

**HETEROCORPOREALITIES**  
**POPULAR DANCE AND CULTURAL**  
**HYBRIDITY IN UK DRUM 'N' BASS**  
**CLUB CULTURE**

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## **Abstract**

In this thesis I examine popular dance practice within contemporary UK Drum 'n' Bass club culture. Despite an active focus by cultural analysts on club and rave events where dancing is the central focus and 'dance music' is played, the dancing body is noticeably absent from previous discussion. I provide a discursive framework for the introduction of the dancing body into club cultural research by documenting and examining the dance practices in one specific genre of dance music: Drum 'n' Bass.

Drum 'n' Bass is a sub-genre of electronic dance music that first developed in the UK in the early 1990s with its origins in US Hip Hop, Detroit and European Techno, and Jamaican Reggae and Ragga. In this thesis I argue that the intertextual, inter-generic and inter-cultural development of Drum 'n' Bass musical and clubbing culture is represented in the dancing body. I situate dancing as the central way in which Drum 'n' Bass club-goers construct, perform and reiterate specific personal and collective identities, which are informed, although not defined, by the musical genre's history.

Empirical research examining the popular dance practices within contemporary Drum 'n' Bass club culture reveals complex networks of association with, and dissociation from, other 'dance music' and Drum 'n' Bass clubbing crowds, which is demonstrated through the 'appropriation' and revaluation of specific racial, class-based and gendered identities. My central hypothesis is that the Drum 'n' Bass dancing body is heterocorporeal: a hybridized body where knowledge and beliefs about cultural groups, articulated in terms of class, race, gender, age and sexuality, actively intersect to create new meaning and significance through dance.

The thesis is structured into two parts; in Part One I examine discourse regarding the construction and performance of identity in contemporary youth cultures and in Part Two I analyse fieldwork data from Drum 'n' Bass club culture.

## CONTENTS

<b><u>Part 1</u></b>	<b><u>Frameworks, issues and contexts</u></b>	
<b>Introduction</b>		1
	Introduction Notes	10
<b>Chapter One</b>	<b>Framing the field in subcultural studies</b>	
1.1	Introduction	11
1.2	The beginnings of subcultural theory	11
1.3	The development of post-subcultural theories	22
1.4	The postmodernist take-over: fluidity, fragmentation and the neo-tribe	24
1.5	Re-thinking postmodern subcultures	28
1.6	New directions in post-subcultural studies	31
1.7	Conclusions	35
	Chapter One Notes	38
<b>Chapter Two</b>	<b>Club culture is the new subculture</b>	
2.1	Introduction	40
2.2	Postmodern approaches to contemporary 'dance music' cultures: trance dance, transcendence and the absent [dancing] body	41
2.3	Dance in contemporary club culture: writing bodies moving	49
2.4	Transformation, liminality and the creation of a [lost] / false community	53
2.5	Taste cultures: affiliations and distinctions within contemporary club cultures	56
2.6	Identification, belonging and playful vitality in contemporary club cultures	60
2.7	New expressions of femininity	65
2.8	Conclusions	69
	Chapter Two Notes	71
<b>Chapter Three</b>	<b>Mapping the multifarious: the genrification of dance music cultures</b>	
3.1	Introduction	73
3.2	House music	75
3.3	Techno	82
3.4	Breaks	87
3.5	Conclusions	89
	Chapter Three Notes	93
<b>Chapter Four</b>	<b>Identity and identification</b>	
4.1	Introduction	95
4.2	Self and 'Other', 'us' and 'them': identity and identification	97
4.3	Race, ethnicity and cultural identity	99
4.4	Cosmopolitan alternatives: identity and cultural hybrid	103

4.5	Delineating difference: performing ‘blackness’ through ‘whiteness’	106
4.6	Alternative ‘black’ identities and their ‘white’ appropriation	114
4.7	Conclusions	119
	Chapter Four Notes	122
<b><u>Part 2</u></b>	<b><u>On the Drum ‘n’ Bass dance floor</u></b>	
<b>Chapter Five</b>	<b>Appropriation, hybridity and intertextuality in contemporary popular culture</b>	
5.1	Introduction	124
5.2	Issues of cultural ownership / the commercial production of culture	127
5.3	From the Jungle to Drum ‘n’ Bass	134
5.4	New directions in Drum ‘n’ Bass	142
5.5	Conclusions	146
	Chapter Five Notes	149
<b>Chapter Six</b>	<b>Fieldwork Issues and Methodologies</b>	
6.1	Introduction	152
6.2	Framing and defining the dance event	154
6.3	Research methodologies and reflexive practice	158
6.4	Fieldwork methodologies: participant observation	164
6.5	Fieldwork methodologies: gathering and recording data	171
6.6	Fieldwork methodologies: sourcing and interviewing informants	174
6.7	Conclusions	179
	Chapter Six Notes	180
<b>Chapter Seven</b>	<b>Boys, Bass and Bover</b>	
7.1	Introduction	182
7.2	Dancing identities: gendered relations	185
7.3	Boys don’t dance: valuing the corporeal	194
7.4	Class matters	201
7.5	Conclusions	207
	Chapter Seven Notes	210
<b>Chapter Eight</b>	<b>Ambivalent identities: hybrid appropriations</b>	
8.1	Introduction	212
8.2	Traces from Africanist practice	213
8.3	Re-visiting cultural appropriation	220
8.4	The carnivalisation of Drum ‘n’ Bass	227
8.5	Conclusions	235
	Chapter Eight Notes	237
<b>Final Conclusions</b>	<b>Heterocorporealities: the hybridized dancing body</b>	<b>239</b>
	Final Conclusions Notes	249

**Appendices:**

Appendix A  
Appendix B

250  
252

**Bibliography**

254

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Whilst my time in club culture has come to an end I know that the dance floor will remain a special place for so many of you.

**Introduction**

Club Supreme, Vauxhall, London  
5<sup>th</sup> November 2004, 10.30pm

Underneath the brick railway arches I stand looking over the balcony to the crowded dance floor below. It's dark but the revolving red and blue lights allow me to identify moving bodies through the clouds of cigarette smoke and dry ice that hang in the hot, sweaty space between me and the dancing clubbers. The sides, ceiling and floor of the room reverberate with a sound that is unmistakably electronic and futuristic, yet simultaneously dirty and primitive. Insistent, polyrhythmic drum patterns clatter alongside a low, grinding synthesised horn. The combination of noises initiates a release of adrenalin through my body and I can't resist the urge to move. I begin to shift my shoulders alternately forward and back, which as the music builds in intensity becomes more forceful. A loud, wobbling bassline that sounds like the large propellers of a helicopter rotating prompts some of the dancers to jump up and down, shout and flick their hand toward the DJ in appreciation of his track selection. There is a strong sense of anticipation and intense excitement for the night ahead.

The MC is standing on a small stage to the side of the club space with shoulders tightly raised and one hand gripping the microphone close to his mouth. His other arm gestures into the space, waving up and down in time with bouncing knees. Dressed in baggy tracksuit trousers and hooded top, he reminds me of rappers in American Hip Hop music videos. Next to him the DJ, enclosed by the large stacks of speakers and twin set turntables, bounces up and down with his eyes transfixed on the decks. As I breathe in, an acrid smell of fresh sweat combined with tobacco and stale beer assaults my nostrils. The MC shouts out to the crowd 'big respect for all you ravers out there....let's hear it for DJ Hype...coming straight at ya!'

I move to watch the clubbers standing to the side of the dance floor. A lad of about eighteen is wearing white trainers, white tracksuit trousers and has the hood of a blue sports top pulled low over the peak of a white baseball cap. With one hand he clasps a can of lager, whilst the other arm swings heavy and undirected at his side as he shifts

from foot to foot. As the music builds in intensity he gathers both arms together and with shoulders raised, bounces through the feet as if building up to action. When the track breaks, his movement becomes low and grounded with deep bended knees, the upper body rocking forward and back with an aggressive quality that is also rolling and fluid. There is a combination of nonchalance, confidence and aggression that makes me think of anti-social British youth in television programmes like *Cops with Cameras* or *Street Wars*. There is something laddish, even loutish about this movement style. Yet, there are other elements in the dance. He takes a long swig of lager, leans back slightly and begins to rolling alternate shoulders backwards treading through each foot with sense of ease, chin lifted. He stares out under the peak of his baseball cap and hood with a wry smile.

Extract derived from personal fieldnotes, 2004

This is a thesis about popular dance and its role in the construction and performance of identity in contemporary UK Drum 'n' Bass club culture. The extract from personal fieldnotes above introduces a reader to the experience of a club event but also highlights the existence of several 'images' of identity that reside as hybrid in the Drum 'n' Bass dancing body. Dance studies writer Desmond has urged scholars 'not to ignore the ways in which dance signals and enacts social identities in all their continually changing configurations' (1997: 49). In this thesis I take up Desmond's challenge and contribute to the developing academic field of popular dance research. Whilst the 'popular' is a highly contested theoretical term it is commonly used to refer to those aspects of culture that have their base in 'the experiences, the pleasures, the memories, the traditions of the people' (Hall, 1995: 472), and are defined as 'the everyday practices and everyday experiences of ordinary folk' (Hall, 1995: 472). A myriad of approaches to the academic study of popular culture prompts Strinati to conclude that as it 'cannot be properly defined except in relation to particular theories...the possibility of a theoretically informed definition receiving widespread agreement is a long way off' (2004: xvii).

In relation to dance practice Malnig (2008) notes how the labels 'popular', 'vernacular' and 'social' are often used interchangeably. However, she distinguishes between vernacular forms such as folk dance, which 'tend to involve like-minded or



homogeneous communities of dancers interested primarily in the preservation of heritage and group traditions' and social and popular dance practices, whereby 'a sense of community often derives less pre-existing groups brought together by shared social and cultural interests than from a community created as the *result* of dancing' (Malnig, 2008: 4, emphasis in original).<sup>1</sup> McRobbie describes social dance as 'a participative form enjoyed by people in leisure, a sexual ritual, a form of self-expression, a kind of exercise and a way of speaking through the body' (1997: 211). In the context of this thesis I use the term 'popular dance' to refer to dance practices that take place in vernacular settings, such as night clubs, and which are often accompanied by popular music. However, I highlight these scholars' definitions to demonstrate how an analysis of the popular dancing body can enable a reader to learn more about how social and cultural identities are *embodied*.<sup>2</sup>

Contemporary British club cultures have their roots 'in a blend of international musical and cultural influences that stretch back, at least in easily recognisable form, to 1945' (Malbon, 1999: 16). Thornton (1995) uses the term 'disc cultures' to describe the rise in popularity of using recorded music, rather than live bands, at social events during the 1950s and 1960s. This significant change in focus was accompanied by the development of specialist venues that hosted these events that became known as discothèques.<sup>3</sup> However, it was the gay, African American New York Disco clubs of the 1970s that prompted the development of a clubbing culture that became predominantly associated with the social practice of dancing to electronic 'dance music' mixed together by a 'DJ' (disc-jockey). In the UK Acid House was the first sub-genre of dance music from America that became widely popularised and it was this style that initiated the development of a British rave and club culture that became synonymous with the 'dance drug' Ecstasy (MDMA or 3, 4 methylenedioxymethamphetamine) in the late 1980s and early 1990s.<sup>4</sup>

In the twenty years following the birth of Acid House in the UK, club culture has changed beyond recognition. Surveys conducted in the latter half of the 1990s demonstrate a significant growth in the percentage of the total UK population attending night-club events at least once a year: moving from 34% in 1990 to 42% in 1996 (Mintel in Malbon, 1999). At the end of the 1990s Malbon (1999) described clubbing as a hugely significant social phenomenon and a major cultural industry.

However, in the 2000s journalists, such as Petridis (2004, 2003), heralded the decline of dance music: ‘clubbing [has] lost its all-important cachet of cool’ (Petridis, 2004, n.p). The British Phonographic Industry’s decision in 2004 to substitute the Brit Awards category of Best Dance Act with Best Live Act confirmed this move away from mainstream popularity and visibility: ‘the Brit’s committee decided that dance music is no longer where it’s happening in music. That scene is returning to its underground roots. The award was no longer right for mass television audience’ (Anon in Petridis, 2004, n.p.). However, in August 2008 listings hosted on the *Mixmag* website detail over 25 specialist dance music club events available every weekend in London alone. In addition, membership statistics for specialist internet websites demonstrates that dance music club culture retains its appeal for a substantial group of individuals in the UK and internationally.<sup>5</sup>

As a result of significant growth throughout the 1990s this area has become the subject of animated discussion by both youth and popular cultural scholars. Thomas (2003) characterises this shift of interest in cultural criticism as a move from the study of subcultures to ‘club cultures’. Cultural analysts have focused primarily on clubs and events where dancing is the central focus and where dance music is played (for example Buckland, 2002; Pini, 2001, 1997; Bennett, 2000, 1999; Malbon, 1999; Rietveld, 1998; Thornton, 1995; Redhead *et al.*, 1993). In addition, these scholars use the terms dance cultures, social dance cultures, dance music cultures and contemporary dance cultures interchangeably (Thomas, 2003). However, despite such significant acknowledgement of the centrality of dance to this leisure activity, ‘dancing is what clubbing is about and is largely what clubbers ‘do’ while clubbing’ (Malbon, 1999: 85-86), there remains a serious scholarly neglect of these popular dance forms.

In this thesis I provide a discursive framework for the introduction of the dancing body into cultural studies research by documenting and examining dance movement in UK club culture. My personal experience in dance music club culture during the mid to late 1990s and early 2000s has enabled me to identify the urgent need for scholars to account for the diversity and specificity of the range of dance music genres that, I argue, structure sociality in contemporary dance music club cultures (Chapter Three). Despite wide recognition of a proliferation and fragmentation of dance music genres

that occurred in the 1990s, and the acknowledgement that musical style or DJ often leads club-goers' choice of club event, previous club cultural scholars have failed to differentiate between styles of dance music in their research (Chapter Two). Moreover, I have been able to observe across a range of dance music genres significant differences in the dancing that occurs at these differing events, which thus creates further opportunities for future study in dance music genres other than that chosen for the focus of this thesis.

Drum 'n' Bass is a sub-genre of electronic dance music that first developed in the UK in the early 1990s. It is characterised by combination of a slow, heavy bass line, such as those used in Dub Reggae records, with fast, frenetic Breakbeat drum rhythms that move at double speed of the bass.<sup>6</sup> In this sense Drum 'n' Bass is 'double-voiced', a genre where seemingly contradictory or conflicting stylistic elements work in simultaneity. Gilbert and Pearson describe how these contrasting elements allow the genre to occupy a 'double space' (1999: 79), as a music which appeals both to audiences as a 'black' musical form, and to fans of the avant-garde.<sup>7</sup> Music scholars, journalists and production artists describe the genre as located at the intersection of a range of musical and cultural influences, proclaiming Drum 'n' Bass as a product of 1990s urban, multicultural Britain: '[Drum 'n' Bass] reflect[s] our experience of growing up in multi-cultural cities' (Garratt, 1998: 281). However, whilst initial descriptions of club audiences depict them as racially mixed, scholars Gilbert and Pearson (1999) identify a bifurcation of the sub-genre into 'black' and 'white' audiences.<sup>8</sup> This tension is also apparent in contemporary clubbing crowds as young, 'white' male participants dominate the scene.

In this thesis I argue that the intertextual, inter-generic and inter-cultural development of Drum 'n' Bass musical and clubbing culture is represented in the dancing body. I situate dancing as the central way in which Drum 'n' Bass club-goers construct, perform and reiterate specific personal and collective identities, which are informed, although not defined, by the musical genre's history. Whilst I identify traces from African American Hip Hop, Jamaican Reggae and Ragga, and Detroit and European Techno musical and clubbing cultures, the dancing body also expresses specific beliefs and values that are particular to the context of contemporary UK Drum 'n' Bass club culture. I argue that the dance practices reveal complex networks of

association with, and dissociation from, other 'dance music' and Drum 'n' Bass clubbing crowds and that this is demonstrated through the 'appropriation' and revaluation of specific racial, class-based and gendered identities.

In response to these findings my central hypothesis is that the Drum 'n' Bass dancing body is heterocorporeal: a term that is derived from Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia (1981) (meaning the many voices in language or the 'hybrid utterance'). The heterocorporeal is a hybridized body where knowledge and beliefs about cultural groups, articulated in terms of class, race, gender, age and sexuality, actively intersect to create new meaning and significance through dance. The Bakhtinian concept of the *carnavalesque* (1984) is used to explore themes of ambivalence, contradiction, parody and play that are apparent in the dance movement of, and articulated in descriptions by, Drum 'n' Bass club-goers. Influenced by Bhabha's (1994) notion of a hybrid 'third space' that argues for a productive understanding of difference, I argue that clubbers simultaneously embody and denounce self and 'Other'. In simultaneous yet contradictory gestures of affiliation and distinction Drum 'n' Bass clubbers force a theoretical move away from limiting and essentialist conceptions of cultural ownership, to recognise potential re-articulation and revaluation of cultural forms and identity-based imagery through popular dance practices.

Located firmly within dance studies I use fieldwork techniques from dance ethnography to conduct empirical research at club events to document and analyse the dance practice, complemented by face to face and electronic interviews with informants, as well as textual research and analysis of internet and niche media. Intertextuality has proved a powerful force for this thesis, both methodologically and as a mode of analysis in itself.<sup>9</sup> Whilst anchored in dance studies I *move* in an interdisciplinary manner, drawing from a range of closely related and intersecting academic disciplines: subcultural studies, cultural studies, genre theory, and race and ethnic studies. Theories of poststructuralism, postmodernism and intertextuality have proved influential to the scholars that I use from each of these key academic areas.

In Chapter One of this thesis I examine literature located within the field of subcultural studies as the central discipline concerned with analysing the practices associated with youth sociality. Scholars working in this area have increasingly

focused on subcultural practices that include the communal consumption of music in venues such as night clubs. Whilst dancing is often integral to these experiences it has received scant attention, often at the expense of a focus on visual 'style'. In addition, I discuss how contemporary developments in the theorisation of subcultures reveal tension between accounts that depict fluid modes of sociality and those that highlight significant subcultural substance. In this thesis I contribute to this discourse by investigating the process by which Drum 'n' Bass club-goers associate and disassociate themselves from others in the Drum 'n' Bass scene and dance music more widely.

In Chapter Two I explore previous literature from a broader range of academic disciplines but whose writers have focused particularly on club cultural practices. These texts present conflicting and contradictory existing accounts of 'dance music' club cultures, which I argue highlight the need for future scholars to acknowledge the diversity and specificity of dance music and their attendant communities; 'they all have validity if they are taken to apply to sectional audiences' (Huq, 2006: 105). Importantly the dancing body has been noticeably absent from these discussions. In this thesis I address this critique through detailed analysis of the dance practices associated with one specific sub-genre of dance music: Drum 'n' Bass.

In Chapter Three I explore the affiliations and distinctions that exist between club-goers by investigating diachronic and synchronic relationships between dance music sub-styles on and around the club dance floor. Through the use of genre theory I reconceptualise the relationship between club cultures to reveal complex networks of association that are led by the development of the musical sub-genres. Dance music is quintessentially intertextual and inter-generic. I argue that an intertextual analysis of the relationship between dance music genres that looks further than the immediate expressive capacities of the 'text' [record / genre] can assist in an analysis of the identities that are an integral part of the structure of the club culture.

In Chapter Four I discuss contemporary debates regarding the social construction of personal and collective identities in an increasingly globalised and hybridised world. In particular I use the writings of cultural hybridity theorists, such as Hall (2000, 1994) and Bhabha (1994), to support a move away from essentialist conceptions of

identity in recognition that ‘no-one today is one pure thing’ (Said, 1994b: 407). In addition, I explore popular representations of racial and class-based identities, relevant to the focus of this research in UK Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture, to reveal how meaning and value is ascribed to particular collective identity categories through social discourse. In Chapter Five I investigate the (re)production of particular identity constructs in the promotion and consumption of popular music through a consideration of contemporary debates regarding cultural hybridity and authenticity in relation to music and dance practices. An exploration of the historical development of Drum ‘n’ Bass locates the musical style at an intersection of musical and cultural influences.

The methodology employed for my empirical research in UK Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture is discussed in Chapter Six. I examine current debates in dance ethnography and set out the fieldwork design. Whilst I use techniques from ethnography, I do not claim to produce an account of a specific group of individuals that I have traced over a period of time. Nor do I state that the research is representative of all Drum ‘n’ Bass club events throughout the UK as the number of fieldwork visits remains small in comparison to the number of events that happen each week. However, a range of venues across a selection of cities and towns were used for the research to illuminate potential regional variation, of which there was a negligible amount. In addition, a range of ethnographic techniques have been used to supplement primary participant observation research at club events. My own knowledge and experience of dance music club cultures has enabled more immediate access to some informants and club events, although it has been necessary to maintain a self-reflexive perspective and to seek a variety of sources. In this sense my research is one of several recent sociological studies in popular culture by young academics ‘many of whom are already immersed in their chosen culture prior to intellectual engagement’ (Purkis in Muggleton, 2000: 4), which brings several advantages as well as challenges.

In Chapter Seven I use empirical data to explore the shifting systems of value that exist within Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture. Clubbers comments regarding the value of the dance, alongside other club cultural practices, are key in an exploration of perceptions of similarity with, and difference from, others, which, in turn, establish a sense of club cultural identity. The Drum ‘n’ Bass dancing body demonstrates a

valuing of qualities that can be linked to specific identity-based imagery. I reveal how participants simultaneously denounce and embody popular representations of working-class identities, and suggest that these club-goers engage in a process of re-valuation.

In Chapter Eight I debate issues of cultural authenticity and ownership in relation to movement practices observed in Drum 'n' Bass club culture. An analysis of dance movement in relation to the work of dance scholar Brenda Dixon Gottschild (1996) is used to highlight the problematic nature of narratives of appropriation. I use Bakhtin's (1981) related concepts of double-voiced discourse and heteroglossia to move away from restrictive notions of cultural ownership through a productive understanding of difference. A socially orientated notion of intertextuality is used to conceptualise the dancing body as hybridised as it contains traces of prior meaning and logic yet is replete with new meaning and significance. Bakhtin's concept of the *carnavalesque* (1984) assists in understanding the ambiguity, plurality and parody apparent in contemporary UK Drum 'n' Bass club culture. As noted at the beginning of this introduction, research focused on the analysis of popular dance practice can contribute significantly to understanding the construction and performance of social and cultural identities.

## Introduction Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> For further discussion of the distinctions between folk and popular dance forms see Friedland (1987), and between folk and vernacular dance see Spalding (1995).
- <sup>2</sup> For further discussion of the term 'popular culture' see Strinati (2004) and Fiske (1991). For discussion of the term popular in relation to music see Moore (2001), and dance see Malnig's edited collection *Ballroom, Boogie, Shimmy Sham, Shake: A Social and Popular Dance Reader* (2008).
- <sup>3</sup> See Thornton (1995) for a detailed discussion of the development of the discothèque.
- <sup>4</sup> For detailed discussion of the close connection between the use of recreational drugs, such as Ecstasy (MDMA) and speed (amphetamine), and clubbing see Saunders (1994; 1995; 1997) and Malbon (1999). Whilst in this thesis I choose not to focus in detail on Drum 'n' Bass club-goers' use of recreational drugs, I do acknowledge that they continue to form an important part of the clubbing experience for some participants.
- <sup>5</sup> For example in August 2008 *Drum 'n' Bass Arena* has 48, 351 registered users.
- <sup>6</sup> Dub Reggae is a style of music originating from the Caribbean but was popularised in the global music market by artists such as Bob Marley in the early 1980s. Breakbeat is a sub-genre of dance music in itself, but the term is also used to refer to a broken beat drum rhythm that follows an irregular structure within a 4/4 time signature.
- <sup>7</sup> Gilbert and Pearson (1999) contrast these two notions by describing the avant garde as emphasising intellectualisation over and above music as a source of pleasure.
- <sup>8</sup> The terms 'black' and 'white' are used here as they have been taken directly from Gilbert and Pearson (1999). The problematic essentialising and homogenising nature of these identity labels will be discussed further in Chapter Four of this thesis.
- <sup>9</sup> Intertextual theory 'insists that a text...cannot exist in as a hermetic or self-sufficient whole, and so does not function as a closed system' (Worton & Still, 1990: 1). The term originated in the 1960s and was first used by Kristeva in relation to literary texts. However, since this time it has been used in a variety of disciplines including structuralism, poststructuralism, semiotics, postcolonial theory, Marxism, feminism and psychoanalytic theory (Adshead-Lansdale, 1999). Intertextuality has also been used by some scholars working in the discipline of dance studies (see Lansdale, 2008; Adshead-Lansdale, 1999). Lansdale's description that intertextuality 'rests on the invocation of references to earlier cultural positions, pre-existing icons, previously developed genres, settings for performance and other dominant performance modes' (2008: 3) is of particular relevance to the ideas contained in this thesis.



## **Chapter One**

### **Framing the field in subcultural studies**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

Recent sociological scholars, such as Gelder (2005), note how since the late 1980s the principles of subcultural theory have been variously criticised and largely abandoned. Despite this, the concept of ‘subculture’ has survived as a centrally defining notion in much sociological work on the relationship between youth, music and style (Bennett, 1999). In the early to mid 1990s, theories of the postmodern were the catalyst and inspiration for the largest challenge to British subcultural studies since its inception: a movement which has become known as post-subcultural studies. Since then a proliferation of alternative ways of describing, theorising and naming subcultures have surfaced. All refer to the ways in which people gather together around common interests and focus particularly, but not exclusively, on youth sociality through the consumption of music. The parameters of my research in contemporary UK Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture are set in flux by this discourse as the question of why club goers choose to group together, and to disassociate themselves from others, is key to the ‘fixing’, or finding, of the boundaries of my study. Furthermore, such scholars’ writings have much to contribute to an understanding of the role of social groups in the construction of personal and collective subcultural or ‘club cultural’ identities, which I argue are expressed in dance music club cultures through the dancing body. In this chapter I introduce the key themes, strengths and limitations of subcultural and post-subcultural theories in order to identify how these issues are addressed in this thesis.

#### **1.2 The beginnings of subcultural theory**

Subcultures can be defined as particular groups of people who are represented as non-normative and / or marginal because of their interests or practices (Gelder, 2005). As a social method of differentiation a subculture is a way of defining a subset or grouping within a larger culture. Members of the subculture may represent

themselves as different, or it may be others who engage in social classification that demarcates them (Gelder, 2005). The term was first widely accepted as a sociological category in the 1940s in the United States of America by a group of academics who became known as the Chicago School.<sup>1</sup> However, written accounts of particular and distinct social groupings, which Gelder (2005) describes as displaying the beginnings of an influential genealogy for subcultural studies, can be found in Elizabethan accounts of the anti-heroes of early modern English society. For example, John Awdeley's early sixteenth century text *The Fraternity of Vagabonds* describes a number of vagabond 'types' such as the ruffler, the whip-jack and the palliard. Similar accounts of rogues and 'anti-commonwealth' social types are further described in literature of the period by writers Thomas Harman, Robert Greene and Thomas Dekker (Gelder, 2005).

These early accounts of 'sub-cultural' groupings offer significant insight into the ways in which subcultural theorists have applied systems of social classification. Gelder (2005) describes the existence of two juxtaposed perspectives in the understanding of early subcultural groups: firstly where members of the subculture are seen by others from the outside as disorderly, and secondly where members perceive themselves as a tight-knit organised world. These opposing perceptions produce an understanding of social groupings (from the outside) as anti-social, itinerant and unproductive. This negative portrayal of subcultures continued into the nineteenth century with vagabond literature that portray a class of individuals whose non-conformity posed a real and apparently residual problem to society. Karl Marx's use of the term *lumpenproletariat* (to indicate a level beneath the working classes) describes groups of rogues that were gathered together to support Louis Bonaparte in his rise to power in 1851 (Gelder, 2005). Whilst this description of déclassé subcultures is in contrast to the explicit naming of working class subcultures in work published by the British Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in the 1970s, the negative associations of idleness and self-absorption appear to have a legacy in descriptions of post-war subcultures such as mods, skinheads and teds (Gelder, 2005). In addition, these characteristics resonate with 'oppositional' qualities displayed by club-goers in contemporary UK Drum 'n' Bass club culture.

Authors from the American ‘Chicago School’ conducted empirical research in early twentieth century urban environments, such as that described in the co-authored seminal text *The City* (Park, Burgess & McKenzie, 1925) and Cressey’s (1932) study of Chicago’s taxi-dancers.<sup>2</sup> Tracking an increasing pluralisation of American lifestyles the term ‘subculture’ became used to account for particular kinds of social difference that often focused on immigrant or marginalised communities. Gordon’s *Assimilation in American Life* (1964) advocates the study of subcultures by arguing for the need to look beyond conventional sociological categories of ethnicity, class and national identity to explain the complex social arrangements of these groups (Gelder, 2005). The seminal text by Albert Cohen, *Delinquent Boys: the Culture of the Gang* (1955), brought the association of subcultures and deviant behaviour to prominence in the 1950s through an increasing connection between sociology and criminology.<sup>3</sup> Cohen’s text describes the social nature of deviant behaviour and defined deviancy not simply as ‘abnormality’ but as ‘a site through which an alternative (and possibly highly organised) set of values are articulated’ (Gelder, 2005: 22).

Albert Cohen’s (1955) research was the first to provide a general theory of subcultural identity by situating subcultures as the result of a need to find a solution to a social problem related to social status, which is a notion that continued to be widely popular in subcultural theory until the 1980s. Cohen (1955) describes how individuals facing status problems (because they are of a lower social class) will naturally gravitate towards one another and create new norms and behaviours that are different, if not antithetical, to the larger social system. Whilst described as ‘non-utilitarian, malicious and negativistic’ (Cohen, 1955: 25) Cohen’s deviant boys are situated as a normative part of American society. This class-based conception of subcultural groupings influenced subsequent American studies, for example Polsky’s study of the Greenwich Village beatnik and the pool room ‘hustler’ in *Hustlers, Beats and Others* (1967), as well as British subcultural theory (see section 1.2). In this thesis I argue that Drum ‘n’ Bass subcultural identity is informed by notions of the working class. However, in line with poststructuralist developments in contemporary cultural criticism that challenge the cohesiveness of collective [working class] identities (see section 1.3 and Chapter Four), I argue that it is perceptions or imagery of class that are used in the performance of Drum ‘n’ Bass club cultural identity. The following part

of this chapter is focused on the writings of the CCCS or 'Birmingham School' in order to examine the association of subcultures with working class, oppositional identities in the context of the UK.

Scholars working within the CCCS, Birmingham, in the 1970s employed the term 'subculture' to refer a collective reaction of working class youth to structural changes taking place in post-war Britain. According to Phil Cohen (1972) these collective reactions, which were particularly expressed territorially, were a response to the break up of traditional working class communities as the result of urban regeneration in the 1950s and the consequent relocation of families to 'new towns' and modern housing estates.<sup>4</sup> The formation of youth subcultures, such as teds, skinheads and mods, was part of an ongoing working class struggle against the particular socio-economic circumstances of post-war existence. Locked into a generational conflict with a 'parent culture', subcultures provided young people with a way to experience a sense of solidarity that had been lost through working class community displacement. According to Cohen the latent function of the subculture is 'to express and resolve, albeit magically, the contradictions which remain hidden or unresolved in the parent culture' (1972: 23).<sup>5</sup>

The research of the CCCS centres on youth subcultural style and moves away from the empirical, ethnographic work of the Chicago School through the use of a heavily theorised approach that focuses on the issues of power and class. In the late 1950s and early 1960s British Cultural Studies scholars Raymond Williams and E. P. Thompson began to distance themselves from the urban sociology and criminology of the American Chicago School by initiating the study of popular culture and the increasingly prominent popular media. Similar to the Chicago School, these scholars situate culture as a source of class conflict, but focus in particular on depicting the British working classes as 'sub-cultural' groups bound together through common experiences and interests (Gelder, 2005).<sup>6</sup> These ideas influenced CCCS scholars such as Phil Cohen (1972), who describes youth subcultures in post-war Britain as socially subordinate groups and, as a consequence, their actions as invested in political meaning. Positioned at a transitional moment of social change, youth subcultures are situated as indicative of a disintegration of traditional communities and working class identities (Gelder, 2005). Cohen's writing clearly articulates a concern for

theorisation of subcultures rather ethnographic research: ‘subcultures are symbolic structures and must not be confused with the actual kids who are their bearers and supports’ (Cohen, [1972]2005: 90). Whilst the majority of the work of the CCCS was highly theoretical in method rather than empirical, the work of Paul Willis is an exception. Willis’s 1977 study of working-class school boys in the West Midlands used ethnographic techniques including face to face interviews with informants.<sup>7</sup>

Whilst Phil Cohen (1972) positions subcultures as a ‘solution’ to the breakdown of traditional working class communities they are described as a compromise, with little capacity for social resistance. Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson’s edited collection, *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain* (2000, [1976]) places a greater emphasis on the resistive potential of such groupings.<sup>8</sup> These scholars were influenced by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci’s concept of ‘hegemony’, where the ruling classes dominate subordinate groups within society through a process of regulation, negotiation and coercion. Gramsci’s Neo-Marxist model offers subordinate classes the opportunity to claim back control through group resistance. This approach was adopted in Hall and Jefferson’s (1976) collection of articles, although the employment of strategies of resistance during *leisure* rather than work time is acknowledged as reducing the subculture’s political productivity. The political potential of subcultures continues to be a popular debate to the current day and will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter and in Chapter Two in relation to dance music cultures.

The CCCS’s later body of work displays a shift of focus from the analysis of subcultural territory to subcultural ‘style’, which as the most obvious visual marker of social identity has remained a key descriptor in contemporary subcultural research. Stimulated by increasingly youth orientated consumer markets designed to make youth a distinctive category, style, displayed through clothing, hairstyles and adornments is situated as the predominant marker of subcultural affiliation. Influenced by semiotic theorists Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco, Hebdige’s *Subculture: the Meaning of Style* (1979) investigates the subversive use of style by British punks and interprets examples of ‘spectacular’ style (for example punk Mohican hairstyles) as oppositional gestures of refusal, defiance and contempt. The notion of style as ‘bricolage’, as discussed by Clarke (2000, [1976]), is also used by

Hebdige to describe subculturalists' appropriation of a range of different commodities that subvert or erase original meaning by positioning them in a new and original context (for example, punks use of bin liners as clothing).<sup>9</sup> The semiotic nature of this approach is openly acknowledged by Hebdige as he uses Umberto Eco's term 'semiotic guerrilla warfare' (Eco, 1972) to describe these subversive practices. In this thesis I argue that the dancing body is a key visual marker of Drum 'n' Bass club cultural affiliation, where movements that carry traces of racial and class-based identities construct a movement 'bricolage' or hybrid dancing body that articulates new meaning and significance; 'when the bricoleur re-locates the significant object in a different position within that discourse, using the same overall repertoire of signs, or when the object is placed within a different total ensemble, a new discourse is constituted, a different message conveyed' (Clarke, [1976], 2000: 177).

Hebdige (1979) also re-works and extends the CCCS scholar Willis's (1978) concepts of 'homology' and 'integration' in relation to subcultures. Willis (1978) describes the internal structure of subcultures as characterised by extreme orderliness where 'each part is organically related to other parts and it is through the fit between them that the subcultural member makes sense of the world' (Hebdige, [1979], 2005: 127). The notion of a symbolic fit between the values and lifestyles of a group and their preferred musical and stylistic choices, which is also a topic for Clarke (1976), is explored by Hebdige (1979) using the example of the 1970s British punk subculture. He notes a consistency between the subversive and 'spectacular' style, behaviour and interests of punks that includes spiky hairstyles, trashy clothes, violent and anti-social behaviour, and "'soulless", frantically driven music' (Hebdige, [1979], 2005: 128). Hebdige reaffirms Clarke's notion that the 'objects' chosen by subcultures were ones 'in which (the subcultural members) could see their central values held and reflected' (Clarke in Hebdige, [1979], 2005: 127).

Hebdige also notes that punk subculture's use of parody in their 'prodigious rhetoric' (2005: 128) offered by 'spectacular' style prevents a straightforward semiotic reading of style and thus, meaning remains elusive. Demonstrating clear similarities with early post-subcultural theorists discussed in the following section of this chapter, Hebdige notes that: 'instead of arriving at the point where we can begin to make sense of the style, we have reached the very place where meaning evaporates' ([1979] 2005:

129). Influenced by the poststructuralist concept of *polysemy*, where a text is freed from a fixed number of concealed meanings, Hebdige (1979) describes subcultural style as a subversive signifying practice and positions punk as a subculture that is characterised by its ‘unlocatedness’. Rather than ‘magically’ resolving experienced contradictions (as discussed by previous CCCS scholars), punk subculturalists represent the experience of contradiction through rupture: ‘punk style fitted together homologically precisely through its lack of fit (hole:tee-shirt::spitting:applause::binliner:garment::anarchy:order)’ (sic, Hebdige, [1979], 2005: 130). Hebdige’s description of subversive subcultural practice is similar to the use of parody observed in Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture (see Chapter Eight). In contrast to Hebdige (1979) and early club cultural scholars discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, I argue that meaning, albeit contradictory and ambiguous, is actively constructed and reiterated in the dancing body.

Hebdige (1979) presents the term ‘incorporation’ to describe the process by which the style of spectacular subcultures becomes ‘recuperated’ into mainstream society leading to their demise. He describes this as occurring in two ways: firstly by converting style into mass-produced commodities (‘the commodity form’) and secondly through the labelling or re-definition of deviant behaviour by dominant groups within society, such as the judiciary or the media (‘the ideological form’), in order to ‘situate it within the dominant framework of meanings’ (Hall in Hebdige [1979], 2005: 122). In describing the process of incorporation through the ‘commodity form’ Hebdige acknowledges the integral role of commerce in the creation and diffusion of new styles as ‘[they are] inextricably bound up with the process of production, publicity and packaging’ ([1979], 2005: 95). He situates particular style ideas as original innovations, which then become *frozen* as they are translated into mass commodities and become available for all, which leads to the ultimate demise of the subculture.

Hebdige’s concept of ideological incorporation describes how the media seeks to normalise, domesticate or ridicule that which is non-normative by presenting difference as spectacle, or to deny it altogether: ‘Otherness is reduced to sameness’ (Hebdige, 1979: 97). He writes in response to Stanley Cohen’s (1972) descriptions of society’s ‘moral panic’, which, he states, fails to acknowledge the full range of media

responses to subcultures including more ambiguous reactions that seek to underplay their exotic status. Hebdige draws on Barthes' notion of identification to describe how subcultures like punk are viewed as a threat to social order: 'the Other...a scandal which threatens his existence' (Barthes in Hebdige, 1979: 97) and in response are re-defined by the dominant mainstream. Similarly, club cultural scholar Thornton (1995) discusses the changeable reactions of the media to UK Acid House culture in the late 1980s, but critiques Hebdige (1979) for failing to acknowledge the active role that the media play in the creation and development of such subcultures (see Chapter Two). In line with the majority of previous CCCS scholars, Hebdige has a clear focus on the 'outsider's' perception of the subculture rather than discussing the subjective experience of the subculturalists themselves. This criticism raises questions regarding the methodology of this research, where in using both interview data and fieldwork observations, I seek to address the club-goers' perceptions and experiences (see Chapter Six).

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the work of CCCS scholars has been criticised by many writers since the 1970s. Whilst some limitations have already been highlighted, in the following discussion I explore the critiques posed by Stanley Cohen in the article *Symbols of Trouble* (1980) and Gary Clarke in *Defending Ski-jumpers: a critique of theories of youth subcultures* (1981), which were both first published within two years of Hebdige's *Subculture: the Meaning of Style* (1979). It is these two early pieces of research, supported by the work of other scholars, such as Thornton (1995) and McRobbie (1991, 1989, 1978, 1975), which highlight many of the concerns that forced a major re-direction for subcultural studies at the beginning of the 1990s.

Stanley Cohen refers to what he terms as the 'over-facile drift to historicism' ([1980], 2005: 160), to criticise the CCCS school of work that focuses on identifying a trend or continuities of resistance from previous periods in history. Cohen ([1980], 2005) problematises the notion that forms of contemporary youth resistance are seen as part of an ongoing struggle of the free working classes dominated by bourgeois state since the eighteenth century. He describes this tendency as historical essentialism and whilst accepting the potentially fruitful use of historical connection in sociological work to explore contemporary instances of youth resistance, he warns against



projecting single, one-directional historical trends of ‘commercialisation, repression, bourgeoisification, destruction of community, erosion of leisure values’ ([1980], 2005: 160) onto a more complex, ambiguous and contradictory present.<sup>10</sup> The contemporary ‘use-value’ of theoretical models constructed in a particular socio-temporal context has also been questioned by scholars, including Hebdige: ‘the idea of subculture as negation grew up alongside punk, remained inextricably linked to it and died when it died’ (1988: 8).

Cohen (1980) also critiques the tendency for CCCS scholars to decode subcultural style only in terms of ‘resistance’ and ‘opposition’. In support, he describes the existence of youth styles that are conservative or adopted from the dominant commercial culture without subversion. Whilst the CCCS subculturalists may acknowledge the existence of these styles, Cohen states that they are brushed aside or explained as oppositional values hiding behind the conservative. In particular the notion of ‘bricolage’ is described as being used to discard any contradictions between stylistic elements that would disrupt the offered reading. Cohen critiques Hebdige for constructing: ‘an aesthetics which may work for art but not equally well for life’ ([1980], 2005: 165). Returning to his first point Cohen posits this tendency by scholars as a continued attraction to explaining subcultures as a cumulative form of historical resistance: ‘what we are really being directed is towards the “profound line of historical continuity” between today’s delinquents and their “equivalents” in the past’ ([1980], 2005: 163). This critique has resonance with one of the central arguments of this thesis. In Chapter Three I discuss how the diachronic development of dance music sub-genres has much to contribute to our understanding of each attendant club culture (and the divisions that exist between them). However, I also use the writings of Bhabha (1990) to argue that the hybrid dancing body cannot be understood as a simple admixture of identities (see Chapters Seven and Eight).

The notion of subjective intent is problematised by Cohen (1980) as he discusses the various approaches of the CCCS scholars with regards to subcultural group self-consciousness. Whilst Clarke (1975) describes a sufficient level of internal recognition of the use of symbolic objects, Hebdige concedes that: ‘it is highly unlikely...that the members of any subcultures described in this book would recognise themselves reflected here’ (1979: 139). Describing an otherwise silent refusal to

acknowledge this problematic issue of whether subculturalists are themselves aware of the symbolic meaning read into their actions by academic scholars, Cohen explains these contradictions as the result of a too-literal application of certain strands of structuralism and semiotics (for example he describes Hebdige's interpretations of punk style as 'symbolic baggage' that is 'just too heavy'). He describes this as an over reading of code that, whilst 'imaginative', is also questioned as 'imaginary' due to a lack of detailed empirical data (Cohen, 1980).<sup>11</sup>

Cohen (1980) continues to challenge the way in which the highly theoretical approach of the Birmingham School relates to the everyday lives of young people: 'the nagging sense here is that these lives, selves and identities do not always coincide with what they are supposed to stand for' ([1980], 2005: 167). Questioning whether the 'mundane' forms of 'day-to-day delinquency', which Cohen describes as focusing around property crime, have anything to do with magic, codes or rituals, he infers that these accounts may misrepresent the experiences of the majority of young people in Britain. Although Clarke *et al* state that patterns of subcultural involvement vary across the youth population with some members' relations to subcultures being 'fleeting or permanent, marginal or central' (2000, [1976]: 16), further detail is not offered on the nature such involvement (a criticism also offered by Clarke, 1981). In addition, it is not clear how and when spectacular styles and symbolic objects fit into the lives of individuals. Whilst Cohen praises the work of Willis for conducting empirical research into the lives of young people, McRobbie (and Clarke, 1981) criticise his 1977 research, *Learning to Labour*, for not exploring how the groups formed within the school, or are enacted or played out at home: 'what happens around the breakfast table or in the bedroom[?]' (1991: 32).<sup>12</sup> Discourse regarding the balance of theoretical discussion and empirical data prompts questions regarding the methodology chosen for this research (see Chapter Six).

The close relationship between class and subculture that is offered by the CCCS researchers is problematised by Cohen (1980) and Clarke (1981). Both authors critique the structuralist analysis offered by Phil Cohen (1972) for the way in which he focuses particularly on the 'card-carrying' members of the subculture (by this they mean the most committed or 'authentic' subculturalists) and trace back to uncover class situation. The resulting conclusion may then infer that all members of a

particular class are members of a corresponding subculture. These scholars suggest reversing the process and starting with an analysis of the social relations based around class, race, gender and age rather than stylistic elements, which would reveal a myriad of responses to complicate the CCCS readings. Clarke (1981) asserts that this approach would force a break from the Centre's paradigm of examining the 'authentic' subculture that is frozen at a specific point in time resulting in an essentialist and non-contradictory picture and reveal the 'reality' of youth subcultures as 'diffuse, diluted and mongrelized in form' (Clarke, [1981], 2005: 170). Debates regarding the heterogeneity of subcultural membership have proved central to post-subcultural discourse in the late 1990s and early 2000s (see section 1.4).

The elitist divide that the CCCS scholars describe between 'authentic' subculturalists and 'hangers-on' (Hebdige, [1979], 2005: 131) can be criticised for the lack of information provided on what happens when styles dissipate or become used by youth more generally, and consequently for the creation of an overly simplistic dichotomy between the (imaginary homogenous) subculture and the (imaginary homogenous) 'mainstream' (Clarke, 1981). Whilst conceding that subcultures may lose 'potency' (although this is not clearly defined) Clarke (1981) asserts that discussion of the incorporation of styles is inadequate for several closely related reasons. The creativity of the 'original' and 'authentic' subculturalists is overstated and this is closely tied to the way in which theorists position the subculture as autonomous or as separate from the commercial market until the moment of incorporation by the general public. Highlighting an apparent contempt for 'mass culture', which stems from the CCCS Neo-Marxist approach, Clarke (1981) reveals how their descriptions of market involvement in subcultures at the point of incorporation rather than inception, is misleading. In support, he describes the central role that fashion designers McLaren and Westwood played in the creation of the punk style.<sup>13</sup> In addition, he describes the ways in which large numbers of youth, who may not be seen by the CCCS scholars as 'authentic' subculturalists, draw on elements of subcultural style to create their own meanings and uses for them. Clarke (1981) notes that creativity and 'bricolage' are not techniques limited to the exclusive few, for example, he describes the 'normal' (or mainstream) dress of male working class youth as consisting of a variety of clothing styles.

The focus of the mid to late 1970s CCCS work on style is also critiqued by Clarke (1981) who advocates the need for future studies of youth culture to transcend this exclusive category. Stating the need for further information on the subculturalists 'lifestyles' (for example age range, income and source of income) rather than merely the identification of cultural artifacts or possessions that indicate membership of a particular social grouping, Clarke describes members as 'ironically, reduced to the states of dumb, anonymous mannequins, incapable of producing their own meanings and awaiting the arrival of the code breaker' ([1980], 2005: 172). The lack of empirical data gathered by the CCCS scholars is also critiqued by 'post-subcultural' theorists Hodkinson (2002) and Muggleton (2000, 1997) who advocate the privileging of subculturalists' subjective experience (see the section below for a review of their work).<sup>14</sup> I also argue that a focus on subcultural 'style' excludes discussion of other significant practices that form part of each subcultural grouping, such as that which is the focus of this thesis: the dance.

### **1.3 The development of post-subcultural theories**

During the early 1990s scholars working in the Department of Law at Manchester Polytechnic (which became Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) from 1992) developed a field of study referred to as 'popular cultural studies'. The vehicle for the promotion of this new field was the Manchester Institute for Popular Culture which was created in May 1992 as the result of a federation of pre-existing research units: the Unit for Law and Popular Culture (in the School of Law) and the Centre for Urban and Cultural Analysis (in the Department of Social Science). The edited collection *The Clubcultures Reader: Readings in Popular Cultural Studies* (Redhead, Wynne & O'Conner, (eds.) 1997) consolidated the research of scholars in this emergent disciplinary field whose focus was developments in youth and pop culture since the 1970s. Early research is dominated by scholar Steve Redhead (*et al*) in publications that primarily document but also theorise popular culture: *Rave Off: Politics and Deviance in Contemporary Youth Culture* (Redhead, (ed.), 1993), *The End-of-the-Century Party: Youth and Pop Towards 2000* (Redhead, 1990) and *The Passion and The Fashion: Football Fandom in the New Europe* (Redhead (ed.) 1993).

In response to the many criticisms of subcultural theory, discussed in the previous section of this chapter, scholars undertook a radical reworking of the concept 'subculture'. This new approach was initially influenced by postmodernist theory, and the fields of post-subcultural and club cultural studies have developed from this complex discourse. According to Muggleton and Wienzierl (2003), Chambers (1987) working within the disciplinary field of cultural studies was the first to use the term 'post-subcultural' to refer to stylistic and musical eclecticism within contemporary youth cultural phenomena. In *Style Surfing: What to Wear in the 3rd Millennium* (1996), Polhemus refers to clubbing as 'a post-subcultural phenomenon', Muggleton's (1997) essay is entitled *The Post-subculturalist* and Wilson's (2002) study of the Canadian Rave scene discusses both "'post-subculturalist" and "clubcultures" strands of theory' (Wilson in Muggleton & Weinzierl, 2003: 4). Redhead's edited collection from 1997 declares, in its title, a move away from *Subcultures to Club Cultures [An Introduction Popular Cultural Studies]* (Redhead, 1997), which is reiterated by dance sociologist Thomas: 'there has been a shift in interest from subcultures to club cultures in cultural criticism' (2003: 204).

Muggleton and Weinzierl identify two main strands of post-subcultural theory, although are careful to note that these are 'neither wholly encompassing nor mutually exclusive, and some work may fall outside of, or into both positions' (2003: 5). The first reconceptualises the theoretical apparatus of the CCCS by moving away from the Gramscian-semiotic model in favour of work by poststructuralist scholars such as Michel Maffesoli (1996), Judith Butler (1993, 1990) and Pierre Bourdieu (1984). The second moves away from using the term 'subculture' altogether, to employ a variety of alternatives including 'club cultures' (Redhead, 1997; Thornton, 1995), 'tribes' and 'neo-tribes' (Ueno, 2003; Malbon, 1999; Bennett, 2000, 1999; after Maffesoli, 1996), 'channels' and 'subchannels' (Singh, 2000), 'temporary sub-stream networks' (Weinzierl, 2000), 'lifestyles' (Shields, 1992; Chaney, 1996; Jenkins, 1983) and 'scenes' (Harris, 2000; Straw, 1991).

The proliferation of alternative terms used to describe 'sub-cultural' social groupings in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century has complicated the field of post-subcultural study (Hodkinson, 2002). Whilst Muggleton and Weinzierl (2003) insist that these different concepts are not necessarily incompatible as they often refer to

different aspects of social reality, Hodkinson (2003) highlights scholars' lack of clarity regarding the similarities and differences between each new term.<sup>15</sup> In the remaining part of this chapter I explore the work of scholars who seek to re-work or replace the theoretical notion of 'subculture' as established by the former University of Birmingham's CCCS in the 1970s. The diversity of new concepts and terms used to refer to contemporary social groupings has prompted the selection of specific scholars' work that represent significant shifts in the theoretical understanding of subcultures, as well as those that focus particularly on contemporary dance music cultures.

#### **1.4 The postmodernist take-over: fluidity, fragmentation and the neo-tribe**

In the article entitled *The Post-subculturalist* (1997), Muggleton considers the implications of postmodernism for subcultural theory, and in particular, for 'spectacular' subcultural style by presenting a theoretical model of a postmodern (and modern) subculture.<sup>16</sup> In this article, which was initially published in Redhead, Wynne and O'Conner's edited collection, *The Club Cultures Reader* (1997), Muggleton describes the need for additional empirical research to further illuminate his preliminary theorisation of 'postmodern' subcultures, which he goes on to provide in his sole-authored text *Inside Subculture: the Postmodern Meaning of Style* (2000) (see section 1.5).

With reference to postmodernist scholars, such as Kasier *et al* (1991), Kroker and Cook (1991), Jameson (1991) and Connor (1990), Muggleton (1997) describes changes that have taken place with regards to style in postmodernity. He describes postmodernist fashion as providing the consumer choice from an ever-increasing 'supermarket of styles' (Polhemus, 1997, 1995). In contrast to functional, predictable, uniform and 'massified' 'modernist' style, 'postmodern' fashion is fragmented, individualised and eclectic. Muggleton (1997) suggests that such a postmodern merging of stylistic codes that, in modernity, were strictly demarcated along traditional lines of class, gender and ethnicity, signals a breaking down of boundaries between cultural spheres, as well as within cultural collectivities. Whereas subcultural theorists describe modernity as an era of clearly differentiated yet internally

homogenous groups, postmodernism encourages internal fragmentation through a drive for stylistic heterogeneity and individualisation. In an increasing proliferation of ever-fragmenting and hybridized fashions Muggleton depicts postmodern subculturalists engaging in a 'cannibalistic orgy of cross-fertilization, destroying their own internal boundaries through the very act of expansion' (Muggleton, 1997: 177).

Muggleton (1997) also considers the consequent rapid development and close inter-relationship of postmodern subcultures of the 1980s and 1990s. He describes postmodern individuals as moving from one social group to another freely, leaving the need for 'boundary maintenance' between subcultures negligible. This concept is of particular interest to research in dance music club cultures as scholars, such as Malbon (1999) and Thornton (1995), cite the fragmentation of sub-genres of dance music as the reason why they fail to differentiate between club cultural groupings (see Chapter Two). In 1979 Hebdige defined 'spectacular style' as 'the communication of significant difference' (in Muggleton, 1997: 181) from other subcultures or the 'dominant mainstream'. However, in postmodernity scholars Connor (1990) and Beezer (1992) question whether the concept of subculture is still relevant 'for it maintains its specificity with something to define it against' (Muggleton, 1997: 181). Furthermore, Muggleton suggests that the fragmentation of collective identities may continue to such an extent that identities become more individualistic rather than subcultural. This approach is distinct from that of Thornton (1995) who describes the imposition of new modes of differentiation by club-goers through alternative and shifting hierarchies between the 'hip' and the 'mainstream' (see Chapter Two).

The collapse of boundaries between subcultural groups is also discussed by sociologist Bennett (2000, 1999) with particular reference to dance music club cultures. He argues that the term 'subculture' is redundant in contemporary society due to the rigid lines of division it imposes over forms of sociation, which he describes as more fleeting than this term allows for. In line with Muggleton's (1997) writings on post-subcultures, Bennett (1999) asserts that contemporary social groupings are often unstable and shifting. He uses Shields' concept of the 'postmodern persona' where each individual has multiple identifications and the notion of 'a self ...can no longer be simplistically theorized as unified' (Shields in Bennett, 1999: 605), to describe how in contemporary society the group or

‘subculture’ is no longer a central focus for an individual. It is rather one of several foci or ‘sites’ within which an individual can occupy or live out a particular temporal role before relocating to an alternative site (Bennett, 1999). The notion of fluidity between dance music cultures in particular is echoed by Ueno who describes these groups as having ‘no absolute or universal belonging but many overlaps and interconnections’ (2003: 108). However, Ueno, unlike Bennett (1999), is careful to distance himself from postmodernist interpretations of fluidity as mere eclecticism or cynicism to emphasise the value of a sense of belonging that provides individuals with an empowering ‘tribal solidarity’ (2003: 108).

Ueno (2003) and Bennett (1999) use the term ‘neo-tribe’ (after Maffesoli, 1996), as an alternative concept to ‘subculture’, to describe social groupings that are based on common beliefs, tastes and styles as demonstrated through consumption. Within a ‘tribe’ individuals identify with others by observing shared ‘personas’ (Maffesoli, 1996), which can be revealed through sensibilities of clothing style and musical taste (Bennett, 1999). Whilst subcultural theorists described a fixed homological relationship between musical taste and visual style, Bennett (1999) proposes that within contemporary neo-tribal social groupings, such as within dance music club cultures, there is a less rigidly defined relationship. He substantiates this statement with reference to an interview with an unnamed individual who discusses his experiences of listening to several genres of music from rock, punk and dance music in his hometown.<sup>17</sup> The interviewee comments on his group of friends being ‘leather clad rockers’ yet having an interest in listening to ‘dance music’ by groups in the category of ‘band house’ (Reynolds, 1998), for example Leftfield and The Chemical Brothers.

While Bennett’s (1999) empirical evidence demonstrates a degree of fluidity between musical and taste sensibilities I argue that it does not demonstrate the free mixing of visual and musical styles that he describes as characteristic of the neo-tribe. The ‘bands’ mentioned by the interviewee are notably positioned closer to rock genres, by their use of heavy metal guitar sounds, than House, Trance, Drum ‘n’ Bass or Techno producers. In addition Hall’s study (2002) of Techno and House clubs in London in the early 2000s reveals clear similarities in style displayed and music played at singular club events, and clear stylistic differences between these groupings. In



*Clubbing: Dancing, Ecstasy and Vitality* (1999) Malbon also describes a lack of diversity in social groupings within London's dance music club culture.<sup>18</sup>

Bennett describes club goers as having 'multiple memberships' of different 'dance club' groupings and stresses the fluid and performative nature of late modern identity by stating that these 'different sites of collective expression...[allow club-goers to] reconstruct themselves accordingly' (1999: 606). In his mid 1990s ethnographic study of the urban dance scene in Newcastle, Bennett identifies an increasing eclecticism in contemporary modes of music consumption, which mirror current dance music compositional sensibilities of appropriation and reassembly of 'stylistically diffuse hooks, riffs and melodic phrases' (Bennett, 1999: 610). By discussing the club event, 'Pigbag', Bennett describes how dance clubs in Newcastle now offer several spaces in one club to listen to diverse forms of contemporary dance music such as 'hip hop and jazz...singing sort of house music...the more housey end of techno music with sort of trancey techno' (sic, Debbie in Bennett, 1999: 611). Bennett asserts that these findings define contemporary clubbing as a series of fragmented, temporal experiences where an 'emphatic sociality'<sup>19</sup> allows for a fluidity of lifestyle 'sites and strategies'<sup>20</sup> (Chaney in Bennett, 1999: 608). Whilst this quote does reveal links between some musical styles under the category of dance music it does not provide detailed evidence of Bennett's inferred free interchange of different musical and visual styles at contemporary dance music club events.

It is important to acknowledge that dance music clubs are increasingly offering several *related* musical styles within one event, with some DJs employing the notion of a 'musical journey' through several *related* dance music styles in one night (DJ Lizzie Curious, 2004); and that there has been an increase in 'borrowing' between styles during the production process (Rietveld, 1998). However, as discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis, some sub-genres are more closely related within club culture than others. Within a Drum 'n' Bass event a secondary club space may offer Breaks, Hip Hop or Hard House but would not play Deep House music. Some Hard House events will feature Trance records and have a Funky House room for club goers to 'chill out' but would not have an Electro space. A Techno event may play Electro but would not commonly offer a space for Drum 'n' Bass. From an understanding that some sub-genres of electronic dance music are more closely 'related' than others, it is possible

to begin to understand the affiliation between some club cultural groups and the disassociations of some from others. This argument will be developed further in Chapter Three of this thesis.

### **1.5 Re-thinking postmodernist subcultures**

Whilst some scholars, for example Ueno (2003) and Bennett (2000, 1999), seek new terms to replace 'subculture', Muggleton (2000, 1997) seeks to re-work the concept to reflect changes in contemporary society. In the text *Inside Subculture: the Postmodern Meaning of Style* (2000), he clearly outlines the intention to create two 'ideal types' (a term taken from Weberian sociology) of the 'modern' and 'postmodern' subculturalist, which will then be used for fieldwork studies.<sup>21</sup> Muggleton stresses that the naming of two 'types' is a process he undertakes to formulate a 'conceptual ordering framework' from which he will proceed to analyse empirically derived data to conclude the extent to which contemporary subcultures display a postmodern sensibility. He is quick to acknowledge that these 'types' 'cannot be found in any pure form in any one subculturalist' (2000: 15).

Following analysis of fieldwork data gathered from interviews with a number of youths with various subcultural affiliations Muggleton (2000) concludes that contemporary subculturalists display a number of postmodernist characteristics including a 'fragmented, heterogeneous and individualistic stylistic identification' (2000: 158). However, there is no evidence for some of the more excessive claims that theories of the postmodern may infer as Muggleton (2000) argues that whilst subculturalists stress the importance of fluidity and movement of a subculture, there is no evidence that members are rapidly employing and then discarding of a number of discrete styles in rapid succession. These findings support my assertion that whilst the relationships between contemporary club cultures are complex and inter-related, it is possible to identify specific networks of identity-based associations and distinctions between dance music clubbing crowds (see Chapter Three). Muggleton (2000) also refutes claims of a postmodernist celebration of subcultural inauthenticity and describes how subculturalist sensibilities appear to be 'a combination of a modernist depth model of reality and a postmodern emphasis on hybridity and diversity' (2000:

158).

The contribution of Muggleton's work, which attempts to promote a more nuanced reading of contemporary subcultures than some research of this period (see Chapter Two for a more detailed discussion of Redhead's early 1990s work on club cultures), has been somewhat overshadowed. Literature that makes reference to Muggleton's (2000, 1997) research (for example Gelder, 2005; Hodkinson, 2002) often fails to acknowledge that his descriptions of a postmodern subculturalist were a theoretical exercise from which he went on to temper claims of a postmodernist 'take over' through an analysis of his empirical research. Gelder (2005) notes that Muggleton's statements relating to characteristics of fluidity and change apparent in 'postmodern' subcultures is reminiscent of John Irwin's work in *Scenes* almost thirty years earlier. This critique fails to acknowledge that Muggleton (2000) is not claiming to reveal something anew as he openly disputes CCCS notions of subcultural stasis and rigidity agreeing that 'constant change and flux have been endemic to the universe of youth subcultures' (Osgerby in Muggleton, 2000: 50), and suggesting that 'postmodernism / postmodernity entails an intensification of these aesthetic characteristics which have always been present in the development of subcultures' (Muggleton, 2000: 50).

In *Goth: Identity, Style and Subculture* (2002) Hodkinson criticises the rapid proliferation of alternative terms for 'subculture' that has occurred in the early 2000s: 'the current enthusiasm for coining more and more alternatives seems liable only to further complicate things' (2002: 23). In response, he calls for a greater specificity when analysing youth cultural practices, warning against the tendency to apply single concepts in a wide variety of contexts. With reference to substantial empirical research within the Goth scene, Hodkinson (2002) proposes a more relevant, workable and up-to-date understanding of the CCCS concept of subculture that is no longer associated with resistance, problem-solving or class conflict. However, he is also cautious of post-subcultural (or postmodern) theorists' over-emphasis on fluidity and ephemerality. Hodkinson (2002) advocates a notion of subculture that is defined by cultural substance in relation to levels of commitment to the subculture, consistent distinctiveness of the social group, productive and organisational autonomy from broader social groups and subculturalists' subjective perceptions of group belonging.

CCCS theorists' descriptions of subcultures as fixed, bounded and homological structures do not account for the varying levels of consistency and commitment that Hodkinson (2002) observes as present within the Goth subculture. He describes notable differences in the regularity with which members will wear specific clothing and hairstyles that represent the Goth style, as some members will get 'gothed up' every time they leave the house whilst others only dress in this manner for social events. In addition, there is a degree of fluidity in and out of the subculture, which includes members having social contact with other subcultural participants at mixed alternative or rock-based music events. The style of clothing and hairstyle worn by members of the subculture also demonstrates a level of internal diversity and dynamism, rather than stasis and conformity.

Hodkinson's (2002) interviewees also place value on individuality and creative expression, often finding their own style by drawing on a range of influences: 'there's very rarely two people look exactly the same...you take things from everywhere' (sic, Martin in Hodkinson, 2003: 137). Another informant identifies several specific sub-styles within Goth subculture: 'you get the Sisters...goths and the cobwebby goths, or cyber goths...and then if you are like us you're stuck in the middle' (Martin in Hodkinson, 2003: 137). This aspect of his research demonstrates that subcultural individuality is limited by, and dependent on, the values and characteristics of the subculture itself. Whilst Hodkinson (2002) draws the readers' attention to the value placed on individuality and creativity by members of the subculture he concludes that overall there is a consistent *distinctiveness* to the range of values and tastes exhibited. He identifies two stylistic themes as relatively consistent within Goth subculture across differing locations and time periods. The first is a valuing of 'darkness', which is shown in the colour and style of clothing worn and in the 'gloomy' lyrics of songs by Goth bands. The second is the display of particular types of femininity through unisex use of make-up, and clothing using lace, PVC, fishnet and mesh materials. These consistent aspects of Goth style allow members to be easily recognised both by insiders and outsiders of the subculture and enable Hodkinson (2002) to make legitimate claims for contemporary subcultural substance. This aspect of his work demonstrates a welcome move away from postmodernist claims of extreme stylistic eclecticism in contemporary subcultures. However, Hodkinson's (2002) limited focus on visual style, with additional references to musical atmosphere or lyric content, as

the defining factors for diagnosing subcultural value, fails to acknowledge how the actions of the body, including dance movement, may make an important contribution to the construction and performance of subcultural identities.

Hodkinson's (2002) research makes a significant contribution to understanding the relationships between subcultural groupings in contemporary society. Members of the Goth subculture have a clear, substantive sense of group identity that lead to strong affiliations with insiders, and distinctions with those regarded as outsiders. A strong sense of subjective affiliation is combined with a commitment to the subcultural group, demonstrated by a substantive involvement in activities related to the subculture such as attending events, buying music and involvement in fanzines and specialist website forums. Hodkinson includes direct comments from his informants to clearly demonstrate the importance of belonging to the Goth subculture for their sense of self: 'it's how you are. The way you dress, the music you listen to influences...other things' (Susan in Hodkinson, 2003: 145). These findings are in contrast to descriptions of participants in dance music club cultures by scholar Ueno (2003). Referring to the work of Grossberg (1996) who, following Giorgio Agamben, discusses the notion that group belonging, community and solidarity can exist without being anchored in a particular identity: 'the belonging without identity' (Grossberg in Ueno, 2003: 107), Ueno argues that individuals within dance music cultures in Tokyo value the feeling of belonging, rather than belonging to a particular group. In this thesis I argue that collective identities are constructed and performed through the Drum 'n' Bass dancing body, which, in line with Hodkinson (2002), demonstrates the existence of substantive subcultural groupings within this club culture. As the performance of specific collective identities in Drum 'n' Bass club culture are articulated in relation to perceptions of race and class the following section examines writings in post-subcultural studies that consider these identity categories, and elements of subcultural style that evoke them.

## **1.6 New directions in post-subcultural studies**

Martina Böse (2003) considers the position of racial and class-based identities in post-subcultural accounts of contemporary social groupings. Drawing on the work of

Gilroy (1993), she highlights the lack of attention given to the relationship between race and class in subcultural analysis, which she attributes to the preoccupation of CCCS scholars with white working class [male] youths. 'Blackness' featured in subcultural accounts only in reference to the influence of African-Caribbean music in *white* subcultures, and black youths, like women, did not form a significant part of CCCS writings. Whilst some subcultures, such as mods and skinheads, have been described as sympathetic, or indifferent, to black youth, Gilroy and Lawrence (1988) have noted how perceptions of black 'cool' employed by white youths, was predicated on romantic imagery that was underpinned by a racist common sense: the image black people as 'by nature happy-go-lucky, colourful, rhythmic and amoral' (Gilroy and Lawrence in Böse, 2003: 168). In addition, she notes how Hall's (*et al*, [1976], 2000) and Stanley Cohen's (1972) descriptions of the moral panic surrounding various subcultural groups who were depicted in the media as 'folk devils', fail to acknowledge the potentially racial nature of this characterisation: 'moral panics about the activities of mainly White, working class male youths did not accidentally arise just at the time when black cultural forms were being introduced into White subcultures' (Böse: 2003: 169).

Whilst Böse (2003) highlights the absence of black youth from 'classical' accounts of youth subcultures, she also critiques contemporary post-subcultural writings that dismiss the resistive potential of subcultures as well as the need to account for social stratification. She refers to Muggleton (2000) who describes how postmodernist style loses its capacity for 'resistance' through endless reinvention: 'the outward appearance of rebellion becomes merely another mode of fashion' (Muggleton in Böse, 2003: 169). In Muggleton's (2000) postmodern subculture a rupture exists between social context and subcultural response, prompting descriptions of a lack of "authenticity", defined 'where inception is rooted in particular socio-temporal contexts and tied to underlying structural relations' (Muggleton in Böse, 2003: 169). Whilst some scholars have questioned the importance of such authenticity, 'who is real? Who is a replicant? Who cares? Enjoy' (Polhemus in Bose, 2003: 170), Böse recognises that post-subculturalist descriptions of globalised 'style surfing' (Polhemus, 1997), and 'sartorial mobility' (Muggleton, 2000), fail to take account of social stratifications that are present in contemporary society as 'this pleasure is reserved for privileged sections of dominant cultural groups' (Böse, 2003: 170).

Böse (2003) argues for a move away from postmodern descriptions of subcultural consumption as simplistic, superficial and beyond meaning, to an acknowledgement that any interpretation of subcultural symbols will be dependent on their socio-temporal context. She refers to the 'semiotic baggage of style' that continues to be associated with particular styles of dress and hairstyle and notes that these often play on particular cultural stereotypes. Referring to an example where an informant discusses how having dreadlocks as a hairstyle often leads observers to assume that she smokes marijuana, Böse (2003) demonstrates how style choice, against a background of cultural stereotyping, carries significant political meaning. She also discusses how another black informant actively uses his dreadlocks as a marketing tool to encourage black customers into his Afro-Caribbean shop, acknowledging that this particular style is recognised as 'the ultimate expression of Blackness' (anonymous informant in Böse, 2003: 173). These examples provide convincing counter-arguments to postmodern conceptions of subcultural style that fail to recognise the existence of 'structuring relations of class, gender, ethnicity or even the age span of youth' (Muggleton, 1997: 199).

The importance of social class in an analysis of access to, and membership of, specific subcultures is highlighted by Bose (2003). She notes how social class is a topic which has proved a 'no-go area' within post-subcultural writings on youth sociality following a distancing from the writings of the CCCS. Previous club cultural scholars Malbon (1999) and Thornton (1995) have acknowledged the existence of particular structures of exclusion and stratification in the application of door entry policies to some night clubs. However, they also describe social distinctions as becoming irrelevant once participants are inside the venue (and therefore irrelevant to the construction and performance of subcultural identities in this particular context of consumption). In contrast, Böse's (2003) empirical research in Manchester's club scene demonstrates how social class is an important factor that limits participation in particular sub/club cultural activities for African British and Caribbean British people. Her informants describe how socio-economic factors limited their participation in the clubbing scene, for example, the lack of a local black radio station is described by them as a 'class problem'.<sup>22</sup> In addition, one informant describes the existence of

specific sub-scenes within Manchester's club cultures that are perceived to be demarcated along lines of class as well as race:

there are two distinct hip hop scenes here. There is a Black hip hop scene and there is a White surfer hip hop scene. It's a class thing as well as – as much as colour it's a class thing. And just happens to be that in Manchester most of the...class that most Black people are in, is the underclass! And those who aren't don't really seem to go out!

Anonymous informant in Böse, 2003: 177

Böse's (2003) research moves away from postmodernist interpretations of subcultures to reintroduce discussion of the power relations linked to race and class, the latter of which was a central concern of CCCS work on subcultures. These aspects of subcultural identity are posited as integral to understanding the lifestyle choices and practices of young people in contemporary society. Böse is careful not to conclude that subcultural styles are a reaction to shared material conditions of existence but instead argues for further research into the experiences of those groups who have been excluded from previous subcultural accounts: 'it might again be time to look beyond conspicuous styles and study absences' (2003: 178). Scholars Carrington and Wilson (2004) provide additional support for this argument as they note the lack of scholarly attention given to matters of social inequality, particularly in writings focusing on club and rave culture of the late 1980s and 1990s, due to a tendency to over-emphasise contemporary sociality as postmodern and hyper-individualised.

Whilst this work provides support for the focus of my research in Drum 'n' Bass club culture, Böse (2003) fails to move beyond a focus on the interpretation of visual *style* to consider other aspects of subcultural practice such as dance and movement practices (although she does acknowledge the complex structures of meaning that accompany the use of specific cultural symbols, whilst considering their particular socio-economic, socio-temporal and socio-political context). While Böse (2003) does not investigate the consequences of increasingly globalised and hybridised forms of culture for subcultural theory in detail, she does warn against a postmodernist reduction of key aspects of identity such as 'blackness' and 'working class' to their signifying value through the de-politicization and de-contextualisation of cultural artefacts. Böse's (2003) research does not contribute significantly to debates



regarding the construction, or performance, of contemporary subcultural identities, but it does reinstate race and class experience at the centre of sub / club cultural criticism. A revised theoretical interest in these aspects of identity is also affirmed by Carrington and Wilson (2004) who note that whilst post-subcultural scholars' rejection of classical approaches to studying subcultures has enabled a more complex understanding to emerge of how contemporary social groups are organised, it has failed to acknowledge how participation in, for example, particular club cultures is led by racial and class based affiliations and distinctions.

Carrington and Wilson's (2004) research is focused particularly on club and rave culture, which they describe as responsible for a significant shift in theoretical understanding of youth sociality during the late 1980s and 1990s. Whilst this work appears to mistakenly infer that post-subculturalist theorists Muggleton (2000) and Miles (2000) use dance music as their focus, it provides an effective review of other scholars who have worked in this area in relation to subcultural and post-subcultural theory. Carrington and Wilson (2004) discuss how postmodernism has refocused subcultural theory onto patterns of lifestyle and consumption, and moved discussion away from discourse relating to race and class identities. They assert that whilst the notion of a clear and direct homological fit between style and social location is weaker than early CCCS accounts claimed 'contemporary dance cultures do exhibit patterns of class and racial differentiation that necessitate some form of materialist understanding' (Carrington and Wilson, 2004: 78). Carrington and Wilson's argument for the need to re-centre race and class within contemporary accounts of dance music cultures is particularly pertinent to this study in Drum 'n' Bass club culture as 'there is still a paucity of sociologically informed accounts that have mapped the racial signification of dance music cultures' (Carrington & Wilson, 2004: 77).

## **1.7 Conclusions**

In this chapter I have traced the development of subcultural theory from its inception in the United States of America in the 1940s, through the development of British subcultural theory in the 1970s, to the diverse number of contemporary post-

subcultural theories of the early twenty-first century. During this period theorists have sought to explain the ways in which sub-cultural groups, in particular those which are predominantly associated with young people, are formed within society and, increasingly, to account for the affiliations and distinctions between a burgeoning number of them. As Gelder (2005) notes, ‘the question of how distinct or how ‘deviant’ subcultures actually are these days preoccupies subcultural studies’ (2005: 11).

The Chicago School scholars posit subcultures as distinct forms of sociality associated with criminality and deviance, whereas researchers from the Birmingham School, with close links to the discipline of British Cultural Studies, describe subcultural distinctions as indicative of a refusal of mass cultural forms and social ‘incorporation’ (Gelder, 2005). Some contemporary post-subcultural writers have emphasized the heterogeneity, transience and ‘porousness’ of contemporary youth sociality, whilst others have tempered these claims with descriptions of subcultural substance, autonomy and cultural distinctiveness. In Chapter Three of this thesis I contribute to this discourse by examining the inter-relationship of sub-genres of dance music using intertextual genre theory, from which I propose a new approach to the trope of subculture. In line with Carrington and Wilson (2004) I argue that participation in club cultures is led by identity based associations, which are an integral part of their generic structure. I use these findings to counter post-subcultural and club cultural scholars’ descriptions of the fluidity and ephemerality of dance music club cultures.

Much of the research on subcultures has privileged ‘style’, in the form of clothing, hairstyles and accessories, as the modality through which ‘difference’ from and ‘belonging’ to, or deviancy, is displayed or recognised. CCCS scholars employ a structuralist semiotic reading of visual style, whereas Hebdige’s (1979) research on the punk subculture signals the beginning of a period influenced by poststructuralism and postmodernism: ‘instead of arriving at the point where we can make sense of style, we have reached the very place where meaning evaporates’ (2005 [1979]: 117). These discussions of subcultural style have excluded any description of bodily movement. Whilst dancing has frequently been described as one of the main activities practiced by subculturalists, from taxi-dancers of the 1920s (Cressey, 1932), to the night clubs, beach parties or raves of the 1990s and 2000s (for example Ueno, 2003;

Hodkinson, 2002), there is a lack of detailed descriptions of the dance practice. In this thesis I argue that the dancing body is integral to the construction and performance of (dance) club cultural identities. In the following chapter I explore the work of scholars who are located across a range of disciplines but who all write specifically about *dance* music club cultures. I investigate whether the dancing body is provided the prominence the title of the musical style begets. In addition, a review of this body of work identifies key themes and highlights important omissions that have shaped the focus of this research.<sup>23</sup>

## Chapter One Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> The Chicago School referred to the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago in the United States of America that dominated sociological theory and practice until the mid 1930s.
- <sup>2</sup> Taxi-dancer is a term used to refer to women who worked in Chicago's dancehalls as private dance partners for male clients.
- <sup>3</sup> Cohen studied sociology at Harvard University but joined the Department of Criminal Justice at Indiana University (Gelder, 2005).
- <sup>4</sup> Cohen's (1972) research focused particularly on communities located in the East End of London.
- <sup>5</sup> The use of the expression 'magically' or symbolically resolved is used by Cohen *et al* to indicate the non-productive outcome of forms of subcultural resistance, which 'thus fail to pose an alternative, potentially counter hegemonic solution' (Clarke, 1975: 189).
- <sup>6</sup> The continued relevance of unified class categories has been challenged in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries by cultural studies scholars such as Frow (1995) (see Chapter Four).
- <sup>7</sup> Willis' (1977) study reveals how working class school boys differentiate themselves from middle class institutional values, which leads them to develop a 'counter-school culture' that ultimately condemns them to menial jobs on leaving school, and thus perpetuates pre-existing class inequalities.
- <sup>8</sup> This edited collection was first published in 1975 by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (University of Birmingham) as *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* no.7/8.
- <sup>9</sup> The influence of anthropology on the development of subcultural theory is again apparent in Hebdige's citation of Hawke's (1977) anthropological definition of the term 'bricolage' (Hebdige, [1979], 2005: 126).
- <sup>10</sup> This view is also stated in post-subculturalist critiques of the Birmingham School by scholars such as Muggleton and Weinzierl (2003).
- <sup>11</sup> Cohen (1980) discusses Hebdige's particular interpretation of punk's use of the swastika symbol as only employed as meta-language to outrage and shock, rather than as support for the Fascist movement or far-right politics. He critiques the little detail that Hebdige provides about how the symbol is worn and questions why he arrives at his conclusions (that are in direct contrast to findings regarding working class attitudes to immigration).
- <sup>12</sup> McRobbie (and later authors such as Thornton, 1995) also critique the sole focus of the CCCS research on male youth subcultural practices. McRobbie and Garber's joint authored paper *Girls and Subcultures*, which was published as part of Hall and Jefferson's *Resistance Through Rituals* (1975) edited collection, was an attempt to redress this balance and has been followed by several other works that focus particularly on the subcultural practices of girls and women (for example McRobbie, 1991, 1989, 1984).
- <sup>13</sup> Later studies of particular youth subcultures, such as snowboarders (Humphreys, 1997) and windsurfers (Wheaton, 2000), clearly demonstrate a consumerist nature. The work of Thornton (1995) also identifies the use of different forms of media in the creation and promotion of subcultures.
- <sup>14</sup> Paul Willis's accounts (for example 1978, 1977) are acknowledged by these scholars (and Cohen, S. 1980) as an exception through the use of ethnographic techniques.
- <sup>15</sup> This is exemplified by Shields (1992) who uses the terms tribe, bünde, lifestyle and subculture interchangeably (Hodkinson, 2003).
- <sup>16</sup> The term 'spectacular subculture' is a direct reference to CCCS theorists to evoke their body of work.

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- <sup>17</sup> Bennett's (1999) study of club cultures is limited in this respect. A wider selection of towns and cities would have enhanced the potential representativeness of this ethnographic research.
- <sup>18</sup> However, Malbon (1999) does use Maffesoli's concept of the 'neo-tribe' in his discussion of club culture (see Chapter Two).
- <sup>19</sup> This term suggests a form of sociality that is based upon 'ambiences, feelings and emotions' (Maffesoli, 1996: 11) rather than a rationalised social self (Bennett, 1999).
- <sup>20</sup> The term 'lifestyle' is used by Chaney (1994) to refer to the sensibilities employed by an individual when choosing certain commodities and consumption patterns, and how these are used as a mode of personal expression.
- <sup>21</sup> This intention is also outlined in the introduction to the 1997 article *The Post-subculturalist*.
- <sup>22</sup> The term 'black' is taken from Böse's article, where she uses it to refer to people of African British or Caribbean British ethnic heritage. The problematic nature of this term will be discussed further in Chapter Four of this thesis.
- <sup>23</sup> Whilst Bennett (1999), Carrington and Wilson (2004) and Böse (2003) have all used dance music as their focus, I have included discussion of their research in this chapter due to their contribution to the theorisation of youth cultural groupings.

## Chapter Two

### Club culture is the new subculture

#### 2.1 Introduction

The term ‘clubbing’ is used to describe the social practice of attending nightclubs where participants listen and dance to a style of music that is referred to as ‘dance music’.<sup>1</sup> Dance music club cultures have become a central focus for theorists from a range of disciplines since the early 1990s following the development of the ‘dance music’ club scene from the late 1980s (see Chapter Three for a detailed exploration of this period). As Carrington and Wilson note, ‘for sociologists who study youth...developments in dance music signified a shift not only in the way those subcultures were organized, but also in what subcultural participation meant for young people’ (2004: 65). Club cultural studies have, therefore, not only provided information regarding this burgeoning phenomenon but have enabled a greater understanding of youth sociality at the end of the twentieth, and beginning of the twenty-first centuries.<sup>2</sup> Club cultural accounts have mirrored approaches in, and contributed to the development of, subcultural and post-subcultural theories that were discussed in Chapter One of this thesis. Early scholars, such as Redhead (*et al.*, 1993), use postmodernist theory to characterise participation in club events as narcissistic, depthless and superficial. However, later writing has located new meaning and significance in club cultural practices with some scholars focusing, as I do in this thesis, on the construction and performance of identity.

Despite club cultural scholars’ acknowledgement of the centrality of dance to the spaces and experiences of ‘dance music’ clubbing, few examine the movement practices in detail. In this chapter I explore and critique previous club cultural literature in order to identify common approaches to the dancing body. As part of this investigation I review how these scholars have used fieldwork data as a primary source for their research. In addition, I examine how scholars describe the ways in which clubbers associate themselves with particular groups within club culture and how they distinguish themselves from others. In Chapter Four of this thesis I explore how this process relates to the construction of personal and collective identities. In Chapter Three I argue that clubbers’ affiliations and distinctions are structured by sub-genres of dance music, which

highlight the existence of distinct areas of club culture that demand specific and individualised study. Whilst noting the rapid development of sub-genres of dance music since the late 1980s, previous club cultural scholars do not differentiate between them.<sup>3</sup> Their conflicting and contradictory accounts demonstrate the need for future scholars to provide greater specificity when discussing particular areas of club culture. In the first part of this chapter I examine a range of literature in club cultural studies from early accounts such as Redhead (*et al.*, 1993) to contemporary writers, with a particular focus on the issues noted above. In the second part of this chapter I review the work of Pini (2001), Malbon (1999) and Thornton (1995) in detail as these scholars' texts contribute significantly to each of these areas, and constitute the most substantial and influential academic research within club culture to date.

## **2.2 Postmodern approaches to contemporary 'dance music' cultures: trance-dance, transcendence and the absent [dancing] body**

Early academic writing on club culture focuses upon the Acid House phenomenon that developed in the UK in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It was this style of dance music that became associated with illegal 'rave' events held at unlicensed, industrial and subsequently rural venues from 1989 (for further discussion of the development of music styles and their attendant club cultures see Chapter Three). Scholars such as Leask (1996), Gore (1995), Jordon (1995), Redhead (1993), Rietveld (1993) and Melechi (1993) discuss the expanding dance music club and rave culture as characteristic of late twentieth century postmodern society and, as such, typified by depthlessness, superficiality and a loss of individual subjectivity. However, despite describing club-goers' *loss* of identity, many of these writers comprehensively document the role of significant club events, DJs, producers and musical tracks of this time and, thus, bring discussions of identity to the fore (Pini, 2001).

In *Rave Off: Politics and Deviance in Contemporary Youth Cultures* (Redhead *et al.*, 1993) scholars describe the Acid House club and rave scene as a form of 'mass disappearance', constituting a postmodern collapse of meaning. Melechi (1993) discusses how the early British Acid House scene initially developed as a result of British holiday

makers visiting the Spanish island of Ibiza during the mid 1980s. At this time tourists from the United Kingdom were visiting the resort of San Antonio, where they could experience 'a self contained pocket of [UK] domestic culture, a home from home' (Melechi, 1993: 30). However, Ibiza Town, a resort on the other side of the island, offered a more 'cosmopolitan' experience with late opening night clubs such as Amnesia, Pasha and Manhattan's. At these venues British holiday makers were able to experience dancing for long periods of time, often assisted by the use of recreational drugs such as Ecstasy (MDMA or 3, 4 methylenedioxymethamphetamine). Club-goers are described by Melechi (1993) as experiencing a loss of cultural and self identity in an 'ecstasy of disappearance'. The dance floor is presented as a 'magical' space where holiday makers literally lose themselves in the dry ice to the Balearic mix (Melechi, 1993: 33).<sup>4</sup> Despite the use of the same term, Melechi's (1993) description of Acid House culture is in contrast to Phil Cohen's (1972) discussion of the 'magical' function of a subculture, as club culture of this period is presented as devoid of any [political] meaning.

Melechi (1993) tracks the development of the Acid House scene from Ibiza to Britain at the end of the summer of 1987. In November, Club Shoom was opened in London, which was modeled on Ibiza Town's Balearic clubs and advertised as an Ibiza reunion event. The success of Shoom prompted a rapid increase in the number of events in London and elsewhere in the UK that focused specifically on dance music and contributed significantly to the development of rave and club culture (Garratt, 1998). Melechi (1993) describes clubbers at Shoom engaging in a form of trance dance that induces a loss of subjective identity that he also describes as apparent in the Ibiza clubs. However, by describing the dance as an act of 'disappearance', Melechi (1993) avoids any detailed description of the movement. He contrasts trance movement practices with such diverse dance forms as breakdance and jiving, stating that whereas dance has been traditionally structured by the (male) gaze, trance dance is performed without audience observation. These descriptions are in contrast to empirical data collated during this research in Drum 'n' Bass club culture, where I have observed the performances of professional female dance troupes, as well as clubbers' own awareness of their dance and movement practices (see Chapters Seven and Eight).

Jordan (1995) also comments on a loss of individual subjectivity through dance, which he



describes particularly as occurring within rave events that became popular in the UK in early 1990s. The raver's perception of self is described as becoming *lost* into a larger 'collective body' of the 'rave machine'. Drawing upon the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1982), Jordan (1995) describes the practice of raving as a 'desiring machine', within which the rave crowd comes together to construct a metaphorical 'body without organs' (BwO). Rave participants desire to experience a feeling of 'collective delirium' through the BwO, and achieve this state through the use of trance dance. This experience constructs an undifferentiated self that supports the ravers' connections between parts of the assemblage (such as drugs to dance, dance to music and drugs to music).<sup>5</sup> Many contemporary club cultural writers since Jordan (1995) and Melechi (1993), for example Pini (2001) and Malbon (1999), also refer to a loss of the individual's sense of self that is induced by the disorientating effects of dancing, music and lighting effects on the club and rave dance floor. Pini (2001) describes clubbers losing subjectivity and merging into a collective body, which she compares to Haraway's (1991) feminist notion of the 'cyborg' (see section 2.6), whilst Malbon (1999) describes these sensations in club culture as moments of 'exstasis' (see section 2.5). Whilst these writers acknowledge the opportunity and clubbers' desire for individual loss of subjectivity they describe these moments as fleeting rather than consistent throughout each event.

The notion of trance dance as a non-interactive and non-virtuosic form is also described by Sommer (2001). However, she notes that this style of dance is more commonly associated with large scale rave, rather than smaller club events, thus indicating the importance of specifying the type of event studied.<sup>6</sup> In articles that document rave culture of the early 1990s, Gore (1997, 1995) and Jordon (1995) describe how the repetitive nature of trance dance allows ravers to lose their sense of subjectivity and to enter a trance-like state, which is particularly assisted by dancing with large numbers of people, and the use of recreational drugs such as Ecstasy (MDMA). Gore's approach is clearly aligned with the postmodernist writings of Melechi (1993) as she describes how 'since acid house, anonymity and impersonality...dominate the dance floor' (Gore, 1997: 63). Gore's ravers are 'no longer constituted as dancing subjects by the gaze of the (male?) spectator / other' (1997: 63), but transcend identity into 'the nothingness of asubjectivity and the atopia of the postmodern present' (1997: 60).

Contrary to Gore's (1997), Jordan's (1995) and Melechi's (1993) characterisations of trance dance at rave events as a purely internal performance experience, McCall's oral history of rave culture in Canada and North America describes participants as aware and appreciative of fellow dancers' movement practices: 'there is no audience at a rave - we all entertain each other' (Synapse in McCall, 2001: 3). In addition, Buckland's (2002) and Pini's (2001) accounts of clubbing describe participants as being acutely conscious of 'performing' for others whilst dancing. Melechi's account promotes an image of Acid House clubbers attempting to attain invisibility and appearing 'absent' throughout the dance event: 'a space where nobody is but everyone belongs' (1993: 32). However, this is in contrast to accounts that describe how participants display moments of intense interpersonal communication;

you'd have people in their own world doing that mad trance dancing, oblivious to everything else. But then you also had blokes coming up who were, like, "yeah all right!! Smile! Smile!" and hugging you.

Mark Moore in Reynolds, 1998: 39

Melechi (1993) also describes Acid House as celebrating the death of the 'scene' of dance for self-expression. Although the use of recreational drug Ecstasy (MDMA), club lighting effects, such as strobes, and dry ice may have physically prevented continued outward communication on the dance floor, this does not mean that the dance is no longer expressive of identity. Music journalist Garratt (1998) describes a lack of dancers' virtuosic display, but she attributes this to the lack of space on a crowded dance floor rather than lack of physical ability. Garratt (1998) also draws links between rave and club culture to the socio-political context of the late 1980s and early 1990s by stating that the Acid House and rave scene was about a generation, who had been denied a space in society, being able to express themselves. McCall also describes dancing at rave events as 'an outlet for self-expression' (2001: 74) and includes statements by ravers describing why the practice of dancing is important: 'It helps me express the way I feel, the music just flowing liquid to the bottom of your soul and right back out again' (Charlie in McCall, 2001: 78). In contemporary academic club cultural texts, scholars have also consistently described club and rave cultural practices as invested with meaning (Buckland, 2002; Hall, 2002; Bollen, 2001; Pini, 2001; Sommer, 2001; Malbon, 1999). However, these accounts are not always articulated as fully embodied movement

experiences as the specific dance practices that are integral to clubbing remain neglected. In this thesis I argue that the dance practices in Drum 'n' Bass club culture are integral to the performance of personal and collective identities.

Early club cultural accounts have described the dance as de-sexualised. Leask (1996) draws on the postmodernist writings of Baudrillard, and subsequently Melechi (1993), to characterize the dance as 'a solitary wilderness for the discovery of bodily sensations' (1996: 38). She describes the body in club culture as de-personalised and de-sexualised with club goers' focus remaining solely on an individual, interior experience rather than outward sexual display or exchange. This characterisation of the dancing body is also proposed by McRobbie (1994) and Rietveld (1993) when discussing the Acid House and rave period of the early 1990s. McRobbie (1994) describes the popular use of children's accessories during raves, such as dummies, ice lollies and whistles, as well as references to children's cartoons within musical tracks and in visual projections used at events. Both scholars attribute these child-like elements to a 'pre-sexual' or 'pre-Oedipal' stage that clubbers seek to regress to during the rave experience. McRobbie describes the existence of a childlike body pleasure ('polymorphous perversity') that she attributes to a 'text of anxiety' over fears of AIDS and other life pressures during this period (1994: 172). She proposes that rave culture is an avoidance of adult sexuality. However, this argument is challenged by Pini (2001) and Malbon (1999) who discuss the sexual nature of dance floor experience: 'some women clubbers experience clubbing as involving a level of often heightened sexualisation or sexual display' (Malbon, 1999: 45). The dance practices observed in Drum 'n' Bass club events also include sexualized movement material performed by some female clubbers (see Chapter Seven).

Similar to Melechi (1993), Leask (1996) also contrasts rave and club movement practices with earlier social dance forms such as jiving and breakdance, stating that club dance is not about exhibition and attracting a male gaze but about deflecting the gaze of others. Despite her descriptions of clubbers focusing upon an internal journey Leask (1996) describes 'Chippendale look-alikes' and 'babes' stripped down to their underwear on the contemporary club dance floor. The concern for body appearance and fashion is noted as a new phenomenon that she attributes to the growth of the club culture industry in the early 1990s. Leask continues to characterise participation in this culture as a 'ritual of

disappearance' (Melechi in Leask, 1996: 38) despite describing dancers as being very present on the dance floor: 'the most energetic dancing is performed by the "body beautiful brigade", by those who work out and are confident enough to *flaunt* their bodies' (Leask, 1996: 39, my emphasis). In this article Leask applies Melechi's findings on Acid House to club culture of the 1990s, omitting discussion of the changes he identifies in youth and club culture brought about by the death of Acid House post 1989. These contradictory statements support my argument for the need for scholars to recognize and acknowledge the diversity and complexity in contemporary club and rave culture by specifying the precise context of their research. In addition, Leask's article does not appear to be based on methodical ethnographic research and is extremely limited in source material, drawing solely on the writings of Melechi (1993) and Baudrillard (1984). This writer reinforces early characterisations of club culture as 'postmodern', whilst ignoring the complexities involved in club and rave culture, and in this classification.

In *This is our house: House Music, Cultural Spaces and Technology* (1998) Rietveld uses postmodernist theory to discuss the emerging role of the DJ as mediator between music producer and dance floor audience. Referring to the work of Foucault (1989), Baudrillard (1988) and Barthes (1977), Rietveld (1998) presents a postmodernist analysis of issues of representation, authenticity and authorship surrounding the production and consumption of electronic dance music. The DJ is presented as 'meta-author', re-using and combining parts of different texts, which are in turn reinterpreted through movements of the body on the dance floor. Rietveld (1998) describes a 'death of the author' (the producer) as texts (records/tracks) are continually faded and blended by the DJ, constituting an untying of the subject and potential loss of meaning. The prominent use of sampling by DJs provides further intertextuality and shifts of meaning that support this conceptualisation. Whilst I agree with Rietveld's characterisation of electronic dance music as intertextual (see Chapter Three), her descriptions of clubbers *lost* in an 'ecstatic bubble' perpetuate descriptions of club dance as instigating a postmodern *loss* of self. This is in clear contrast to my argument that clubbers' actively engage in the construction and performance of identity using racial and class-based imagery on the Drum 'n' Bass club dance floor (see Chapters Seven and Eight).

Reynolds (1998) and Gore (1997) acknowledge the centrality of the dance practice at club and rave events: ‘dancing...is the single most important element, if not the *raison d’être*, of rave culture’ (Gore, 1997: 52). However, neither writer provides significant description of the specific *dance* content. Gore’s movement descriptions, which are used to draw similarities between British rave trance dance and ‘freaking out’ to music in hippie culture of the 1960s, are limited to:

sinuous on-the-spot body movements with a focus on spinal vibrations or torso and pelvic contractions (which connect to the rhythm of breathing) while the arms are held aloft and perform wavy movements in moments of trance.

Gore, 1997: 54

In addition, Gore describes vague “‘dehumanized” movements of individual body parts (as in air punching or waving)’ and ‘whole body vibrations’ (1997: 64) as trance dance movement, stating that these actions mirror the faceless character of the dance music industry and, as such, defy identification. Music journalist Reynolds’s (1998) movement descriptions are also limited as they are often used to evoke the atmosphere of the scene rather than document or analyse the dance material:

One image sums up Castlemorton for me. A beautiful androgynous girl...is dancing on top of a van. Her fingers stab and slice, carving cryptograms in the dawn air, and her mouth is puckered in a pout of indescribable, sublime, impudence.

Reynolds, 1998: 139

Further descriptions of dance movement include images of ‘shadow boxing’ and descriptions of boys moulding their hands into cocked pistols ‘to let rip’ (Reynolds, 1998: 112). These metaphorical and poetic images of dance activity, rather than detailed analysis of movement content, are difficult to compare across club and rave culture and are based on the writer’s memory of personal experience rather than empirical research, making them potentially unstable. Reynolds (1998) describes club dance as the physical expression of ‘going mental’, which he defines as the spontaneous corporal result of combining loud forms of dance music and drugs such as Ecstasy (MDMA). However, this notion presupposes a lack of meaning and value in the dance, over and above the functional purpose of interpreting the music and releasing energy. The notion of

subcultural practice, including vernacular dance, as a social ‘safety valve’ can be argued to separate individuals’ identities and experiences within and outside of the specific context and, thus, reduce their significance and potential for change. This debate echoes that offered by scholars in Hall and Jefferson’s (1975) edited collection who note that working class subculturalists’ use of leisure time for ‘strategies of resistance’ were less politically productive. However, these scholars use of the term ‘political’ is defined through a Neo-Marxist model that focused on conflict between a subordinate working classes and a hegemonic dominant social order. When placed outside of this theoretical context the notion of ‘political significance’ is broadened. This theme will be explored further in relation to contemporary club culture literature later in this chapter.

The labelling of rave and club practices as essentially hedonistic in writings such as Gore (1997, 1995), Rietveld (1998, 1993), Jordon (1995), Melechi (1993) and Redhead (1993) has contributed to views of dance practices within club and rave culture as holding little value. In *Impossible Dance: Club Culture and Queer World-Making* Buckland (2002) investigates cultural prejudices that have located social dance practices as apolitical. Tracing a historical suspicion of the body, Buckland (2002) asserts that the Western Puritan-capitalist ethic has forged a deep division between work and leisure that has associated cultural ‘use value’ with those practices producing an end, and autotelic activities with indulgence and hedonism. Club cultural scholars’ use of postmodernist theory in this early period has further reduced the significance attributed to, and meaning located within, the clubbing / raving, dancing body.

Contemporary club cultural scholars have since moved discussion away from postmodernist notions of depthlessness and superficiality, to expose constructions of value and significance. A broadened notion of the ‘political’ as located outside the arena of government and within the realms of popular culture has prompted investigation of how politics of the body are constructed and contested within contemporary club cultures. Postmodernist thought has continued to be influential as ‘discourses on contemporary clubbing generally generate a picture of a fragmented, unfixed, postmodern world in which new fluid modes of sociality and figurations (gender, sexual, racial) are at least a possibility, if not an actuality’ (Thomas, 2003: 184). In an increasingly inter-disciplinary academic context, club cultural writers draw on the work of post-structuralist scholars,

such as Maffesoli (1995) and Butler (1992, 1990), to explore new fluid modes of sociality and identity in youth cultures.<sup>7</sup> For example, Gilbert and Pearson (1999) describe how the rave space provides an environment where alternative articulations of both masculinity and femininity are possible, Sommer (2001) presents the [House] club as offering dancers the opportunity to play with different identities and to ‘enact alternative human realities’ (Sommer, 2001: 83), Bollen (2001) investigates queer performativity on the gay and lesbian dance floors of Sydney, and Hall (2002) investigates moments of transgressive gender behaviour in London’s House and Techno clubs. The growth of dance studies research during the 1990s has prompted some of these scholars to look more closely at the dance practices within club and rave events.

### **2.3 Dance in contemporary club culture: writing bodies moving**

Sommer (2001) examines the dance practices observed in New York City’s contemporary club culture and, in contrast to previous club cultural literature (with the exception of Hall, 2002), focuses on one particular sub-genre of dance music that she refers to as ‘Underground-House’. Sommer’s conclusions contrast with that of early club cultural scholars as she states that the ‘Househeads’ goal is not to trance out and relinquish self-identity to the collective body but to maintain individuality and hit the zone through the ‘physical rapture of hard dancing’ rather than the use of recreational drugs such as Ecstasy (Sommer, 2001: 73). Her descriptions of dance style greatly differ from those of trance dance in accounts of rave and Acid House culture. Dancing to Underground-House is characterised as an ‘interactive, performative and improvisational’ practice (Sommer, 2001: 73) where the dancer strives to keep a sense of objectivity rather than experience a loss of subjectivity. Sommer’s account of the dance practices in House clubs of New York City are similar to Hall’s observations at Underground US House club events in London 2001, where dance is described as a participatory dance form with ‘a focus on social interaction, community celebration and sexual display’ (Hall, 2002: 114).

Rather than engaging in detailed description of the movement language, Sommer (2001) encourages the reader to create their own image of dance activity within the Underground-House club as she describes how movement is borrowed from fellow

dancers to mimic one another playfully (often with props such as a handkerchief, toilet roll, balloon or shirt) or created from material and characters from popular culture such as Kung Fu movies, circus, capoeira, video games, movies and advertisements (Sommer, 2001: 83). These descriptions are similar to that of Leask (1996) who states that dancing bodies within club culture are reminiscent of martial arts, boxing and robotics and Reynolds (1998) who likens rave and club dance to images of fighting. Sommer also describes a variety of different modes of dance used in the New York House club that create a balance between “zoning” and interactive dancing’ (2001: 81), which is similar to Pini’s (2001) and Malbon’s (1999) descriptions of clubbers’ shifting sense of collective and individual subjectivity.

Contemporary descriptions of dance movement practices within club culture, such as Sommer’s (2001) account of New York Underground-House clubs, address the dance practice as invested in meaning and revealing of social values and aspirations but remain lacking in specific movement description. Buckland (2002), who uses performance theory to investigate the creation of ‘queer life-worlds’ through dance practices within New York City during the 1990s, is an exception. An examination of dance movement by describing motifs and phrases of material with attention to action, space and dynamic, leads Buckland (2002) to acknowledge that there are distinct differences between the movement practices observed in differing dance clubs. Providing support to my argument in the introduction to this thesis, Buckland (2002) notes that club dance movement is determined by the musical genre.<sup>8</sup> For example, in the House music room at Octagon she describes dancers moving with ‘gracefully arched spines, twirling, jumping, or raising their arms in the air’ (Buckland, 2002: 62), whereas in the club’s second space, playing Hip Hop, men hold energy within their bodies: ‘their heads nodded to the beat, shoulder hunched, chests downward, knees and weight fixed low and scooped down towards the floor’ (Buckland, 2002: 61). Buckland’s (2002) descriptions of difference between and coherence on queer club dance floors supports my assertion that contemporary dance music cultures should not be studied as a monolithic phenomenon and supports my choice to focus specifically on the dance practices found within UK Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture.



Buckland (2002) investigates in detail how the music's dynamic soundscape affects clubbers' choice of dance movement. Referring to the work of Friedland (1983), who has studied the relationship between music and social dance practice in an African American community in Philadelphia, Buckland identifies four musical factors that affect dance movement practice: tempo, rhythmical structure, phrasing and lyrics. Tempo is the primary element that dancers respond to on the queer club dance floor (Buckland, 2002: 70). Buckland describes how some dancers move on the beat whereas others play with it, using syncopation to create alternative rhythms and structures. She also describes a mirrored relationship with musical structure; the more 'space' between rhythmical elements in the soundscape, the more a dancer was able to compose in and around the beats. Buckland notes that faster tracks and musical structures where the beat is the primary content, such as the sub-genre of Hard House, produce less variation in dance practice and between bodies on the dance floor (Buckland, 2002: 71-72). Phrasing or 'nonmetrical' aspects of the music, such as musical dynamics and timbre, affect a dancer's effort qualities (Buckland, 2002: 74) and lyrics often stimulate the use of gestural movement language to act out words from the tracks or as expression of the lyrics' emotional content. This analysis is useful for highlighting and exploring some of the differences between movement practices in contemporary club culture. However, in this thesis I argue that Drum 'n' Bass movement choice is most significantly structured by clubbers' association with specific racial and class-based imagery, which I describe as an integral part of the musical genre and attendant sub / club culture (see Chapters Three and Five).

Contemporary club cultural scholars Buckland (2002) and Bollen (2001) also discuss the processes of improvisatory social dancing. Buckland (2002) describes a dancer's level of involvement in movement creation along Konitz's continuum of jazz improvisation as ranging from interpretation to improvisation. Initially, dancers interpret the music by using its rhythmical structure and texture and progress towards using the music for improvisation with increased confidence and concentration. Buckland (2002) describes how some dancers are restricted to interpretation by a perceived lack of self confidence or 'fierceness'. Dancers also produce movement material through mimesis and adaptation from other participants' or club podium and 'go-go' dancers' repertoire (Buckland, 2002: 119). In an ethnographic study of queer performativity in Sydney's gay and lesbian clubs

Bollen (2001) also describes the occurrence of imitation between dancers (which he refers to as kinesthetic exchange), as well as synchronicity (where movement becomes temporally cohesive across different dancers). His descriptions of how dancers generate and share movement material, whether ‘the result of an accumulation and re-performance of past dance-floor experiences’ (2001: 299), or ‘picking from the crowd’ (2001: 299), present the dance floor as a ‘choreographic ensemble’ with specific rules regarding interaction and danced etiquette. These scholars’ descriptions provide useful insight into the processes of imitation and improvisation on the club dance floor and promote the need for further detailed study of the complex processes of popular social dancing. However, I argue that further discussion of how and from where these movement practices are accumulated is also needed.

Buckland’s (2002) account of dance practices in queer club culture of New York City provides the reader with some detailed movement examples. Importing terminology from theatre dance analysis (such as motif, phrase and dynamics) enables her to construct the dance floor as a stage for the performance of differing queer identities. Despite several long and evocative descriptions of dance material (see 2002: 77, 81, 83) Buckland fails to provide the reader with a significant analysis of the variety of movement practices seen at different queer clubs included in the study. This may also be the result of her wide-ranging research; as well as dance music clubs (Hard House, Garage, Hip Hop and House) Buckland (2002) describes visiting Latino Salsa clubs where participants practice a very different movement lexicon that is focused around formalised partner dancing. Although examined in relation to the creation of queer lifeworlds, Buckland’s dance analysis becomes secondary, rather than being integral to, theoretical conceptualisations of queer world-making.

Bollen (2001) employs a gendered analysis of dance floor practice to reveal the performance of kinesthetic styles that he describes as ‘girly poofter’ or ‘cool dyke’.<sup>9</sup> Movement description of these styles includes ‘up and over-the-top arm gestures, hands that “flap around”, lightly articulated support shifts, and most distinctively, a swishing lateral pelvic action with fluid torso inclusion’ (Bollen, 2001: 304) and ‘pulled down pectorals, flexed arms, and clenched fists, as gym queens pump their athleticism...pelvis slung low, shoulders rolled forward, and support on the heels’ (Bollen, 2001: 306).

Although some further descriptions of the movement are included, Bollen admits that his descriptions ‘hardly exhaust the repertoire of...dance-floor styles’ (2001: 306). Despite worthy recognition of the potential for movement analysis to provide ‘a different kind of bodily intelligibility’ that could contribute positively to a performative analysis of how identities are conceptualized and experienced within club culture, Bollen’s (2001) focus moves away from discussion of the specific dance practice. He discards the value of reading ‘off the surface of the body in terms of matter, shape, or form’ (2001: 309) in favour of a phenomenologically informed notion of queer kinesthesia, which successfully privileges the experiential dancing body but does less to illuminate the dance movement content.

#### **2.4 Transformation, liminality and the creation of [a lost / false] community**

Themes of transcendence from everyday existence or escape from the confines of a quotidian identity, which were included in early postmodernist accounts of Acid House and rave culture, are also prominent in contemporary club cultural writings. These experiences are often linked to identity politics and described as politically significant and progressive. Buckland (2002) describes the desire of queer club goers to transcend limitations of the everyday physical body, which is judged by wider society according to measures of heteronormativity, to create an empowered political and personal vision. She describes how physical movement on the dance floor can encourage the ‘self-conscious’ body to dissolve producing a third body of recreation, which performs free from external or internalized judgment. Buckland contrasts the ‘work body’ and ‘home body’ with a third body of recreation (Buckland, 2001: 108, 125), and thus evokes a tripartite structure where the third space is potentially politically transformative (Mulvey, 1989).<sup>10</sup>

Sommer (2001) describes a sense of ‘play’ in the Underground-House club displayed through dialogic exchanges between dancers and the DJ. Sommer relates these playful exchanges to Victor Turner’s descriptions of ‘ludic liminality’ (1969), describing the Underground-House club and its dance practices as ‘unique, contemporary, “liminoid” rites of passage’ (Sommer, 2001: 72). She describes clearly identified stages of ‘separation’ where on entry to the club the dancers are ‘body checked’ and street weapons

handed over to door staff, and ‘liminality’ where once inside the club, dance becomes the ‘prime identifier’ and personal details are not exchanged (Sommer, 2001: 73). During this latter period clubbers are ‘stripped’ of their non-liminal status and become ‘anonymous’: ‘do not ask about my job. Do not ask what I do. Judge the way I dance’ (Burnett in Sommer, 2001: 73). Mulvey’s (1989) discussion of the transformative potential of the liminal phase of van Gennep’s tripartite rites of passage (1960) (from which Turner further developed the notion of ‘communitas’ and, ludic and spontaneous liminality), is also useful here to provide clarification of Sommer’s unsubstantiated claim that club-goers use dances of imitation, derision and parody to create alternative structures, to revitalize and to win space against an [unspecified] hegemonic social order.<sup>11</sup> These writings are of interest to my research in Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture, as club-goers regularly use play and parody in their movement practices. I argue that these activities function to distance themselves from particular identities within the scene, and simultaneously to associate themselves with particular values (see Chapter Seven).

The importance of clubbers’ generation of ‘communitas’ (Turner, 1969) has been explored within various club cultural accounts, such as those by Sommer (2001), Malbon (1999) and Gore (1997, 1995). Gore (1997, 1995) presents the rave event as a ritualistic experience where generation of ‘communitas’ is key to each event. Sommer (2001) notes that feelings of ‘communitas’ are generated in the Underground-House club by the energy of the movement, the uplifting and celebratory lyrics of the music and the interaction between dancers, which is often aided by the use of a circle, or ‘cipher’ as a structural device (Sommer, 2001: 82). Malbon (1999) also refers the concept of ‘communitas’ (Turner, 1969), as well as Maffesoli’s (1995) term ‘unicity’ to explore experiences of group cohesion in club culture. Whilst he acknowledges the powerful feelings of inclusivity generated within club culture, he questions the inferred existence of differences *between* clubbers. Rather than eradicating difference between individuals in moments of intense group identification, Malbon (1999) describes how it is the *imaginative* construction of clubbing as premised upon the inclusion of difference that establishes a sense of communality. In Chapter Eight of this thesis I explore similar perceptions of diversity in Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture, where informants’ verbal descriptions of inclusivity contradict the observed demographic composition of the dancing crowd.

Whilst Buckland (2002) and Bollen (2001) do not use the specific concept of 'communitas', they do refer to clubbers' desire for a sense of community within [queer] club culture. Buckland (2002) describes how improvised social dancing together with other participants plays an important role in queer world-making. However, the desire for feelings of community is recognised by Buckland's participants as a utopian ideal that is not always achievable due to the multiplicity of queer identities within New York City dance clubs. The generation of feelings of belonging and the identification with others is a central aspect in discussions of group sociality and, thus, remains a predominant theme in club cultural (and subcultural) research. Descriptions of utopian sentiment often accompany these descriptions, for example Malbon describes clubbing as a 'powerful site for utopian sensibilities' (1999: 161). However, Reynolds (1998) describes a bifurcation in dance music styles that has had a notable affect on club and rave culture from the early 1990s. Reynolds describes the development of musical styles such as Hardcore, Darkcore and Gabba as contributing to a loss of utopian 'communitas' at dance events playing these musical styles during this time:

I don't like going to a club and seeing 600 people waving their arms about with smiling faces. I like to see 600 people in a dark, hot place; it isn't about happiness, it's more aggressive, more intense.  
Casper Pound in Reynolds, 1998: 115<sup>12</sup>

Although Reynolds recognises that club and rave events featuring alternative forms of dance music, such as Funky House and Happy Hardcore, may still hold utopian appeal for participants, he asserts that the utopian/dystopian dialectic is a prominent theme within contemporary club and rave culture (Reynolds, 1998). Despite this notable diversity between styles of dance music the dystopic or 'dark' character of some club and rave events has not been recognized in previous club cultural research. In Chapter Eight of this thesis I reveal how an attraction to the 'darkness' and 'dirtiness' of Drum 'n' Bass club culture is a key factor in the construction of club cultural identity.

In the first part of this chapter I have reviewed a range of club cultural literature from early postmodernist writings that focus predominantly on the Acid House phenomenon to research that locates new meaning and significance in club cultural practices.

Descriptions of transcendence, loss of subjectivity, transformation and feelings of community and inclusivity have been central to these accounts. Whilst most scholars acknowledge the importance of dance within club and rave culture, a small number have focused in detail on the dancing body and in particular have focused on the relationship between music and dance. However, scant attention has been provided to how movement material is generated (in relation to aspects of the music other than stylistic features such as rhythm and texture that I discuss further in Chapter Three) or how it is constitutive of club cultural identities. There remains a significant lack of detailed movement description and analysis. In the following section of this chapter I will look in close detail at the three most substantial academic texts in club cultural research to date in order to provide clear justifications for the direction of this study. The section begins with an analysis of Sarah Thornton's (1995) acclaimed text, which was the first research to bring together analysis of club culture with the theorisation of youth subcultures and introduces some of the issues that will be investigated in relation to Drum 'n' Bass club culture later in this thesis.

## **2.5 Taste cultures: affiliations and distinctions within contemporary club cultures**

Thornton's (1995) study is of significance to my research in Drum 'n' Bass club culture as she investigates notions of distinction employed by contemporary youth subcultural groups within UK club culture. She defines club cultures as 'taste cultures' (1995: 3), where groups are formed and divided by affiliations with and distinctions from other young people on the basis of shared tastes and values as demonstrated through choice of music and consumption of different forms of modern media (1995: 3). This approach is similar to scholars discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, such as Bennett (1999), although Thornton focuses particularly on how clubbers define themselves against a popular 'mainstream', rather than the process of moving between clubbing crowds.

Thornton (1995) draws on the work of Chicago School scholars Polsky (1967) and Becker (1963), to highlight clubbers' conceptions of 'hipness', which are set in opposition to those theorised by the Chicago School as 'square', and by Thornton as a

popularised and feminised ‘mainstream’: ‘the entity against which the *majority* of clubbers define themselves’ (Thornton, 1995: 5; emphasis in original). Extending Bourdieu’s notion of cultural capital, she describes how contemporary club-goers assess ‘hipness’ (which consequently denote affiliation with or distinction from others, including groups *within* club culture) through objectified and embodied forms of *subcultural* capital. Thornton (1995) cites fashionable hairstyles or ownership of particular records as objectified forms and, rather ambiguously, embodied subcultural capital is shown: ‘in the form of “being in the know”, using (but not over-using) current slang and looking as if you were born to perform the latest dance styles’ (Thornton, 1995: 11-12). Despite reference to the importance of dance to participants within club cultures as a potential source of subcultural capital Thornton (1995) provides no detail of the actual movement practices.

Thornton (1995) describes how forms of subcultural capital are displayed by youths ‘in the know’, to disassociate themselves from the homogenous ‘mainstream’. However, during fieldwork investigations she could not find a club environment that would fit into this category. Thornton (1995) therefore describes the mainstream as *conceptually* constructed, in opposition to ‘underground’ or ‘cool’, rather than locatable in practice. This argument has been criticised by Pini (2001) who states that although we may question the use of the term ‘mainstream’, this particular type of club environment does exist and is characterised by an oppressive masculinity.<sup>13</sup> Contemporary Drum ‘n’ Bass clubbers’ comments sourced during my research appear to partially support Thornton’s argument as they also reveal a positioning of dance music club cultures in opposition to ‘mainstream’ or ‘cheese’ clubs and a desire to distance themselves from the values that they perceive to be associated with this group (see Chapter Seven). However, further empirical research outside of dance music club cultures is needed to comment on how ‘mainstream’ or ‘cheese’ club participants’ view these events. In contrast to Pini (2001), I argue that contemporary Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture is no longer a place where female clubbers can be safe from male predatory behaviour (see Chapter Seven).

Thornton contributes to post-CCCS subcultural discourse by moving away from the notion that subcultural affiliation is dictated by class membership as she describes: ‘the assertion of subcultural distinction relies, in part, on a fantasy of classlessness’ ([1995],

2005: 189). Club cultural membership is derived from autonomy from one's social status and displayed through ownership of subcultural capital that 'is the linchpin of an alternative hierarchy in which the axes of age, gender, sexuality and race are all employed in order to keep the determinations of class, income and occupation at bay' ([1995] 2005: 191). In particular, Thornton notes that 'despite the fact that black and white youth cultures share many of the same attitudes and some of the same musics, race is still a conspicuous divider' (1995: 7). Whilst Thornton highlights the potential relevance of these aspects of identity the nature of their significance in structuring relationships between club cultural groups remains significantly underdeveloped. In contemporary Drum 'n' Bass club culture class-based imagery is a significant factor in the display of subcultural membership (see Chapter Seven).

Thornton (1995) notes that the shift of thinking away from notions of 'class', has been instigated by a change in the way in which sociologists view 'difference'. Moving away from a modernist, Gramscian Neo-Marxist view that the assertion of cultural difference is a progressive gesture of deviance due to concerns over hegemony, Thornton notes that contemporary sociological theory describes a post-industrial society where a consumer culture encourages individualisation.<sup>14</sup> Modes of distinction that rely on the ownership or acquisition of subcultural capital are an assertion of hierarchy and 'a possible alibi for [the] subordination [of others]' ([1995], 2005: 192). Despite claims to a methodology that is 'post-Birmingham', Thornton (1995) reinstates the notion that subcultures provide youth with a solution to 'problems' of age and social structure, which is demonstrated in club culture through the paradoxical imposition of a series of alternative hierarchies that are based on *subcultural*, rather than economic, cultural or social, capital (Bourdieu, 1984).

Thornton describes clubbing as crossing boundaries of class, ethnicity, race, gender and sexuality (1995: 15). However, she also identifies 'strategies of exclusion and stratification' which are employed in clubs through both distribution of micro media (flyers for the event), and the implementation of set door policies (1995: 25). These segregation methods attract specific 'niche' club-goers, often on the basis of DJ and musical style (1995: 112) and therefore create differing 'taste cultures' within UK 'club culture'. Although club goers often describe their own clubbing crowd as mixed and the



'mainstream' as homogenous, Thornton notes that clubbing crowds are often narrow and specific in their range of demographics (1995: 99). Despite acknowledging the range of taste cultures within 'club culture' Thornton fails to discuss differences between club events. She asserts that 'dance cultures' have fluid boundaries (1995: 3) with clubbers regularly attending a range of different musical events but dismisses the need for further analysis of sub-genres of the style by stating that club culture is faddish and fragmented (1995: 99), and that hundreds of new dance genres are coined each year (1995: 156). Whilst I would agree that there has been a rapid proliferation in sub-genres of dance music since the late 1980s (see Chapter Three), in not acknowledging differences worthy of individual study I argue that Thornton presents these distinct 'taste cultures' as superficial and banal.

Thornton describes her ethnographic fieldwork as including:

a broad range of musical styles from rock and roll revival through classic disco to new age cyber-punk clubs; from clubs with reggae, rare groove and hip hop playlists to ones featuring indie, industrial and rock music.

1995: 108

As her study clearly incorporates musical genres outside the 'dance music' category she groups together not only all dance music club cultures but all club cultures, as a literal interpretation of the title of this text would suggest. Although it is not Thornton's (1995) intention to document all subcultural practices within differing segments of UK club culture, she does make generalisations that ignore the complexities of these vastly different social groupings and as a result are totalising and misleading. Similarly, Thornton initially recognises environmental differences between 'rave' and 'club' venues (1995: 14) but fails to differentiate between the two when describing her findings. Following the growth of club and rave culture in the early 1990s these two types of event have occupied different spaces (rural/industrial v urban, unlicensed v commercial) and also vary in audience, musical styles and ideology. To conflate these distinct subcultural practices is to ignore the complexities and peculiarities of each experience.

Thornton (1995) describes her research as involving a substantial period of ethnographic fieldwork that included attending over 200 club events. However, there is little empirical

data included in the text. Whilst Thornton (1995) states that her assertions regarding clubbers' conceptions of clubbing crowds, their classification of other youth cultures, their opinions about the mainstream and their positive views of condemnation by the mass media, have been drawn from interview data and observations from club events and raves, there is a significant lack of 'voices from the field' (Buckland, 1999). Whilst recognising the difficulties inherent in the publication of large amounts of ethnographic data, it can be argued that the reader is left to rely solely upon Thornton's interpretations and as a result the energy and excitement of the clubbing experience is lost (Bell, 2001). This critique raises important questions regarding the methodology employed for my research in Drum 'n' Bass club culture, as well as the presentation of empirical data that will be discussed further in Chapter Six of this thesis.

*Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital* (Thornton, 1995) is a key text for the academic study of clubbing practice as it provides a clear historical overview of the rise of 'disc cultures' and a comprehensive textual analysis of the media's role in the development and demise of Acid House culture. Thornton's research demonstrates a welcome move away from a sole focus on subcultural visual style (although this area has continued to preoccupy postsubcultural scholars in the 2000s<sup>15</sup>) and highlights the need for cultural analysts to remain attentive to the micro-level interactions that underlie subcultures. However, her failure to differentiate between particular sub-styles within club culture and her consequent lack of detailed consideration of the particular identities constructed within such groupings (other than perceptions of insider / outsider, hip / mainstream) does not adequately account for the diversity within this area of contemporary youth sociality. As Carrington and Wilson valuably note: 'the danger is that, in moving too far from the over-determined structuralist interpretations – be they of a semiotic or Marxist kind – we simply end up with a symbolic interactionist version of labelling theory that is void of sensitivity to social and historical context' (2004: 77).

## **2.6 Identification, belonging and playful vitality in contemporary club cultures**

Malbon's (1999) ethnographic account of clubbing in London in the late 1990s extends Thornton's (1995) writings on the associations and distinctions that exist between

clubbers through a close examination of club cultural practices. Malbon's (1999) work is of interest to my research, investigating the construction of identity through dance movement in Drum 'n' Bass club culture, as he explores how the experiences of clubbing where dancing is central create notions of belonging and identification with others. Using the work of Butler (1990) and Goffman (1971, 1963, 1959), Malbon (1999) establishes sociality as a performed, and therefore learned, process through which identity can be created, and an individual can experience feelings of belonging. He states how in contemporary society practices of both material and experiential consumption are integral to establishing personal identity and 'identifications' with others. Drawing on the work of Maffesoli (1995), who highlights identification with others through shared sentiments, experiences and emotions as a key process of contemporary sociality, Malbon (1999) describes crowd based 'consuming' experiences, such as clubbing, as expressive and constitutive of the self. In this thesis I argue that it is specifically the dance and movement practices that are reflective and formative of clubbers' personal and collective identities within Drum 'n' Bass club culture (see Chapters Seven and Eight).

Similar to Thornton (1995), Malbon (1999) describes how feelings of belonging to particular clubbing crowds are constituted through clubbers' constructions of 'cool' that are based upon both reflexive and embodied practices. He describes how affiliations with, or distinctions from, other clubbers are already at play before entering the event as the club-goer will make specific choices regarding where and with which clubbers they wish to be seen.<sup>16</sup> In addition, participants 'prove' an appropriate social identity in order to successfully negotiate arbitrary club door policies (Malbon, 1999). The reflections that take place prior to entering a club event are described by Malbon (1999) as moments of self-selection and self-identification that are a vital part of identity formation and amendment (as a fluid and dynamic process). Once inside the club shared experiences of speech patterns, dancing, styles of dress and affiliation with particular styles of music are central to notions of identification with others.

Malbon (1999) draws his own comparisons between his descriptions of club-goers' perceptions of 'coolness' and Thornton's (1995) use of the term 'hip' and subsequent concept of 'subcultural capital' (as the concept through which 'hipness' is assessed). Through extensive use of interview accounts Malbon clearly demonstrates how

contemporary clubbers engage in complex modes of distinction: 'other clubbers within the clubbing crowd of which he is a constitutive member are central to Dwayne's understandings of both what is cool and what is not, as well as to his construction of himself and his identifications with that crowd' (1999: 56). Malbon (1999) also refers to club-goers perceptions of the 'mainstream', which, like Thornton (1995), he defines as the antithesis of how all clubbers see themselves. The perception of the mainstream as a particular 'attitude', 'against which other attitudes can be constructed and identified with' (Malbon, 1999: 60), is described as playing an important role in creating feelings of belonging within club culture. Whilst there are clear points of comparison to the work of Thornton (1995), Malbon also moves beyond distinction based on subcultural capital to explore the creation of sensations of belonging through *crowd based* consumption practices, including dancing.

Malbon (1999) establishes clubbing as a mode of sociality where social identification with others can fleetingly submerge individual identity through moments of shared experience. Drawing on Bauman's (1995) and Canetti's (1973) writings on the emotional power of crowds and Maffesoli's (1995) discussion of empathetic forms of group sociality, Malbon (1999) argues that crowd-based experiences, such as clubbing, can produce moments of 'anonymisation' or loss of self. Whilst this notion is similar to the descriptions of clubbers' loss of subjectivity in club culture by scholars such as Rietveld (1998), Jordan (1995) and Melechi (1993), Malbon (1999) notes that this occurs momentarily. He also provides a detailed exploration of the *processes* of identification that produce such sensations. Malbon's clubbers are not described as 'switching off', in a trance or slipping into an automatic quest for pleasurable sensations but are present in the space: "'work[ing] together" in creating conditions for the positive experiencing of ...the oceanic, and if drugs are involved, the ecstatic experiences' (Malbon: 1999: 114).<sup>17</sup>

The quantity of the clubbing crowd and sensory overload from the combined effects of lights, dry ice and amplified music is described by Malbon (1999) as encouraging participants to move from tracing individual pathways through the event to a 'consciousness of being part of something much larger' (1999: 74). In a flux between individual subjectivity and sensations of identification with the crowd, clubbers experience moments of 'in-betweeness', which is a central notion in Malbon's (1999)

research.<sup>18</sup> At its most intensive the flux between identity and identification can produce an ‘oceanic experience’, which Malbon describes as characterised by: ‘ecstasy, joy, euphoria, ephemerality, empathy, alterity (a sense of being beyond the everyday), release, the loss and subsequent gaining of control, and notions of escape’ (1999: 105). In these moments club-goers can experience opposing sensations, such as disassociation / empathy, and introversion / expression, simultaneously (Malbon, 1999). This concept is of relevance to my research as I argue that meaning and values located in the Drum ‘n’ Bass dancing body are multiple and contradictory (see Chapter Eight). Whilst I investigate how ambiguity is manifested in dance movement, Malbon (1999) focuses on club-goers’ subjectivity.

The importance of dance in clubbing practice is acknowledged by Malbon as he states that ‘together with and inseparable from the music, dancing is what clubbing is about and is largely what clubbers “do” while clubbing’ (1999: 85-86). He notes how dance can be a source of social and personal identity for clubbers as a way to individualise themselves within the clubbing crowd, but is also central in producing club-goers’ feelings of identification and belonging with others. To engage with the ‘emotional spacings’ of clubbing Malbon (1999) describes how participants must first learn techniques and competencies, such as how to dance (which is achieved through watching and mimicking others, and listening to and interpreting the music) and the spatially and temporally bounded rules of dancing.<sup>19</sup> Only once these aspects have been mastered may clubbers experience moments of ‘in-betweenness’. Although Malbon provides significant discussion of the spaces and processes of dancing, he avoids any specific description of the movement and presents the dance as contradictorily non-specific and yet ‘pre-arranged and usually practised’ (Malbon, 1999: 92). Moreover, Malbon’s focus on subjectivity precludes any discussion of the identities that are constructed and performed by clubbers on the dance floor.

Malbon’s failure to address the specific movement practices and identities of club-goers may be, in part, based on his observation that ‘there is little stylistic or musical unity across the cultures of clubbing’ (1999: 180). Malbon (1999) describes his research as an investigation into general ‘clubbing’ practices in London over a period of one year. Although he acknowledges that subdivisions within club culture, according to ‘sexuality,

age and location into types or strands...[and] musical genres' (1999: 32) do exist, he does not provide any further information about the clubs he visits. Instead of describing the types of events or styles of dance music, Malbon highlights those that were excluded from his research: 'I did not explicitly set out to include indie music clubs, S&M clubs or suburban Ritzy-type clubs' (1999: 32). He openly disregards specific consideration of individual dance music genres by claiming that the 'already countless genres [will] continue to fragment and multiply' (1999: 180). In this thesis I argue that club cultural scholars need to acknowledge the diversity and specificity of dance music cultures. The clubbing practices examined during Malbon's (1999) ethnographic study are excessively wide-ranging in musical style, and therefore present contradictory evidence. In Chapter Three I explore connections between dance music genres and argue that these associations structure sociality and subcultural affiliation (and distinction) in club culture.

Malbon (1999) also advises the reader of a narrow range of social identities that were interviewed during this study, but this is despite the geographical constitution of central London and therefore the potential diverse range of club goers. This lack of range of identities interviewed may be due to Malbon's appeal for clubbers that was placed in *The Face* and *ID* magazines, which are known for their focus upon 'style' rather than specific musical or club information. Malbon (1999) may, therefore, have attracted a particular 'niche' clubbing audience, that attend a wide range of club nights within the dance music category, but which will not reflect the wider clubbing population:

Such is the feeling of *communitas* produced by the clubbers and the accounts we are offered, I began to wonder what this might be trying to compensate for, or even why the voices given space in the book are so unconditionally positive?...Where were the clubbers who...have had difficult experiences?

Stevenson, 2001: 457

*Clubbing: Dancing, Ecstasy and Vitality* (Malbon, 1999) is a complex insight into London's club cultures in the 1990s. Although Malbon fails to address the specific dancing body in detail, this text does highlight the centrality of this practice in clubbers' lives and therefore 'propels the activity of dancing to the centre of the study of club cultures' (Thomas, 2003: 211). Malbon's (1999) detailed exploration into the processes of and sensations resulting from, club-goers' identifications with others on the dance

floor, enables a complex understanding of the constitutive practices of clubbing experience. However, there is little detail regarding the actual 'shape' of the identities that are constructed, performed or imagined.

## **2.7 New expressions of femininity**

Pini's (2001) account of rave and club practices in London during the late 1980s and early 1990s is of interest to my research in Drum 'n' Bass club culture as she focuses particularly on the construction of new female identities by club-goers. Although Drum 'n' Bass is a male dominated club culture I do explore participants' construction and performance of specific masculine and feminine identities in Chapter Seven of this thesis.<sup>20</sup> Pini (2001) describes femininity, at the end of the twentieth century, as in a state of uncertainty and reconstruction where traditional signposts and landmarks are being eroded and the traditional 'life-course' of women is being disrupted. She presents the club and rave dance floor as offering women a place where important questions about femininity can be asked, worked out and reworked.

Pini's (2001) work is a valuable contribution in an academic field where previous scholars have focused predominantly on the experiences of young men. For example, Redhead (1993) characterises Acid House club culture as dominated by white, male working class youths, whilst Thornton (1995) describes sub-cultural capital as the prerogative of boys. In addition, Pini (2001) highlights how Thornton's characterisation of the 'mainstream' as 'feminine' constructs the 'underground' in terms of distance from signifiers of femininity and, thus, reinforces the hierarchies of distinction that she intends to expose and critique. Thornton's (1995) focus on the production and organisational roles of dance cultures also 'fails to address the significance of club cultural involvement for hundreds of thousands of women who regularly participate' (Pini, 2001: 9). Whilst Thornton (1995) and Bradby (1993) both acknowledge male domination in production and organisational aspects of club culture, Pini (2001) notes how their work has done little to challenge male domination within club cultural criticism.

Pini (2001) argues that the experience of dancing at rave and club events is empowering

for women. Although Thornton recognises female clubbers' feelings of liberation and freedom, she describes them as 'utopian' and as a 'false consciousness' as they do not impact on 'substantive political rights' (1995: 21). Pini critiques Thornton for her failure to recognise the political value of rave for women: 'even if we are simply talking about women's "freedom" to party alone and unharassed, about their struggles to defend this "freedom", or about their temporary release from the domestic and familial realms, then something crucial about the regulation of femininity is, I believe, at stake here. This *is* about politics' (Pini, 2001: 37). Pini's research broadens notions of political significance and enables club / subcultural experiences, such as dancing, to be recognised as constitutive of identities and, as such, potentially politically transformative. This aspect of Pini's (2001) work resonates with my research in Drum 'n' Bass club culture as whilst I describe how women are often marginalised and subject to sexual harassment, I also argue that female dance performance groups have reclaimed space within this male dominated culture through a re-valuation of characteristics traditionally associated with specific racial and class-based imagery (see Chapter Seven).

Pini (2001) explores how rave constructs a space for women that she refers to as 'elsewhere', by enabling a radical re-framing of the embodied subject (2001: 161). This reframing allows for a re-instatement of subjectivity that is freed from a liberal humanist notion of the bounded individual, and that does not reproduce traditional hierarchical distinctions between 'self and other, between mind, body and spirit, between inner and outer or between physicality and technology' (2001: 161). Demonstrating similarity with Malbon's (1999) discussion regarding club-goers flux between individual subjectivity and a feeling of connection with the dancing crowd, Pini (2001) describes ravers moving from a subjectivity that acknowledges an autonomous individual self into the wider 'body of rave'.<sup>21</sup> These feelings include a sense of interconnectedness with a larger being that includes the music, other ravers and technology. Pini (2001) uses Haraway's feminist notion of the 'cyborg' (1991) to explore female ravers' positive engagement with technology, evoking 'new patterns of connectedness and affinity' and allowing the exploration of new social identities (2001: 170).

Feelings of 'madness', 'losing it' or 'letting go' are prominent in descriptions by Pini's (2001) informants, as well as those interviewed as part of my research in Drum 'n' Bass



club culture. Pini (2001) is quick to dismiss a drug determinist argument stating that although drugs are important within rave culture they are not always taken by her interview subjects and in other non-club environments they are reported not to have had the same effects. She considers dance drugs to be part of a complex assemblage she refers to as 'the body which is rave culture' that include the music, lights and dancers (2001: 136). However, all of the experiences that she describes are constructed through experience of drug use associated with raves and clubs. 'Losing it' or 'getting out of it' are commonly used as references to drug use (whether alcohol or chemical based drugs) and many of Pini's interview subjects describe people who have not been part of rave culture being unable to understand the feelings associated with it: 'attempting to make rave intelligible within a non-rave context is seen to be almost impossible' (2001: 137). In my research in Drum 'n' Bass club culture I am unable to conclude whether all participants use recreational drugs, such as Ecstasy (MDMA), as this falls outside of the boundaries of this study. However, I do suggest that an endorsement of illegal drugs (particularly Marijuana) and associated notions of madness and loss of control form an important part of the ascriptive criteria for Drum 'n' Bass identities (see Chapters Four, Five and Eight).

When discussing her research methodology Pini asserts the need for club cultural criticism to be grounded more firmly in specifics so that the 'faceless mass' of clubbers or ravers be given a more precise form and that 'complexity, contradiction and diversity be made apparent' (2001: 54). She critiques previous club cultural scholars for failing to do this by not substantiating their claims empirically and for their work being 'difficult to ground in the lived actualities of raving' (Pini, 2001: 49). Pini addresses this concern in her own text by discussing each of her eighteen interview subjects' accounts individually and including many sections of interview transcripts. This approach successfully enables the reader to gain specific insight into the thoughts and experiences of these women and to gain an understanding of the excitement and anxiety generated by participation in this particular cultural experience. However, the interview accounts provided by Pini (2001) are very similar and her conclusions, in actuality, are without complexity, contradiction and diversity. The techniques employed for finding interview subjects, such as snowball sampling and 'word of mouth', produced a very similar group of female subjects (white, 20-35yrs and student, unemployed or temporary workers). Whilst exploring the

articulation of new modes of subjectivity Pini (2001) ‘seems oblivious to the fact that her subjects are, for the most part, articulating particular forms of *white* femininity’ (Carrington & Wilson, 2004: 72, emphasis in original).

I support Pini’s call for club cultural criticism to ‘move away from totalising accounts’ and ‘admit to the multiplicity of rave culture’ (2001: 55). However, the lack of specificity she employs when discussing ‘rave culture’ does little to acknowledge this diversity. Pini initially describes her area of study as ‘late 1990s rave’ (2001: 24), but later describes her focus on ‘techno-musical events that last all night and at which the use of class A drugs is normal and still popular’ (2001: 24). In contemporary club culture this definition would incorporate many different rave and club events where the many distinct musical sub-genres within the broad genre of ‘dance music’ are played (see Chapter Three). Previous studies of the Techno club have proved to attract a less flamboyant crowd than is described in this text (Hall, 2002), and as Pini (2001) does not discuss or further elaborate on her fieldwork area, it must be assumed that ‘techno-music’ is a literal interpretation of ‘music made by technology’, rather than the specific sub-genre of dance music, Techno. It is only when she discusses the ravers’ own classifications that she names the sub-genres of ‘Happy house music and Garage’ (Pini, 2001: 184). Rather than using these categories to assist her to be more specific about her research area, or to explain why her informants are of a limited demographic range, she describes sub-genres as a way for club-goers to manage their own knowledge gained through the rave experience, thus disregarding their impact on the structure of sociality in club and rave culture.

Pini (2001) states that she does not work within a traditional ethnographic framework but uses a post-structuralist approach, which is more self-reflexive. However, there is little of Pini’s (2001) own experience in the text despite describing the research as a personal history of growing up in 1990s London. She describes how she has visited as many events as possible but fieldwork data remains limited to the experiential accounts of the female interviewees with no information about the club and rave venues, or dance practices. Whilst interview accounts provide the subject specificity Pini (2001) advocates, this methodology can also be criticised for a privileging of the experiential and of the spoken word, over embodied practice. This is in contrast to Pini’s claim that she

has ‘an acute awareness of bodies’ (2001: 47) and wishes to present female ravers as embodied cultural subjects (2001: 155). As with the majority of club cultural accounts reviewed in this chapter, the dancing body is absent from the text. In my research in Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture I use a range of techniques to balance verbal description and discussion with observational data from fieldwork visits (see Chapter Six).

Pini’s (2001) research is a valuable contribution to the academic field of cultural criticism, and is of interest to my research in Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture as she describes the creation and performance of new feminine identities within club culture. In contrast to McRobbie’s (1994) suggestion that ravers are seeking to prolong the category of youth, Pini (2001) believes that her informants are discovering new ways of experiencing adult femininity, which include feelings of madness, adventure, autonomy and self-absorption, at a time when traditional modes are in question. Whilst Pini (2001) acknowledges that dancing is central to the rave experience, she chooses to focus on her informants’ sense of subjectivity rather than how new identities are constructed in practice.

## **2.8 Conclusions**

The texts that have been discussed in this chapter identify omissions that forge a clear path for the development of further club cultural study. As Ward notes, the activity of ‘dance [has been] glossed over and its importance and centrality to raves...effectively ignored’ (1997: 5). Whilst the terms ‘dance’ or ‘dancing’ are mentioned more than fifty times in Redhead’s (1993) edited collection there is no significant discussion of the dance itself. Whilst more recent club cultural texts have begun to address the embodied experience (Buckland, 2002; Hall, 2002; Pini, 2001; Malbon, 1999) the ‘dancing’ body is mostly absent from the text and is often displaced by the spoken word; privileging the verbal and the experiential. Buckland’s (2002) and Bollen’s (2001) descriptions of the complex processes of imitation and improvisation on the club dance floor highlight the need for further detailed study of popular social dancing. However, little attention is given by these scholars to how movement material is generated or how it is constitutive of club cultural identities.

Pini (2001) provides a detailed discussion of the creation of new femininities in club and rave culture. However, she does not address other aspects of identity such as class or race that intersect with gender to produce specific localised constructions. A predominant focus on subjectivity in club cultural literature has also led to scholars failing to address questions of social stratification and political economy (Carrington & Wilson, 2004). As Carrington and Wilson (2004) note, dance cultures are not just about individual lifestyle choices made by autonomous consumers; they are determined by complex patterns of racial and class differentiation and affiliation that require further investigation and acknowledgement. In this thesis I consider how different aspects of identity actively intersect, and are constructed and performed in the dancing body.

It is necessary to move away from homogenising accounts of 'club culture' that fail to recognise the diversity of contemporary club environments. Although the category of 'dance music' is still rapidly expanding with new styles developing each year, many are established, longstanding and distinctive. Club cultural criticism must now study 'club culture' with greater specificity of musical style to allow 'complexity, contradiction and diversity [to] be made apparent' (Pini, 2001: 54). Whilst the complex relationship between different social groups within club culture is an area of interest to some club cultural scholars (such as Thornton, 1995 and Malbon, 1999), their conclusions are limited by a failure to acknowledge the specificity of particular dance music genres. Where I have highlighted differences between club cultural accounts and my own research, it has been to demonstrate the diversity within 'club culture' rather than to discount previous scholars' findings. In the following chapter I deconstruct the affiliations and distinctions between club-goers through investigating the relationship between particular dance music styles. Through an intertextual analysis I present an alternative reading of the relationship between club / subcultural groups in contemporary dance music club culture.

## Chapter Two Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> It is noted that the term ‘clubbing’ may also be used to describe the practice of visiting nightclubs that play a wider variety of music than that solely within the dance music genre, including popular music styles that have achieved success in the music charts through records sales (referred to by informants discussed in Chapter Seven of this thesis as ‘cheese clubs’ or by scholar Pini (2001) as ‘pre-rave’ clubs) or alternative styles of music such as Indie or Rock. In addition, venues that offer specific events, such as Salsa nights, may also use the term ‘club’ to describe social gatherings that include dancing to recorded or live music. However, in the 1990s the term ‘clubbing’ was used predominantly to refer to events that featured ‘dance music’.
- <sup>2</sup> Clubbing is still predominantly, but not solely, a ‘youth’ phenomenon (Jackson, 2004; Malbon, 1999; Thornton, 1995). For example, Jackson’s (2004) ethnographic study of British club culture includes interview data from a range of informants who continue to ‘club’ in their late 20s, 30s and early 40s. However, Malbon uses Release survey data (1997) to note that 85% of clubbers attending ‘dance music’ events were under the age of 30, with most falling in the 20-24 years age range. Whilst these statistics appear contradictory, I argue that the range of clubs that Jackson (2004) includes in his research disrupts a clear picture of the demographic of club-goers that attend clubs offering particular styles of music.
- <sup>3</sup> This is not the case for scholars working within popular music studies, such as Gilbert and Pearson (1999) who discuss clear differences between dance music sub-genres. In addition, American studies of Hip Hop culture also distinguish between Rap and other sub-genres of electronic dance music.
- <sup>4</sup> Balearic mix was a term used initially to describe a style of DJ-ing used by DJ Alfredo at club Amnesia in Ibiza that included an eclectic range of styles such as Pop, Rock and Disco. However, from early 1988 the musical selection became dominated by House music from the United States of America and subsequently Europe (Garratt, 1998; Reynolds, 1998).
- <sup>5</sup> Jordan also describes the ‘rave machine’ as politicised when conceptualised as Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘war machine’, dedicated to ‘mutation, creativity and change, and waging war on molar and molecular lines of flight’ (Jordan, 1995: 133). These comparisons are made particularly with the illegal rave scene, rather than commercial club culture. The overt political function of rave and post-rave ‘technocultures’ that developed in the mid to late 1990s is discussed in greater detail by scholar Graham St. John who describes these subcultural movements as ‘fashionably committed to pleasure and politics’ (2003: 65). For further information on this area of electronic dance music cultures see McKay (ed., 1998).
- <sup>6</sup> In the early 2000s the distinctions between rave and club events have become more apparent, with raves taking place in large-scale multi-room venues that feature several specific and related styles of dance music such as Hardcore or Old Skool, Jungle, Breaks and Hard House. However, in the late 1980s dance music event promoters organised after-hours events at night club venues that became known as ‘raves’ (Garratt, 1998). When these illegal club nights were shut down by police, promoters began to use alternative venues such as disused industrial warehouses and rural venues (Garratt, 1998). From the early 1990s commercially organised and licensed rave events became popular and continue to the present day, often modelled on Hardcore Rave events of this period (for further discussion see Garratt, 1998; Reynolds, 1998).
- <sup>7</sup> As noted in the introduction to this chapter, this change in theoretical direction follows writers working within post-subcultural theory that are discussed in Chapter One of this thesis.
- <sup>8</sup> Buckland (2002) also argues that dance movement is affected by the differing rules of sociality within queer life-worlds that she has studied.
- <sup>9</sup> Bollen (2001) uses these terms to reinforce the regulatory power of gender norms, which are used as repertoire for dance styles. Later in the article he introduces the notion of a queer

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kinaesthesia, which he describes as an enacted critique of a heterosexual model of desire that operates through morphological difference.

- <sup>10</sup> Despite an underlying utopian promise within queer club culture Buckland recognises the potential for alienation, where self transformation is not always possible (Buckland, 2002: 127).
- <sup>11</sup> Whilst Buckland (2002) does not use the term 'liminality' (as developed by van Gennep, 1960 & Turner, 1969) explicitly, her descriptions could also be argued to sit comfortably with this concept.
- <sup>12</sup> Reynolds (1998) attributes this shift from utopian structures of feeling to those of dystopia to the end of what he names as the Ecstasy 'honeymoon period' in the early 1990s when hardcore styles of music became popular (for further detail see Reynolds, 1998).
- <sup>13</sup> Pini (2001) describes these environments as pre-rave events or 'hassle' clubs where women would be regarded as sexual prey.
- <sup>14</sup> This is an observation that is reinforced in Muggleton's (2000) conception of a 'postmodern' subculturalist, and challenged, in part, by Hodkinson (2002).
- <sup>15</sup> For example see Hodkinson (2002) and Muggleton (2000).
- <sup>16</sup> This is similar to Thornton's (1995) descriptions of 'taste cultures'.
- <sup>17</sup> Malbon (1999) describes how for non-drug-users these sensations are only fleeting. However, recreational drugs such as Ecstasy (MDMA) can heighten and prolong these moments. He distinguishes between these experiences by using the term 'ecstatic' to describe the oceanic when induced by recreational drugs.
- <sup>18</sup> Malbon's (1999) descriptions of 'in-betweenness' can be compared to Turner's (1969) concept of liminality. In this state differences between individuals disappear and feelings of 'communitas' are generated. Whilst Malbon acknowledges the existence of clubbers' intense feelings of inclusivity, he notes that clubbers assume 'greater diversity within the dancing crowd than there actually may be' (1999: 160).
- <sup>19</sup> Malbon (1999) acknowledges that these aspects of dance practice are never fixed but vary across different clubbing spaces and over time.
- <sup>20</sup> However, I also consider how gender identity intersects with other aspects such as race and class (see Chapter Four).
- <sup>21</sup> As noted earlier in this chapter, this concept is also similar to research by Jordan (1995).

## Chapter Three

### Mapping the multifarious: the genrification of dance music club cultures

#### 3.1 Introduction

Dance cultures are fluid, multifarious formations, which will always exceed any attempt to map them.

Gilbert & Pearson, 1999: vii

Whilst the term ‘dance music’ could be used to refer to any musical form that is used to dance to, in late twentieth century western musical discourse it has taken on a specific significance (Gilbert & Pearson, 1999). This noun denotes a number of synthesised musical styles that can be grouped together by shared characteristics including a preference for cyclical repetition rather than linear narrative, a concentration on timbre and bass line rather than melody and harmony and the use of vocals (if any) as part of the rhythmic syntax of the piece (Gilbert & Pearson, 1999). However, different dance music sub-styles conform to these characteristics to a greater or lesser degree: some include more vocals or heavier bass sounds, some are polyrhythmic or include more instrumentation, minimalism, repetition or cyclicity. Although as Hesmondhalgh (2001) notes most forms of popular music have some sort of relation to dancing, a consistent factor that links sub-genres of dance music is that they are devised, produced and consumed with the dance floor in mind. Thus, in order to gain a greater understanding of dance music I argue for the need to look further than the stylistic characteristics of the genre to the dance cultures that produce and consume them.

Despite an active focus by cultural analysts on club and rave events where dancing is the central focus and where dance music is played (for example Pini, 2001; Bennett, 1999; Malbon, 1999; Thornton, 1995; Redhead, 1993; Reitveld, 1988), the dancing body is noticeably absent from discussion.<sup>1</sup> Previous club cultural scholars have also failed to differentiate between sub-genres of dance music due to a perceived difficulty in mapping the rapid proliferation and mixing of styles of dance music that occurred during the 1990s

(Pini, 2001; Malbon, 1999; Thornton, 1995). Although these scholars' fieldwork studies in British club culture have revealed little demographic variety in the audiences that they have observed, significant differences exist between their accounts that indicate a diversity of social groupings. These findings reveal a tension between club cultural accounts and some contemporary writings within the field of postsubcultural studies that describe fluid boundaries between club cultures where clubbers have multiple memberships of different dance club groupings (Bennett, 1999) (see Chapters One and Two). Whilst musicologists, such as Middleton and Beebe (2002), also identify an increasing eclecticism in the listening practices of contemporary youth, Huq notes that 'exclusivity and separatism persist in dance culture which is highly segmented with its own multiple elites' (2006: 106).

In this chapter I explore the affiliations and distinctions that exist between club-goers by investigating diachronic and synchronic relationships between dance music sub-styles on and around the club dance floor. As part of this investigation I draw on genre theory, which examines the relationship between texts, such as examples of literature, film or music, and between classes or groups of such texts, in order to understand how genres are used in everyday life to support knowledge and understanding of culture.

Poststructuralist writers have reinvigorated traditional genre theory by reconceptualising genre as an ongoing, intertextual process rather than an attempt to set static and bounded categories. Whilst theorists such as Frow (2006), Altman (1999) and Kallberg (1996) have used such approaches to genre to examine the relationships between literary, filmic and classical musical texts, it has not previously been employed to explore the relationships between subcultures, or dance music sub-styles and their attendant dancing communities. A new approach to the trope of club / subculture arises from this exploration to encourage future study of the specific and diverse dance cultures that are part of the dance music generic matrix.

In mapping elements of the historical development of dance music it is not my intention to provide a comprehensive and definitive account, as I recognise that all versions of history are constructs rather than 'truths'. Sources used for this chapter include some academic texts, although it is popular texts that are often personal accounts of the development of dance culture, discussions from internet forums and 'word of mouth'



gathered whilst in and around the club ‘field’, that inform much of its content.<sup>2</sup> Where differences have existed between sources, material that has been confirmed by several informants has assumed greater authority. To trace the historical development of dance music within the confines of this chapter will inevitably lead to the exclusion of many key producers, tracks and club communities, as well as many of the micro-genres that exist in contemporary dance music club cultures. In this account I do not, therefore, claim to reflect fully the diverse nature of the dance music community or its history, but I do reveal the links between genres of dance music and explore their relationships within dance club culture by investigating the communities that are an integral part of them.

It is often assumed that the relationship between genre and sub-genre is progressive from the general to the more specific (Frow, 2006). Genette discusses general groupings as ‘archigenres’, overarching categories that include the smaller more specific sub-genres (in Frow, 2006: 64). However, this does not mean that genre works in two stages from generality to specificity, as there are many potential levels of classification. Whilst the open-endedness of genre prevents the identification of a ‘starting point’ for a discussion of dance music, the development of three musical styles in the United States of America during the 1970s and 1980s, House, Techno and Breaks, constituted a significant new development in popular music that signalled the beginning of a new period of cultural practices that became known as dance music club culture.<sup>3</sup> In this chapter I have used these divisions to demonstrate the diversity and specificity of stylistic characteristics and associated ideologies, and thus structure my discussion in the following sections: House music (3.1), Techno (3.2) and Breaks (3.3). However, I also highlight the cross-fertilisation between genres of dance music in order to demonstrate inter-generic networks of association that I argue structure sociality within contemporary dance music club cultures.

### **3.2 House music**

Frow states that ‘all texts are strongly shaped by their relation to one or more genres, which in turn they may modify’ (2006: 1). This intertextual relationship is clearly shown in the development of House music in the United States of America. Following the demise in the popularity of Disco in the late 1970s two African American DJs from New

York, Frankie Knuckles and Larry Levan began to experiment with creating new sounds from a montage of existing records (Brewster & Broughton, 1999). The House music aesthetic developed on the night club dance floor from a re-editing of Disco tracks played on a reel-to-reel tape and cassette player over a rhythm track created by a Roland TR808 drum machine (Reynolds, 1998).<sup>4</sup> The explicit citation of other musical texts and genres, re-mixed together to create new sounds, has become a defining characteristic of House and other forms of dance music (Bennett, 2001; Gilbert & Pearson, 1999; Rietveld, 1998).

The first House track to be made in vinyl format was Jesse Saunders' and Vince Lawrence's *On and On* (Jes Say Records, 1983) which was produced using a Roland TR808 drum machine, a Korg Poly 61 keyboard, a TB 303 Bass Line synthesiser and a four track cassette recorder (Garratt, 1998; Reynolds, 1998). The use of the Roland TR808 and TR809 drum machines has become a key feature of House and other genres of dance music. Japanese and European Synth-pop artists, such as the Yellow Magic Orchestra and the Human League, were popular in America at this time and key producers, such as Frankie Knuckles, have acknowledged their influence: 'a lot of people I have worked with were influenced by...[Depeche Mode]. I know that Jesse Saunders was a big fan' (Knuckles in McCready, 1989: 98). The fusion of Japanese and European Electronica sounds and technology with African American Funk and Soul influenced Disco tracks is described as 'an intercontinental collision at the heart of Chicago house' (McCready, 1989: 100) and reveals the quintessentially intertextual or inter-generic nature of House music.

The labelling of new genres of dance music is an informal and often localised process. Genre names are sometimes taken from the location where the style became popular (such as Chicago House or Detroit Techno) or are descriptive terms (such as 'boompity', 'hard' or 'funky' House). These labels are established or become recognised through common usage by producers, DJs, record shop owners and reviewers of recorded tracks or club nights. This is similar to Altman's (1999) account of genrification in the film industry, where he describes how adjectives often become used as nouns.<sup>5</sup> The label for the dance music sub-genre, 'House', is taken from the name of the Chicago nightclub where Knuckles became DJ in 1977, the Warehouse. In the late 1970s the term 'house'

became used between club-goers to describe an attitude that reflected a wealth of subcultural capital.<sup>6</sup> You would be ‘house’ if you visited the right clubs and bars, wore the right clothes and played the right music (that played by Knuckles at the Warehouse) (Brewster & Broughton, 1999). However, the record producer Chip E, who worked in the Chicago record store Imports Etc, claims that the term ‘house’ became used from his labelling of tracks played by Knuckles as ‘Warehouse Music’, which became gradually became shortened to ‘House’ (Brewster & Broughton, 1999). The New York club, the Paradise Garage, where Levan became DJ in 1977, also provided the name for the more gospel influenced sub-genre of House, Garage (Brewster & Broughton, 1999).<sup>7</sup>

The sub-genre of Acid House also originates from America and is defined by a screeching ‘acid’ bass line sound (Reynolds, 1998). In 1987 DJ Pierre, from production team Phuture (including Earl ‘Spanky’ Smith and Herb Jackson), reportedly found the ‘acid’ sound accidentally by quickly twisting the resonant filter knobs on the Roland TB-303 Bass Line synthesiser (Collin, 1997; Reynolds, 1998; Garratt, 1998; Osbourne, 1999). *Acid Trax* (Phuture, Trax Records, 1987) was the first record in this new genre and was included on the third compilation album released in the UK by FFRR records (Full Frequency Range Records, a subsidiary of London Records) in late 1987: *The House Sound of Chicago - Volume III: Acid Trax* (1987). The release of this album signalled the beginning of UK Acid House culture, which formed the focus of early club cultural research discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis.<sup>8</sup>

When discussing the characteristics of genres Bhatia describes them as ‘highly structured and conventionalised with constraints on allowable contributions’ (1993: 13). Similarly Derrida (1980) states that the logic of genre establishes rules and boundaries that *limit* a text: a law of purity and one that is against miscegenation. However, there is also a ‘principle of contamination’ at the heart of the workings of genre as the creation of any new text will be determined by a repetition and modification of previous textual structures (Derrida, 1980). This ongoing process of change and development produces an unstable relationship between text and genre; a relationship described by Schryer as only ever ‘stabilised-for-now or stabilised enough’ (in Frow, 2006: 28). Thus, whilst genres such as ‘House music’ are historically specific identifiable categories, they are open-ended, fluid and constantly shifting and redefined by the creation of new texts and their

relationship to others. The film scholar, Altman, also discusses the indeterminate nature of a genre's morphology, stating that genres are inter-fertile and 'may, at any time, be crossed with any genre that ever existed' (Altman, 1999: 70). Whilst theoretically this level of free exchange would seem possible, I argue that in dance music cultures there are clear networks and associations present in the development, and consumption, of sub-genres that indicate that limitations, dictated either by musical, or wider (club)cultural, factors, are at play.<sup>9</sup>

The historical development of House music club cultures demonstrates the existence of such networks of affiliation between club / subcultural groups. In the late 1970s club goers and DJs at the Warehouse and the Paradise Garage were predominantly African American and Hispanic gay men and the atmosphere described as one of hedonistic celebration (Reynolds, 1998). The development of the Gay Liberation Movement in the United States of America, following the Stonewall Riots of 1969, had enabled a growth in confidence of the gay community, leading to the establishment of several small, predominantly African American and Hispanic clubs that were instrumental in the development of Disco and subsequently House music (Brewster & Broughton, 1999). Although in the early 1980s club-goers at the Warehouse and Paradise Garage became increasingly mixed, House's historical association with the gay clubbing community continued in clubs that played a new faster, sub-genre of House: Hi-NRG. However, this style became popular with predominantly Caucasian gay communities, such as those found at the New York club The Saint and London's club Heaven (Brewster & Broughton, 1999).<sup>10</sup> Whilst stylistic characteristics distinguish this new sub-genre of House music from previous forms, I argue that the dance cultures that surround the music remain an important part of the generic structure.

Similarly, in the UK, the sub-genre of Acid House became predominantly associated with rave culture. Initially the musical genre became popular at London's small scale, after-club events, such as Klub Schoom (later renamed Shoom) or the RIP (Revolution in Progress) raves held at Clink Street in Southwark in the late 1980s. Reitveld (1989) and Garratt (1989) state that Britain's strict licensing laws, which forced nightclubs to close by 2am, had a direct effect on the growth in popularity of such illegal 'rave' events. In the mid 1980s there had also been an increase in the numbers of young British holiday

makers visiting the Balearic island of Ibiza where relaxed licensing laws allowed clubs to stay open throughout the night and the recreational drug Ecstasy (MDMA) had become increasingly popular (Garratt, 1998; Reynolds, 1998; Rietveld, 1998) (see Chapter Two). Although recreational drugs were a part of dance club culture in America (see Brewster & Broughton, 1999 and Garratt, 1998), in the UK the burgeoning Acid House club and rave scene became synonymous with the 'dance drug' Ecstasy (MDMA). Whilst dance music has continued to be associated with the use of recreational drugs, in contemporary club culture their usage varies across sub-genres. In this thesis I suggest that Drum 'n' Bass club-goers value an association with the use of drugs and criminality because of the oppositional, subversive or 'Othered' identities with which they are connected in social discourse (see Chapter Eight).

In the UK the summer of 1988 became known in the developing club and rave scene as the 'Second Summer of Love', through a connection between Acid House ideology (of love and Ecstasy) and hippie values (of love and peace) from 1968 (Garratt, 1998; Reynolds, 1998). In August the first large scale, all night 'Acid House party' named Apocalypse Now, was held at Wembley Film Studios (Garratt, 1998). Although the weekly music press, such as *NME* and *Melody Maker*, had begun to feature articles covering use of the drug Ecstasy at Acid House events from July 1988, it was not until the autumn that national news coverage prompted public concern (Garratt, 1998; Rietveld, 1998). The increase in national news coverage and moral panic that ensued played an integral role in the development of Acid House culture from 1988, prompting more young people to become involved in the scene and an increase in the number of Acid House events (Thornton, 1995). This demonstrates how rave culture formed an important part of the generic structure of Acid House music in the UK.

The dance drug Ecstasy remained of central importance to developing genres of dance music in the late 1980s such as 'Madchester House', which was created through an inter-generic fusion of Indie music, a 'grungy' Rock style of the late 1980s, with UK Acid House. Bands such as the Happy Mondays, The Stone Roses and the Inspiral Carpets borrowed clothes and hairstyles from 1960s psychedelia to create a 1980s 'drugged up and dropped out' image of working class, British youth (Reynolds, 1998). Initially the Happy Mondays centred their promotion around performances at the Hacienda where

Shaun Ryder (lead singer) and Mark 'Bez' Berry (whose role was the band's front man dancer and maraca shaker) facilitated the growth of Manchester's drug culture by giving away Ecstasy pills to the audience (Ryder in Reynolds, 1998). Although the first single, *Delightful* (Factory Records), was released in 1985 it was not until the late 1980s that the band achieved chart success. The *Madchester Rave On* EP, released in 1989, typifies the Manchester House sound at this time, and led to the name 'Madchester' to be adopted to describe not only a style of music but also the surrounding drug and club culture.<sup>11</sup>

Traditional genre theory conceptualises the relationship between individual text and genre as one of type/token, where a particular instance of a text would be located 'in' one genre, the text being solely describable in the rules of that genre (Friedman in Frow, 2006). However, the relationships between 'texts' and sub-genres of dance music demand an alternative analytical methodology as records located within one sub-genre often use samples from others, and new genres are developed from the combination of specific elements from others. It is more useful to think of genre as sets of 'inter-textual' relations where texts are in dialogue with each other, and are defined by their similarities and differences (Friedman in Frow, 2006). Kallberg (1996) describes how classical music composers use characteristics from different genres within a single 'text', which may be with passing or more substantial reference.<sup>12</sup> Whilst some texts are describable in the terms of one genre, others will make reference to a 'multiplicity of genres' (Frow, 2006: 29): they may have characteristics that appear to refer the reader to several different generic frameworks with varying levels of force. In addition, the intertextual relationship may be one of direct citation where there is either an explicit or implicit reference to specific texts.

Derrida (1980) also states that a text will never *belong* to a genre, but will *participate* in one or several. He describes the 'law of genre' as participation without belonging: 'a taking part without having membership of a set' (Derrida, 1980: 59). Derrida's conceptualisation of the relationship between text and genre is similar to how some postsubcultural scholars have discussed participant involvement in contemporary social groupings, such as those that exist within club culture (see Chapter One). Rather than 'belonging' to one subculture, contemporary club goers or music consumers are described as 'participating' in (one or) several genres (Ueno, 2003; Bennett, 1999). Whilst in this

thesis I dispute the claim that contemporary clubbers move freely between all dance music club cultures, I do acknowledge that there is fluidity between associated sub-genres. Similarly, producers of individual 'texts' or records use samples or characteristic sounds from those sub-genres that they choose to associate themselves with and not those that they wish to distance themselves from.

By the early 1990s UK Acid House illegal raves had been largely suppressed by police and were replaced by a number of legally organised large-scale events, although drug use escalated during this time (Reynolds, 1998). The growth of legal rave events, which were held in large venues such as exhibition or conference centres, attracted a new generation of ravers and encouraged the development of several new micro-genres of dance music that became known as Hardcore Rave. During the period from 1990 to 1993 this term was used to describe several styles that demonstrated characteristics from the sub-genres of German and Belgian Techno, UK Acid House, American Hip Hop and Breaks, as well as Jamaican Dancehall and Ragga (Reynolds, 1998). One of the first record labels to produce tracks in this genre was Sheffield based Warp Records who began to release fast, bass heavy electronic tracks that became known as Bleep and Bass (Reynolds, 1998).<sup>13</sup> Influenced by Reggae sound systems that organised parties in the North West of England, Hardcore Rave was often played alongside Reggae and Hip Hop tracks at illegal rave parties in Sheffield's industrial areas (Reynolds, 1998). In the South of England, the Black British production duo named Shut Up and Dance also began to produce tracks that incorporated the use of Reggae influenced vocal samples with Hardcore Rave and Breakbeat House.<sup>14</sup> This sub-genre, which became known as Breakbeat Hardcore, was influential in the development of Jungle and Drum 'n' Bass from 1993 (see Chapter Five).

The Hardcore Rave sub-genre of Happy Hardcore (also known as 4-beat) developed in the UK as a reaction against the dystopic sounds of Breakbeat Hardcore in the early 1990s (Reynolds, 1998). Happy Hardcore tracks are typically between 165-180 b.p.m. and contain child-like female vocals and piano samples (Reynolds, 1998). DJ producers such as Slipmat reintroduced the four-four, kick-drum from House, used fewer snare drum breaks and introduced a more Techno-influenced 'stompy' bass line. Happy Hardcore rave events such as Die Hard, Dreamscape and United Dance became popular

during the mid 1990s when the style reached its peak of popularity. In the 2000s Old Skool rave events still provide Happy Hardcore arenas, alongside Breakbeat Hardcore and Jungle. These examples demonstrate the diversity of sub-genres within one small area of dance music, but also show inter-generic links between them forged by their historical development and associated club / subcultural practices.

In contemporary club culture the genre of 'House' is no longer an adequate descriptive term to differentiate between a number of different musical styles. Whilst it is possible to identify a House rhythm (a heavy, four-to-the-floor<sup>15</sup> kick drum) a number of sub-genres have been developed that incorporate musical elements from other styles such as Funk (Funky House), Techno (Tech House), Jazz (Jazzy House) and Hip Hop (Hip House). These 'fusion' genres cite musical elements from the two named styles with varying generic force, although references and citations from other genres may also be apparent to a more or lesser degree. Similarly, other House sub-genres may incorporate intertextual and intergeneric references from several other styles without such obvious acknowledgement, alongside the direct citation of particular musical texts by sampled melodies, basslines or vocals. However, the intertextual relationship between texts and genres is never arbitrary as each carries specific meaning and value, including that gained from the context of production or consumption: 'when discourse is linked to a particular genre, the process by which it is produced and received is mediated through its relationship to prior discourse' (Briggs & Bauman in Frow, 2006: 48).

### **3.3 Techno**

The sub-genre Techno developed alongside House in the early 1980s in the American city of Detroit where three African American school friends Juan Atkins, Derrick May and Kevin Saunderson are credited as the 'founding fathers' of the genre (Reynolds, 1998). At this time many of Detroit's automobile factories had begun to close and the city was being transformed from the United States capital of car production, to the United States capital of homicide (Reynolds, 1998). Far removed from the atmosphere of liberation and celebration of Chicago and New York House clubs Atkins states that his early tracks, recorded as part of a production duo named Cybotron (with Rick Davies), were a social commentary on the degradation and depression surrounding them (Atkins in Reynolds,



1998). Although these tracks were initially referred to as House music the three friends were confident they had found their own sound: ‘music that goes beyond the beat...a hybrid of post-punk, funkadelia and electro-disco’ (Cosgrove, 1988: 93).

Atkins, May and Saunderson were regular listeners to DJ Charles Johnson, ‘the Electrifiyin Mojo’s’ Detroit radio show which featured African American Electro-funk artists, such as Afrika Bambaata, Parliament and Funkadelic as well as European experimental Electronica and Synth-pop bands such as Kraftwerk (Brewster & Broughton, 1999). The consequent Detroit sound has been described by Derrick May as a fusion of these textual and generic influences: ‘it’s like George Clinton [from Funkadelic/Parliament] and Kraftwerk stuck in an elevator’ (May in Brewster & Broughton, 1999: 356). Atkin’s subsequent record label, Metroplex, under which May and Saunderson released tracks during the late 1980s, dominated the first-wave Detroit Techno scene. Influenced by Kraftwerk’s futuristic ideology, as well as novels such as Alvin Toffler’s *The Third Wave* (1980), the three producers embraced technology and cyber-culture (Reynolds, 1998). Atkins, May and Saunderson saw themselves as ‘warriors for the technological revolution’ and in the face of new rival electronic artists were in battle, ‘fighting to keep the standards high’ (Atkins in Reynolds, 1998: 11).

Genres, such as Techno, are systems of use and are often most visible as methods of classification such as in libraries and catalogues, in marketing and publicity, and in the formal and informal practices of reviewing, listing and recommending texts to others (Frow, 2006). Consumers, readers and creators of texts are constantly learning and refining their knowledge about genre systems through their active interaction with examples. This dialogic process can result in difficult and precarious judgements, a type of ‘folk classification’ (Frow, 2006), which, on closer analysis, may appear arbitrary and lacking in coherence. However, Frow (2006) states that such inconsistencies between judgements can be seen as largely irrelevant as genre systems do exist with norms and characteristics that are largely identifiable and sharable. The delineation of sub-genres of dance music has been described as problematic as they are transient and evolutionary in nature (Huq, 2006; Gilbert & Pearson, 1999; Malbon, 1999; Thornton, 1995). However, all genres, and sub-genres are subject to an ongoing process of change and development (Frow, 2006; Kallberg, 1996). Reviews of recorded tracks and club events within

specialist dance music magazines (for example *DJ*, *DJ International*, *MixMag* or *Knowledge*), alongside record and club promotional material, reveals a consistency of labelling and categorisation, that demonstrates that an identifiable, shared genre system exists across national and international dance music and dance club communities.

For a long time techno was more of an adjective than a noun. The word was first used as the name for a completely separate genre as late as 1988. Before that its creators were happy to be labelled 'house' and thrown in with the Chicago scene.

Brewster & Broughton, 1999: 355

The term 'Techno' became attached to this new genre of dance music in 1988 when British Northern Soul DJ, Neil Rushton, convinced Virgin Record's 10 label to release a compilation album in the UK (Brewster & Broughton, 1999). The compilation's working title was originally, *The House Sound of Detroit*, but it became apparent that the music from Detroit had developed into a new distinct style and was renamed *Techno! The New Dance Sound of Detroit* (1988). Techno was recognised as distinct from House, and the new form of African American dance music from New York, Hip Hop, in that it looked directly to European Synth-pop bands for much of its inspiration, incorporated futuristic ideologies and made a break from its past:

Techno is probably the first form of contemporary black music which categorically breaks with the old heritage of soul music. Unlike Chicago House, which has a lingering obsession with Seventies Philly, and unlike New York Hip Hop with its deconstructive attack on James Brown's back catalogue, Detroit Techno refutes the past. It may have a special place for Parliament and Pete Shelley, but it prefers tomorrow's technology to yesterday's heroes.

Cosgrove, 1988: 94

The categorisation of sub-genres of dance music is often seen as a restrictive process that producers and club-goers resist: 'it shouldn't be divided in the first place...the media and the fans and everything like to pigeonhole people' (FD, 2006). However, as Fowler notes 'in reality genre is much less of a pigeonhole than a pigeon' (in Kallberg, 1996: 4). Genre is a communicative concept that guides a reader's interpretation of a text (Kallberg, 1996; Bhatia, 1993; Adshead, 1988). More than stylistic devices, which provide recognisable characteristics, genre assists in understanding by creating meaning and value

that Frow refers to as ‘effects of reality and truth, authority and plausibility’ (2006: 1). Kallberg (1996) also describes the ‘rhetoric of genre’, noting its persuasive force in guiding a readers’ experience of the text. However, the ‘effects of meaning and value’ are not stable and do not ‘belong’ to genres, but rather they are the uses of them (Frow, 2006). This knowledge is both culturally and historically dependent, rather than essential: ‘genre is pragmatic not natural, defined not found’ (Rosmarin in Frow, 2006: 102).

Altman emphasises the dynamic, interactive and fluid nature of genres by describing them not as a ‘permanent product of a singular origin but a temporary by-product of an on-going process’ (in Frow, 2006: 138). Genres are subject to constant redefinition and, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, are shaped by the creation of new texts: ‘to some degree every work written alters the genre to which it belongs’ (Kallberg, 1996: 10), as well as the processes of *reading and interpretation*. ‘New’ texts are never ‘one-of-a-kind’ as they have a relationship with previous texts (Frow, 2006: 139). Similarly, the reading and interpretation of a text is never a singular event, as it is always in the *context* of a reader’s knowledge and experience of others (Frow, 2006). Therefore, even when a text disrupts expectations by performing outside of an established norm, the readers’ understanding of genres will be shaped by these changes.

The on-going process of genrification can be seen in the development of Detroit Techno, which had reached its peak during 1988-1989 with DJs such Derrick May and Kevin Saunderson playing to large, mixed crowds at Detroit clubs such as The Shelter and the Music Institute (Reynolds, 1998). Although the style’s popularity had begun to wane by the early 1990s, because of an increasing interest in alternative Hardcore Rave styles from Europe, a second wave of Detroit Techno producers began creating new tougher tracks. Underground Resistance (UR), originally formed by Jeff Mills and Mike Banks, was influenced by industrial Euro Body Music and Belgian New Beat as well as the 1980s sounds of Electro-funk and European Synth-pop (Reynolds, 1998).<sup>16</sup> The result was a new ‘harder’ sound of Detroit that was similar to the brutalism of Hardcore Rave music from Britain, Holland and Germany. In a manner that was similar to Atkins, May and Saunderson’s obsession with their battle with future technology, UR also had an affiliation with the military. They presented themselves as a paramilitary unit of ‘sonic

guerrillas' engaged in a war with "the programmers" (the mainstream entertainment industry) (Reynolds, 1998).

In the early 1990s Belgium was the home to a new raw style of Techno, where producers such as Lenny Dee, Mundo Musique and British DJ producer Joey Beltram took the genre harder and faster (Reynolds, 1998). Beltram's *Energy Flash* (1990), released by the R & S record label, contains dark whispers of 'acid, ecstasy' heard above a fast, electronic vacuum of noise that is described by Reynolds as a 'speedfreak's drug 'flash', like being plugged into an electric mains' (1998: 108). Belgian production teams, such as Cubic 22, T99 and Incubus developed their own distinctive brand of Techno where melodic pattern was replaced by industrial and synthesised noise. This style of dance music became popular within the European rave scene, including the UK, and is known as Hardcore Techno or European Hardcore. However, Detroit Techno retained a focus on experimental composition with artists such as Richie Hawtin returning to making more soulful and complex tracks from 1992. Detroit Techno's stylistic and ideological links with the avant-garde composition of Electronica has encouraged writers to intellectualise the genre, describing it as 'degree level dance music' (Brewster & Broughton, 1999: 346).<sup>17</sup>

In contrast, Hardcore genres, such as Gabba from Rotterdam, became associated with predominantly working class, male youths with a 'nutter mentality' (Reynolds, 1998: 114). Hardcore styles flourished in Europe from the early 1990s and were connected stylistically by a preference for intensely fast and repetitive rhythms but also through the surrounding subculture and the identities of its consumers. Reynolds describes the atmosphere on the dance floor of Gabba events as 'somewhere between a National Front rally and a soccer match' (Reynolds, 1998: 112), evoking the image of a white, male, aggressive crowd. A typical club-goer is described as 'small, shaven head with bright pink ears sticking out from the skull...pale, gaunt, speedfreak torso' (Reynolds, 1998: 259), whilst the term 'Gabba' refers to a hooligan or 'a guy that is low-class, maybe jobless' (Darkraver in Reynolds, 1998: 257). Whilst it is impossible to conclude whether these participants are from working class backgrounds, these comments do highlight the differences between identities associated with Detroit Techno and European Hardcore sub-genres.

### 3.4 Breaks

In America in the early 1970s, Clive Campbell, a Jamaican American living in the Bronx area of New York, developed innovative DJ-ing techniques that would later lead to the establishment of Hip Hop and Rap sub-genres of dance music. At this time groups of young, African American male dancers at parties or in night clubs would wait for the 'break' section of Funk or Disco record, where the melody or vocals would cease and the percussion would take over, before they would dance (Brewster & Broughton, 1999). Campbell, who had started to DJ at small local parties as DJ 'Kool Herc', developed a technique that would allow participants to continue to dance by cutting straight from one break in a record, to another, using two turntables (Brewster & Broughton, 1999).

Joseph Saddler or 'Grandmaster Flash' was also from the Bronx area of New York and was inspired by DJ Kool Herc's new DJ-ing techniques. However, Grandmaster Flash also wanted to use techniques from Disco DJs to match the timing of records so that they would mix together with greater precision. The combination of a faster cut from different 'break' sections of tracks and seamless mixing combined to create the Hip Hop style. With this new technique Grandmaster Flash was able to manually sample and loop different sections of records to create a distinctive new sound; a technique that prefigured digital sampling technology used in contemporary dance music composition (Brewster & Broughton, 1999). Grandmaster Flash was also the first DJ to introduce the 'Beatbox' to the compositional mix, using rhythms created by a Vox drum machine in addition to the 'breaks' from records (Brewster & Broughton, 1999).

Contemporary forms of Hip Hop and Rap have changed considerably from the intertextual cut and mix of long breaks from Funk and Disco records to new methods of digitalised musical composition. However, DJ Kool Herc was the instigator of a new musical form that became solely focused on syncopated and percussive bass and drum sounds. The contemporary category of 'Breaks' now includes the sub-genres Breakbeat, Jungle, Drum 'n' Bass, Hip Hop and Garage. Breakbeat (also referred to as Nu Skool Breaks) contains influences from Electro (Electro-funk bands such as Afrika Bambaataa), Drum 'n' Bass, Hip Hop and Techno. Maintaining the fast polyrhythms that came from the break sections of old Funk and Soul records, Breakbeat merges syncopation with

futuristic synthesised sounds from Techno. Jungle (which later became known as Drum 'n' Bass) developed in the UK from the Hardcore Breakbeat sounds of the early 1990s when artists, such as Shut Up and Dance, began to introduce syncopated rhythms from Hip Hop into Hardcore Rave (see Chapter Five).

Groups of genres, such as dance music, form systems of historically shifting hierarchical order in specific limited domains. Frow (2006) describes this as especially true for fields that are governed by institutional discourse, such as literary genres, and less so for more informal domains, such as everyday conversation. Whilst academic study has moved beyond British subcultural debates regarding 'authentic' subcultures (those seen as fitting within politically resistant, class-based homologies) or 'non-authentic' subcultures (those that do not), hierarchical divisions within dance club cultures do exist (Huq, 2006; Gilbert & Pearson, 1999; Thornton, 1995). Previous club cultural scholars such as Malbon (1999) and Thornton (1995) have explored these issues but do not distinguish between particular genres of dance music (see Chapter Two).<sup>18</sup> Although dance music cultures are not governed by a formally recognised institution, they are subject to a form of institutional discourse that is generated by various groups such as record producers and reviewers, record shop owners, club promoters and consumers. This discourse not only affects the hierarchical order of sub-genres of dance music that shift diachronically, but exists in many different pools of discourse, each having their own shifting value system. Rather than having an objective existence, these communities are the processes by which [dance music] genres come and go (Altman, 1999).

Despite the cross-fertilisation that I have noted between styles of dance music, the genre of Breaks and the sub-genres contained within this category differ from those grouped under House, Acid House, Techno and Hardcore as they have retained an association with 'black' producers and club audiences.<sup>19</sup> Huq comments that 'Jungle and Garage...are 'black', whilst some techno styles are more 'white' in terms of principal artists and audience base' (2006: 105). Belle-Fortune (2004) recalls how MTV Executive Producer Stephen Wright assumed that Jungle was 'a black, male thing' (2004: 5) when planning to make a documentary about the musical genre in 1998. Gilbert and Pearson describe Jungle as a largely 'black', working class phenomenon that came 'out of the urban penumbra of London' (1999: 79) and Reynolds (1998) describes how Jungle was first

heralded as Britain's first truly indigenous 'black' music. However, like House, Techno and Breaks, the genres of Jungle, Garage and Breakbeat all take influence from previous musical styles (from America and Europe) and are, thus, quintessentially intertextual and hybrid forms.

Discourse regarding the controversial notion of racial ownership of musical forms and detailed discussion of the racial identities constructed and reiterated within club culture will be discussed further in Chapter Five of this thesis. However, sub-genres grouped under the category of Breaks, particularly those forms that originated in America: Hip Hop and Rap, are generally regarded in Western society as 'black music'. Rose defines Rap as 'a black cultural expression that prioritises black voices from the margins of America' (1994: 2) and Johnstone describes the genre as 'black punk' (in Huq, 2006: 111). In contrast, Huq's (2006) study of French Rap describes how non-black ethnic groups (white and Asian) are producing Hip Hop and Rap tracks as their own form of cultural expression. Rap has also influenced the development of new Asian dance music through a fusion of Bhangra and Hip Hop in the early 2000s (Huq, 2006). What is evident is that the 'racial branding' of musical genres, which may lead to differentiation between social groupings within club culture, is not solely dependent on the stylistic features of the music (intertextual or inter-generic reference) but includes the wider rhetorical features of the generic frame: subcultural (or club cultural) practices and their associated social and political identities.

### **3.5 Conclusions**

In this chapter I have demonstrated the specificity and diversity of dance music club cultures through an analysis of their diachronic and synchronic development. All genres possess historically specific and variable expressive capacities that act as frameworks for constructing meaning and value (Frow, 2006). Why a reader chooses to engage with particular texts (records or club events), rather than others, is guided by knowledge of the specific possibilities of meaning and value that they will offer. These 'truth effects' are generated by the discursive qualities of the generic structure (Frow, 2006). However, the rhetorical function of genre can be seen as more than the internal and external cues

produced by texts, as it includes the surrounding subcultural communities that give them life through their usage '[genres] can easily be seen as tiny *subcultures* with their own habits, habitats, and structures of ideas as well as their own forms' (Colie in Frow, 2006: 93, my emphasis). Thus, I argue that 'genre' can be understood as extending *further* than the immediate expressive capacities of a group of texts. The subcultural communities that make use of genre are integral to their schematic world and are part of their structure. The shifting value systems between related genres of dance music and the truth effects that are generated by them are reflective and *formative* of the social and political identities of the users; a relationship that is contingent but never arbitrary.

Although there is the potential for new genres to develop through mixing with 'any other genre that ever existed' (Altman, 1999: 70), I have demonstrated that 'family' groupings and patterns exist between genres of dance music. Whilst music scholars have identified a tendency for contemporary consumers to listen to a more eclectic range of music (see Middleton & Beebe, 2002), and post-subcultural scholars describe participation in social groupings as fluid and transient where 'there is therefore no absolute or universal belonging' (Ueno, 2003: 108), their accounts fail to acknowledge how participation in dance music cultures is led by identity based affiliations and distinctions, which are an integral part of their generic structure. The sociologist Rupa Huq states that the crossover between social groups within dance club cultures is limited as 'different music appeals to different groups' (2006: 105). By exploring the historical development of dance music sub-genres, the subcultural identities of producers, DJs, listeners and dancers, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of the relationships that exist between the different areas of dance music culture. Through conceptualising genre *as club / subculture* it is possible to account for the affiliations and distinctions that exist between these social groupings:

What we learn in 'doing' genre (in performing and transforming it), is the values we share and don't share with others and the means with which to challenge and defend them. Through the use of genres we learn who we are, and encounter the limits of our world.

Frow, 2006: 144

Dance music sub-genres are inherently intertextual and inter-generic as texts sample, recycle and mix with previous records and musical styles. However, this process is never



arbitrary as there are connections and limitations provided by the identities, subcultural contexts and practices of producers, DJs and club-goers. These (generic) structures provide networks of association and differentiation within club culture, establishing social groupings that have ‘crossover’ potential. This concept not only accommodates recent post-subculturalist writings that discuss fluid boundaries between areas of dance culture (Ueno, 2003; Bennett, 1999), but also accounts for the inconsistencies that exist between descriptions of the demographics of club cultural communities: ‘they all have validity if they are taken to apply to sectional audiences’ (Huq, 2006: 105).

In this chapter I do not claim to have reconstructed an accurate and comprehensive history of dance music, but I have illustrated some of the key differences between musical genres through reference to context, stylistic characteristics, associated club cultural practices and the social and political identities of the producers and consumers. This discussion supports my argument in Chapter Two (see section 2.7) that in order to gain an understanding of the relationships between social groupings within contemporary club culture it is necessary to acknowledge the diversity and specificity of dance music sub-genres, and the communities that dance to them. The rapid proliferation of sub-genres of dance music in the early 1990s has complicated the generic matrix but does not prevent a tracing of its major developments. Huq’s statement that ‘contemporary youth cultures are cumulative rather than successive, constructed of a panoply of influences’ (2006: 108) is here applied to (the dance music) genre and the hybrid identities that are part of its history and framework.<sup>20</sup>

All classifying systems are subject to a degree of ‘folk’ logic and the boundaries between genres are often fuzzy and not clearly defined (Frow, 2006). However, I oppose Huq’s statement that in the context of dance music cultures ‘one man’s garage may be another man’s handbag’ (2006: 95). I argue that participation in specific dance music cultures is led by identity based affiliations and distinctions, which are an integral part of their generic structure. The rhetoric of genre is reflective and formative of the identities of its ‘users’. In the following chapter of this thesis I examine the work of contemporary identity theorists to provide a theoretical basis for an analysis of the construction and performance of social and political identities within UK Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture. Dance music club cultures are multifarious and increasingly complex but through

investigation of the similarities and differences between genres it is possible to understand more about the communities that use (and dance to) them:

In one important sense...these shortcomings and inconsistencies are irrelevant. Genre classifications are real. They have an organising force in everyday life.

Frow, 2006: 13

## Chapter Three Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> The lack of detailed and rigorous ethnographic research documenting the dance practices within dance music clubs prevents discussion of dancing bodies in this chapter.
- <sup>2</sup> See Brewster & Broughton, 1999; Garratt, 1998; Reynolds, 1998; Collins, 1997.
- <sup>3</sup> It might also be argued that a discussion of the historical development of dance music should include early Disco, with key figures such as the DJ Francis Grasso and club promoter David Mancuso. For further information on this period see Brewster and Broughton (1999).
- <sup>4</sup> Giorgio Moroder was the first to produce Disco tracks that were entirely synthesised by combining European Synth-pop with American Disco; his 1977 hit with Donna Summer, *I Feel Love*, had no set chorus or verse but improvised vocals over a rhythmic soundtrack (Reynolds, 1998). This heavily synthesised strain of Disco, named Euro-Disco or Italo-Disco, is regarded as the precursor to House music.
- <sup>5</sup> Altman (1999) uses the example of the film genre the Western, stating that before the term became recognised as a separate genre it was used as an adjective to categorise types of other genres, for example, the Western epic, Western romance or Western melodrama. This is also a clear example of how texts have shared memberships with other genres. An example from dance music cultures would be the fusion genre of Tech House: a combination of Techno and House music.
- <sup>6</sup> The term subcultural capital is taken from Thornton (1995) and refers to objectified or embodied forms of 'hipness': subcultural worth in the form of fashionable haircuts, records, slang or dancestyles.
- <sup>7</sup> The term Garage was also used in the late 1960s to refer to guitar-based bands such as the Stooges that were the precursors to Punk (Huq, 2006).
- <sup>8</sup> For further information on the Acid House and rave scene that developed in the UK in the late 1980s and early 1990s see Garratt (1998) and Reynolds (1998).
- <sup>9</sup> This can be seen by the manner in which different dance music genres are featured together (often in two separate dance spaces) during one club event. For example, a Drum 'n' Bass club may provide a Garage or DubStep space but would be unlikely to play Acid House or Trance music; Techno events may also have a Tech House room but would be unlikely to feature Handbag House. However, at a rave or festival event a club goer would have access to several different areas playing music across the [dance] music spectrum.
- <sup>10</sup> UK Hard House also became popular at gay club events in the early 1990s, featured at club nights such as London's Trade with resident DJ Tony De Vit.
- <sup>11</sup> For further discussion of the 'Madchester' dance club scene see Garratt (1998). For further information on Indie/Dance cross-over bands such as The Stone Roses see Reynolds (1998).
- <sup>12</sup> For example, Kallberg describes Mozart's use of minuets in the Piano Concertos K.271 and 482 (1996: 8) as inter-generic.
- <sup>13</sup> For further information about early Warp producers and tracks see Reynolds (1998).
- <sup>14</sup> Breakbeat House (or Hip House) was created through mixing the break section of a Hip Hop record with a house rhythm. This style initially became popular in America with producers such as Todd Terry and Fast Eddie and Tyree (Reynolds, 1998).
- <sup>15</sup> This term refers to a heavy four/four drum beat (Reynolds, 1998).
- <sup>16</sup> Euro or Electronic Body Music (EBM) was a form of popular music in the early 1980s that fused German Electronica with Industrial music of bands such as Throbbing Gristle. Belgium New Beat developed from EBM in the late 1980s and is seen as the precursor to European forms of House music.
- <sup>17</sup> Some music journalists now claim that the 'intellectualisation' of Techno was a strategy invented by them during the late 1980s rather than the intention of the original artists (Brewster & Broughton, 1999).
- <sup>18</sup> In *Discographies: Dance music and the politics of sound* (1999) Gilbert and Pearson do

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provide a highly informative and detailed discussion of the differences between selected sub-styles of dance music. However, this work often focuses upon consumption away from the club context.

<sup>19</sup> The term 'black' is used here, and in the remainder of the thesis, to refer to the collective identity category that has been constructed through social discourse. The problematic nature of this term will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

<sup>20</sup> As DeFrantz (2002) notes the term African American (which is crucial for an accurate understanding the development of dance cultures) should lead to a consideration of the implications of cultural hybridity and invention it suggests.

## Chapter Four

### Identity and Identification

#### 4.1 Introduction

In contemporary inter-disciplinary theoretical discourse, writings on the nature of the 'self' have shifted away from descriptions of a stable, Cartesian subject, to a notion of identity that is multiple, contingent and subject to rapid change (May, 2002). The 'old logic of identity' (Hall, 2000: 144) has been abandoned following radical changes in modern thought. Scholarly writings, such as Marx's decentring of the role of individuals in social practice, Freud's descriptions of a fragile self through the workings of the conscious and unconscious mind, and Saussure's post-structuralist discourse that disrupts the relationship between language and 'truth', have led to the problematisation of the notion of a single, dependable, stable identity (Hall, 2000). Scholars, such as Butler (1990), describe how personal and collective identities are 'performed' rather than essential, and in a process of 'becoming' rather than 'being' (Deleuze & Guattari in Back, 2002b). In addition, the rise of non-Western cultures to prominence following cultural relativism of the Western narrative, feminist displacement of the male gaze, the collapse of the Empire and of the decline of the nation state have resulted in the fragmentation of 'the great collective social identities of class, of race, of nation, of gender and of the West' (Hall, 2000: 146). However, as I demonstrate in this chapter, identities remain structured by 'class, ethnic and gender stratification, objective constraints and historical determinations' (May, 2002: 137).

In Chapter Three of this thesis I argue that participation in dance music club cultures, such as Drum 'n' Bass, is led by club-goers' association with particular identities that are an integral part of the structure of the genre. In this chapter I investigate contemporary discourse on identity politics by considering the social, political and cultural construction of collective and personal identities. In particular, I explore specific racial ('black') and class-based (working class) identities that resonate with performances in Drum 'n' Bass club culture.<sup>1</sup> The scholars discussed in this chapter have not focused on particular *subcultural* identities. However, I argue that these theoretical concepts from race and ethnic studies, and cultural studies have much to contribute to an understanding of club cultural affiliations and distinctions. Whilst

contemporary scholars of identity politics regularly refer to the *performance* of identity, they fail to address how it is articulated and negotiated through the body. In this thesis I redress this omission by investigating how cultural knowledge and beliefs regarding racial and class-based identities are brought together as hybridized in the dancing body. In addition, I recognise the importance of not considering different aspects of identity separately, in sole categories of age, class, gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity, and so throughout this thesis endeavour to reveal how they actively intersect to produce historically situated and spatially localised identities. However, I do not aim to conceptualise the interplay of different aspects of identity as each example is dependent on context; ‘they are best construed as historically contingent and context specific relationships’ (Brah in Back, 2002a: 445).

In discussions regarding identity politics it is inevitable that, at times, some ‘categories’ may prove more persuasive than others. Questions of cultural identity have become central to social and anthropological research following an increase in global migration and a consequent rise in public interest and debate (Hall in Alexander, 1996). A decade after Alexander published *The Art of Being Black* (1996), which considers the construction of new black British youth identities in the late 1980s, public debate in the UK is vehemently focused on issues of national identity and cultural belonging (Anon, 2006a; Copping, 2006; Wynne-Jones, 2006). The data collated during my fieldwork research for this thesis demonstrates that ‘white’ club-goers dominate the contemporary UK Drum ‘n’ Bass club scene, whilst their movement practices indicate an ‘appropriation’ of aspects of ‘black’ expressive culture (see Chapter Eight).<sup>2</sup> Thus, in the first part of this chapter I investigate the construction of personal and collective identities, focusing particularly on how knowledge and beliefs about racial, ethnic and cultural identities are produced through historical and social discourse. In the second part I explore constructions of identity that are articulated in specific terms of age, gender, sexuality, race and class, which are relevant to the focus of this research in Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture.

## 4.2 Self and 'Other', 'us' and 'them': identity and identification

A conception of personal identity connotes a process of identification with, and from others, and in doing so a split occurs that marks 'one that is and one that is Other' (Hall, 2000: 147). The 'Other' is a necessity in determining our own identity, whether that is in terms of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity or class. Identity, therefore, can be characterised as a relational concept. In addition, Hall (2000) suggests that the boundary that is suggested by this split is, in discourse, artificial, as the identity of the 'Other' is one that belongs within the viewer; we can only know the 'Other' from the place where one stands: 'as a process, as a narrative, as a discourse, [identity] is always told from the position of the Other' (Hall, 2000: 147). An example of this concept can be seen in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986) where Franz Fanon recalls a moment when a young white girl he passed in the street cried out 'look Mama, a black man' and 'for the first time I knew who I was' (Fanon in Hall, 2000: 147). Fanon's 'black identity' is constructed in relation to a difference identified by the white girl rather than that seen from the position of Fanon himself. This concept of identity is useful in understanding club cultural accounts (discussed in Chapter Two) that focus on clubbers' perceptions of 'difference from' other groups such as the 'mainstream' (see Thornton, 1995), whilst affiliation 'with others' is theorised experientially through notions of belonging (see Malbon, 1999).

The relationship created by the symbiotic dualism of self and 'Other' is implicitly one of hierarchy and has historically positioned specific racial and cultural groups in a subordinate relationship with a dominant order.<sup>3</sup> The disciplines of colonial discourse analysis and postcolonial theory are concerned with the way in which subaltern native identities are constructed, how knowledge is produced about the 'Other', and the consequences of these constructions in contemporary society. Said's seminal text, *Orientalism* (1978), discusses the political circumstances in which knowledge of the Orient has been constructed, not based on empirical evidence but founded on the desires and repressions of a European imperialising hegemony. European knowledge about the Orient was constructed within a biological determinist framework that separated different races, Oriental-African / European-African, using a social Darwinist approach (Said, 1994a). Whilst contemporary postcolonial discourse fights against essentialising narratives, the consequences of 'orientalism' are still evident in

contemporary understandings of the identities of non-Western racial and cultural groups.

Beliefs about collective racial and cultural identities are, thus, not constructed from knowledge about a racial 'essence' but are the result of positioning of 'Othered' groups within a socially derived, asymmetrical schema. In addition, as knowledge that is constructed about collective racial or cultural group identities is contingent, it is the *imagery* of race that is at play: 'identity is actively constructed within a history, not of a factual past but one of myth, memory, narrative and fantasy' (Hall, 1994: 395). The narratives constructed about these identities have proved so persuasive that subordinate racial and cultural groups have incorporated these beliefs and live through them (Hall, 1994). These concepts from postcolonial theory and identity politics are key to my theorisation of the dancing body in Drum 'n' Bass club culture as I argue that 'white' club-goers draw on imagery of the racialised 'Other' to construct, perform and reiterate new identities through dance and movement practices.

Identity 'labels', constructed by the process of identification through difference, shape actions and behaviour (Appiah, 2000). Appiah (2000) describes how although such classifications are ascribed to us by others using socially and culturally derived 'criteria', it is possible to choose how central we make them to our lives.<sup>4</sup> For example, some identities may be easier to 'conceal', or to escape ascription, where they may not be clearly marked by physicality (for example, a multiple ethnic heritage). Appiah (2000) also states that the body, referring to its morphology, is central to the identification of race, gender and sexuality but that this is not the case for class and ethnicity. However, I advocate a broader conception of the body that acknowledges the importance of movement and, more specifically, dance practices in the performance of identity. In Chapters Seven and Eight of this thesis I demonstrate how the dancing body can be a marker of class, race and gender.

May (2002) argues that there is a degree of autonomy in identity performance, stating that individuals may demonstrate some latitude in their attachment to particular collective and personal identities. In addition, club cultural scholars discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis have described how spatially and temporally located constructions of *new* subjectivities are actively produced by cultural or subcultural



groups, which in turn *re-write* localised narratives for personal identities that are defined by identity categories such as gender (for example Pini, 2001). However, racial identification, especially by ‘non-white’ bodies, is harder to resist and re-script. As Appiah notes, racial ascription is more socially salient than other identity markers; race ‘is taken by so many more people to be the basis for treating people differently’ (2000: 610). Although the notion of racial essence has been largely abandoned, the ascription (the descriptive criteria for the category) acts to hold the label together (Appiah, 2000). The understanding that identity ‘labels’ can continue to hold meaning, even though the basis for ascription is exposed as unsubstantiated, is central to my discussion of the construction and performance of identity in contemporary UK Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture.

### **4.3 Race, ethnicity and cultural identity**

It is important to clarify the use of the terms race, ethnicity and cultural identity as they refer to related, yet distinct conceptions of identity and have been employed by the scholars referred to in this chapter in varying ways. These distinctions also highlight the inequalities between social groups that are the consequence of ‘marking’ by physicality or culture. Sollors (2002) describes how the term ‘race’ has been traditionally associated with physical difference and ‘ethnicity’ with cultural difference. However, this distinction is more complex than a simple nature / nurture binary allows. The dualistic relationship of ‘us’ and ‘them’, of ‘self’ and ‘Other’ is reaffirmed in the distinction between ‘ethnicity’ and ‘race’ (Rex and Jenkins in Alexander, 1996). Whilst ‘race’ implies immutable difference ‘[defined by] virtue of innate or immutable physical characteristics’ (Van de Berghe in Sollors, 2002: 100), ‘ethnicity’ ‘signifies allegiance to the culture of origin and implies a degree of choice and a possibility of change that race precludes’ (Wallman in Alexander, 1996: 13).

Groups defined by ethnicity are, thus, attributed agency whereas those who are defined by physical characteristics, such as skin colour, are denied. ‘Culture’ is the primary definitional characteristic of ethnicity, with a clear focus on internal personal identification (Alexander, 1996). The ascription of self-identification to the category of ethnicity ‘writes “across” race’ (Miles, Wallman and Benson in Alexander, 1996:

13) as it allows an individual the freedom to move across cultural boundaries by learning cultural codes. However, Alexander also states that a traditional organicist approach to culture leads to absolutist notions of cultural authenticity, 'which, in turn, reinscribe new racist ideologies of essential cultural difference' (1996: 14). These attempts to naturalise culture, a form of 'biological culturalism' (Stolcke in Alexander, 1996: 14), present race as an immutable signifier of ethnicity, and ethnicity an attribute of race. 'Ethnic group' can, therefore, be seen as like race 'but without the biology' (Tonkin, McDonald & Chapman in Alexander, 1996: 14), leading to an essentialised notion of difference through 'ethnicity'.

The American cultural theorist, Henry Louis Gates Jr., warns of the danger that whether 'ethnicity' is seen as internally defined or essentially determined there is an implicit conception of groups as homogenous bounded entities: 'the bubble theory of culture' (in Alexander, 1996: 14-15). In addition, these approaches to 'race' and 'ethnicity' and 'culture' have failed to recognise that these concepts are themselves social and cultural constructs and, therefore, open to negotiation and change (Miles in Alexander, 1996). The re-negotiation of racial identities is discussed further in section 4.6 of this chapter, and relates to the central hypothesis of this thesis as I argue that Drum 'n' Bass club-goers embody 'black' and 'working class' identities in dance movement by subverting 'negative' values into positive (see Chapters Seven and Eight).

Whilst Rex and Jenkins (in Alexander, 1996) draw a connection between the relationship of race and ethnicity to that of 'self' and 'Other', scholars of 'whiteness' identify a further conceptual distinction by those of 'white' racial heritage. Frankenburg (1993) discusses how many 'white' women in the United States of America do not see themselves as 'white ethnics' and are concerned because they do not perceive that they recognise a particular 'culture'. Despite a variety of cultural tastes and practices, these women do not recognise 'a culture' because it is not marked as 'white'. This is in contrast to African Americans (and other minority racial and ethnic groups) whose culture is clearly marked by their cultural difference (Frankenburg in Appiah, 2000). It is important to note that whilst people grouped within the racial identity category of African American do not have a single, shared

culture, the legacy of essentialism continues to associate race with the notion of a homogenous culture.

Scholars Ware and Back (2002), and Dyer (2000) criticise the non-racing of 'whites'. Contemporary studies of 'whiteness' discuss the absence of 'white' racial imagery, for example in the non-racing of 'whites' in speech where 'blacks' are identified by colour, whereas the 'white' man's colour is marked by absence (Dyer, 2000). These strands of thought support the notion of identity as a positional concept and emphasise the imbalance between racial or ethnic groups by stressing the powerless position of 'non-white' groups in the construction of racial and cultural identities. However, subordinate 'white' groups rather than being subjected to stereotyping in relation to their colour are instead characterised in terms of the other aspects of identity such as gender, sexuality and class (Dyer, 2000). These scholars' discussion of 'whiteness' as a racial category hopes to displace it from the position of power and authority it has traditionally occupied (Dyer, 2000).

Identity politics movements of the 1960s and 1970s, which began in the United States of America and parts of Europe, fought for the equal rights of specific groups in society along lines of race, sexuality and gender. Subaltern groups used collective identity categories as a way to exercise control over the way in which they were perceived, and consequently treated in society. Hall (1994) notes that a collective notion of 'blackness' has played an important role in creating an imaginary coherence for Pan-African communities following the enforced diaspora. For example, in the 1970s in Britain 'Black' became a political, cultural and historically situated identity that enabled subordinate racial groups to defend themselves against the practices of a racist society (Hall, 1994). Whilst 'Black' became a political term that was used to refer to a collective identity for people of African heritage, other minority groups, such as those of Asian ethnicity, were also referred to under this banner. Although collective action may enable groups to gain greater political influence the identity category of 'Black' ignores the many different cultures within Pan-African and other minority communities, and silences the particular experiences of these different groups (Hall, 1994).

Any articulation of group-based rights presumes a homogenous collective identity, which is in conflict with liberalist views on society's moral obligation to individual freedom (Appiah, 2000). Large-scale collective identities are also essentialist as groups are described in terms of fundamental, immutable characteristics (May, 2002).<sup>5</sup> Postmodern scholars have disrupted the notion of 'cultural authenticity' by emphasising the relational and fluid aspects of identity formation. This shift in thinking reveals a tension between the political project of identity and some contemporary scholarly discourse. Feminist scholar, bell hooks, questions the intentions of postmodernist critiques of the subject, when they arise at a time when 'many subjugated groups feel themselves coming to voice for the first time' (1994: 425). Whilst welcoming a postmodernist critique of essentialism that challenges imperialist constructions of a 'primitive' black identity, bell hooks reinforces the need to recognise the historical location of such identities. Hall also argues for a conception of racial and cultural identity that recognises cultural and historical situatedness: 'a recognition that all speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, a particular culture, without being contained by that position' (Hall in May, 2002: 138). This notion supports my assertion in Chapter Three of this thesis that an intertextual analysis of the diachronic and synchronic development of dance music sub-genres and their attendant club cultures enables a deeper understanding of contemporary club cultural identities.

The development of increasingly multicultural societies has challenged the authority of the 'white West' (Owens in Dyer, 2000: 541), providing a space for a myriad of different cultural voices.<sup>6</sup> The rhetoric of globalisation has led to a celebration of cultural diversity in cities such as London (Keith, 2002). Whilst multiculturalism has given voice to minority identity groups, Dyer (2002) points to a homogenisation of world culture through the continued dominance of popular forms from the United States of America, such as news, television programmes and Hollywood films.<sup>7</sup> Concerns regarding the presence of world religions, particularly Islamic extremist organisations, in the UK have led to a 're-invigorated British Orientalism' (Back, 2002a: 440) and postcolonial scholars have criticised images of subordinate racial and cultural groups in the media for fetishism of the racialised 'Other'. Dyer (2000) warns of the danger that multiculturalism could function as a sideshow for 'white' people to celebrate the diversity that surrounds them without fully recognising and embracing

cultural difference. Discourse regarding the orientalist appropriation of 'black' expressive culture, such as genres of popular music, is discussed further in Chapters Five and Eight of this thesis.

#### **4.4 Cosmopolitan alternatives: identity as cultural hybrid**

Cultural hybridity is an alternative conception of contemporary cultural identity that is prominent in the work of British cultural studies scholars such as Gilroy (2000, 1993), Hall (2000, 1994) and Bhabha (2004, 1994). Whilst these scholars focus on the experience of the postcolonial subject, in Chapter Eight of this thesis I use the writings of Bhabha (2004, 1994) for my theorisation of the Drum 'n' Bass dancing body as heterocorporeal (as articulated on page 4 and discussed more fully in Chapter Eight). Cultural hybridity theorists highlight how 'no-one today is one pure thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are no more than starting points' (Said, 1994b: 407). Hall (1994) describes how the contemporary diasporic experience is one that recognises heterogeneity and diversity, and he argues for a conception of identity that lives with, not despite, difference, by hybridity. Following postmodernist conceptions of identity as multiple, shifting and contingent, hybridity theory is opposed to universalism, traditionalism and any notion of racial or cultural rootedness (May, 2002). These scholars advocate a politics of difference through the promotion of localised identities, which subvert categorical oppositions. Hybridity theorists' promotion of a differential politics is commensurable with multiculturalism but is distinct in that it refuses the notion of essential identities (May, 2002). From this 'hybrid displacing space' (Bhabha in Back, 2002a: 446) it is possible to understand the dialogic nature of 'inter' and 'intra' group relations, such as those formed through the inter-cultural development of sub-genres of dance music (see Chapters Three and Five).

A criticism of hybridity theorists' focus on the 'inter' and 'intra' relationship between cultures is that the concept of a hybrid cultural identity is predicated on the notion of border crossing, which presumes that previous cultures were complete wholes (Friedman, 1997). Following Levi-Strauss's (1994) assertion that all cultures are heterogeneous, May (2002) describes how hybridity theorists' implied juxtaposition of

purity against hybridity, and authenticity against mixture, is thus, fundamentally misconceived. Thus, Friedman (1997) suggests that advocates of cultural hybridity perpetuate essentialist conceptions of culture. However, theorists such as Bhabha (2004) argue for the recognition and exploration of moments of cultural interchange that do not infer the existence of an essentialised culture but recognise *intertextual* (or inter-cultural) traces. As noted by Back, such critiques of cultural hybridity incorrectly assume a link to the legacy of race thinking as if ‘past discourse determines present usage as if some sort of embalming agent’ (2002a: 449).

Whilst acknowledging that identities are increasingly fragmented scholars, such as May (2002), are dismissive of the notion of ‘real life’ hybrids. Friedman (1997) identifies a lack of ethnographic research in this area and, thus, critiques an apparent separation between the academic theorisation of identity and the reality of the postmodern world, ‘[political agency is] constituted not in flux or displacement but in given historical locations...[and is sustained by a coherent] sense of place, of belonging, of some stable commitment to one’s class, gender or nation’ (Ahmad in May, 2002: 134). However, Back (2002a) notes an apparent unwillingness by scholars such as Friedman (1997) to problematise the distinction in the theoretical imagination between the figurative and literal meaning, which is exemplified in Bhabha’s statement ‘my interest lies only in the movement of meaning that occurs in the writing of cultures articulated in difference’ (2004: 312). Bhabha (2004) is particularly concerned, as I am in this thesis, with tracing the meanings, values and judgements about cultural groups that emerge in the enunciation of cultural difference.

Back (2002a) also advocates the need for a more complex appreciation of the ‘sites and times’ of hybridity as he recognises that theorists such as Bhabha (2004), Gilroy (2000, 1993) and Hall (1994) do not advocate a total break with the past, but do recognise the importance of not reducing the present to it; ‘hybridity is never simply a question of the admixture of pre-given identities or essences’ (Bhabha, 2004: 314). Similarly, in Chapter Three of this thesis I argue that a mapping of the historical, social and cultural development of sub-genres of dance music can assist in understanding contemporary club cultural identities and practices. However, I also acknowledge that the intertextual, inter-generic and inter-cultural relationship between

sub-genres that reveals ‘traces’ between club cultural groups, does not preclude the articulation of new meaning and significance (see Chapter Eight).

Waldron (1995) suggests an alternative conception of cultural identity that is further removed from the notion of authenticity and cultural rootedness than hybridity. He objects to the idea that our identity is defined by our ethnicity and believes that we can pick cultural fragments from a ‘kaleidoscope of cultures’ without specific allegiance to any: ‘we need culture but we do not need cultural integrity’ (Waldron, 1995: 108). These ideas conflict with Hall’s (1994) definition of cultural identities as points of identification and suture within the discourses of history and culture. Whilst recognising that these identifications are unstable, Hall (1994) states that they are purposeful and situated; ‘identities cannot be freely chosen and to suggest otherwise is to adopt an ahistorical approach which reduces life to the level of a market or cafeteria’ (Worsley in May, 2002: 137). These scholars’ objections to Waldron’s notion of cultural identity are similar to my critique of Altman’s (1999) descriptions of the relationship between genres in Chapter Three of this thesis (see section 3.1). Altman suggests that genres are inter-fertile and ‘may, at any time, be crossed with any genre that ever existed’ (1999: 70). However, I argue that in dance music cultures there are clear networks and associations present in the development, and consumption, of sub-genres that indicate that limitations, dictated either by musical, or wider (club) cultural, factors, are at play.

There is, therefore, a need to maintain a sense of reflexivity when constructing conceptions of personal and collective identity so that, as with genres of dance music, they are not conceived as static and historically bounded but as dynamic, ongoing and subject to constant change (May, 2002). Whilst these scholars discuss cultural identity in particular, these thoughts also apply to the other aspects of identity such as gender, class, age and sexuality. It is important to consider how these different identities are situated in relation to each other, how they differ in salience amongst individuals and how they are positioned in the wider framework of power relations. May (2002) refers to this concept as a ‘critical multiculturalism’, where through engaging with postmodern conceptions of cultural identity whilst holding onto the possibility of emancipatory, group based politics, the gap between academic discourse and the politics of identity can be bridged.

Back (2002a) discusses the existence of contemporary cultural identities with the phrase ‘fact of hybridity’, evoking Fanon’s (1986) descriptions of the ‘fact of blackness’ that describes the visual regime through which racism operates, ‘in white eyes blackness is fixed as an object’ (Back, 2002a: 450). The fact of hybridity is registered in a wider range of senses than the visual, and is less connected to maintaining absolute boundaries. However, it is demonstrable and potentially productive (Back refers to a ‘critical calculation’ with the legacies of racism to produce new understandings of identities) in the increasingly intertwined and overlapping histories that make separation of self and ‘Other’ increasingly problematic. Back advocates the need for scholars to engage in dialogue with young people to seek out the ways in which the ‘fact of hybridity’ is ‘lived and coexists with racism, exclusion and essentialised definitions of identity, belonging and entitlement’ (2002a: 451). In this thesis I address this concern by investigating the ways in which cultural hybridity is evident in the popular dances of contemporary UK Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture. In the following section of this chapter I investigate the historical, social and cultural construction, performance and revaluation of particular ‘black’ and working class identities that will be used to support my analysis of the Drum ‘n’ Bass dancing body in Chapters Seven and Eight of this thesis.

#### **4.5 Delineating difference: performing ‘whiteness’ through ‘blackness’**

Fine, Weis, Addleston and Marusza (1997) examine how deindustrialisation has affected the performance of white, male working class identities in late twentieth century America. Increased foreign investment, corporate downsizing and automation, the disablement of many workers unions, as well as the rise in prominence of gay rights and feminist movements has meant that these males have been left feeling emasculated, angry and looking for someone to blame (Fine *et al.*, 1997). In line with colonial scholars discussed earlier in this chapter Fine *et al.* (1997) describe how notions of maleness and whiteness are produced through the discursive construction of knowledge and beliefs about the racialised ‘Other’, in this case African American males. However, they also highlight how the hierarchical relationship between ‘self’ and ‘Other’ is vehemently reaffirmed in moments of



‘white’ disempowerment: ‘at a moment of economic crisis in which white, working-class men are being squeezed, the disparaging constructions of others proliferate’ (Fine *et al.*, 1997: 56).<sup>8</sup>

Fine *et al.* (1997) identify how historically determined notions of the racialised ‘Other’ are at play in the construction of American working class, white male identities. Participants narrate a heteromascularity that positions themselves as pure and straight, and African American males as ‘dirty, oversexualised and almost animal-like’ (Fine *et al.*, 1997: 58). These findings are of interest to my research in contemporary UK Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture as I also explore the construction of personal and collective identities through participants’ active disassociation from (racial, class-based and gendered) ‘Othered’ identities. However, I argue that club cultural participants simultaneously denounce *and* embody these characteristics through dance movement (see Chapters Seven and Eight).

In the UK knowledge about African-Caribbean communities has been mediated by British concerns regarding ‘national identity’. Writers in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, such as Patterson (in Alexander, 1996) portray these communities as mutilated by slavery with high instances of single parent families and illegitimate children. Contrasted to ‘authentic’ Asian cultures, Caribbean migrants are described as culturally deprived and as struggling ‘against the legacies of a slave past, or the hangovers from Victorian preconceptions about ‘Darkest Africa’’ (Hennessy in Alexander, 1996: 7-8). For Hennessy, Caribbean culture is derived from Europe as the result of imperialism, and has, thus, created a sense of inauthenticity, dislocation and rejection within these communities. He suggests that this is why black youth may be more susceptible to engaging in criminal activity and developing what was characterised by post-war subcultural theorists as deviant ‘lifestyles of resistance’ (Hennessy in Alexander, 1996).

The association of ‘black’ male youth identity with criminal activity has been made through the construction of a number of African-Caribbean ‘folk devils’: the black mugger, the Rastafarian drug dealer, the rioter and the Yardie (Alexander, 1996).<sup>9</sup> In the late 1970s black youth were typecast into a role of pathological dislocation by a British society that according to the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, was

feeling ‘swamped by immigrants’ (in Alexander, 1996: 2). Political and social concern that British national identity was under attack, led to the rejection of these communities and the construction of particular black identities that were associated with crime and destruction; ‘the term “alienated generation” carried with it the image of a whole group of young Blacks becoming separated from the main institutions of society and *withdrawing into their “racial identities”*’ (Solomos in Alexander, 1996: 10, emphasis in original).

The association of African Caribbean [male, youth] identities with crime has also been consolidated by beliefs about inner city areas where many black communities first became resident following immigration. Whilst the characterisation of the city as a ‘jungle’, with bestial, violent and primitive values, was common before the large-scale migration of Caribbean communities from the 1950s, Gilroy (1994) proposes that contemporary definitions of black racial identities draw heavily on these ideas.<sup>10</sup> In Chapter Five of this thesis I discuss the use of this term in relation to the sub-genre of dance music, Jungle, which consequently became known as Drum ‘n’ Bass in the early 1990s. Keith (2002) explores how the binary of city and countryside carry both positive and negative values for each space: the city is associated with culture, avant-gardism and cosmopolitanism but also with debauchery, instability, danger and transgression; the countryside with security, stability and order but also with repression, tradition and parochialism. In addition to these oppositional qualities the city and country are also evoked in racial and political terms. Rural areas have been associated with the rise of fascism and nationalism in the UK since the 1930s (Keith, 2002). Suburban areas of towns and cities are associated with white, middle class groups and inner city residential areas are associated with lower class black or minority groups (Bettie, 2000); ‘invoked racial worlds of urban social are implicit when discussing ghetto and community, street and projects, problem estate and regenerated neighbourhood, the ‘burbs’ and the “hood”’ (Keith, 2002: 333).

The term ‘ghetto’ was originally used to refer to segregated areas for Jewish communities in sixteenth century Italy and later in Germanic countries, but has a much broader meaning in contemporary society (Bernasconi, 2002). ‘Ghetto’ became associated with densely populated, inner city, residential areas in the United States of America from the 1920s, and became used as a racialised term. African Americans,

alongside other minority groups such as Hispanic and Jewish communities, lived in these areas in poor social conditions (Bernasconi, 2002). Clark (in Bernasconi, 2002) also uses the term ‘ghetto culture’ to describe the behaviour of a black under-class reacting to a racist society in the UK in the 1970s and 1980s. In contemporary Western society the term continues to be associated with predominantly black or ethnic minority communities living in poor, inner city areas with high instances of crime and unemployment (Bernasconi, 2002). ‘Ghetto’ is, therefore, a signifier of both African American or African European race, and lower class status. However, as I discuss in section 4.6 of this chapter, it has also been re-valued by subcultural groups through its use in contemporary forms of African American popular culture.

The discussion of the term ‘ghetto’ in the paragraph above highlights the intersection of the identity categories race and class. However, Frow (1995) suggests that there is some question as to whether an analysis of social class is still feasible. Criticised for an overtly economist and deterministic approach, class analysis has become deeply unfashionable (Munt, 2000; Frow, 1995). The category is now seen by some scholars as ‘a concept of merely nominal value: it is simply the term used to subsume the manifold differences in occupation, income, prestige, residence, lifestyle and education that characterise a complex, urban industrial society’ (Aitkin in Frow, 1995: 102). However, Frow (1995) warns that without class analysis we have no method of understanding the movements of social power nor can we explain the role of cultural capital in economic production.<sup>11</sup> Drawing on the writings of Poulantzas (1975), who states that ideological and political relations are as much part of the structural determinants of class as economics, Frow (1995) argues for a conception of class structure that is defined in each of the economic, political and ideological spheres.<sup>12</sup> Rather than identifying different classes he delineates where the experience of *belonging* to a class may take place; in the struggle between sites of the political, economic and the ideological.

Frow describes how ideological class relations that are formulated in the ideological sphere produce ‘semiotic constructions of the subject form; the sense of self-identity and identification of the social Other’ (Frow, 1995: 106). This is of particular interest to my research in Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture as I argue that club cultural identity is constructed using class-based imagery. Through through embodiment of

characteristics traditionally associated with the working classes, Drum 'n' Bass participants experience an ideological class belonging that may not extend outside of the club space (see Chapter Seven). In addition, complex and competing systems of value that engage knowledge and beliefs about other aspects of identity, such as gender and race, produce simultaneous 'movements' of association with and distinction from specific identity constructs (see Chapter Seven).

Bourdieu's (1984) sociological study on the class system in France positions aesthetic choices and cultural preferences as the product of social conditioning: '[uniting] all those who are the product of similar conditions of existence whilst distinguishing from all others' (Bourdieu in Bakare-Yusif, 1997: 86). He describes the process of distinction as reliant on class positioning and aesthetic choices as 'the practical affirmation of an inevitable difference' (Bourdieu in Bakare-Yusif, 1997: 86). Thornton (1995) praises Bourdieu's (1984) work for a move away from vertical models of social structure to a multi-dimensional space that widens definitions of class from the economic, to include social and cultural forms of 'capital' (see Chapter Two). However, Frow describes Bourdieu's positioning of cultural forms as expressive of class position as an 'inadequate conception' (1995: 5), because it places class in a fixed and essentialising relationship with culture.<sup>13</sup> In addition, Bourdieu fails to recognise that class is not the only factor that structures cultural choice and taste (Reynolds, 2000; Bakare-Yusif, 1997; Frow, 1995).

The delineation of social groups on sole grounds of class relies on the establishment of homogenous entities, with little attention given to other aspects of identity such as race, ethnicity, gender and age. Frow's (1995) model of class structural relations theorises the interrelationship of these identity categories. He identifies gender as an overarching determinant in every area of class relations: organising separate status hierarchies for men and women, attributing value to, or devaluing, different skills and supporting the consequent division between the public and private spheres. This is particularly pertinent to my analysis of male and female participants in the Drum 'n' Bass club as I argue that club cultural class-based imagery is gendered (see Chapter Seven). Race and ethnicity are also significant determining factors of class, and whilst the articulation of the relationship is nationally and regionally specific, Frow

(1995) identifies these identities as having a greater force within working class groups, rather than in the middle or upper classes:

Ethnic rivalry is one of the most common forms taken by class struggle and class hatred (both between classes and within a class). In the United States, to be of Polish or Italian, Irish or Jewish, Puerto Rican or African-American descent is to have alternative modes of access to and integration in class, at the same time as ethnic identity is always rigorously positioned *within* a racially structured class hierarchy, the crucial fact about which is that it is the class of former slaves, not the (white) working class, which occupies the bottom rung.

Frow, 1995: 10, emphasis in original

The relationship between ‘race’ and ‘class’ is seen as one of the most theoretically contested issues in contemporary academic discourse (Alexander, 1996). However, the interplay between these constructs is key to my theorisation of Drum ‘n’ Bass club cultural identity (see Chapters Seven and Eight). Some scholars advocate the theoretical separation of these two aspects of identity (such as Ben-Tovim in Alexander, 1996), whilst others argue that economic structures have primacy over ‘the ideological mirage of race’ (Miles in Alexander, 1996: 92). However, Gilroy (1987) warns against the homogenisation of temporally distinct and disparate experiences in a search for unified theories and advocates the need to position the relationship between race and class within a historical framework that recognises dynamic change and the heterogeneity of experience. For example, he describes how in Britain racism is active in combining political, economic and cultural elements into a contradictory unity, ensuring that ‘race is the modality in which class is lived, the medium in which it is appropriated and fought through’ (Gilroy, 1987: 30). This notion reinforces discussion earlier in this chapter (see section 4.1) where I describe how racial ascription can be argued to be more socially salient than other identity categories.

Alexander (1996) argues that symbolic markers of class, which she defines as ‘external symbols’, can be employed to confirm or contest the categorisations surrounding race.<sup>14</sup> Thus, whilst race has become a marker of class, the relationship between the two aspects of identity is malleable rather than determinist. Although Alexander (1996) refers to ‘external symbols’ as markers of class-based identity she does not consider how the *body* is central to this process. However, she does

demonstrate the inter-relationship between constructions of race and class in social discourse, which is of relevance to my research in Drum 'n' Bass club culture. During interview discussions her young black informants equate a black identity with a working class status and describe their maintenance of such a position as a marker of their 'racial authenticity'. To be successful in a white dominated work sphere, such as business, is to lose status as a black man and to 'go white' (Alexander, 1996). Thus, individuals who wish to mediate their subordinate racial positioning through improving their economic status are at risk of 'losing' their racial status. Similarly, in this thesis I argue that contemporary UK Drum 'n' Bass club-goers associate themselves with a working class authenticity that is closely connected with notions of a racialised 'Other', although I demonstrate how this is performed through the *dancing body* (see Chapter Eight).

The association of black identities with criminal activity can be compared to the characterisation of white, male youths as marked by working class signifiers such as violence and racism. Following the post-war explosion of teenage consumption the identity category of 'youth' has become a 'prime icon' of moral concern (Back, 2002a). As discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, various youth subcultural movements in Britain from the 1940s to the 1970s have been extensively documented by scholars from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). Class identities were seen as integral to the analysis of white subcultural movements, for example Skinheads 'utilized industrial working-class imagery to produce a conservative masculinity in a period of political, economic and cultural upheaval' (Cohen in Back, 2002a: 441). Despite the use of the supposedly gender-neutral term of 'youth', these scholars have been criticised for the overtly 'masculinist overtones' of their work (McRobbie in Bettie, 2000: 1). There has also been little attention given to how the cultural politics of race affect the construction of youth identities (Back, 2002a).

In the 1990s new concern was raised about an increasingly lawless youth 'yob culture' amongst a new British underclass (Murray in Back, 2002a). This discourse is of interest to my research due to similarities between the characteristics associated with this group of youths and those displayed by Drum 'n' Bass participants (see Chapter Seven). Whilst Hebdige (1988) has stated that the category of youth will always act

as a cipher through which concern about the nature of society is articulated, descriptions of young people have become increasingly more alarming. Campbell (in Back, 2002a) employs the term 'lawless masculinities' to describe young, male British culture at the beginning of the 1990s, whilst the importation of American style anti-social behaviour orders at the end of the century has led to descriptions of 'wolf-children' (Tuck in Back, 2002a: 439) and a 'savage generation' (Smith in Back, 2002a: 439). Whilst these terms are not always racially coded connections have been made between white, working class male youth and violent, racist behaviour: 'white working class youth have been for some time the object of public alarm focused on the theme of 'rampant racism' and / or football hooliganism' (Back, 2002a: 439).

In addition, the association of football hooliganism, fascism and the articulation of a British white, working-class, masculine identity are explored in Robson's (2000) discussion of the fan culture surrounding Millwall Football Club in London. Robson establishes how football contributes significantly to the construction of the social identities of its fans, which for Millwall, are characterised by violence, hypermasculinity and racism (Robson, 2000). Whilst the connection between football, drunken rowdiness and violent conflict was established in the eighteenth century (Malcomson in Robson, 2000), Robson (2000) describes how the identification between the working classes and the game began in the early twentieth century when football was appropriated from public school amateurs. Values associated with the working classes, as exemplified in football, at this time are described as 'skill...cunning...hardness, stamina, courage and loyalty' (Holt in Robson, 2000: 221). However, contemporary identities associated with Millwall Football Club are characterised by a local patriotism and a 'territorial urban masculinity' (Robson, 2000: 219). Robson (2000) describes the perception of Millwall Football Club fans as racist as informed by liberal, 'leftist' and 'populist right' anxieties about vulgar corporeality and physical expressivity where the 'politically unfocused working-class physicality: the white male body and its characteristic forms of expressive vigour are framed and understood as incipiently fascistic' (Robson, 2000: 226).

Expressions of racism within contemporary 'Millwallism' is described not as an expression of racism *per se* but as an aspect of expressive (subcultural) practice aimed

at humiliating and intimidating players and fans of the opposing team (Robson, 2000). Violence and racist, abusive behaviour is politically downplayed through the explanation that, 'for many participants, racist expression is intimately bound up with the prevailing dynamics of hostile partisan fervour and vulgar orality which underpin intimidation' (Robson, 2000: 227-228). In a statement reminiscent of Gramscian Neo-Marxist CCCS subcultural theory, the racist expressive actions and behaviour of Millwall Football Club fans is described as a collective response to a bourgeois cultural hegemony, as Robson describes a 'reluctance to embrace "politically correct" moral perspectives...[as] one of [the subculture's] central characteristics' (2000: 226). Whilst I acknowledge the potential critique of this argument (see Chapter One), Robson's descriptions of the manifestation of a particular working-class, hyper-masculine physical culture and sensibility are of great interest to this study as they are similar to the characteristics of masculinity and violence displayed by participants within contemporary UK Drum 'n' Bass club culture. In Chapter Eight of this thesis I explore the ambivalent and contradictory attitudes demonstrated by participants in Drum 'n' Bass club culture towards criminal, discriminatory and violent behaviour through the Bakhtinian (1984) concept of the *carnavalesque*.

#### **4.6 Alternative 'black' identities and their 'white' appropriation**

Despite negative associations ascribed to black identities (such as those discussed earlier in this chapter) Bernasconi (2002) describes how these communities have not remained passive but have used the spaces of the ghetto to *re-value* these qualities and create alternative identities, which have become valorised by white, suburban youths:

Ghetto has come to signify a whole style of being black in the U.S. including a form of dress and dialect. White suburban youths have even sought to imitate this style, albeit showing little understanding of the conditions that gave rise to it.

Bernasconi, 2002: 346

Thus, alternative black identities have been constructed, primarily through popular music cultures such as Hip Hop and RnB, which subvert negative associations into positive attributes causing 'ghettocentricity' to become a sign of valued 'authentic blackness' (Osumare, 2000). Hip Hop has been described as the latest form of



popular music that has helped equate 'black' with 'cool' for another generation of white Americans (Kitwana, 1995).

The attraction of white youths to black style and music is not a new phenomenon as 'black music generally and Jamaican music in particular have functioned as transmitters of oppositional values and liberating pleasures to different generations of whites for nearly three decades' (Jones, 1988: 231). Jones notes that the appropriation of black styles of dress and dance is 'a well-acknowledged and established feature of white youth culture with numerous historical precedents' (1988: 142). Jones's (1988) ethnographic study, which focuses on the experiences of two groups of young mainly male participants from contrasting residential (urban / suburban) areas of Birmingham, UK in the 1980s, investigates how and why young, whites become attracted to black expressive musical cultures, such as Jamaican Reggae. An association with such cultures, through signifiers such as style of dress and hairstyle, the use of patois speech and extensive musical knowledge, affords young white males prestige within friendship groups (Jones, 1988). Whilst Jones's work is firmly located within a CCCS subcultural approach that can be criticised for interpreting all youth activity as inherently political and as a reaction to a homogenous mainstream dominant culture (see Chapter One), his descriptions of young, white males appropriation of the signifiers of black expressive cultures resonate with my observations of white participants in contemporary UK Drum 'n' Bass club culture (see Chapter Eight).

Jones's informants reveal that their attraction to Reggae culture often stems from an attraction to something different: 'being English people, and living in Northfield, it was just boring to me' (Anne in Jones, 1988: 159). These comments can be interpreted as orientalist in approach as they associate Reggae and Jamaican culture with the 'exotic' (see Said, 1978). However, Jones notes that young whites are also attracted to notions of resistance present in the lyrics of Reggae tracks. Bob Marley has been attributed with the popularisation of Reggae music to young whites as his lyrics permit universal readings (Jones, 1988). Whilst Jamaican Reggae, prior to popularisation, included explicit reference to the black experience, Marley's lyrics can also be seen as non-racially exclusive (Jones, 1988). Commenting on specific issues, such as work and employment, state authority and the law, Marley's music provides a

‘common language through which black and white youth could share their joint or parallel experiences’ (Jones, 1988: 163), through subordinate and disadvantaged *class* experience.

The connection forged across racial identities through social and economic experience does not, however, lead to an automatic acceptance of black identities by white youth. Jones’s (1988) study revealed that white youths could uphold racist beliefs despite an involvement in black expressive cultures: powerful feelings of attraction to black culture could easily coexist with perceptions of that culture as threatening and with resentment and fear of black people’ (Jones, 1988: 216). These findings are similar to those discussed by Hewitt in *White Talk, Black Talk: Interracial Friendship and Communication Amongst Adolescents* (1986) where he notes that ‘an identification with black youth culture does not inevitably lead to any ideological questioning of white racial attitudes’ (1986: 144). Hewitt (1986) also identifies that a shared class position can lead to white association with aspects of black culture but states that this can be limited by white racist beliefs.

Hewitt (1986) explores how the appropriation of aspects of black expressive culture, such as the use of Creole and patois speech, allows young, white males to manipulate cultural referents so that they may construct a particular identity that is characterised by the associated qualities of masculinity, competitiveness and a ‘street machismo’. However, he discusses these identities as ‘fictive’ social identities and believes that the further removed from the ‘source’ the cruder the use of racial markers will be. Adolescents that do not have black friends to mimic will draw on racial imagery from other sources, such as the popular media (Hewitt, 1986). However, Hewitt (1986) fails to recognise the constructed nature of the black identities he describes as the original ‘source’. Whilst he states that white youth identities constructed using black markers will be mediated by stereotypes seen in media representations of the black community, he does not comment on how contemporary black, youth identities may also be constructed or mediated in the same way. Hewitt concludes that the valorisation and validation of black culture by white youth will be ‘ultimately of little meaning when it remains locked in the purely connotational realm of signification’ (1986: 215), whilst contemporary postmodern discourse would suggest that all identities are socially and culturally constructed and are, therefore, also part of the

process. In this thesis I argue that club-goers use social, historical and cultural representations of black and working class communities to construct and perform Drum 'n' Bass club cultural identities through dance movement. In addition, in Chapters Five and Eight I problematise notions of 'appropriation' for its essentialist claims of cultural 'ownership'.

The re-valuation of black identities by youth cultures through a valorisation of the spaces of the 'ghetto' is also discussed by Keith (2000) who notes how the 'street' has a privileged place in the modern city as it carries a sense of valued 'authenticity'. Associated with inner city, highly urbanised areas, the 'street' represents a celebrated vernacular aesthetic of 'where it's at' producing a situated notion of identity formation and knowledge production (Keith, 2000). Credibility is accorded to youth identities by an association with the 'street' and the 'ghetto', and this subverts negative values that are attached to black, working-class identities into a positive street 'machismo' (Alexander, 1996).<sup>15</sup> The promotion of material wealth through symbols of economic success has also been a common element used to subvert assumptions about black identities within contemporary Hip Hop culture. Whilst images of the 'hood', the ghetto and criminality feature heavily in the lyrics of Rap and Hip Hop artists, their ostentatious style of dress and material possessions suggest financial success and power.

The concept of power is central to any discussion of black youth identities and black masculinity in particular (Alexander, 1996). Presented as outside of normative gender relations of the wider (white) society, 'black machismo' is described by some scholars as a substitute for, and indicative of, a lack of social and economic power (Alexander, 1996). Wallace (in Alexander, 1996) argues that the origins of black machismo are to be found in a search for 'manliness', as defined by the dominant white society. Black masculinity can, therefore, be understood as a reaction to structural inequality, 'enacting and subverting dominant definitions of power and control (Alexander, 1996: 137). Black men have been traditionally viewed as emasculated by 'white' society, and as creating an artificial sense of masculine power through the exploitation of women (Alexander, 1996). The assertion of manliness constitutes a 'façade of power' (Wallace in Alexander, 1996: 137) that enables the individual to negotiate personal control, which, in turn, allows for the expression of personal worth. However, bell

hooks criticises scholars that hold this opinion for their 'assumption...that only the power white men have that black men do not have is real' (hooks in Alexander, 1996: 159).

An association of black identities with sexuality can be traced to colonial beliefs about black male and female bodies. Noble (2000) discusses how Western discourse ties black subjects to their dismembered and exoticised parts, such as the black woman's large buttocks and the black man's extended penis. Constructed in opposition to the image of the idealised, passive, white woman, black women were portrayed by European colonialists as deviant and exotic (Noble, 2000). In contemporary society black sexuality has been intensified through forms of popular culture in which black men are portrayed as defined by their physicality (Gilroy, 1997; Alexander, 1996). Whilst Liebow describes these images as existing in society at the level of 'public fiction' (in Alexander, 1996: 159), as external social stereotypes that bear little relation to social 'reality', Alexander acknowledges that 'constructions of black...sexuality have become reified and naturalised; transformed through the lens of new racism into an inherent and inescapable part of black cultural life and expression' (1996: 158).

Contemporary representations of black female sexuality can be found in popular music videos made by Hip Hop and RnB artists and are similar to those found in Jamaican Ragga and Dancehall culture, where signifiers of violence, criminality and sexuality circulate freely (Noble, 2000). There are also clear similarities between Hip Hop, Dancehall and UK Drum 'n' Bass club culture, which will be discussed more fully in Chapter Five of this thesis. Violent heterosexist and homophobic lyrics are common in Ragga and Dancehall tracks, alongside explicit references to guns and criminality (Hope, 2004). In addition, a 'strongly urbanised working-class male culture' (Noble, 2000: 150) is established through the MC's lyrics.<sup>16</sup> Cooper (in Noble, 2000) describes how values of 'slackness' are valorised in the Dancehall, which she defines as an oppositional value within 'ghetto' or lower class Jamaican culture that is resistive to imposed Eurocentric measures of sexual respectability.

Notions of reputation and respect, described by Wilson (in Noble, 2000) as primarily male Caribbean value systems, are also prominent within Ragga and Dancehall

culture. 'Reputation' is achieved through individual skill in 'verbal virtuosity or sexual virility and anti-establishment activities' (Noble, 2000: 152). The Dancehall, therefore, becomes an arena for the subversive celebration of sexuality as a source of social recognition, reputation and value. The highly processed, commodified and eroticised image of the female Ragga 'Queen', with provocative costumes, elaborate jewellery and hairpieces, can be argued to provide black women with economic agency and sexual power over their male audiences, but can also be interpreted as exploitative within the context of Jamaican, patriarchal culture (Noble, 2000).<sup>17</sup>

The use of overtly sexual lyrics, pornographic dance movement and revealing costumes in contemporary Ragga and Jamaican Dancehall culture creates disagreement between writers that describe these elements as a celebration of black, female sexuality and those who feel uneasy about reinforcing a stereotype of the black woman as sexually licentious (Noble, 2000). Whether this culture entices women into complicity with an objectifying male gaze or allows women valuable agency and sexual liberation, these images of black sexuality, violence and criminality are commonly disseminated into other areas of popular culture in contemporary society. Images from popular music video become signifiers of black identity that are consequently consumed on a global scale and contribute to contemporary constructions of knowledge about black expressive cultures. This knowledge may then be used to construct personal identities that draw on black cultural signifiers, resulting in a *chosen* public identity that contrasts with that of an individual's *inherited* identity (Bettie, 2000: 10).<sup>18</sup> In this thesis I argue that female club-goers use popular representations of black sexuality to construct their own identities in contemporary UK Drum 'n' Bass club culture (see Chapter Seven).

#### **4.7 Conclusions**

Contemporary postmodern academic writing has emphasised the multiple and transient nature of contemporary personal and collective identities. This approach acknowledges the importance of the interplay of different aspects of identity in specific, localised instances. At the beginning of this chapter I introduce the notion of identity as a 'performed' rather than essentialised process, thus indicating a level of

intention or agency in identity construction. However, as I have demonstrated in this chapter, the performance of intentional actions does not occur freely but ‘under descriptions’ (Anscombe in Appiah, 2000: 608).<sup>19</sup> All major forms of identifications that are central to contemporary identity politics, such as race, ethnicity, gender, class and sexuality, have sets of theoretically committed criteria that form the basis of ascription (of ourselves or of others) to the identity category, although ‘not all of which will be held by everybody, and which may not be consistent with one another even in the ascription of a single person’ (Appiah, 2000: 609). In the process of self identification these identity markers (or ascriptive criteria) shape the intentional acts of (some of) those who fall within it.

Contingent, yet temporally and spatially located, identity markers (or symbolic symbols, Alexander, 1996) are dynamic and open to appropriation, negotiation and change. The beliefs about collective identities that circulate within contemporary society, whether articulated in terms of race, ethnicity, culture, class, gender, age or sexuality, are constructed through historical, social and cultural discourse. However, the ‘supermarket of signifiers’ has restricted access for subaltern groups, and meanings attached to these markers are open to manipulation by external power structures such as the globalised, popular mass media, and the historical legacy of European colonialism. This discourse are the ‘concepts’ by which people actively shape their actions (Appiah, 2000);

so what we learn to recognise as categorizations of race and class [gender, ethnicity, age or sexuality] are not just classification or social positions but an amalgam of features of a culture that are read onto bodies as personal dispositions - which themselves have been generated through systems of inscription in the first place.

Skeggs, 2004: 1

In this chapter I have explored the complexities and contradictions that surround knowledge and beliefs about black and white youth, working and/or lower class identities to expose the myriad of signifiers circulating within contemporary social discourse. I have highlighted the connection between my theorisation of the *intertextual* relationship between genres and club / subcultures of dance music, and contemporary identity theorists’ notions of cultural hybridity and interchange, in order

to propose a conception of club cultural identity that recognises cultural and historical situatedness but does not preclude the articulation of new meaning and significance. In the second part of this thesis I analyse how cultural knowledge is represented as hybridized in the Drum 'n' Bass dancing body by tracing the meanings, values and judgements about (club) cultural groups that emerge in the enunciation of similarity and difference.

## Chapter Four Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> The term ‘black’ is used here, and in the remainder of the thesis, to refer to the collective identity category that has been constructed through social discourse. As discussed later in this chapter this identity label is commonly used to group people of African ethnic and racial heritage by assuming commonality by skin colour rather than culture.
- <sup>2</sup> The term ‘white’ is used here to group people of European descent. Similar to the collective identity category of ‘black’, the label ‘white’ assumes commonality by physical appearance, but that which is defined by the absence of skin colour. Whilst I use these terms throughout the thesis I do so to highlight their associated meaning and value in social discourse, and to problematise the essentialising binary opposition that they evoke.
- <sup>3</sup> The hierarchical relationship that results from a binary opposition is here applied to the ways in which specific dominant racial and cultural groups have organised knowledge about the ‘Other’. However, group identity categories such as gender, sexuality and class could also be discussed in this way. Attention to these aspects of identity will be given later in this chapter.
- <sup>4</sup> I also recognise that the identities constructed through the narrative of this thesis are an act of identity ascription.
- <sup>5</sup> This critique can also be applied to the homogenisation of ‘dance music’ by previous club cultural scholars (see Chapter Two).
- <sup>6</sup> Waldron (1995) criticises the concept of multiculturalism for implicit notions of cultural purity and authenticity, stating that cultural delineation will lead to isolationism and cultural stasis. However, liberal theorist, Kymlicka (1995), believes that those in favour of multiculturalism seek to maintain membership of a distinct cultural group rather than wishing simply to preserve the past. He insists that minority cultures also wish to be cosmopolitan and to embrace cultural interchange.
- <sup>7</sup> In light of the discussions in Chapter Three of this thesis I would also add popular music to this list. Although, as noted in Chapter Three, the majority of popular dance music genres from the United States of America have been created and developed by African American artists.
- <sup>8</sup> Similarly, Ware and Back (2002) propose that the racially motivated murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993 by a group of British working class male youths, was prompted by their feelings of disempowerment from a [white] position of cultural and political privilege.
- <sup>9</sup> The term ‘Yardie’ was originally used to refer to drug dealing gangsters from the slum areas of Jamaica but is also now used as a slang term to refer to a youth style and attitude that is particularly associated with African American Hip Hop culture.
- <sup>10</sup> The characterisation of African communities as primitive and bestial was also common in the writing of European colonialists (Gilroy, 1994).
- <sup>11</sup> The term ‘cultural capital’ is taken from the writings of Bourdieu (1984) and refers to ‘class-based knowledge and skills, linguistic and cultural competencies, and a world-view passed on via family’ (Bettie, 2000: 3). The concept of cultural capital widens the identity category of class to include social as well as economic factors.
- <sup>12</sup> However, it is important to acknowledge that these spheres are separate, for example political action or ideological argument is not always tied to the economic (Frow, 1995). Class position is, thus, not unified or non-contradictory and each of the three spheres is a site of struggle and formation, rather than of fixed class positions (Frow, 1995).
- <sup>13</sup> Frow (1995) also critiques Bourdieu’s (1984) focus on the French class system as it limits the model’s use-value in other contexts and at other times.
- <sup>14</sup> Alexander’s (1996) use of the term ‘symbolic marker’ is similar to Appiah’s (2000) concept of ‘identity marker’ introduced at the beginning of this chapter as both



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recognise the social and cultural construction of identity and, thus, the possibility for appropriation, contestation and change. However, Alexander (1996) specifically explores the relationship between those markers that ascribe race *and* class.

<sup>15</sup> The construction of a (young, black, working class) ‘street machismo’ is also clearly gendered as masculine.

<sup>16</sup> MC refers to the ‘master of ceremonies’ who rhymes or ‘toasts’ over recorded tracks played by the DJ.

<sup>17</sup> For further discussion of the complexities of Jamaican Dancehall culture see Hope (2004), Cooper (2000) and Noble (2000).

<sup>18</sup> Bettie defines ‘inherited’ identity as coming from one’s family of origin, whereas ‘chosen’ identities are shaped by resources that are not inherited but desired and emulated. However, the use of the terms ‘public’ and ‘inherited’ should not be taken to assume a biological determinism but rather used to distinguish between the (re)production of a personal identity that may be ascribed to us on grounds of family background and that which is constructed more freely from ‘external’ sources.

<sup>19</sup> As noted earlier in this chapter, this concept can be compared to my theorisation of the inter-relationships between dance music genres in Chapter Three of this thesis.

**Chapter Five**

**Appropriation, cultural ownership and hybridity  
in contemporary popular culture**

**5.1 Introduction**

In Chapter Three of this thesis I argue that it is possible to gain a more nuanced understanding of the affiliations and distinctions between areas of dance music club culture through detailed consideration of the inter-generic relationship between musical styles and their attendant communities. A 'mapping' of sub-styles of electronic dance music, which I characterise as dynamic, multi-centred sets of intertextual traces, provides information regarding the spatial, temporal and ideological contexts of dancing communities, which in turn can illuminate the performance of particular collective, socially expressed, club cultural identities. In Chapter Four I suggest that the knowledge and beliefs regarding collective identities that circulate in social discourse are often communicated through forms of popular culture and the mass media. In this chapter I investigate the (re)production of particular identity constructs in the promotion and consumption of popular music through a consideration of contemporary debates regarding appropriation, cultural ownership and hybridity in relation to music and dance practices. I also explore the historical, social and cultural development of Drum 'n' Bass in relation to these issues to highlight the focus of fieldwork research that will be discussed in the final part of this thesis.

Scholars such as Middleton and Beebe (2002) have identified an increasing eclecticism in contemporary consumption patterns with regards to genres of popular music. As youth sociality has become increasingly focused on spaces used for the collective consumption of music, such as clubs, it is not surprising that such descriptions mirror how some postsubcultural scholars describe involvement in, and movement between, contemporary social groupings (see Chapter One). However, as within the 'archi-genre' of dance music, identifiable sub-genres of popular music clearly exist (dance music being one of them), that are demonstrated in the relatively

high levels of consistency in style labelling throughout the global music retail industry, including the production of niche music magazines (e.g. *Hip Hop Connection*, *Rock Sound*, *Jazzwise*). In Chapter Three of this thesis I argue that a ‘reader’ [clubber] chooses to engage with particular texts [genres and club / sub cultures] rather than others, because of knowledge of the specific possibilities of meaning and value that they will offer. The discursive or rhetorical function of the [musical] genre generates discursive ‘truth effects’, which are both reflective and *formative* of the social and political identities of the ‘users’. This notion is supported further by scholars, such as Bennett (2000), who describe how popular music has become a central means for framing discourses concerning identity.

Whilst the focus of this thesis remains firmly centred on the dance practices associated with the sub-genre of electronic dance music, Drum ‘n’ Bass, participants’ choices regarding which club events they will attend is not led *directly* by conscious association with a particular *dance* ‘genre’; although I argue that dancing is the main activity through which the social and political collective identities of the subculture are expressed in the club environment. As discussed in Chapter Two, there is widespread acknowledgement from scholars of the centrality of dancing to club and rave events; McRobbie notes dance is ‘the motivating force’ (1994: 169) for attendance. However, the improvisatory nature has led some scholars to assume that the dance requires ‘no expertise whatsoever’ (Redhead, 1990: 6), or to ‘gloss over’ the movement content by describing it as individualised and non-specific (Malbon, 1999). As Thomas notes, there are ‘observable patterns and stylistic elements to social dancing’ (2003: 202). Dancing in clubs is also an expression of belonging to and identification with a particular subcultural group (Malbon, 1999); there is ‘sociality at work’ in the way in which people use their bodies to dance (Thomas, 2003: 202).

Despite these convincing arguments regarding the importance of the dance practice in the performance of club cultural identities, attendance at club events is led by ‘what the club night will consist of in terms of music and DJs’ (Malbon, 1999: 60), as well as prior experience or knowledge of the venue, event or clubbing crowd (Malbon, 1999). There is, inherent within this choice, a level of knowledge of the ‘truth effects’, the meanings and values, of the genre (as a learned and dynamic process).<sup>1</sup> It is, therefore, important to investigate the ways in which understanding regarding

particular racial, class-based and gendered identities in social discourse becomes associated with particular musical genres, for this is one of the ways that participants will select one genre over another.

As noted in Chapter Four of this thesis, racial imagery has become central to the organisation of the modern world (Dyer, 2000: 539). In relation to popular music contemporary academic scholars describe the racialisation of particular styles; for example Ware and Back (2002) note how musical genres such as Hip Hop and RnB have been classified as 'black' music, whereas Country and Western, and Rock are seen as 'white' forms.<sup>2</sup> In the context of dance music, Huq (2006) describes the genres Garage and Jungle as 'black' and Techno as 'white'. Although Stephens (2000) acknowledges that such racial classifications do not necessarily directly reflect the music's structural origins or the audiences, as performers or consumers, that sustain them, scholars frequently claim the appropriation of cultural forms when, for example, those that have been categorised as 'black' are produced or consumed by 'whites'.<sup>3</sup>

The effects of meaning and value that become associated with particular genres (club cultures and identities) are historically and culturally dependent rather than essential. Therefore, a diachronic and synchronic mapping of the development of dance music sub-genres provides information regarding the wider rhetorical features of the generic frame and a greater understanding of the genres' affiliations and distinctions, which, in turn, provide guidelines regarding the expected performances of particular club / sub cultural identities.<sup>4</sup> In this chapter I explore the development of UK Drum 'n' Bass, which was first known as Jungle, to reveal intertextual and inter-generic traces from European and Detroit Techno, UK Breakbeat Hardcore, African American Hip Hop and Jamaican Dancehall and Ragga musical cultures. I am particularly concerned with tracing the meanings, values and judgements about racial, class-based and gendered identities that emerge in the enunciation of club cultural similarity and difference. However, I first consider debates regarding the cultural 'ownership' of music and dance forms in order to highlight the problematic nature of this discourse and consider alternative approaches that use the intertextual concepts of hybridity and cultural interchange.

## 5.2 Issues of cultural ownership / the commercial production of culture

Tricia Rose describes Hip Hop as an ‘Afro-diasporic cultural form’ (Rose, 1994b: 71) that provides a source of identity formation and social status for black, American youth.<sup>5</sup> She argues that the musical genre of Rap is clearly and substantially indebted to African American ‘oral, poetic and protest traditions’ (Rose, 1994b: 72), whilst also acknowledging that it is a product of the post-industrial urban city. She locates the inception of the musical form in New York in the 1970s (see Chapter Three), but describes how Hip Hop has continued to evolve through the 1980s and into the 1990s, across different parts of America where it has taken on local and specific significance. However, the explicit characterisation of Hip Hop culture as a form of ‘*black*, urban renewal’ (Rose, 1994b: 85, my emphasis) infers a racial ownership of the music that can be argued to be problematic as it excludes the involvement of other racial groups (as consumers as well as producers) and perpetuates an essentialising black / white oppositional binary.<sup>6</sup>

Rose’s only description of ‘white’ involvement in Hip Hop culture is restricted to describing the move from local ‘black’ and Hispanic control of the production of, and profit from, Rap music into ‘the hands of larger, white-owned, multinational businesses’ (Rose, 1994b: 83). McRobbie (1999) also notes that in the text *Microphone Fiends* (Ross & Rose, 1994) American scholars describe Rap and Hip Hop as created by black youth, for black youth, and infer that cross-over appeal (to white audiences) occurs only following an artist’s signing with a major record label, invoking a relationship of appropriation. McRobbie (1999) critiques this assumption as it leads too easily to simplistic characterisations of ‘black’ as marginal and ‘white’ as mainstream, as well as ‘black’ as ‘authentic’, and ‘white’ mainstream in opposition to both (‘black’ and authentic): ‘it is often assumed that the two are necessarily aligned; that commercialised music = whitened music’ (Ross, 1989: 69-70). The commercial music sector has also been noted by scholars as gendered, for example Thornton (1995) explores how club participants characterise the ‘mainstream’ as feminised. A discursive connection is, therefore, established between notions of blackness, authenticity and masculinity. This is of interest to my research in Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture as in Chapter Seven of this thesis I discuss how informants’ distance themselves from a feminine ‘mainstream’ in order to associate themselves with a

racially informed, masculine authenticity. However, this reading is also disrupted by participants' class-based affiliations and distinctions.

The characterisation of Rap as a 'black' musical form is in contrast to studies that have been conducted in America, which reveal that up to 70% of Rap records are bought by white youth (Strauss in Middleton & Beebe, 2002). In addition, scholars also note the globalisation of Hip Hop culture and Rap music (Osumare, 2000). In particular there has been a growth in research focusing on the development of Hip Hop in European countries such as Scandinavia (see Ásmundsson, 2001; Fock, 1999; Vestel, 1999), Germany (see Bennett, 1999; Cheesman, 1998), Italy (see Wright, 2000) and France (see Huq, 2006; Poulet, 1993), as well in the Middle East, South America and the Asian Pacific rim (Huq, 2006). These studies reveal how localised communities have developed their own particular style of music that incorporates regional/national linguistic and musical features, from an initial adoption of the US form. Osumare argues that such transnational examples of Hip Hop culture could enable a move away from notions of cultural appropriation as global Hip Hop offers a new model for how cultures interface through music and dance 'that...[is] respectful of origins and at the same time implicitly innovative and representative of indigenous sensibilities' (2000: 337). However, he also describes how the popularisation of Hip Hop is premised on understandings of 'blackness' as associated with authenticity, the ghetto and criminality that have been communicated through forms of popular culture such as the 1970s 'blaxploitation' films. As discussed in Chapter Four, such representations of black expressive culture can be argued to perpetuate racist beliefs.

Ware and Back (2002) describe the stereotype of the 'conniving and parasitic white record producers and company executives' (2002: 230) who exploit black creativity, as one of several archetypal possibilities offered by scholars and critics who are obsessed by limiting 'white' involvement in 'black' music. They argue that a historical diversity of 'white' involvement in 'black' music has been elided in the language of 'appropriation' and argue for a more complex understanding of the relationship between music, race and racism. Using an example of the development of Blues influenced Soul music in the United States of America, they describe a gross simplification of white musicians' contribution to the form, by writers such as Garon (1979). The writer Nelson George essentialises race by describing creativity as a

racial attribute accorded only to those of African racial descent: 'Blacks create then move on. Whites document and then recycle' (in Ware and Black, 2002: 232). Michaels (in Ware & Back, 2002) questions the logic that defines which sounds belong to particular groups and describes this tendency as a form of 'cultural geneticism'. As discussed in Chapter Four, it is problematic to view all people within, for example, the African American racial category, as defined by a singular culture (Appiah in Ware & Back, 2002). A conception of racial ownership of musical forms, therefore, leads to the conflation of 'race' with 'culture'.

The arguments that I have explored in this section that discuss the transmission of styles of music can, of course, be applied to other cultural forms, such as dances. Scholars of African American dance forms, such as Gottschild (2000, 1996), Hill (2000, 1992), Hazzard-Gordon (1990) and Sterns (1968) have discussed the ways in which 'black' dance forms have been appropriated by 'white' social groups. These works provide important information regarding the original proponents and methods of dissemination of dance forms through detailed archival research. However, Gottschild (1996) also engages in debate that infers the racial ownership of cultural forms. She uses the term 'Africanist' to describe those 'concepts and practices that exist in Africa and the African diaspora and have their sources in concepts and practices from Africa' (1996: xiv). Gottschild (1996) describes how the Africanist presence has had a central role in defining the American aesthetic but it has been invisibilized due to a history of racial segregation and discrimination. She identifies 'opposing' Africanist and Europeanist concepts and practices that she describes as both 'fused and interwoven in many aspects' but 'discrete and distinct' (1996: xiv). By Gottschild's own admittance these concepts lend themselves to the problematic 'discussion of binary opposites' (1996: xiv).<sup>7</sup>

Desmond (1997) introduces the term 'transmission', to describe the movement of dance forms across social and cultural groups. She uses this term, as complementary to appropriation, to stress the need to take account of the changes that will take place through the dance's re-inscription in a new context, in terms of resultant signification, as well as modifications to the actual dance practice.<sup>8</sup> Desmond describes the ways in which dance practices originating in lower-class or non-dominant groups are often engaged in a trajectory of 'upward mobility', 'in which the dances are "refined",

“polished”...often desexualised...or codified’ (1997: 34).<sup>9</sup> This class related transmission of dance forms is also often coded in racial terms. Desmond describes the example of Vernon and Irene Castle who became well known among American middle and upper classes for their exhibitions of Ballroom dance. The Castles used “toned down”, “tamed” and “whitened” (1997: 34) social dances that originated in the lower classes and that were predominantly associated with black social groups.<sup>10</sup> This is of particular interest to my research in Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture as writers describe a ‘whitening’ and ‘gentrifying’ of the musical genre in the mid 1990s (see section 5.4).

Desmond (1997) highlights how the appropriation of dance forms is not always constructed through the process of hegemonic groups “borrowing” from the subordinate. In support, she cites the example of the African American ‘Cake-walk’, which originated in the slave era and is thought to be based on mimicking European social partner dances.<sup>11</sup> However, in line with race and ethnic scholars Ware and Back (2002), Desmond (1997) notes that the notion of ‘appropriation’ does not adequately explain the complex interactions between social and cultural groups, and nor does it account for the result of interchange of ideologies and power differentials (that are often productive of racism) that are manifest these dance forms. Desmond (1997) acknowledges that narratives of appropriation often evoke racial binaries of white / black (or Latin / white), which reinforce essentialised notions of cultural production. She also notes that these distinctions, whilst misleading, continue to function powerfully in popular discourse (as I have discussed in Chapter Four). However, Desmond (1997) does not offer an alternative way of conceptualising this process other than suggesting the concepts of hybridity or syncretism, which she does not investigate in detail.

Desmond’s (1997) contributes to the debate regarding racial ownership of cultural forms by highlighting the need for dance scholars to account for the specific context of the dance (in terms of performance as well as origin), as well as the changes that take place at a ‘bodily level’ through detailed movement analysis.<sup>12</sup> She also places dance at the centre of the humanities study of the body by emphasising the way in which dance ‘signals and enacts social identities’ (1997: 49). Desmond (1997) highlights how particular social constructions of racial identities, for example that



associate black with sexuality and sensuality, are mapped onto the dance and consumed by other racial groups (i.e. white) to experience ‘a measure of “blackness” without paying the social penalty of “being” black’ (1997: 37). In Chapter Eight of this thesis I consider this argument in relation to Drum ‘n’ Bass dance practices. However, Desmond’s descriptions of the ‘whitewashing’ of Hip Hop (1997: 39), fail to move beyond the restrictions that she has already identified as present in such characterisations of danced appropriations. She does suggest the term ‘body bilingualism’, to describe the movement practices of American television star, Bill Cosby, who combines ‘African American movement markers’ with a ‘white...upper-middle-class professional demeanor’ (1997: 39-40). However, the concepts of hybridization and bilingualism remain theoretically underdeveloped.<sup>13</sup>

In an intertextual analysis of the theatre dance work, *ma* (Khan, 2004), Sanders (2008) introduces the concept of hybridity to describe the existence of multiple dance genres in Khan’s dance work that comprise a style she refers to as Contemporary Kathak. Sanders discusses how the choreographer and performer Khan has rejected the term ‘fusion’ to describe his movement style as it suggests an overly simplistic response to what he describes as the ‘confusion of having two physical systems overwritten in his body’ (Sanders, 2008: 55).<sup>14</sup> Sanders describes how formalist modes of dance analysis assume a unitary outcome, which has led to critical responses to this dance work as flawed through an apparent tension (‘jarring elements’) between contradictory styles (of Kathak and contemporary dance) and their associated aesthetic values (modernism / classicism, western / eastern and experimental / traditional). However, Sanders (2008) uses Derrida’s theory of the discursive function of *différance* to situate this ambiguity as productive instead of destructive of (multiple) meaning(s).<sup>15</sup> In addition, Derrida’s notion of the *pharmakon* (a Greek term meaning both poison and cure) demonstrates what Sanders (2008) refers to as a ‘productive *undecidability*’ in Khan’s movement language. Kathak and contemporary dance (and their value systems) are described by Sanders as present simultaneously in an ‘*inseparable flux*’ (2008: 60).

I support Sanders’s (2008) argument that intertextuality is potentially useful in the analysis of danced hybridities and use this methodology to conceptualise the Drum ‘n’ Bass dancing body in this thesis. Sanders notes that by seeking out difference, instead

of considering it as disruptive, intertextuality ‘embraces contradiction and contextual complexity’ (2008: 69). The acceptance of difference as productive of meaning will be used in Chapter Eight of this thesis where I argue that club-goers embody contradictory and ambiguous values. In addition, there are similarities between Sanders’ intertextual understanding of difference, to that described by cultural hybridity theorists discussed in Chapter Four, which I use to develop the central hypothesis of this thesis. However, Sanders’s research focuses on a theatre dance performance style that, by the admission of the choreographer, is predicated on the existence of two specific dance styles: Kathak and contemporary dance. In an analysis of Drum ‘n’ Bass social dance practice I am interested in how cultural knowledge, that is formative of the rhetorical aspects of the subculture, is represented in the expression of personal and collective identities through the dancing body.

The notion of hybridity in popular music has been discussed by scholars Middleton and Beebe (2002), who focus on the particular example of Rock / Rap hybrids that became popular in the late 1990s. They acknowledge that a borrowing by ‘white’ culture from ‘black’ has a long history in popular music, for example, the artist Elvis Presley has often been described as appropriating an African American vocal style. However, Middleton and Beebe (2002) situate Rock / Rap hybrids as a new phenomenon, which take advantage of increasingly eclectic modes of contemporary music consumption. Their research is of particular interest to this study as Middleton and Beebe (2002) explore the complex relationship between racial and class-based identities, which I have highlighted to be of particular importance in the performance of Drum ‘n’ Bass club cultural identity.

These scholars initially describe how bands such as Kid Rock, Limp Bizkit, Sugar Ray and Korn successfully marketing the Rock / Rap hybrid to white audiences by associating themselves with signifiers of blackness from Rap music, such as use of a turntable or B-boy clothing, whilst dissipating ‘racial otherness’ through association with ‘white’ Rock: ‘Rock / Rap hybrids offer white suburbanites perfect balance of familiarity and otherness’ (Middleton & Beebe, 2002: 161).<sup>16</sup> In an analysis of Limp Bizkit’s music video for the record, *Nookie* (1999, Flip Records), Middleton and Beebe (2002) describe how the band’s front-man, Durst, moves between two scenes that are replete with ‘black’ and ‘white’ cultural signs, and their associated meaning

and values. The first is an urban setting covered with graffiti where Durst is dressed in B-boy clothing and surrounded by groups of dancing women of different races (similar to those featured in Hip Hop and RnB videos). The second is a live band performance scene where the crowd, who are almost entirely white, are head-banging and crowd surfing.<sup>17</sup> These scholars describe how the lack of a black masculine presence in the video demonstrates a deliberate avoidance of threat to Durst's white masculinity (from direct association with a racial 'Other'), leaving him as the master of both domains and the elements from black culture as objects for consumption by the white consumer. Whilst Middleton and Beebe (2002) introduce the potentially progressive notion of hybridity their discussion narrates a 'white' 'orientalist' and imperialist appropriation of 'black' culture.

Middleton and Beebe (2002) acknowledge the close relationship of identity signifiers of race and class, stating that Rock / Rap 'hybrids consistently re-map racial otherness onto class otherness' (2002: 161). For example, they describe how Limp Bizkit and Kid Rock employ images of low class 'white trash', for example locating part of a video in an American trailer park, to buy into a form of class based authenticity, 'which is premised on a supposed cultural affiliation with black people articulated through common class status' (Middleton & Beebe, 2002: 162). These scholars note how the videos that accompany these hybrid musical forms actively replicate dominant knowledge about 'black' and 'white' cultural forms. However, they also identify political and aesthetic ambiguity in the lyrics and video content that could be interpreted as social critique. The concept of using class-based imagery to establish an association with race, in this case to suggest notions of 'authenticity' and alterity, is significant to my study of Drum 'n' Bass club culture as I explore how club-goers' use of working class identity imagery can be argued to access a valued 'black' authenticity. Whilst Middleton and Beebe (2002) assert that 'it seems rare to find forms of hybridity...that attempt to bring forth rather than repress the challenging history of their sources' (2002: 167), they do suggest that Drum 'n' Bass is one form that is negotiating complex interchanges between 'black' and 'white'. The following section explores the inter-generic and inter-cultural development of Drum 'n' Bass in relation to these issues.

### 5.3 From the Jungle to Drum 'n' Bass

Jungle evolved from the UK Breakbeat Hardcore scene but its origins lay in US Hip Hop, Detroit and European Techno, and Jamaican Reggae and Ragga. Early Jungle producers, such as DJ Hype, Aphrodite, DJ Crystl, DJ SS and Danny Breaks were initially involved in the London Reggae and Hip Hop sound system culture but became attracted to the rave scene because of the new hyper-syncopated broken rhythms of Breakbeat Hardcore (Reynolds, 1998). This developing music is described as having offered predominantly black, British, male youth an alternative to the increasingly political genre of US Gangsta Rap, Britrap and Hip House styles that were declining in popularity (Breaks in Reynolds, 1998).<sup>18</sup> London 'B-boys' began to create their own sound through an intertextual and inter-generic mixing of elements from Reggae, Ragga, Hip Hop, Breakbeat Hardcore and Techno.<sup>19</sup>

By 1990 the sounds and themes used for Breakbeat Hardcore tracks had become dystopic and were often referred to by producers and DJs as Darkcore (Reynolds, 1998). For example, 4 Hero's *Mr Kirk's Nightmare* (1990, Reinforced Records) includes a conversation where the Star Trek character Mr Kirk is informed that his seventeen-year-old son has died due to a drug overdose. Their 1992 concept EP *Where's The Boy* (Reinforced Records), which has a coffin on the front of the black record sleeve, also contains four tracks that refer to Ecstasy deaths due to heatstroke: *Burning*, *Cooking Up Your Brain*, *Time to Get Ill* and *Where's the Boy (Trial By Ecstasy)*. The macabre character of Breakbeat Hardcore can be argued to be evident in contemporary Drum 'n' Bass culture as the micro-genre Darkside or Dark Drum 'n' Bass uses particularly morbid themes for tracks, and club-goers display a fascination with and attraction to the qualities of 'darkness' and 'dirtiness'. However, I also argue that these characteristics are valued by Drum 'n' Bass club-goers because of their association with the identity of a racialised 'Other' (see Chapter Eight).

In 1991 London's Forest Gate producer Lennie De Ice released the Breakbeat Hardcore track *We Are I.E.* on the small independent I:E Records, which included a 'heavy' Ragga influenced bassline, sampled gunshots and parts of the break section from The Winstons's Funk and Soul track *Amen Brother* (1969, Metromedia Records).<sup>20</sup> This track is cited as the first 'proto-Jungle' release due to its combination

of broken beats, Ragga bassline and Hip Hop influenced samples (Belle-Fortune, 2004). However, in the same year Paul Ibiza released a white label track on Ibiza Records called *Jungle Techno*, which was the first record to use the term 'Jungle' and led to some artists adopting its full title to describe the new style: 'the term jungle techno described it perfectly because it was a mixture of European and sound system traditions...That mixture became the British sound' (DJ Kemistry in Collin, 1997: 257).<sup>21 22</sup> These comments clearly acknowledge Jungle's intertextual, inter-generic and inter-cultural development through a combination of European, African American and Jamaican musical styles.

House and Techno DJs, such as Fabio and Grooverider, began to develop new Breakbeat Hardcore sounds during 1991 whilst playing at weekly London club events such as the Reggae influenced Sunday afternoon *Roast*, which was initially held at Turnmills and later moved to Linford Studios, and the Hardcore event *Rage* at Heaven (Garratt, 1998). The Thursday club night event *Rage* had opened in 1988 as an Acid House night but by 1991 had become a place for experimentation with new Breakbeat that marked the beginning of the movement's transition to Jungle and separation from Breakbeat Hardcore:

[Fabio and Grooverider] took over as the main DJs at the end of 1991, and made the night a laboratory for breakbeat science. They would play entire records at the wrong speed, play techno tracks over speeded-up hip-hop breakbeats, fast-cut and mix sections of records together, forever searching for a sound they said they could feel but never quite reach.

Garratt, 1998: 271

The club event *AWOL* (A Way of Life), which opened at the Paradise Club in Islington, London in the autumn of 1992, played a mixture of Techno and Reggae and Ragga influenced Breakbeat Hardcore (Garratt, 1998). DJs such as Kenny Ken, Mickey Finn, Dr S Gachet, DJ Randell and Darren Jay played regularly at these early influential events and their audience included future Drum 'n' Bass DJs and producers Kemistry and Storm, DJ Rap, Photek, Dillinja, Ed Rush and Goldie (Brewster & Broughton, 1998). These artists' experiences at Breakbeat Hardcore club events in London, such as *AWOL*, in the early 1990s can be argued to have had a direct influence on the subsequent development of Jungle as the style contains characteristics from each of the musical genres of Breakbeat, Techno and Ragga.<sup>23</sup>

Breakbeat Hardcore and Jungle DJs played at rave events across the UK in the early 1990s, whilst the increase in number of pirate radio stations playing Hardcore Rave styles provided a forum for the sharing of new tracks and development of the Jungle sound (Belle-Fortune, 2004; Reynolds, 1998). The Breakbeat Hardcore and developing Jungle scene supported and embraced the illegality of both rave and pirate radio culture, which is shown in the title of Rum and Black's 1990 release *Fuck the Legal Stations* (Shut Up and Dance Records).<sup>24</sup> A connection with criminality remains evident in contemporary Drum 'n' Bass club culture, where club-goers value an association with illegal and subversive activities (see Chapters Seven and Eight). The style of MC-ing that developed at rave events and that was used for Breakbeat Hardcore pirate radio during the early 1990s comprised a hybrid combination of Jamaican patois and Ragga chants with colloquialisms from Hardcore Rave and African American Hip Hop, and cockney slang (Reynolds, 1998):

last caller, we're gonna have to go. Respect going out to you mate!  
 Hold it down caller, *rude boy* FOR YEEEEAAARS! Believe me,  
 send this one out to you last caller! From the Dominator! Send this  
 one out to you, mate. You're a *bad boy*, BELIEF!!! 90-3, the Index,  
 comin' on strong, *belief!!!*...we're comin' on, we're comin on strong,  
 believe...Yeah, London Town...Wicked. Shout to the South London  
 crew. Respect.

MC no. 1 for Index FM Christmas Eve 1992,  
 in Reynolds, 1998: 233

The inter-cultural and inter-generic influence of Jamaican musical culture on Drum 'n' Bass can also be identified in the naming of the genre. The term Jungle is thought to be taken from the Ragga chant, 'alla the junglists', that was sampled from an imported Jamaica sound system 'yard tape' by British early Hip House and Breakbeat artist Rebel MC in 1991. Reynolds (1998) describes this chant as referring to an area in Kingston, Jamaica called Tivoli Gardens that is referred to locally as 'the jungle'. However, the origin of the term is contested by many involved in the scene; DJ Fabio and Sarah 'Groove Connection' Sandy state that 'jungle' was first heard on the dancefloor of the Rage event at night club Heaven, whilst Jumping Jack Frost insists that the word was used to describe early bass-heavy House tracks by producers such as Kid Bachelor as early as 1989 (Garratt, 1998).<sup>25</sup> As noted in Chapter Four, the term 'jungle' is a racialised term that evokes images of the urban city and its

associated characteristics of violence, danger, transgression and 'ghettocentricity'. In Chapters Seven and Eight of this thesis I argue that these oppositional meanings and values form an important part of contemporary Drum 'n' Bass club cultural identity.

From late 1992 Jungle developed strong associations with criminality through the use of inter-textual samples from gangster films such as Scorsese's *Goodfellas* (1990) and the theme track from *The Godfather* (1972). Artist and track names also reflect an obsession with guns, such as the production teams Tek 9 and AK47 and records *Hitman* (Marvelous Caine, 1994, IQ Records) and *Sound Murderer* (Remarc, 1993, White House Records) (Reynolds, 1998). This is of particular interest to my empirical research in Drum 'n' Bass club culture as I identify club goers' attraction to the genre's subversive status through links with guns and crime (see Chapter Eight). Morbid themes, which were popular in earlier Darkcore tracks, continued to influence some producers such as Origin Unknown's (also known as Ant Miles and Andy C) *Valley of the Shadows* (1993, Ram Records) and Ed Rush and Nico's *Bludclot Artattack* (1994, No U-Turn) (Reynolds, 1998). Concurrently other Breakbeat / Jungle producers began to release tracks that demonstrated a stronger inter-generic connection to Jamaican Ragga, such as SL2's *On A Ragga Trip* (1992, XL Recordings) (Garratt, 1998). The development of distinct styles within Jungle indicates a fragmentation of the genre which began in the early 1990s, with some artists choosing to emphasise Ragga and Reggae sounds, whilst others pursued a more dystopic, industrial and formalist character (see section 5.4).

The use of MCs to accompany Jungle DJs at both rave and club events became common from 1993 (Belle-Fortune, 2004) and demonstrates the incorporation of Jamaican sound system and African American Hip Hop musical practices into the developing club culture. This is a feature that continues to the present day, although is more common at Jump Up Drum 'n' Bass events (see section 5.4). The role of the MC is to excite the crowd using 'toasts' such as 'Big it Up!': a call for the crowd to applaud the DJ; 'Brock Out!': used to instruct the crowd to dance with abandon; and 'Reeee-wind!': a call for the DJ to rewind part of a record to play it again; as well as longer chants that are often increasing in volume and tone mirroring the track's musical structure.<sup>26</sup> The use of 'dub plates', one-off exclusive tracks recorded on acetate rather than vinyl that are only released to DJs, became common from the early

1990s and can also be traced to Jamaican sound system culture (Reynolds, 1998). The incorporation of Reggae and Ragga sounds and traditions encouraged many African and West Indian British youth to attend Jungle rave and club events at this time: ‘as Jungle got bigger and it became a black thing, it just drew all the raggas’ (Chambers in Collin, 1997: 257). This is in clear contrast to empirical data collated for my research in contemporary Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture where a large majority of participants are of Caucasian ethnicity.

The combination of Ragga samples, which often includes homophobic, violent or sexist lyrics with themes of violence or criminal activity, became increasingly popular in 1994 (Belle-Fortune, 2004). The 1994 release of *Incredible* (Renk Records) by M Beat and British Ragga star General Levy, and Shy FX and UK Apachi’s *Original Nuttah* (SOUR) brought Jungle to the attention of the general public, attracting a large number of new followers but also national media interest (Belle-Fortune, 2004; Garratt, 1998). By the end of 1994 music journalists describe how ‘white’ club-goers were becoming increasingly alienated by the extreme content of Ragga influenced lyrics as Jamaican Reggae’s values of harmony and togetherness, which had been incorporated into some early Jungle tracks alongside classic US Hip Hop and Funk breaks, had been replaced by tracks describing ‘*Bad Bwoys who were Wicked In Bed, on their way to Burn the House Down*’ (Belle-Fortune, 2004: 19, my emphasis). These participants began to describe Jungle rave and club events as containing ‘moody vibes, moody people and moody music’ (Collin, 1997: 260) and there was an increase in criminality;

a lot of criminals and dealers got involved in the scene because it was easy pickings....It did attract a lot of undesirables because it was such an easy vibe, they didn’t have major searches for weapons then, nobody had heard of bringing a weapon to a rave.

DJ Kemistry in Collin, 1997: 260-261

The suggestion that ‘white’ club-goers were alienated by Ragga influenced Jungle because of its association with criminality, violence and explicit sexuality is in contrast to my empirical research in contemporary Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture where I describe how club-goers embody these values in dance movement (see Chapters Seven and Eight). It can be argued that ‘white’ club-goers disassociation from Jungle in 1994 is the result of their positioning of ‘black’ British youth (who had begun to



attend events in greater numbers at this time) as associated with these club cultural values, which is informed by a historically determined notion of the racialised 'Other' (see Chapter Four).<sup>27</sup> In contemporary Drum 'n' Bass club culture 'white' participants' embodiment of these qualities (in an environment that is dominated by 'white' youth) therefore, demonstrates a potential orientalist 'appropriation' of values from 'black' expressive culture. However, this argument is problematic as it fails to acknowledge the inter-generic, inter-cultural development of the genre.

Jungle artists' incorporation of Jamaican Reggae and Ragga sounds and traditions is described as having initiated a change in clubbers' drug use from the rave drug Ecstasy to Marijuana: 'no E's – pure weed smoking' (Chambers in Collin, 1997: 257).<sup>28</sup> This association assisted in building Jungle's reputation as depressing and moody music rather than euphoric and clearly distinguishes this club culture from others within the dance music category (see Chapter Three):

I think the problem lies with the DJs. The music they play is so depressing, it could never in a million years make people ecstatic, joyous, carefree and loving. In fact it is more likely to make them frightened.

Anon in Collin, 1997: 260<sup>29</sup>

In the national and musical press Jungle was also linked to the increasing crack cocaine problem in British inner cities (Collin, 1997). Whilst many producers released tracks that berated the use of such drugs, journalistic accounts of club culture describe the use of Crack Cocaine in Jungle events in the early 1990s (see Collin, 1997). This was accompanied by DJs' and some clubbers' extravagant consumption, which was demonstrated through the wearing of male designer casual-wear and the drinking of expensive champagnes (Reynolds, 1998; Collin, 1997). Links with drugs, criminality and ostentatious displays of wealth during this period have a clear comparison with the values and activities associated with American Gangsta Rap fans and producers (Quinn, 1996). In addition, descriptions of female club-goers' clothing and dance movement demonstrates the continued influence of Jamaican Dancehall on Jungle club and rave culture; 'girls in skin-tight hot pants, bustiers and micro-skirts, dropping to a panther-style half crouch and flexing their abdomens with the kind of risqué, confrontational sexuality patented by *raga* star Patra' (Reynolds, 1998: 251, my emphasis). This is of particular interest to my research as in Chapter Seven of this

thesis I describe the use of similar movement language in the performances of female Drum 'n' Bass club-goers.

The dominant inter-generic and inter-cultural traces from Jamaican and African American musical culture have resulted in a 'racial branding' of Jungle as 'black' music (Huq, 2006). Reynolds (1998) also acknowledges the racialisation of the genre, but makes this connection through an association of a black racial identity with working class status: 'the true meaning of jungalist is defined not by race, but by class, in so far as all working class urban youth are 'niggas' in the eyes of authority' (Reynolds, 1998: 248). He depicts 'Junglists' as 'potential criminals' who have been excluded from British society, 'inhabiting the same run-down tower-blocks and council estates, being harassed by the police, living for marijuana, breakbeats and b-b-b-bass' (Reynolds, 1998: 248). Whilst Reynolds appears to dismiss the relevance of racial identity his comments evoke a 'junglist' authenticity, which is premised on the socially constructed notion of the 'ghetto' that associates 'black' racial identity with working class status (see Chapter Four). Although it is possible to establish that many of the early Jungle producers, such as DJ Hype, were brought up in working class and lower working class suburbs of South London (Belle-Fortune, 2004), without further empirical research this statement remains unsubstantiated. However, these descriptions are of interest to my research as they provide information regarding the identity constructs (and their associated meanings and values) that circulate in Jungle / Drum 'n' Bass culture.<sup>30</sup> I argue that it is such identity constructs that, in part, comprise the 'truth effects' of the genre / subculture and become formative of the social and political identities of club-goers.

Whilst scholars, such as Huq (2006), describe Jungle as a 'black' musical form, prominent producers working within the scene prefer to describe the music as urban 'British' rather than 'black': 'it was very ethnic, but it wasn't a black thing. It was an *urbanite* thing' (Goldie in Garratt, 1998: 272). Some writers have suggested that inter-textual references to African diasporic culture in early tracks could be indicative of African British and West Indian British youth's desire to reassert control over the music of African or West Indian origin that were appropriated by Caucasian British through Acid House rave and dance club culture (Collin, 1997).<sup>31</sup> However, *Shut Up and Dance*, who are often cited as early proponents of Jungle, state that the culture

was truly multi-racial (Belle-Fortune, 2004; Reynolds, 1998). DJ Jumping Jack Frost draws attention to Jungle's distinct combination of European and second wave Detroit Techno, Breakbeat Hardcore with Jamaican Reggae and Ragga styles and states that,

some of the most important records weren't made by black people. This is a multi-cultural society and that music is a product of that multi-cultural society. If it was a black thing alone I don't think it would be what it is now.

Jumping Jack Frost in Collin, 1997: 257

The search for new British identities at a time of cultural and political change is a common theme in writings regarding the development of Jungle culture. Goldie states that young people were searching for something that was British following substantial importation of youth orientated products from America:

we grew up in an era where youth culture was something which was imported from the US...and everything from the music to Adidas sneakers to whatever was imported. We had no identity from here. If we didn't have America to look at we'd have been like every other fucking Eastern Bloc country. It's the youth culture that changed us. And prior to rave, barring punk, this is the only thing that was original UK shit.

Goldie in Marcus, 2006, n.p.

Garratt also describes how the inter-cultural development of Jungle is reflective of 'identities that...[were] British, that reflect our experiences growing up in multi-cultural cities' (Garratt, 1998: 281). Whilst scholars' claim that the musical style of Jungle reflects a range of identities from 'multi-cultural' Britain, later descriptions of club audiences do not reflect this cultural diversity. As noted above, music scholars describe the alienation of white audiences in 1994. Furthermore, the development of a new direction for the genre from 1993, that emphasised formalist influences from the genres of Detroit and European Techno, was accompanied by a significant change in audience base from one that was initially racially mixed to one that became dominated by Caucasian youth.

#### 5.4 New directions in Drum 'n' Bass

In an attempt to move away from increasingly 'negative' associations some Jungle producers began to concentrate on constructing complex drum and bass driven tracks rather than using Ragga influenced lyrics and samples (Reynolds, 1998, Garratt, 1998). The term Drum 'n' Bass was used to describe this new musical direction and has subsequently been adopted to refer to all sub-styles within the genre.<sup>32</sup> However, key African British and West Indian British artists in the mid 1990s began to object to the use of the new term Drum 'n' Bass, because of a perceived racial and class-based split between 'black', working class Jungle and 'white', middle class Drum 'n' Bass: 'I think there was a subtext with Drum & Bass meaning white, friendly, middle-class. Jungle meaning 'A bad boy ting' (Bret in Belle-Fortune, 2004: 21). Jamaican British MC Five-O suggests that producers began to make Drum 'n' Bass from 1993 to accommodate white audiences: 'Drum & Bass is a white bwoys' bizniss' (sic, cited in Belle-Fortune, 2004: 21). Gilbert and Pearson (1999) also draw a distinction between Jungle and Drum 'n' Bass, stating that Jungle emerged from largely (though not solely) 'black', working class communities of South East London, whilst Drum 'n' Bass was adopted by 'white' middle class audiences.

The characterisation of Drum 'n' Bass as consumed by predominantly 'white' youth accurately reflects the demographic of club-goers that I have observed during fieldwork studies in contemporary UK club culture (see Chapters Seven and Eight). Reynolds (1998) estimates that from the early 1990s more than fifty percent of Drum 'n' Bass producers have been 'white', and from the mid 1990s this figure has increased. Drum 'n' Bass club culture can, thus, be characterised as dominated by club-goers of Caucasian ethnicity (in contrast to Jungle, which is described as having mixed or predominantly African British or West Indian British club audiences). Informants interviewed as part of this research also claim that Drum 'n' Bass fans are of a 'middle class' social status, and through a distancing from working class values associate themselves with 'middle class' identities (see Chapter Seven). However, their movement material indicates the embodiment of values traditionally associated with the working classes. These contradictory findings indicate that complex systems of value operate within contemporary Drum 'n' Bass club culture, which will be explored in detail in Chapters Seven and Eight of this thesis.

The mid to late 1990s can be characterised as a period of fragmentation and growth for Drum 'n' Bass, as artists forged a number of new directions for the style that demonstrate intertextual links with a variety of associated genres. London producers Fabio, Goldie, 4 Hero, Omni Trio, Foul Play and LTJ Bukem began to produce fast polyrhythmic broken beat tracks that were strongly influenced by Soul, Funk, House and Techno and contained ambient, soothing textural layers (Reynolds, 1998). Tracks such as *Journey from the Light* (4 Hero, 1993, Reinforced Records), *Return to Atlantis* (LTJ Bukem, 1993, Good Looking Records) and *Open Your Mind* (Foul Play, 1993, Moving Shadow) transformed the Hardcore and Ragga influenced sounds of Jungle into a style that became known as Intelligent Drum n Bass (IDB) or Ambient Jungle (Reynolds, 1998).<sup>33 34</sup> Reynolds describes the influence of these styles as 'gentrifying' the genre by bringing 'finesse, sophistication, upward mobility...real class' (1998: 348). These comments evoke writers' descriptions of Techno as associated with white, middle-class intellectualism (see Chapter Three) and provide evidence for Jungle producers' claims for a racial and class-based divide in the scene.

Further fragmentation of the scene in 1995 led to the development of three sub-genres of Drum 'n' Bass: Tech Step, Hard Step and Jump Up. Darkcore tracks of the early 1990s influenced the sub-genre Tech Step, which focused on exploring timbre as well as bass by using Techno influenced synthetic and sparse industrial noises such as bleeps and squelches over distorted bass-lines and harsh snare drum sounds (Anon, 2005a).<sup>35</sup> The genre became known for its heavy industrial, yet Funk influenced tracks such as those featured on Ed Rush and Optical's *Wormhole* LP (Virus, 1998) that were released during the late 1990s (Anon, 2005a). Whilst Tech Step emphasised inter-generic references to Detroit and European Techno genres, Hardstep and Jump Up Drum 'n' Bass continued to be influenced by Jamaican Ragga and American Hip Hop. Hardstep was initially pioneered by producers such as Grooverider and is characterised by faster 'steppy' drum patterns and the use of deep or 'phat' rolling Ragga basslines that were reminiscent of early Jungle tracks (Livewire, 2006).<sup>36</sup> Jump Up tracks also contains deep synthesised Ragga basslines but uses highly energetic, fast paced drum loops, which are US Funk influenced and less dark in tone than Hardstep and Tech Step styles (Anon, 2005d). The name Jump Up was adopted to describe producers' conscious move away from dystopic sounds; their aim was to

make clubbers literally 'jump up' and dance (Anon, 2005d). Some tracks within this genre also use direct intertextual samples from Hip Hop and Gangsta Rap records, such as in L Double and Shy FX's *The Shit* (1996, Flex Records).<sup>37</sup>

In the mid to late 2000s the genre of Drum 'n' Bass incorporates a number of 'sub' and 'micro' genres.<sup>38</sup> Tech Step, and its predecessor Darkcore, have continued to influence contemporary producers who release beat-driven, 'dark' tracks under record labels such as Renegade Hardware creating a sub-genre known as Dark Drum 'n' Bass or Darkside. Jump Up remains popular in the contemporary Drum 'n' Bass scene with artists, at the time of writing, including Mickey Finn, DJ Zinc, Mampi Swift, Andy C and Chase and Status. Contemporary Drum 'n' Bass club events are often, though not always, organised by DJs who are known for playing *either* Darkside or Jump Up tracks, which will, in turn, attract different audiences (see Chapter Seven). Whilst fieldwork data discussed in Chapter Seven of this thesis reveals internal class-based distinctions between sub-genres of Drum 'n' Bass, there is little difference in club-goers' movement practices. There is a clearer distinction in the promotion and organisation of club events between Darkside and Jump Up, and the third contemporary sub-style of Drum 'n' Bass, Liquid. This style uses vocals reminiscent of House and Disco tracks alongside broken beats and Jazz and Funk inflected rhythms (Anon, 1998). Whilst maintaining the characteristic breakbeat drum rhythms of Drum 'n' Bass, Liquid's inter-generic association with House music has encouraged more women into the previously male dominated scene (Reubin, 2006; FD, 2005).<sup>39</sup> <sup>40</sup> In my empirical research in contemporary club culture the audience composition is notably different at Liquid events when compared to Dark Drum 'n' Bass or Jump Up (see Chapter Seven).

The racial branding of Jungle as a 'black' musical form in the early 1990s reflected dominant inter-generic influences from Jamaican Dancehall and Ragga and African American Hip Hop musical cultures. However, since the fragmentation and diversification of Drum 'n' Bass in the early 1990s the musical genre has incorporated stylistic influences from a range of dance music sub-genres. Despite these *stylistic* changes Drum 'n' Bass club culture continues to demonstrate significant inter-cultural 'traces' from Jamaican Reggae and Ragga, and US Hip Hop. For example, many Drum 'n' Bass events use MCs to accompany the DJ, whose lyrics often contain

references to criminal, violent or homophobic behaviour (see Chapter Eight). In addition, club-goers use Hip Hop and Dancehall terminology including 'ree-spect' and the use of negative terms such as 'bad', 'rude' and 'wicked' as positive affirmations. The influence of Hip Hop gang culture, which values a territorial loyalty is also evident in Belle-Fortune's comments that discuss Drum 'n' Bass ideology: 'your crew will always be your crew, whether it involves your MC, DJ / Producer, computer programmer, barber, carpenter or the guy who's always on-call with the weed' (2004: 24). Whilst influences from Hip Hop and Jamaican Ragga and Reggae culture are prominent in all contemporary sub-genres of Drum 'n' Bass, fieldwork data indicates that club-goers express contradictory and ambiguous views with regards to some of these values (see Chapters Seven and Eight).

In the introduction to this chapter I reinforce how club-goers choose to engage in particular club cultures rather than others because of the specific possibilities of meaning and value that they will offer. These 'truth effects' can be understood as the rhetoric of the genre, and is both reflective and formative of the identities of the 'users'. Through an exploration of the historical and cultural development of Drum 'n' Bass club culture I have been able to identify inter-generic influences from the musical cultures of Hip Hop and Dancehall that have contributed significantly to the development of the generic frame and its associated 'truth effects' (such as the values of danger, transgression and criminality). Complex constructions of racial and class-based identities, which play on changing meanings and values attributed to 'black' expressive cultures in social discourse, are performed by 'white' consumers in Drum 'n' Bass club culture. With the understanding that 'when discourse is linked to a particular genre, the process by which it is produced and received is mediated through its relationship to prior discourse' (Briggs & Bauman in Frow, 2006: 48), in Chapters Seven and Eight of this thesis I trace how meanings and values from African American Hip Hop and Jamaican Dancehall combine with those associated with Detroit and European Techno to become articulated in the Drum 'n' Bass dancing body. As I note in Chapter Four of this thesis, whilst inter-generic and inter-cultural 'traces' indicate the existence of shared meanings and values, they does not preclude the articulation of new meaning and significance.

Previous accounts of the ‘white’ consumption of ‘black’ expressive forms have been described in the language of appropriation with implicit notions of cultural ownership. However, these accounts do not recognise how increasingly intertwined and overlapping histories, such as those evident in the historical development of Drum ‘n’ Bass, make separation of self and ‘Other’ increasingly problematic (Back, 2002a). As I continue to argue in the final chapters of this thesis, narratives of appropriation do not sufficiently account for the inter-cultural development of dance music genres, such as Jungle / Drum ‘n’ Bass and the hybrid identities that form an integral part of their generic structure.

## 5.5 Conclusions

Drum n' bass is old and new, drugged and clean, veteran and fresh,  
black and white, commercial and underground, ambient and hardcore,  
ever-expanding, changing, mutating, rolling and moving.  
Destination unknown - author unknown.

sic, EazyBoy, 2005, n.p.

The electronic dance music sub-genre of Drum ‘n’ Bass is replete with contradiction and ambiguity. Gilbert and Pearson describe the style as occupying a ‘double-space’ (1999: 79), as they note that it appeals both to audiences as a ‘black’ musical form, and to fans of the avant-garde.<sup>41</sup> Drum ‘n’ Bass tracks are described as ‘intra-dimensional’ as they include fast, frenetic breakbeat drum rhythms, combined with a slow ‘heavy’ bass line (Gilbert & Pearson, 1999). Whilst the bass line is set at a Dub Reggae speed (70-80 beats per minute), the drum rhythms work in double time. Drum ‘n’ Bass follows the standard dance music 4/4 time structure, but moves away from the ‘four-to-the-floor’ kick drum used in other styles such as House and Techno. Noys describes the combination of broken beat rhythms and undulating bass line as creating a ‘harsh and metallic, yet also danceable groove’ (1995: 321). Whilst Drum ‘n’ Bass is able to maintain a distinctly identifiable style, it also demonstrates strong inter-generic connections with a variety of genres, some of which have been noted as located outside of the archi-genre of dance music.



The notion of musical and cultural hybridity is prominent in writings examining the style of Drum 'n' Bass. Gilbert and Pearson describe the creation of the genre at the 'intersection' of the dance music styles Hardcore, Hip Hop and Reggae (Gilbert and Pearson, 1999). Noys (1995) refers to the genre as a form of 'Techno Hip Hop' to emphasise the combination of electronic futurism with broken beat rhythms. Scholars describe influences from Jamaican musical culture, such as the use of Reggae samples and Dub Reggae basslines, and the use of an MC toasting over the records at club events. Noys (1995) also emphasises the influences from Hip Hop culture, such as the use of graffiti graphics by record labels and shops to promote tracks, and the language used by participants within the scene. Journalistic writers have described the early Jungle scene as reflective of a multi-cultural Britain: 'a mix 'n' blend of black and white' (Reynolds, 1998), 'a music that reflects the diversity of cultures in Britain' (Watkiss in Garrett, 1998: 281). However, the development of Drum 'n' Bass from 1993 has been described as dominated by 'white' producers, promoters and club-goers.

Osumare (2000) describes the popularisation of forms such as Hip Hop as premised on understandings of 'blackness' that are associated with notions of authenticity, the ghetto and criminality. These values, which have been established as 'black' through commercialised forms of popular culture such as music and film, can be argued to perpetuate racist beliefs through a reproduction of the association of blackness with nature (Gilroy in Skeggs, 2004: 105). It is possible to argue that 'white' Drum 'n' Bass club-goers are attracted to the genre because of these same values. However, theoretical arguments that foreground notions of cultural hybridity in opposition to cultural ownership and attendant notions of appropriation offer an alternative understanding of the inter-generic exchange between club cultures. Previous club cultural scholars have failed to acknowledge the complex (racial and class-based) affiliations and distinctions that exist between different areas of club culture, and whilst acknowledging its centrality to the clubbing experience, have avoided significant discussion of dance practice. Dance scholars who have considered the processes and politics of the inter-cultural and trans-cultural development of dance forms remain limited by essentialising classifications of 'black' or 'whitened' dance forms. In this thesis I address these omissions by exploring these issues in relation to the contemporary Drum 'n' Bass dancing body.

In the final part of this thesis I examine empirical data collated through an extended period of field research within Drum 'n' Bass club culture. This analysis is multi-centred and mirrors how I have conceptualised the matrix of contemporary dance music club cultures. Within the two final chapters I provide detailed descriptions of movement practices that I have observed, experienced and embodied in Drum 'n' Bass club culture. By highlighting observable patterns and stylistic elements I demonstrate the existence of an identifiable style of dance that is associated with Drum 'n' Bass. I also position the dancing body as a resource through which club-goers construct, perform and reiterate particular personal and collective identities that are articulated in relation to social and cultural constructions of gender, sexuality, race and class.

## Chapter Five Notes:

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- <sup>1</sup> Malbon (1999) provides a detailed analysis of the processes involved in accessing club events.
- <sup>2</sup> The use of the terms ‘black’ and ‘white’ is taken directly from Ware & Back’s (2002) text and highlights, rather than endorses, the crude racial binary established between those of the African diaspora and European descent. The problematic nature of these terms is acknowledged and will be challenged later in this chapter.
- <sup>3</sup> Scholars also describe the ‘black’ appropriation of ‘white’ cultural forms (see, for example, Desmond’s discussion of the dance form the Cake-walk, 1997). However, in the context of this research in Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture I am particularly interested in discourse surrounding the ‘white’ consumption of ‘black’ expressive culture.
- <sup>4</sup> My use of the phrase ‘expected’ performance can be compared, in part, to the ‘rules’ that Malbon (1999) discusses when exploring dance floor and club etiquette (1999: 94-99). However, I also include the embodiment of particular meanings and values.
- <sup>5</sup> The term ‘Hip Hop’ is used to refer to a particular sub-culture that originated in New York in the 1970s (see Chapter Three), which is associated with particular forms of dancing (break-dancing), music (Rap) and art (graffiti).
- <sup>6</sup> In contrast Bennett (1999b) describes Rose (1994) as *acknowledging* that the significance of Rap and Hip Hop cannot be reduced to singular or essentialist explanations. However, he provides no specific reference to support this statement and I would contest that this understanding can be reached from her writing.
- <sup>7</sup> The work of Gottschild (1996) will be discussed further in Chapter Eight of this thesis.
- <sup>8</sup> Despite stressing the use value of the term ‘transmission’, Desmond (1997) confusingly uses appropriation and transmission somewhat inter-changeably during the course of the chapter.
- <sup>9</sup> The association of whiteness with the codification and commercialisation of dance forms, rather than ‘original’ creation, reinforces the problematic binary of white, mainstream versus black, authenticity.
- <sup>10</sup> For further examples of the whitening of dance forms see Carrie Stern’s analysis of Ballroom (2000).
- <sup>11</sup> Danielle Robinson’s (2006) article acknowledges the effect of ‘white’ appropriation of ‘black’ dance forms in supporting essentialist notions relating to racial difference but also considers how African American Jazz teachers in the 1920s actively participated in the dissemination of the dance form. Whilst appropriation appears to have ‘reinforce[d] the longstanding view that black labor existed for white profit and pleasure’ it also ‘launched the careers of teachers of black dancing’ (2006: 24).
- <sup>12</sup> In this thesis I combine detailed exploration of the context of Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture with a close analysis of the dance movement.
- <sup>13</sup> Osumare (2000) also suggests Martin’s (1998) notion of the ‘composite body’ in relation to the inter-textual embodiment of multi-cultural influences but does not provide any detailed dance analysis of this in relation to Hip Hop.
- <sup>14</sup> The British Asian choreographer Shobana Jeyasingh, who was trained in classical Bharata Natyam and has developed her own dance style for contemporary performance, has also rejected the use of this term (Jeyasingh, 1998).
- <sup>15</sup> Derrida’s concept of *différance* refers to the complex inter-relationship between signs through a systematic play of differences. Such play produces multiple interpretations that are inherently unstable and temporarily achieved (Sanders, 2008).
- <sup>16</sup> These scholars describe such hybrids as capitalising on the popularity of Hip Hop with white youth; according to Strauss (in Middleton & Beebe, 2002) 70% of Hip Hop records are bought by ‘whites’.
- <sup>17</sup> These styles of dance are commonly associated with Rock and Indie music genres (see Berger, 1999).

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- <sup>18</sup> Gangsta Rap is a sub-genre of the musical style Rap, which was the musical component of Hip Hop youth culture that developed in America in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In British contemporary popular culture the term Hip Hop is generally used to refer to the musical style (whereas in the term Rap is still used in America).
- <sup>19</sup> Popular and journalistic texts have informed much of the following discussion, alongside information gathered from internet forums and interviews with informants. The majority of these sources seldom comment on the lack of female presence in the historical development of Drum 'n' Bass. However, there is an acknowledgement that Drum 'n' Bass is a male dominated scene (see Chapter Seven).
- <sup>20</sup> The 'Amen' break is the most frequently sampled break section in Jungle, Drum 'n' Bass and Hip Hop and was originally played by The Winstons's drummer G.C. Coleman.
- <sup>21</sup> The term 'white label' refers to a record that has produced in small quantities on promotional rather than general release.
- <sup>22</sup> DJ Kemistry is one of the few female DJs, alongside Storm and DJ Rap, who have been involved in the development of the Drum 'n' Bass scene since the early 1990s.
- <sup>23</sup> Jungle tracks contain the syncopated and irregular rhythm of Breakbeat, harsh electronic sounds of Techno and a Ragga bassline.
- <sup>24</sup> For a more detailed discussion of Hardcore pirate radio stations of this period see Reynolds, 1998.
- <sup>25</sup> These DJs' and producers' competing narratives reinforce how the labelling of genres is an informal and localised process (see Chapter Three).
- <sup>26</sup> 'Toast' is a term used in Jamaican sound system musical culture to refer to the MC's dialogue introducing the tracks or DJs and encouraging the crowd.
- <sup>27</sup> The positioning of black youths as associated with these qualities distances themselves from them (see Chapter Four).
- <sup>28</sup> The association that is made here between Jamaican musical culture and Marijuana (whether by the writer Collin, 1997 or club-goers themselves) can be argued to be based on a cultural stereotype of the Rastafarian, as discussed in Chapter One (section 1.8).
- <sup>29</sup> Ecstasy is the drug commonly associated with rave events and is a stimulant, whereas Marijuana is known for its depressant affects (although it is actually classed as a mild hallucinogen).
- <sup>30</sup> It is possible to argue that literature such as Reynolds's (1998) text is also *formative part* of the rhetoric of the genre as it participates in the construction of particular collective identities that are described as prominent in Jungle and Drum 'n' Bass culture.
- <sup>31</sup> Cultural studies scholar, Redhead (1993), describes the British Acid House and subsequent rave scene's domination by white, working class youth.
- <sup>32</sup> Contemporary use of the term Jungle is more commonly used to describe club events that play tracks from the early period of this genre's history, rather than to describe new productions even when they incorporate stylistic elements from Jamaican Ragga.
- <sup>33</sup> The Thursday night club event Speed opened in Autumn 1994 at the London West End Mars club as a platform for LTJ Bukem's new style of IDB (Belle-Fortune, 2004).
- <sup>34</sup> In 2000 the DJ and producer Fabio developed a new style of IDB which become known as Liquid Funk, which by the mid 2000s has been shortened to Liquid.
- <sup>35</sup> This sub-style initially came to prominence through the release of a compilation album *Techsteppin'* (1996, Emotif Records), which included artists such as Doc Scott, Ed Rush, Hydro and Skyscraper.
- <sup>36</sup> Artists such as Peshay and DJ Rap were prominent Hardstep artists in the mid to late 1990s and example tracks include L Double's (recording as Asylum) *Steppin' Hard* (1995, Metalheadz), DJ Nut Nut's *Special Dedication* (1994, Hard Step Records) and *Brotherhood* by Regulate (1995, Hardleaders).
- <sup>37</sup> Tracks within this category are frequently described as 'rollers' in reference to the undulating and energetic basslines that can be compared to the movement of a roller-coaster.

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- <sup>38</sup> I make a distinction between ‘sub-genres’ as prominent and well-recognised forms within Drum ‘n’ Bass culture and micro-genres as a number of lesser known styles.
- <sup>39</sup> Record labels such as Hospital Records, Soul:R, Highlight, Liquid V (a sub-label of Bristol’s V Recordings) and artists such as High Contrast, Calibre, Marcus Intalex, Nu:Tone and Cyantific are among its main proponents at the time of writing (FD, 2005).
- <sup>40</sup> Fabio’s club event Swerve at The End night club in London and Hospitality (organised by Hospital Records) at Heaven are two regular Liquid events.
- <sup>41</sup> Gilbert and Pearson (1999) contrast these two notions by describing the avant garde as emphasising intellectualisation over and above music as a source of pleasure.

## Chapter Six

### Fieldwork Issues and Methodologies

#### 6.1 Introduction

Although there remain distinct qualitative and conceptual differences between scholars working within the disciplines of dance anthropology and other related fields, such as dance ethnology, performance studies, cultural studies, folklore studies, sociology and history, all unite in the belief that movement systems are socially, culturally, temporally and spatially constructed (Kaepler, 1999: 13).<sup>1</sup> Movements are ‘cultural artefacts, which, in their specific combinations and uses, belong to a specific culture or subculture’ (Kaepler, 1999: 15). In Chapters Seven and Eight of this thesis I use empirical data collated from a period of fieldwork study to analyse the particular dance practices of Drum ‘n’ Bass club-goers, and reveal how personal and collective identities that are actively constructed and performed in the *dancing* body, reveal complex systems of club cultural value: ‘though transient, movement systems have structured content, they can be visual manifestations of social relations and the subject of elaborate aesthetic systems, and may assist in understanding cultural values’ (Kaepler, 1999: 16-17). In this chapter I consider both epistemological and practical ethnographic methodologies currently used in a variety of disciplinary fields (such as those listed above) in order to identify and evaluate the fieldwork design for my research in contemporary UK Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture.

Buckland defines dance ethnography as ‘the study of dance through field research’ (1999: 1). This wide definition of ethnography as a research method (or process) permits scholars from a diversity of academic disciplines to follow common principles when studying dance outside a western theatre art dance context. A recent upsurge in interest in dance activity within such fields has been recognised by Buckland (1999), who states that this has widened the discipline of dance studies to include the study of forms of non-theatre art dance activity and other codified movement systems. However, the use of this term to refer to a ‘particular method or set of methods’ (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:1) can cause confusion when identifying methodological positioning for the gathering of data in the field.

Although scholars from a variety of disciplines may employ a selection of ethnographic field research techniques when gathering data not all studies will be methodologically positioned within this framework. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between research where scholars conduct ethnographic research in dance as a process which produces an ethnography (as a 'portrait of a people' (Sklar, 1991: 6)), and those who draw upon fieldwork techniques from ethnography to conduct empirical studies of dance. Scholars working within the discipline of sociology often conduct ethnographic research but are distinguishable from the disciplines of anthropology and ethnology by their experience in the field (Amit, 2000). The dance anthropologist and ethnologist employ techniques of participant observation and will spend lengthy periods in the field where they become immersed into the social group or society (Grau, 2005).<sup>2</sup> However, scholars employing theoretical approaches from alternative disciplines, such as cultural studies, performance studies or sociology, will often make several shorter visits in order to make comparisons over a larger field or to compare findings to previous research.

The aforementioned widening of the discipline of dance studies has also been accompanied by a 'blurring of boundaries' between sub-fields of dance (such as dance history, dance anthropology, dance ethnology and performance studies) as scholars broaden their working methods and theories (Sklar, 2001). This is clearly demonstrated by Sklar, who has a background in performance studies but is now located within the field of dance ethnography. These developments have prompted dance ethnologists to question whether there is a singular disciplinary voice working within the field (Kealiinohomoku, 2001; Sklar, 2001). Due to the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of dance studies and the wealth of disciplinary approaches to researching dance in the field, there can be no singular methodological voice, only related pathways that may overlap and intersect. As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, my research in Drum 'n' Bass club culture is not methodologically set within the parameters of dance ethnography but rather works in an interdisciplinary context drawing from a range of disciplines, using research methods drawn from dance ethnography and yet theoretical paradigms from fields such as cultural studies, subcultural studies and race and ethnic studies.

Sklar (2000) identifies two new trajectories in contemporary ethnographic studies of dance: the kinaesthetic and the socio-political. Ethnographic somatic studies of movement practices have developed within the discipline of dance studies with the use of Laban analysis and focus upon the ethnographer's construction and understanding of 'embodied knowledge, proprioception, somatesthesia, kinaesthetic ambivalence, kinaesthetic empathy and synaesthesia' (Sklar, 2000: 70). These concerns have also initiated further discourse, which focuses upon the challenges of representing dance activity through written language as 'lived experience' (Bacon, 2003). These areas will be considered further in relation to my chosen research methodology in section 6.5 of this chapter.

The second direction employs theories from the sociological field of cultural studies, where scholars are concerned with 'bodily theories – armatures of relations through which bodies perform individual, gendered, ethnic, or community identities' (Foster in Sklar, 2000: 70). As I argue in Chapters Two and Four of this thesis, the inclusion of the ethnographic study of dance within cultural studies allows a reader to learn more about how social identities are *embodied*: 'signalled, formed and negotiated through bodily movement' (Desmond, 1997: 34). It is within the second area identified by Sklar (2000) that I locate my research in Drum 'n' Bass club culture, although as noted above it has also been necessary to carefully consider methodological issues regarding the representation of the embodied club dance experience. In this thesis I analyse dance movement practices in detail to reveal the construction of particular club cultural identities, which I argue to be articulated intertextually in relation to social discourse regarding aspects of identity such as race, class, sexuality and gender. In the following section I consider a variety of concepts used to frame ethnographic fieldwork studies in dance in order to emphasise the importance of context in my research in contemporary UK Drum 'n' Bass club culture.

## **6.2 Framing and defining the dance event**

Part of our difficulty in coming to terms with definitions is our tendency to separate the form of dance from its context, and whether consciously or not, to use *form* as the primary basis for definitions.



We can resolve much of this difficulty by thinking in terms of dance-events rather than of dances and dancing.

Royce, 1977: 10, my emphasis

In Chapter Three of this thesis I argue that a mapping of the historical and *contextual* development of dance music sub-genres enables a deeper understanding of the relationships between contemporary club cultures and the identities that are produced within them. I argue that sub-genres should be understood as extending further than the stylistic (or formal) features of the musical ‘text’ to include the club cultural communities that give them life through their usage. Similarly, Royce (1977) describes how in fieldwork studies of dance it is necessary to consider all aspects of the event, including the influence of *contextual* setting. Alongside many other scholars from the fields of anthropology and ethnography (Cowan, 1990; Dunin, 1988; Ronström, 1988; Torp, 1988) Royce (1977) advocates the use of the term ‘dance event’ instead of ‘dances’ or ‘dancing’. The consideration of contextual aspects of the ‘dance event’, such as time, space, place, information about participants and analysis of other embodied practices, forms an important part of this research in contemporary UK Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture.

Ronström (1988), a dance ethnologist, provides a definition of the ‘dance event’ as a gathering where dancing is the cognitive, visual and kinetic focus of an interactional social occasion. He also describes how the event must be perceived by its participants as distinct; ‘outside or beyond the flow of everyday life’ (Ronström, 1988: 23). According to this definition the term ‘dance event’ could be used to describe dance music clubs. As discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, club cultural scholars such as Malbon recognise the centrality of the dance as ‘together with and inseparable from the music, dancing is what clubbing is all about and largely what clubbers ‘do’ while clubbing’ (1999: 85-86). Moreover, club cultural scholars have frequently described the club event as separate from clubbers’ everyday lives. For example, Pini (2001) locates the dance music club or rave providing an alternative space for women to experiment with new femininities. She describes how the dance club environment is seen by her participants as separate from their ‘day-to-day’ worlds. This view is also echoed by Malbon, who describes how the club environment presents ‘a quite different kind of social space...to the “streets outside”’ (1999: 38). In addition to this conceptual construction of the dance club environment,

nightclubs are often physically set apart from club-goers' everyday lives. To prevent noise pollution club environments are often located away from residential areas in industrial buildings or constructed underground. The urban club environment therefore offers club goers a space that is both ideologically and spatially set apart from their every day existence.

Snyder (1988), working within the discipline of dance anthropology, provides a further definition of the 'dance event' as a space/time experience; bounded by its temporal and spatial frame but non-static, as it is continually changing and shifting. Energy is a third integral component that binds the event together, creating the dynamic between space and time. Snyder describes 'energy' as the 'why': the motivation and driving force for the event. In an attempt to formulate a structure for the analysis of the dance event Snyder has developed a system, *Levels of Event Patterns*, which addresses each component of the dance event separately:

the concept of event would be best handled by levels of time/  
space/energy, described visually rather than verbally, which  
would then reveal the total concept through a full display of  
macro-micro patternings.

Snyder, 1988: 3

Snyder's (1988) 'levels of event patterns' offer the researcher a complex and structured approach to an analysis of a dance event. This anthropological approach attempts to find connections across the event from macro to micro patternings but does not consider links between dance events. Thus, although the term 'dance event' may be used as a potential frame for the analysis of dance practices in one dance music club, this term can be argued to be less suitable for theorising several similar club events and for constructing a framework for the analysis of how they relate to one another. Whilst I continue to assert the need for specificity in club cultural research, for example the need to study Drum 'n' Bass rather than 'dance music', I also argue that the relationship between contemporary clubbing crowds is intertextual and inter-generic where the development of new genres is an open ended and ongoing process. Therefore, my analysis of Drum 'n' Bass club culture will be informed by an understanding of the historical, social and cultural development of other genres within the category of 'dance music'. The use of the term 'dance event' can, thus, be argued to separate individual events from their *context*.

Gore, working within the field of dance ethnology, also emphasises the importance of context when studying dance in the field by advocating the use of the wider term 'dance culture' (Gore, 1999: 210). Whilst acknowledging the difficulties in negotiating the term 'culture'<sup>3</sup> she states that 'dance culture' situates the dance 'contextually or as contextually constructed' (Gore, 1999: 210), which may then include the wider study of 'dance, a dance, dancing or a dance event' (Gore, 1999: 210). Following Hastrup, Gore states that she uses the term 'dance culture' to refer to an 'analytical implication' rather than an 'empirical entity' (Hastrup in Gore, 1999: 201). However, the suitability and usefulness of an analytical term must be determined by its application in the field. This term may be useful for the empirical study of contemporary club culture as it is not temporally or spatially restrictive.

The use of Gore's (1999) term 'dance culture' for research in dance music clubs is also potentially useful as it acknowledges the centrality of the dance. However, the term is regularly used by popular and academic scholars when referring to the style of music within dance music club culture (Malbon, 1999; Reynolds, 1998; Collin, 1997). As I discuss in Chapter Two of this thesis, although these writers may use the word 'dance', the activity is effectively ignored. Ward notes how 'when the term dance does appear it does so most frequently as a descriptor or qualifier as in 'dance drug', 'dance craze', 'Indie dance crossover', 'groovy dance single', 'psychedelic dance hall' etc. This usage tends to move attention away from the dance' (1997: 5). The use of the term '*dance* music' to refer to contemporary electronic music emphasises the importance of dancing to the consumption of this music. However, as noted by McRobbie, the dance 'virtually disappears' from popular and academic accounts of this style (1999: 145).

The term 'dance culture' is also used interchangeably by popular and academic writers with Acid culture, Ecstasy culture and rave culture (Reynolds, 1998; Collin, 1997; Redhead, 1993), all of which are commonly associated with the use of recreational drugs. Although for many cultural commentators, especially those in the media, clubbing equals drug use (Ward, 1997), Hillage refers to a study where only six per cent of club goers stated that they were attracted to clubbing because of the drugs (in Ward, 1997: 6). Other scholars, such as Pini (2001), have also downplayed the role of drugs within club culture

(see Chapter Two). In the context of popular and academic club cultural studies the use of the term ‘dance culture’ has, thus, led to the dismissive association of club practices with hedonistic and deviant behaviour, rather than a focus on the creative use of dance movement by participants. Within contemporary club cultural discourse the term ‘dance culture’ has assumed a meaning disassociated from bodily movement. In the context of this research I use the term dance club cultures to reinstate the dancing body at the centre of club cultural research.

### 6.3 Research methodologies and reflexive practice

Current ethnographic discourse demonstrates a concern for how the process itself is viewed as a construct, a perspective that has radically altered how research in the field is conceived and executed (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). This post-structuralist move away from positivist and naturalist methodologies encourages a reflexive approach that acknowledges the location of the observer in the study of the observed in the sense that ‘the orientation of researchers will be shaped by their socio-historical locations, including the values and interests that these locations confer upon them’ (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995: 16).<sup>4</sup> This concern is evident in a number of recent dance ethnographies where scholars have carefully considered the impact of their own context and training on their experiences in the field, as well as an active acknowledgement of their role as the researcher in the construction of the ethnography; a ‘reflexive self-awareness as experiencing, moving and dancing culture bearers’ (Thomas, 2003: 78) (for example see Sklar, 2000; Browning, 1995; Novak, 1993, 1990; Ness, 1992; Cowan, 1990).

This reflexive approach is particularly evident in Ness’ (1992) study of the *sinulog* dances of Cebu City in the Philippines where she describes how her own training as a dancer has led to an awareness of her research activities as ‘initiating, responding, and interpreting information as would a performing student of choreographic phenomena’ (Ness, 1992: 3). Ness argues that her own skills as a dancer have enabled her to have a heightened awareness of movement that has been beneficial for her study, in which she makes connections between the everyday or vernacular movement of the inhabitants of Cebu City and movement language of the *sinulog*. Similarly, Novak’s (1993) analysis of

gender in classical ballet reflects in detail on her own biography, including her dance training, which she recognises as providing her with particular knowledge and experience on entering the field. These issues will be discussed further in relation to my chosen research methodologies in section 6.4 of this chapter.

Thus, a reflexive approach has caused a shift in epistemological terms from ‘what we want to know?’ to ‘how do we come to know what we know?’ (Buckland, 1999: 7). This change in interest highlights how research in the field is an active process where observation, recording and theoretical interpretation of this data is selective and dependent on the researcher (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Abu-Lughod, working within feminist anthropology, discusses how reflexive anthropologists view ethnographic fieldwork as ‘the locus of the intersubjective production of facts’ (Abu-Lughod, 1990: 10).<sup>5</sup> The aim of ethnography can no longer be to collect ‘pure data’ that is free from bias, as this cannot exist: ‘the field is not a clean space’ (Buckland, 1999: 8). Whilst true objectivity is outside the realms of field research, a reflexive analysis of methodologies employed will enable the ethnographer to develop a grounded manner of interpretation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995: 131).

Establishing a theoretical direction is of great importance in ethnographic research as ‘the whole history of scholarship, whether in the natural sciences or in the humanities, tells us that the mere collection of what are called ‘facts’ unguided by theory in observation and selection is of little value’ (Evans-Pritchard in Williams, 1999: 28). The development of theory is necessary to guide data collection and should be grounded in empirical evidence and not derived from presuppositions (Glaser & Strauss in Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Although I have previous experience both as a researcher and participant in other areas of dance music club cultures (see Hall, 2002) I have been careful to ensure that this knowledge informs but does not dominate the development of a theoretical direction. In Chapter Three of this thesis I investigate the development of dance music club cultures and consider the inter-generic, inter-cultural and intertextual relationships between them. In addition, in Chapter Five I explore the development of Drum ‘n’ Bass music and club culture in the UK during the 1990s. These investigations highlight discourse relating to the cultural ownership of musical forms, as well as other aspects of club cultural identity.

These issues provide substantial lines of enquiry and together with observation and interview data have guided my research questions in the field (see section 6.6).

A move towards reflexive ethnographic methodologies has also instigated discourse regarding a researcher's relationships with their informants in the field. Williams (1999), a dance anthropologist, describes how, when researching one's own culture, a distancing from the observed members of the field is necessary. In support Mascarenhas-Keyes (in Williams, 1999), who conducted field research as a native anthropologist in her home country of Goa, states that the researcher may have to transcend their social position within that culture in order to gain access to or respect from the 'observed' social group. Gore also states that distancing is an epistemological condition of ethnographic work, 'since complete identification renders analytical practice impossible' (Kilani in Gore, 1999: 211).

Whilst I acknowledge that maintaining a 'suitable' anthropological distance may be advantageous in field research as complete immersion may present problems when needing to step 'outside' and view data more objectively, I also recognise the difficulties inherent in this process when attempting to build productive relationships in the field. This view is supported by recent post-structuralist discourse in new ethnography. Recent feminist ethnographers have criticised aperspectivity as a strategy of male hegemony (MacKinnon in Abu-Lughod, 1990) and have suggested the construction of alternative relationships between subject and object that are 'one of relationship rather than distance' (Abu-Lughod, 1990: 15). An elimination of the distance between the observer and observed through the development of social relationships may allow for a greater understanding of the observed cultural practices and greater openness from informants.

During the research process I have engaged in active reflection on both my choice of methods and previous experiences and dance training (see section 6.4). In conducting research in contemporary UK Drum 'n' Bass club culture I have worked in my own cultural context. Although I am familiar with dance club events in other areas of dance music (such as Techno and House), which has enabled me to feel confident visiting club venues, I had little detailed prior knowledge or experience of Drum 'n' Bass music or events before beginning this research. However, a substantial period of fieldwork study

including fieldwork visits to Drum 'n' Bass club events but also learning about the genre and sub-genres from informants, listening to different production artists and reading information available through various forms of niche media, has enabled me to develop knowledge and experience across a range of club events and musical sub-styles of Drum 'n' Bass.

As I approach this study as a 'researcher' rather than as a 'club-goer' it can be argued that I am automatically positioned as an 'outsider' (Giurchescu, 1999). However, some interview informants and sources who have guided my access to the field have been related to my own social group. This has enabled me to develop relationships with some informants that have provided me with access to further club-goers in the field (see section 6.6), as well as discounted entry to some events.<sup>6</sup> In developing relationships with participants in the field I have, thus, developed a 'self conscious ethnography' (Cohen in Pink, 2003), where I remain aware of the changing relationships between myself and my informants. There are also similarities *and* differences of age, gender, class, race, social and cultural beliefs between myself, as researcher, and the observed social group. For example, my Caucasian ethnicity allowed me to fit in with the majority of club participants, whereas my (older) age and (female) gender were more conspicuous (see sections 6.4 and 6.6). During this research I therefore simultaneously occupied the position of 'insider' and 'outsider', which has allowed me to share 'similar frames of reference' (Burgess, 1984: 23), but to maintain a shifting 'near / far', self-reflexive perspective. This understanding of my position as a researcher raises important questions regarding my chosen methods of participation in the field (see section 6.4).

Fieldwork data for this research has been gathered during two distinct fieldwork periods from November 2004 to August 2007. During November and December 2004 visits were made to five London nightclubs offering different dance music sub-styles including Techno, House, Electro, Drum 'n' Bass and Hard House. This initial period of 'pilot' fieldwork established that specific movement practices exist for different sub-styles of dance music and has enabled a greater understanding of UK contemporary dance club culture. This period has also supported my analysis of the relationship between dance music sub-styles in Chapter Three of this thesis. The second fieldwork period, from October 2005 to August 2007, has focused upon nightclub venues featuring the dominant

sub-styles within the Drum 'n' Bass category at the time of writing: Darkside, Jump Up and Liquid. Other musical styles within the Breakbeat category of dance music, such as Breaks, Dubstep, Grime or Hip Hop have not been included in this study as these styles are regarded as significantly different from the main Drum 'n' Bass sub-genres (although there are stylistic similarities between these styles, see Chapter Three). In addition, events that feature Breakbeat styles are generally organised as separate to the UK Drum 'n' Bass club scene (although I acknowledge that larger Drum 'n' Bass clubs do feature Breakbeat DJs in a second club space).

Fieldwork has comprised fifteen 'formal' visits, with several 'informal' visits during the final stages to finalise the research findings (see Appendix B for a list of formal visits).<sup>7</sup> The conclusions that I make in this thesis are limited to the geographical area, the range of events studied and are specific to the time of writing. The parameters of this project have been, in part, set by the time frame for part-time doctoral study and the limitations of solo fieldwork research across a wide area. As discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis, the contemporary dance music scene is intertextual, inter-generic and dynamic, and is, thus, continuously shifting. Whilst I acknowledge the on-going and continuous development of the contemporary dance music scene I also argue that throughout the period of this research I have observed a substantial level of continuity in the DJs and producers that are prominent in the scene, the labelling and recognition of sub-styles of Drum 'n' Bass, popular Drum 'n' Bass club events, the demographic of club audiences and, importantly, the dance movement practiced by participants. This consistency does allow me to make sound interpretations from my fieldwork data that produce 'stable' conclusions regarding current UK Drum 'n' Bass club culture at the beginning of the 2000s.<sup>8</sup>

Club events have been selected for fieldwork visits because of featured DJs who are well-known producers signed to prominent Drum 'n' Bass labels in a variety of sub-styles (such as True Playaz, Hospital, Ram Records, Renegade Hardware), or because they have been promoted and positively received on specialist internet forums (particularly [www.breakbeat.co.uk](http://www.breakbeat.co.uk) and [www.dogsonacid.co.uk](http://www.dogsonacid.co.uk)) or in niche magazines (such as *Knowledge*). The majority of events have been located in the Greater London area although visits have also been made to clubs across other parts of the south of the UK, in



Guildford, Brighton, Bristol, Sutton and Cambridge, to take account of any regional variation of which there has been a negligible amount. London has been selected to provide the focus for the majority of fieldwork visits as Drum 'n' Bass fans believe that it is the centre of the clubbing scene:

Love the scene over in London, the variety of artists you can get is always going to be more than anywhere else. You got all the regular label nights – RAM, Hospital, Renegade Hardware etc., it has to be the best place a DnB fan could want.

sic, Derodra, 2006

Although many Drum 'n' Bass club events are now popular in the North of England, the majority of events appear to be in towns and cities in the South and there is a perceived dominance of these areas in discussion forums that supports the design of my fieldwork research: 'nights in the south outnumber those in the north probably 5 to 1 if not more and you got the 3 best scenes in Britain, London, Bristol and Brighton' (sic, WMD, 2006). Whilst the Drum 'n' Bass club scene is now popular internationally, this study is limited to the UK. A larger study that could include a wider range of towns and cities across the country would provide additional verification of my claims for consistency in the dance movement practices of contemporary British Drum 'n' Bass club-goers. However, the amount of data generated from the fieldwork visits completed during this research has provided me with more than sufficient information to make my conclusions in a rigorous manner.

Events have been selected across a range of Drum 'n' Bass sub-styles for example, *Essence of Chi* at Herbal and *Swerve* at The End for Liquid Drum 'n' Bass; *Switch* at The Ministry of Sound and *Ram Records* at The End for Dancefloor and Jump Up Drum 'n' Bass styles; *Tech:nology* at Mass and *Renegade Hardware* at The End for Darkside Drum 'n' Bass. 'Rave' events, that often feature several different styles of dance music in one venue, are distinct from club nights and have consequently not been included in this study. This research does not focus upon one particular group of participants, geographical location or particular club venue, as is common with a traditional ethnographic approach, as my intention was to look broader than the specific experiences of one group of club goers. However, I recognise that the qualitative focus of this work,

the nature of the data collected and the size of the research project also negates any claims for quantitative representativeness over a large area of the UK. Further research that compares UK national and international Drum 'n' Bass club cultural practices and conventions (including the popular dance practices of participants) would now be beneficial.<sup>9</sup>

#### **6.4 Fieldwork methodologies: participant observation**

At the beginning of this chapter I discuss how scholars working in the field of dance ethnography view the analysis of dance forms as revealing of cultural knowledge (Sklar, 1991). The focus of dance ethnography on understanding *people*, articulated by Sklar through the series of questions, 'why do people move in the way they do, and how does the way they move relate to how they live, what they believe and what they value?' (1991: 6), implies an interest wider than the movement vocabulary or codes, and includes the context of the dance or movement form in terms of the associated social relationships, environment, religion, aesthetics, politics, economics and history (Sklar, 1991). In order to understand the cultural or subcultural communities that practice the dance form under scrutiny, dance ethnographers must seek an understanding of the 'insiders' conception of the dance practice: the 'emic' perspective (Kaeppler, 1999). The goal of a dance ethnographer is, thus, to gain an understanding of the dance form from the perspective of those who practice it.

In order to achieve this goal a tripartite research methodology is advocated by Sklar (1991) where movement description from direct observation, qualitative analysis through speaking with informants, and the embodied experience of the researcher as they learn and participate in the dance event, combine to provide an understanding of the meaning the dance holds for the 'indigenous' performers. This multi-layered approach has been employed by several other dance ethnographers (such as Browning, 1995; Ness, 1992; Cowan, 1990; Novak, 1990), although it is notable that some scholars place a greater emphasis on particular methodologies such as the role of embodied practice.<sup>10</sup> During my research in Drum 'n' Bass club culture I have also used a variety of fieldwork approaches including direct observation of club-goers, semi-structured interviews as well as less

formal verbal interactions, and reflection on my own participation in dancing. This combined research method is commonly known as participant observation and is used across a variety of academic disciplines when conducting fieldwork studies. It shares the goal of dance ethnography in that it is focused on ‘uncover[ing],...[making] accessible, and reveal[ing] the meanings (realities) people use to make sense out of their everyday lives’ (Jorgensen, 1989: 15).

Direct observation is the primary method of data collection used in participant observation but the researcher, as described with reference to dance ethnographers above, will also employ other strategies such as casual conversations, structured or semi-structured interviews or questionnaires (Jorgensen, 1989). Fielding discusses four types of participant observation that are defined by ‘the level of immersion of the observer in the natural setting’ (2004: 1). The first level is where the researcher takes part in the event as ‘complete participant’ or as a ‘normal member’ of the social group. This role presents both ethical and ‘pretence problems’, as participants are unaware that they are being studied and the researcher may not be able to appear ‘native’ as he or she is not aware of (club / sub) cultural conventions. However, the use of such a covert approach to fieldwork minimises the reactivity of participants. The second role is participant-as-observer where members of the observed are aware of the researcher’s status. This overt approach allows for alternative techniques of data gathering from informal contacts to formal interviews. The third role of participant observer is that of observer-as-participant, defined by one-visit interviews within informants alongside observation and participation techniques, and the fourth role is that of complete observer, where the researcher is completely insulated from the observed, which prevents the collection of data from an emic perspective (Fielding, 2004).

The first two levels of participation observation allow the researcher a deep level of engagement with the observed social group, which may result in emotional connection with members of the field. As noted previously, Fielding (2004) also suggests that the development of friendships with the observed may not only cause difficulties in the objective analysis of data but may also render members inefficient informants because of their identification with the researcher. Although a shift in orientation from outside to inside, from periphery to centre allows the ethnographer’s subjectivity to become ‘fully

constituted within local discursive practices, both social and danced' (Gore, 1999: 217), 'going native' may lose the researcher analytical distance. However, this relationship may also enable a researcher to gain information from participants that may not have been shared if an alternative approach had been adopted. Fielding (2004) advocates an even balance between 'detached observer' and 'participant in setting' to ensure negotiation of these associated problems. Gore describes the ethnographic process as a 'balancing act', a 'shuffling between 'experience-near' and 'experience-distance' (1999: 209).

When conducting research in contemporary Drum 'n' Bass club culture it has been advantageous to move from complete participant to observer-as-participant. This has been possible due to the shifting nature and large composition of clubbing crowds. A combination of covert study that has minimised reactivity, and a level of overt study to gain access to informants, has proved suitable for this specific field context. In this research I have therefore employed a movement back and forth 'between...[my] own place and understanding and that of the other' (Spiegelberg in Fielding, 2004: 3). As the majority of direct observation has been conducted without the knowledge of participants the ethical dimension of this work must be considered. Ethnographic scholars are divided between advocating the use of covert research, arguing that the deception involved 'is mild compared to that practiced daily by official and business organizations' (Fielding, 1982: 94), and dismissing it, stating that covert participant observation is analogous to infiltration by spies or *agents provocateurs* (Bulmer, 1982). However, fieldwork activities used during this research have not involved deception of any kind as the events that I have attended are open to the general public. In addition, when asked why I was attending an event I was open with all participants regarding my research purpose.

During the majority of fieldwork visits to club events a covert approach ensured that my presence did not prompt behaviour that was uncharacteristic of participants (Fielding, 2004). The dark and very loud nature of the nightclubs also enabled me to fade into the background or to relocate to another part of the space if my attention was noted. At *Rotation*, at Time nightclub in Guildford, and *Essence of Chi* events at Herbal, London, the promoters of the event were aware of my presence and purpose, although all other participants remained unaware of my research. On these occasions these acquaintances became my 'gatekeepers' to the scene (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995) by permitting

reduced guest list entry or introducing me to DJs, MCs and fellow Drum 'n' Bass enthusiasts. As club management have been wary of requests to conduct research in their venues in previous studies of London club culture (Hall, 2002), no attempt was made to contact event organisers to gain access to events other than those stated above. In addition, as clubs are public venues, with the additional discretion of door security staff, it was not necessary to gain 'permission' to attend each event.<sup>11</sup>

When visiting clubs I have integrated myself into each event and attempted to 'appear native' by participating in the main social activities of dancing, observing others, drinking and conversation. However, the age difference between myself as researcher and the clubbing participants is thought to have limited contact with club-goers as they were often reluctant to engage in discussion. The association of dance music clubs with criminal activities, such as drug taking, may also have limited openness at some events due to suspicion regarding my potential 'undercover' purpose and identity. Whilst attempts were made to approach a variety of individuals at club events, there was a distinct unwillingness from some to converse more than an initial greeting or positive comment on the music. This could also be explained by an increase in violent and non-violent crime at Drum 'n' Bass events since the mid 1990s (see Chapter Five). The young and aggressive, male dominated composition of these events also meant that as a woman in her early thirties I often felt uncomfortable approaching participants in this way; although a small number of contacts were made in the club context with interviews arranged at a later date. The lack of interview contacts found through visiting Drum 'n' Bass clubs could be seen as problematic in the fieldwork design as there may be a lack of consistency between those interviewed and those observed. However, the interview schedule included questions regarding which events informants regularly attended and visits were scheduled to a range of these events (see Appendix A and B).

Farnell (1994) warns of the dangers in studying dance or human movement systems without learning and experiencing 'actions' (that she defines as *signifying* acts) rather than 'behaviour' ('non-linguified' movements separated from human intentions, contexts and meaning). If the researcher does not attempt to understand action as the behaviour plus its intention 'the participant observer may participate in a ghost-like manner, wandering through the ethnographic groves, making notes, drawing diagrams, learning to

talk and ask questions, but not, for the most part, learning how to dance' (Farnell, 1994: 936). I have therefore conducted fieldwork visits, where I have observed and participated in dance activity, during the same period of interviews with informants to create a dialogic relationship between these sets of data.

Dunin (1989) also advocates the need for active observation and *participation* in each dance event, as this will provide the researcher insight into complex interactions that cannot be noted by other methods of research such as interviews or questionnaires. The researchers' own kinaesthetic experience of the dance event plays an important role in the interpretation and construction of theory (Kaeppler, 1999). Although Kaeppler (1999) advocates 'learning' the dance style from members of the studied group (including dialogic exchange regarding suitability of the researcher's execution), when conducting research in multi-sensory contemporary dance club environments with shifting clubbing crowds, this method is not possible. However, the re-production of the basic components of the dance style observed during this field research has been possible by observation and participation through 'kinaesthetic empathy' (Sklar, 2001).

Similar to Ness (1992) who acknowledges the positive benefit of her own dance training as 'a "natural attentiveness" to movement (through years of dance training)' (Thomas, 2003: 87), I recognise that my own experience as a dancer has enabled me to copy and embody movement language quickly through an increased sensitivity to the mechanics and dynamics of movement. This ability to embody movement through visual observation and experimentation has been key to the process of describing the dance language contained in Chapters Seven and Eight of this thesis as I had to perform movements many times away from the club context whilst writing up in order to ensure I described them accurately. I also used visual material in the form of video taken inside various clubs (see section 6.5) to support this process. As dancing to Drum 'n' Bass is an improvisatory social dance practice, it is also relevant to note that like other club-goers who are new to the scene, I have developed skill in the dance form by observing other dancers and improvising to the music over a number of club experiences. During my fieldwork observations there was no obvious distinction between 'experienced' and 'non-experienced' Drum 'n' Bass club dancers, thus indicating that the basic components of the dance form are relatively straight forward to embody.

Whilst acknowledging the positive benefits of careful observation and of the ethnographer embodying the movement material being studied, Farnell (1999) also reinforces the importance of speaking to informants about the dance practice. She argues that previous training as a dancer does not necessarily enable a researcher to automatically understand the emic perspective. Describing a fieldwork visit she conducted in a Nigerian village on the edge of the Niger Delta where she was unable to converse with the local people in their own language and, thus, had to rely solely on her own observations and interpretations, she realised that she had no way of knowing what *they* thought that they were doing:

I was busy interpreting and making judgements about the meanings of their body movements and their uses of the performance space entirely according to my own language and culture. Without being able to talk to the villagers in their own language, I could not possibly know what it all meant from their *perspective*.

Farnell, 1999: 147

The use of participant observation research methods, including discussing the dance with participants as well as embodying the movement, ensures that a dialogical relationship between the observer and the observed is constructed. This also assists in a renegotiation of the inherent hierarchical relationship between ‘expert’ and ‘observed’ (Buckland, 1999). Kaeppler (1999) supports Farnell’s (1999) comments by stating that seeking the emic categorisation of movement types is necessary to avoid ethnocentric presuppositions of dance activity. However, these scholars’ assertion that it is necessary to speak to informants about what they think they are doing when they dance does imply that participants will know or can articulate the movement content accurately, which is not always possible. Previous club cultural scholar Malbon (1999) describes the difficulty that his informants found in describing their dance practices at club events (see Chapter Two). This challenge has also been apparent during my research in Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture where I have included questions regarding the club-goers’ dance and movement practices in the interview schedule (see Appendix A). This part of the interview has appeared difficult or uncomfortable for many of my informants.<sup>12</sup> Some male informants actively distanced themselves from the perceived feminine activity of dancing, whilst others downplayed any ‘dance’ movement content by describing ‘hopping around on one

foot', 'bouncing around' (Deefa, 2006), 'going mad' or 'brocking out' (Ben A, 2006) (see Chapter Seven).

Farnell's (1994) suggestion that a researcher should seek emic categorisation of the dance practice may also imply that the performer's account should be taken as accurate and authentic, which can be misleading when it is not compared to observational and experiential data (Thomas, 2003). Thomas (2003) cites Ness's (1992) study of the Philippine *sinulog* as an example of where a researcher has successfully compared the emic perspective of the dance with direct observations and based her interpretations on what the difference between data sets may suggest. Ness's (1992) informants repeatedly describe their movement as 'just a dance', implying that it does not have any special components and is essentially improvised. However, a choreographic analysis reveals that there are specific and recognisable features to the dance form. Ness (1992) accounts for this difference by describing the movement material as so fundamental to the dancers' everyday movement that they are unaware of its specific choreographic features.

The responses of Ness's informants' are similar to those from participants in Drum 'n' Bass club culture sourced during this research where club-goers downplay the 'dance' content (see Chapter Seven). From my own observational data it is clear that whilst the content is improvised Drum 'n' Bass dance practices have clearly recognisable movement elements. Club-goers frequently prefer to describe their predominant focus on the experience of the music rather than moving, 'I'm there for the music' (FD, 2005), and thus find it difficult to recall and describe their movement patterns. I argue that participants' focus on listening and experiencing the music (albeit through the dancing body), together with their effective negation of the dance through their associations of dancing with a feminine identity, prevents them from recognising and describing the dance content. This has led to an emphasis on my own direct observation, participation and embodiment for the subsequent movement description of the dance form. However, my interpretations regarding the meaning and value of the dance for Drum 'n' Bass club-goers have been derived by setting my observational and experiential observations in active dialogue with interview data, which is evident in the use of direct quotations from informants (see Chapters Seven and Eight).



## 6.5 Fieldwork methodologies: gathering and recording data

Scholars working in the discipline of dance ethnography discuss the practical and theoretical difficulties in recording movement data in the field as ‘the ephemerality of dancing certainly poses difficulties of textualization in the scholarly enterprise’ (Buckland, 1999: 6). As noted in section 6.4, this discourse has led dance ethnographers, such as Novak (1993, 1990) and Ness (1992), to reflect on their own subjective bodily engagement ‘in the process of trying to make sense of another’s somatic knowledge’ (Sklar, 2000: 71). In addition, recording techniques include detailed field notes through active observation in the field, the use of photographs, film and audio recordings of movement practices (see discussion below), and interviews with informants where they describe the dance components as well as discussing other aspects of the dance event and its socio-cultural, economic and historical context. The use of symbolic representation of movement through specialist notation, such as Labanotation, is used by some dance ethnographers. This methodology is advocated by Farnell (1999) because the documentation of movement is made from the perspective of the performer. However, the use of notation requires a high level of training and competence in both the researcher and subsequent readers and this falls outside of the expertise of the author of this study.

During my research in Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture I have made detailed field notes that describe club-goers’ movements from direct observation in terms of action, space and dynamic, as well as information about my own kinaesthetic experiences. At each event I have spent a great deal of time actively engaging in the dance form. I have also made notes regarding the spatial relationships between dancers, any changes in movement during different stages of the event, the estimated age and ethnicity of participants, details of their clothing, descriptions of observed activities other than dancing and information about the venue environment. Whilst I have carefully reflected upon my own participation in the dance, the resulting descriptions included in Chapters Seven and Eight of this thesis may be criticised for not focusing on the experiential (although I would argue that the excerpts from field notes at the beginning of the thesis and within each of these chapters do provide the reader with a sense of the embodied club experience).

According to criteria outlined by Allen Ness (2004) the movement descriptions that I include in this thesis reside at the “far end” of the ‘observation-participation spectrum’ (described as ‘observation-driven’ accounts), which she claims is the most “disembodied” manner of recording movement. Allen Ness (2004) summarises these types of movement description as belonging to generic bodies with movement performed by generic body parts (the head, the knee etc.), rather than allowing diversity and difference according to the individual performer to become apparent. Such descriptions are also noted by Allen Ness (2004) to be expressed by the use of the declarative and present tense grammar. She criticises this approach for being universally conceived, objective and relatively ‘colourless “juice”’ (Allen Ness, 2004: 129). However, I would dispute Allen Ness’s subsequent contention that such descriptions invoke conceptions of performers as ‘perfect tokens of some cultural type’ (2004: 137), as when documenting and analysing dance movement there is a need to identify key recurrent actions and their accompanying spatial and dynamic elements. The movement descriptions included in these chapters are intended to provide the reader with a clear understanding of various examples of the movement content that has been frequently observed in Drum ‘n’ Bass clubs.

In addition, when Allen Ness (2004) discusses what she names as ‘participant-driven’ movement descriptions she identifies the use of similar techniques as used in ‘observation-driven’ accounts, such as the use of the present tense, declarative grammar, the generic representation of body parts and the reliance on standardised action vocabulary. She uses an example of the work of dance ethnographer Kurath but admits ‘the account is very similar to Mooney’s [observation-driven account] cited earlier, particularly with regard to the description of body movements’ (Allen Ness, 2004: 133). From this comparison Allen Ness concludes that ‘embodied practice does not necessarily yield an understanding of movement that is fundamentally different from observationally weighted methodologies’ (2004: 133). However, Allen Ness (2004) does provide further examples that she argues do integrate the participatory experience into the ethnographic description more successfully, such as a section from Chernoff’s *African Rhythm and African Sensibility* (1979) and Browning’s *Samba: resistance in motion* (1995). These examples shift between using the first and third person and use imagery that connects ‘imagined beings and characters with present ones’ (Allen Ness, 2004: 137). Allen Ness (2004) concludes that the methodological paradigm shift towards embodied practice, that

I discuss as identified by Sklar (2000) at the beginning of this chapter, has not necessarily produced an epistemological or philosophical one and that the resultant form of movement description will depend on the purpose and intentions of the researcher.

It is important to note that one of my aims in conducting this research project was to document the popular dance practices practiced in contemporary UK Drum 'n' Bass clubs. The motivation for this aim was the lack of previous club cultural research that provides the reader with any clear notion of the dance forms performed in these environments (see Chapter Two). For example, in a study of the gay and lesbian club scene in Sydney, Bollen (2001) provides a phenomenologically informed notion of queer kinesthesia, which successfully privileges the experiential dancing body but does less to illuminate the actual dance movement content. A final conclusion from Allen Ness (2004) is of interest when providing justification for my chosen method of representation of the dance form in this thesis as she notes that 'the embodied methodology descriptions are in fact *less* focused than the observationally weighted descriptions are on the actuality of the movement' (2004: 138).

Alternate methods of recording dance movement are advocated by Hughes-Freeland (1999), a dance anthropologist, who argues for the value of film as a research tool in ethnographic studies of dance. She states that film recordings give dancing a sense of tempo in their different contexts of social interaction, which cannot be achieved in writing. The inclusion of film in ethnographic work may also help to increase accurate representation by a decentring of the researcher and by the inclusion of actual voices (and dancing bodies) from the field (Hughes-Freeland, 1999). The use of film recording also provides another level of representation of the dance in ethnographic work and assists in understanding the form's aesthetics (Bacon, 2003). However, the film must also be viewed as a construct. Although Bacon (2003) employs the use of 'unstructured recording' where the 'shots' are not predetermined, the process of editing, even if by choosing when and when not to record the dance, is decided by the researcher.

Hastrup (1992), a visual anthropologist, also recommends the use of visual recording methods such as film or photographs in ethnographic fieldwork. She states that these recording methods may allow a researcher to capture occurrences that he or she may not

have observed whilst at the event. Hastrup refers to this concept as the ‘blow-up effect’ where the camera ‘shows us reality as we had *not* seen it before’ (Sontag in Hastrup, 1992: 11). The ‘show-up effect’ of visual methods of recording in the field may also alert the researcher to aspects of the setting he or she had previously noted but had discarded from analysis, therefore correcting ‘the possible bias of the reflective eye in the human observer’ (Collier in Hastrup, 1992: 12). During my research in Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture I have recorded some dance material using a digital camera, which has been valuable for prompting recollections of movement images after the event has begun to fade from memory. However, this material is often of poor quality because of a lack of sufficient light or effects such as strobes or lasers and is not suitable for sharing as part of these research findings. Photographic evidence of dance language has not been used for this study, as it has proved impossible to ‘still’ capture a kinetic form, especially in a dark club environment.

## **6.6 Fieldwork methodologies: sourcing and interviewing informants**

Although one of the central aims of dance ethnography is to represent a ‘multiplicity of voices’ (Buckland, 1999: 197), how these voices are ‘found’ and represented requires reflexive re-evaluation so that the researcher may ‘let others speak’ (Hughes-Freeland, 1999: 120). Previous club cultural scholars have accessed interview informants through advertisements in music and style magazines (Malbon, 1999; Thornton, 1995) or by handing out flyers at alternative locations such as universities (Pini, 2001). However, the recent growth in popularity of internet forums, including those dedicated to particular styles of dance music, now offers a further source of contact with potential informants. Forums and ‘chat boards’ promote discussion on a number of issues surrounding the production and consumption of dance music and also contain information on recommended forthcoming club events. As internet forums permit the use of synonyms for registration informants may feel that they are able to speak more freely about issues proposed for discussion. Although some forum users post comments that are reactionary a researcher should not consider whether the informant is telling ‘the truth’ but what the reactions say about his or her feelings and perceptions (Dean and Whyte in Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

As discussed in the previous section of this chapter, contact with informants can be made within the club event. However, the loud music, dim lighting and intent focus upon the music and dancing in Drum 'n' Bass events has prevented lengthy communication or discussion. Casual discussion with non-directive questioning, which has been possible with a minority of participants in quieter areas of the club environment such as the second dance space or 'chill out' and bar areas, has been used to supplement interview material. However, some club goers' mental impairment through the consumption of alcohol or recreational drugs has also posed difficulties when attempting to make contact in the club environment. As discussion with participants proved difficult to initiate and sustain in a club environment the majority of informants were contacted and interviewed through a selection of alternative methods. Personal contacts within the Drum 'n' Bass scene have enabled me access to several interviewees who are regular clubbers and event organisers. This technique is limited, as contact with a particular social circle may lead to similar responses and concerns, but has also led to 'snowball sampling' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995) with a wider group of informants including informal contact with organisers of the club events *Rotation* and *Essence of Chi*.

A large number of informants were contacted through the two dominant UK based Drum 'n' Bass internet discussion forums, [www.breakbeat.co.uk](http://www.breakbeat.co.uk) and [www.dogsonacid.co.uk](http://www.dogsonacid.co.uk). The initial method that I used to make contact with informants was to post a request for clubbers who may be interested in talking about Drum 'n' Bass club culture. Initially a minimal number of replies were received and my topic quickly disappeared in the rapidly expanding list of new ones (both forums have regular members that post new areas for discussion several times a day). The number of 'posts' that a member has submitted is also shown on the profile alongside his or her date of registration. As a relatively new member of the board my posts were often less well received, and responded to, than those made by regular members. These factors combined with my clear intention to find informants for research purposes are thought to have dissuaded some people from replying. However, subsequent posts where I stated the desire to 'interview' forum members proved more successful and attracted several instant responses (Rolfie, Deefa, Entropy, Reubin), although only two of these informants proceeded to interview. A more direct approach was also adopted by sending private messages to forum members asking

them if they would be willing to be interviewed.<sup>13</sup> Through monitoring forum topics I have been able to purposely select individuals either for their displayed interest in discussing Drum 'n' Bass club culture (Amie), their stated age (Ben A) or their knowledge about the musical scene (Livewire).

In face-to-face interviews with informants questions were semi-structured, which allowed for individuals to give longer qualitative responses and to move away from the topic into other subjects if desired (May, 1993) (see Appendix A for the interview schedule). There was also the opportunity to ask for immediate clarification on various answers, to bring interviewees back to the topic, and the ability to judge the conviction of their response by their body language. Informants who were interviewed through internet forums or e-mail were sent a list of questions (using the same topics as for the face to face interviews) that also encouraged longer qualitative answers. This technique allowed participants to take time to think about their responses, and to change answers if necessary before returning them. This second method may also be seen as beneficial due to the informants' anonymity being retained, which may allow them to respond in a manner that is not altered by their perceived idea of a 'required' response caused by my immediate presence; 'to what degree is the informant's statement the same one he might give either spontaneously or in answer to a question, in the absence of the observer? (Becker in Burgess, 1990: 80).

The use of the internet has also allowed me to adopt a persona that may not be associated with my physical appearance and, thus, may have enabled me to obtain some comments as if I were from a similar social group as the interviewee.<sup>14</sup> Many internet informants appeared to assume that I was male, and familiar with particular ways of conversing as they responded to private messages or emails with comments such as 'Nice1 bro!' (Chang, 2006) and 'yep that's cool m8' (em-tek, 2006). This response was accompanied by some surprise when I contacted some respondents by telephone, although a post entitled 'Callin girls man/dude/mate/rudes whatever' (greeef, 2006) discusses how these terms may also be commonly used for conversing with female participants in Drum 'n' Bass culture. This relatively new method of contacting respondents for fieldwork studies also enabled me to make contact with individuals who are resident in various parts of England

(including Nottingham, Bristol and Brighton), which has extended my sample and therefore the potential representativeness of the collected data.<sup>15</sup>

The majority of informants, accessed through internet discussion boards, are older club-goers (above 20 yrs old) who are either young professionals with a greater disposable income or are students; both groups having greater access to a computer and the internet either at home or their place of work. This technique for sourcing informants may be argued to limit claims for an accurate representation of the class identities involved in the Drum 'n' Bass club scene, although comments included in Chapter Seven from informants regarding the class identity of Drum 'n' Bass club-goers question this criticism by inferring a lack of diversity. In addition, whilst fieldwork observations indicate that a significant proportion of Drum 'n' Bass club-goers are younger than twenty years old, methods of seeking informants from a younger age group have been unsuccessful due to the unease of younger participants to respond to questioning via a forum (especially in committed manner over a period of time), or to interact with an older, and female club-goer within the club context. This is clearly a weakness of the research as in the sample of thirteen interview informants four were twenty-one years old or less at the time of interview, whilst seven are between the ages of twenty-two and twenty-four years, and two informants were aged twenty-five and twenty-seven years respectively (for a full list of interview informants see Appendix B).<sup>16</sup> The ethnic composition of the sample did accurately reflect the *observed* demographic of the clubbing crowd, with the majority of informants of a Caucasian ethnicity (ten, with one of Caribbean British and two of Asian British ethnicity). As a large scale quantitative survey of the demographic of club-goers is outside of the parameters of this research project, I have had to use my own observations from the field, as well as interview discussions with informants, to estimate the ethnic composition.

From the understanding that 'encounters with people...[are] a moral maze of responsibilities of confidentiality, power relations, issues of representation and self-knowledge' (Buckland, 1999: 3), I have carefully considered the ethics of my fieldwork methods. All informants were fully informed of the aims of the research before agreeing to meet for the interview. I have gained each informant's consent for using his or her comments in this thesis, as well as asking for his or her preferred name (some

interviewees have requested that I use that attached to their internet forum profile). Following transcription of each interview informants were offered the opportunity to read and amend their comments. Interview questions include those that seek demographic information, such as age and occupation, which supplements that gathered through observation whilst in the field. Participants have been asked to describe how they became interested in Drum 'n' Bass, which styles they listen to and which events they regularly attend (see Appendix A for an interview schedule). This information is useful to highlight any differences between the sub-styles of Drum 'n' Bass as well as encouraging informants to feel at ease by discussing a topic about which they often felt very passionately.<sup>17</sup> Questions that require informants to describe their own and others' dance movement used in the Drum 'n' Bass club context, as well as when and why clubbers are moved to dance, encourage responses that demonstrate notions of value, as well as supplementing my own observational data. As noted previously, informants used in this study have found describing their dance movement challenging. However, I have used their comments about the dance to make conclusions regarding their perception of this activity in relation to club cultural identities and values (see Chapter Seven).

Following the completion of two pilot interviews (FD, 2005 and Jack, 2005) the interview schedule was amended to include areas for further discussion and clarification. This was also supported by fieldwork observations that suggested emerging lines of enquiry. The dominance of male club-goers and an increase in the number of female dance performance groups performing at larger Drum 'n' Bass events, alongside an observed imbalance of different racial or ethnic groups and a predominance of a specific racial and 'class-based' style, prompted the inclusion of questions regarding perceived identities of 'typical' Drum 'n' Bass participants. Information regarding the historical and cultural development of dance music sub-genres (see Chapter Three) and Drum 'n' Bass (see Chapter Five) has been set in active dialogue with observations during fieldwork and interviewee responses to enable the identification of specific 'sensitising concepts' to produce a 'grounded theory' (Blumer in Fielding, 2004). Whilst this specific focus has comprised the construction of particular racial and class-based identities, consideration has also been given to how these identities intersect with other aspects such as gender, sexuality and age.



## 6.7 Conclusions

In this chapter I have discussed the fieldwork design for my research in Drum 'n' Bass club culture. The chosen methodology uses a range of ethnographic techniques that engage different forms of data in an active dialogue to produce a grounded theory. Fieldwork visits to a variety of different club venues that feature Jump Up and Dancefloor, Darkside and Liquid Drum 'n' Bass events have enabled the collection of observational data of participants' dancing as well as reflection on my own kinaesthetic experiences. This information is supplemented by data gathered during interviews with informants, where I have focused questioning on participants' perceptions of the dance, other club cultural practices and the identities of other Drum 'n' Bass club-goers. The use of internet media and journalistic and academic accounts of the development of Drum 'n' Bass club culture has informed the direction of this research.

In the last two chapters of this thesis I analyse the dance practices observed and experienced in Drum 'n' Bass club events in relation to the construction and performance of identity. I reveal how club-goers draw intertextually on historical and popular representations of racial and class-based identities to articulate new meaning and significance in the dancing body in contemporary UK Drum 'n' Bass club culture; 'movement serves as a marker for the production of gender, racial, ethnic, class and national identities' (Desmond, 1997: 36).

## Chapter Six Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> For further discussion of these differences refer to Kaeppler (in Buckland, 1999: 13-25).
- <sup>2</sup> The work of the dance ethnologist is distinct from the anthropologist by their focus upon the analysis of dance forms and their traditions rather than the social and cultural contexts of their performance (Thomas, 2003).
- <sup>3</sup> For further discussion see Hastrup (1995: 16-17, 154-157) and Clifford and Marcus (1986: 230-236).
- <sup>4</sup> Drawing on models from natural science, positivism and naturalism both seek to understand social phenomena as objects independent of the researcher (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). However, positivists require the rigorous testing of data in controlled conditions whereas naturalists stress the importance of studying the social world in its 'natural state' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).
- <sup>5</sup> Exponents of reflexive anthropological work include Dwyer (1982), Dumont (1986, 1978), Crapanzano (1980, 1977), Rabinow (1977) and Reisman (1977).
- <sup>6</sup> My previous experience in dance music club culture has also enabled me to develop positive relationships with informants outside of this social group as I was able to demonstrate an awareness of specific club cultural practices. This enabled participants to feel comfortable during the interview process and may have given me access to information that they would otherwise not have shared (for example the use of recreational drugs in Drum 'n' Bass club culture).
- <sup>7</sup> I define 'formal' visits as those where I spent a substantial time period at each event (up to five hours) and generated extensive field notes through participant observation and informal visits where I attended for a shorter time period (two to three hours), which were used to supplement dance descriptions.
- <sup>8</sup> Although I do recognise that such conclusions are an *interpretation* of fieldwork data: 'ethnographic accounts are not representations of culture; rather they are (textual) interventions *in* culture' (Thomas, 2003: 71). Detailed discussion regarding methodologies to ensure representation of the 'emic' (insiders') perspective of a dance event is located in section 6.4 of this chapter.
- <sup>9</sup> This is a particularly pertinent topic for future research as website references for video material that I have included in Chapters Seven and Eight of this thesis demonstrate clear differences between dance movement performed in UK Drum 'n' Bass clubs and that which is practiced in other countries such as Russia.
- <sup>10</sup> In Ness's (1992) study of the *sinulog* dances of Cebu City in the Philippines her research methodology does include a variety of participant observation methods including speaking to informants about the dance and direct observation. However, there is a clear emphasis in the text on the researcher's own experience of movement practices in Cebu City (for example the first four chapters include descriptions of her own experiences of the city during her fieldwork and a personal reflection on the process of learning new movement language as a dancer in the US as well as during her fieldwork). In a later article Ness describes the 1992 text as 'primarily an exposition and illustration of "My process of physical, subjective and dynamic attunement to choreographic phenomena" (1992:3)' (2004: 140). This clearly demonstrates the challenges inherent in attempting providing a reflexive fieldwork methodology that includes sufficient representation of the emic voice as, from this statement, it is questionable whether Ness is seeking to represent the insider's perception of the *sinulog* dance form.
- <sup>11</sup> In contrast to previous club cultural accounts I did not find that gaining entry to Drum 'n' Bass events was similar to 'passing an exam' (Thornton, 1995: 114). Whilst some club door staff required proof of age and most performed body and / or bag searches, 'style' or appearance did not appear to be a factor for refusing entry.

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- <sup>12</sup> This was evident in the manner in which they responded to questions about the dance: often short answers accompanied with laughter or signs of more obvious embarrassment.
- <sup>13</sup> Private messages are sent through the internet site, such as with email systems, to an individual account and are not viewed by the public.
- <sup>14</sup> Whilst unintentionally my informants appear to have assumed I was of a similar age or identity to themselves I was always clear of my research intentions.
- <sup>15</sup> Although a 'representative' sample is not necessarily needed for small-scale qualitative field research (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).
- <sup>16</sup> Whilst this could be seen as a limitation of the research methodology, the majority of informants had participated in Drum 'n' Bass club events for several years, including some who had begun clubbing at the age of sixteen (FD, 2005; Jack, 2005).
- <sup>17</sup> When requesting contact with potential informants it will be those who feel most strongly about the topic who will volunteer for interview. This will, therefore, not present a balanced view from respondents. For this reason I have used e-mail questioning with respondents who were less willing to meet with me. I have also interviewed one informant who is no longer a Drum 'n' Bass club-goer to balance the more positive experiences of this club cultural group.

## Chapter Seven

### Boys, Bass and Bovver

#### 7.1 Introduction

Friday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2006, 10.00pm

Driving alone through the wet, dark streets of suburban Cambridge I begin to feel apprehensive. The Legends Bar of Cambridge City Football ground is located away from the main road and the car park is already full. Standing outside the small entrance I observe a small group of young men dressed in dark casual clothing of jeans, trainers, large baggy hooded tops and baseball caps. They stand close together hunched over, and are shifting from side to side and speaking in low voices. As I approach, one looks up and the other two hurry inside. 'You here on your own?' he asks in a surprised tone, to which I reply that I am meeting some friends inside. He leads me through the double doors and into a brightly lit hallway where he quickly places my £6 into his jeans pocket and assures me, 'you won't get any trouble in here...But if you do, come and find me, my name's Daz'.

Entering the main part of the venue I expect to see groups of surly, young men shifting around the sides of the dance floor, perhaps aggressive exchanges between club-goers as they move through the space and unfriendly stares from groups of participants. The loudness of the music hits me as I push open the swing door, and the heavy bassline reverberates through the wooden floor that covers the dance area adjacent to the entrance and shakes into my body resonating in my chest. On and around the dance floor are several small groups of young men between 18-20 years old, some standing near to the DJ talking and drinking bottles of beer, whilst others play with movement. Two clubbers swap baseball caps from head to head whilst stepping through the feet from side to side, whilst others creep towards and away from one another with an emphasised lilting movement up and down, before shifting out of this stylised movement into raucous laughter. As I move towards the bar one young male clubber prompts his friend to move aside to let me order. Far from moody, aggressive and dangerous these participants are excited, enthusiastic and *positively friendly*.

Extract devised from personal fieldnotes, 2006

In this thesis I argue that an exploration of the historical, social and cultural development of Drum 'n' Bass will enable a researcher entering the dance field for ethnographic research to follow a number of 'sensitising concepts' (Blumer in Fielding, 2004). These derive from the expressive capacities of each genre that act as frameworks for constructing meaning and value, and which are articulated not only through internal and external cues of the particular texts (e.g. the musical structure and how it is marketed) but will be evident in the subcultural communities that sustain them. The 'truth effects' that are generated by them will be reflective and formative of the social and political identities of the club-goers. In Chapter Five of this thesis I use journalistic and scholarly accounts of the development of Jungle and Drum 'n' Bass culture to reveal a racial and class-based association with danger, transgression and criminality. Although some writers describe a 'gentrification' of the genre since the mid 1990s, through the incorporation of stylistic influences from a number of other styles such as Detroit and European Techno, contemporary Drum 'n' Bass club culture can still be identified as closely connected with these oppositional values (see Chapter Five). However, as expressed in the extract from my fieldnotes above, fieldwork data collated for this research reveals the existence of complex and contradictory systems of value that both challenge and support these associations.

In Chapters Four and Five of this thesis I explore the ways in which meaning and value is ascribed to particular collective identity categories (such as the racial category of 'black') through social discourse. Skeggs refers to Lingis's (1994) use of Deleuze and Guattari's (1977) notion of 'inscription' to describe how a body is 'marked' in the process producing subjectivity: 'inscription is about making through marking' (Skeggs, 2004: 12). The products of inscription are classifications such as race, gender, sexuality and class, and the process occurs through the marking of value of particular bodies.<sup>1</sup> However, Skeggs also discusses how value is transferred to bodies and read off them, 'how value may be retained, accumulated, lost or appropriated' (2004: 13). She emphasises how the *history* of inscription produces the conditions of marking, allowing particular groups the ability to challenge the dominant symbolic order. In doing so Skeggs identifies how the process of inscription attributes different values to identity markers, for example 'being marked as black, male and working-class produces a different form of inscription and a different value to that of being

white, female and working-class' (2004: 14). These systems of value are shifting according to the context with the ability for re-evaluation and contestation.

These discussions relate closely to those ideas in Chapter Four of this thesis, where I identify how scholars have noted the re-evaluation of 'black' identities as linked to negative values associated with criminality, to produce positive values of 'cool' in various forms of popular culture. This is also discussed by Skeggs who describes this process as a re-appropriation of black culture 'in which black men have been criminalised for their perceived threat and danger, whilst simultaneously being used in popular music and film as dangerously glamorous and cool' (2004: 98). In this thesis I argue that this ambiguity is evident in the Drum 'n' Bass dancing body. Marvin has referred to historical and popular representations of particular identities, which are often constructed by those who have little or no knowledge of them, as 'imaginary simplifications' and 'assumptive worlds' (in Skeggs, 2004: 94-95). These representations act as shorthand images that have shifting value systems dependent on the context and identity of the user. Thus, when representations are transposed to new contexts inscriptions may be re-evaluated in the process of their attachment to a new group. In Chapters Seven and Eight of this thesis I argue that club-goers use shorthand images to construct, perform and reiterate personal and collective identities in contemporary UK Drum 'n' Bass club culture.

Movement and dance are key social activities through which identities are produced and performed. In this chapter I explore the values ascribed to Drum 'n' Bass club goers' dancing bodies through the inscription of representations of identity classifications that are articulated particularly in terms of gender and class (how these identities actively intersect with representations of race will be explored in Chapter Eight of this thesis). Clubbers' perceptions of their own subjectivity through an assertion of difference and the ascription of particular values to 'Others', forms an important part of this analysis. It is also necessary to consider 'who' is dancing for this will alter any interpretation of value. Thus, the first part of this chapter explores the gender composition of Drum 'n' Bass clubbing crowds in order to reveal club cultural attitudes towards masculinity and femininity. Whilst Drum 'n' Bass club culture is dominated by male participants, female dance performance troupes have become popular at Jump Up Drum 'n' Bass events in the early 2000s. Movement

language used by these groups, as well as by some female club-goers, is similar to that used in contemporary Hip Hop and RnB music videos and sexualises the female dancing body. In the last part of the chapter I explore how the performance and ascription of gendered club cultural identities is articulated in relation to historical, social and cultural representations of class.

Dancing in Drum 'n' Bass club events uses improvised movement and is generally a solo practice with some physical and non-contact interaction with friends and other clubbers. Dance movement includes a variety of stepping and weight-shift foot patterns that are generally executed in 'place' with a number of characteristic arm and hand gestures that suggest particular subcultural values and identity constructs are at play.<sup>2</sup> Although vernacular movement practices that are performed in dance music clubs are not codified through the use of set sequences, but are improvised forms, a cohesive 'genre' or style emerges from these descriptions. This is particularly evident when considering how the movement plays an important role in the construction of the clubbers' identities, which in turn form an integral part of these dancing communities, and the genre / club / subculture of Drum 'n' Bass.

## **7.2 Dancing identities: gendered relations**

I remember my mum saying 'Oh you're really lucky, 'cause I used to love dancing, but you couldn't do it without a partner.' And I thought yeah, that's really good. You can dance on your own. You don't need a man to ask you to dance or you don't need anyone to dance with. You don't even need anyone to go to a rave with.

*It's changing.*

Amy in Pini, 2001: 117, my emphasis

Early accounts of club and rave culture described a range of identities as present on the dance floor 'people of different ages, occupational groups, sexualities, subcultures and races' (Newcombe in Bradby, 1993: 166). Redhead describes the Acid House phenomenon as attracting a diverse crowd, from 'football hooligans to New Age hippies' (Redhead, 1993: 4). Despite these scholars' claims for the rave movement's egalitarianism, Pini (2001) notes the absence of the female experience in previous

club cultural accounts. McRobbie describes how 'girls appear...to be less involved in the cultural production of rave, from the fliers to the events, to the DJ-ing than their male counterparts' (1994: 168). Bradby also acknowledges the absence of women in the production and organisational aspects of dance music cultures. However, Pini insists that these scholars fail to acknowledge the significant level of 'involvement for hundreds of thousands of women who regularly participate [in club culture]' (2001: 9).

Since the publication of early club and rave research the dance music club scene has diversified and expanded. Scholars writing in the mid to late 1990s frequently acknowledge the rapid development of the number of dance music styles but quickly dismiss the need to study particular dance music genres due to their perceived rapid evolutionary and transient nature. As discussed in Chapter Two this has led to conflicting accounts and does not allow for a close reading of the particularities of each area of the club cultural scene. Previous scholars frequently contrast women's experiences visiting generic or 'mainstream' nightclubs to that of dance music clubs, when they are described as free from predatory or aggressive behaviour (Pini, 2001; Malbon, 1999; McRobbie, 1994).<sup>3</sup> Whilst I do not suggest that these accounts are misrepresentative of the experiences of women in dance music clubs included in these scholars' research, I use their conclusions in juxtaposition to the following analysis to reinforce the need for scholars to account for the diversity of experiences that are particular to areas of dance music club cultures.

Drum 'n' Bass is a male dominated club culture. During the period of field research the majority of DJs, MCs and club-goers observed and interviewed have been male. The gender balance at club events has ranged from approximately 80% (male) and 20% (female), to 60% (male) and 40% (female). As noted in Chapter Five, Liquid Drum 'n' Bass events attract higher numbers of women, although this was never observed to be more than 40% of the total clubbing crowd. The male dominated nature of the Drum 'n' Bass club scene is also reflected in the lack of female DJs and MCs employed at events (only one female, DJ Storm, was observed during this research). The age range of Drum 'n' Bass club-goers is generally between seventeen years to twenty-five years. It was notable that Jump Up events attracted a younger clubbing crowd with the average age being between sixteen to nineteen years.<sup>4</sup> This



assertion is supported by comments from informants who described Jump Up events as the Drum 'n' Bass club nights that they attended when they first became interested in the style. Dark and Liquid events were noted as attracting older clubbers, although still predominantly under twenty-five years old. Lastly, an overwhelming majority of Drum 'n' Bass club-goers, ranging from 80% to 100% at all club events attended as part of this research and 86% of interview informants have been of Caucasian ethnicity. The remaining club-goers and interview informants have been African British or Caribbean British with very few Asian participants (see Chapter Eight).

All interview informants commented on the unequal gender balance at events: 'I think it's kind of accepted that it is male dominated' (Tasha, 2006). However, several also noted that more women were attending events in the early 2000s than when Jungle was popular in the mid to late 1990s (Livewire, 2006; Rai, 2006; Reubin, 2006). In an attempt to redress the gender imbalance some Drum 'n' Bass promoters, such as those who organise the regular Sunday night event Grace at London's club Herbal, will offer free entry for women. It can be argued that these attempts to attract more women to events are reflective of an intention to create social contexts in which sexual interaction could occur, which is in contrast to previous accounts of the club and rave scene. In addition, some informants felt that by trying to attract more women to club events promoters were attempting to change the reputation of the Drum 'n' Bass scene as 'moody' and associated with criminality (Tasha, 2006).

Attending Drum 'n' Bass clubs is a social practice as club-goers observed during this research arrived in groups of between two and five friends, which could be mixed or same sex (although more commonly groups of young males). However, all informants emphasised the importance of the music rather than socialising and Chris (2006) told me that he would often attend clubs on his own. The loud volume at which the records are played prevents lengthy conversation in the club environment, so verbal social interaction is often limited to the bar or toilet areas with little or none on the dance floor itself. Whilst I did observe several male clubbers standing on their own, it was notable that women were always in pairs or groups. When queuing outside a club event fellow club-goers and door entry staff sometimes asked me whether I was meeting friends inside with a clear suspicion of my lone presence. In addition, when I was approached by male clubbers inside the club they often assumed

that I was waiting for a friend to return from the toilets or the bar. It is, of course, possible that male clubbers would also be asked the same questions by door entry staff or club-goers but from my own observations I appeared to be an 'unusual' female participant.

Where mixed groups were observed they often comprised two or more heterosexual couples rather than mixed platonic friendship groups (they arrived at the club together and engaged in physical interaction such as holding hands, kissing and hugging). Informant Ben A (2006) stated that the majority of women at Drum 'n' Bass events are there only because they are the girlfriends of male club-goers, and suggested that women would not be as interested in the music as their male partners. These comments reveal a marginalisation of the role that women are expected to play in Drum 'n' Bass club culture. Reubin also commented that whilst some women may attend events they 'don't like [the music]...to the extent where they would buy decks' (2006). These comments indicate the existence of internal strategies for differentiation between Drum 'n' Bass club-goers that operate on systems of value ascribed to gender identities according to level of engagement in the musical culture.

The majority of male informants were not able to explain why there were not more female clubbers at Drum 'n' Bass events, although Chris identified the particular style of the music and club atmosphere: 'there are usually far more males...but I can only put this down to the style of music and atmosphere...being slightly more agreeable to guys, than girls, why, I have no idea' (2006). Some male informants positioned going out to Drum 'n' Bass in opposition to other forms of 'mainstream' clubbing by emphasising the importance of the music above socialising. In the following quote Ben B juxtaposes Drum 'n' Bass club culture against 'mainstream' clubbing, which he associates with the feminine:

People who go to Drum 'n' Bass nights, the majority of them will go because of the music, but a lot of people who go clubbing in general to get pissed, have a good time, and then try and pull you know? Erm, and so, *women* get all in their nice clothes and their makeup and stuff, spend hours and then go out and shake their booty! You know? Whereas Drum 'n' Bass is more about the music ...I'm not really sure what it is but not a lot of women tend to get into it as much.

Ben B, 2006, my emphasis

Ben's association of 'clubbing in general' with 'pulling', and his positioning of Drum 'n' Bass club culture as focused on the music rather than sexual interaction, is in line with the conclusions of scholars Malbon (1999) and Pini (2001) introduced at the beginning of this chapter. This is further supported by a comment posted on the forum of the website Drum 'n' Bass Arena: 'girls like cheese, girls go to cheese clubs. Boys like girls, boys go to cheese clubs' (Corpsey, 2008). In addition, the following Drum 'n' Bass fan associates mainstream clubbing with women, drinking and *violence*:

As far as I know, the majority of people in cheese clubs aren't there for the music, at least not round here. After recently converting my girlfriend since she met me (was dead set on that she didn't like DNB at all for months, ended up coming to a Valve night with me and loved it, since then has been to every single night I've been to & festival, she's hooked), she was all about cheese and loved it, but I've noticed that 90% of people in cheese clubs aren't really there for the music at all, moreso to pull people, fight, or for the girls have a huge competition of who's dressed the best (who gives a fuck when theres 2000+ people?).

Not many of them have much knowledge when it comes to music and just go out to drink and the above reasons. They just dance to whatever, music is probably in the background to them.

Cheese clubs = fights / pulling / getting smashed.

sic, Adzh, 2008

Through the assertion of difference from the 'mainstream', Ben B, Corpsey and Adzh distance themselves from a feminized 'Other' and ascribe particular values to themselves and other Drum 'n' Bass fans: 'representations are not just about producing knowledge to enable distance to be drawn from proximity, but also about attributing value' (Skeggs, 2004: 98).<sup>5</sup> This is achieved through a positioning of Drum 'n' Bass in polarised opposition to representations of the mainstream. Thus, Drum 'n' Bass is constructed as authentic (versus commercially constructed), complex (versus superficial; emphasised by references to make up and clothes), intellectualised (versus ignorant; through references to 'getting wasted', fighting and 'pulling') and masculinised (versus feminised; it is women who are described here as first occupying

the 'Othered' space and ignorant men 'following' looking for opportunities for sexual interaction).

The research findings of club culture scholar Thornton (1995) can be compared to the comments of Drum 'n' Bass respondents as she notes a feminisation of some forms of popular music that position 'chartpop disco' in opposition to 'alternative' music and their attendant club scenes. The 'mainstream' and concepts of femininity (reinforced by an association with the fictional characters of 'Sharon and Tracey') are characterised by a lack of focus on the music and an interest in the social and sexual nature of the club experience. Drum 'n' Bass participants are generally very knowledgeable about the musical style, tracks, DJs, MCs and production artists, and informants distinguish between Drum 'n' Bass audiences and those at other dance music and club events: 'if you go to a Hard House thing...people aren't really paying attention to the music...but whereas in a DnB thing people are actually listening to the music' (Reubin, 2006). Musical knowledge is sourced by Drum 'n' Bass participants outside the club context through the practices of buying records, reading specialist music magazines and being part of online Drum 'n' Bass communities through websites such as Drum 'n' Bass Arena ([www.breakbeat.co.uk](http://www.breakbeat.co.uk)) or Dogs on Acid ([www.dogsonacid.com](http://www.dogsonacid.com)). Local and translocal website discussion forum pages are used to promote events, debate current issues and to post users' mix compilations for review.

Some informants distinguish between Drum 'n' Bass clubbers who attend events because of an interest in and knowledge of the music and those who want to 'do a few drugs and get wasted' (Tasha, 2006). These club-goers are particularly associated with Jump Up events that feature well-known DJs, and are differentiated from smaller events that featured emerging artists and new styles. Whilst some informants state that they liked some Jump Up tracks, they characterised the majority of producers in this genre as releasing simplistic music that is produced for superficial and immediate effect on the club dance floor, rather than complex and subtle compositional structures. These comments reveal how hierarchical systems of value operate within Drum 'n' Bass club culture that privilege complexity and intellectualism. These values, which could be argued to be shorthand signifiers of a 'middle-class' identity,

are in contrast to those demonstrated through club-goers dance and movement practices (see section 7.4).

The importance of participants' appreciation and knowledge of Drum 'n' Bass music is reflected in the number of participants that are actively involved in DJ-ing. A large proportion of men interviewed (67%) had record 'decks' (turntables) at home and regularly bought Drum 'n' Bass tracks, as well as 44% of those males attending Drum 'n' Bass events as DJ or MC on a regular basis. However, from the four female informants interviewed for this research only one (25%) could DJ and regularly bought records (Tasha), and one other female informant commented that she liked to listen to Drum 'n' Bass outside the club context (Rai, 2006). Male informant, Reubin (2006) noted that whilst there is an increasing number of female dance music DJs, only a small proportion of these play Drum 'n' Bass. Rai (2006) and Naz (2006) both suggested that female Drum 'n' Bass DJs are not taken as seriously as males and it was, therefore, much more difficult for women to gain employment at Drum 'n' Bass events. Tasha (2006) was cautious in seeking opportunities to play in clubs because she felt there may be an expectation that she would not be as good as a male DJ and she would have less audience support. When questioned on why this may be the case, she described how some female DJs who were lacking in DJ-ing skill regularly obtain employment because their friends or boyfriends have contact with a promoter. Tasha (2006) felt that the standard of female DJs is not always as high as male DJs as they have been given opportunities for social reasons rather than their skills or ability.

Male informant, Deefa (2006), told me that whilst he knew of a small number of female DJs that played at events he attended, it was even more unusual to have a woman as an MC.<sup>6</sup> He described how important the tone of voice is for a Drum 'n' Bass MC: 'a lot of people go for the voice of the MC...and they can get kind of arsey about female MCs with high-pitched voices' (2006). Whilst Rai was supportive of female DJs she agreed with Deefa's comments;

I've been to a lot of clubs and I don't ever remember hearing a female MC...and to be honest I don't know whether I would enjoy it as much as male MCs – like I've heard Tali singing and I've heard Jenna G singing and stuff but for me I like an MC to have a bit of bass in their voice – I don't know why but it's just each to their own I guess.

Rai, 2006

Reubin reflected on why there are not as many women Drum 'n' Bass DJs and MCs and generalised that girls are not as interested in learning about music, concluding that they are into 'more girly things...[like] watching things on TV and...their haircuts and make up' (2006), whereas men have hobbies such as football, cars or music. Whilst highlighting and disputing the inherent essentialism in this informant's statement, these and previous comments clearly demonstrate that some participants articulate traditional views of gender roles that marginalise female involvement in Drum 'n' Bass club culture (even when females are permitted entry to the culture they are described as attending because of their male counterpart rather than through their own serious interest in the music). The preference for a low, bass tone for MCs toasts demonstrates a desire for a 'masculine' auditory presence on the dance floor.

A greater number of women were observed at Liquid Drum 'n' Bass as opposed to Jump Up or Dark Drum 'n' Bass club nights. Tasha (2006) described how she particularly liked Liquid club events as she did not feel as outnumbered as a female clubber, as when attending Dark Drum 'n' Bass events. Reubin (2006) described how the vocals and lightness of Liquid alongside the absence of a 'blearing' MC would be more attractive to women. These comments support Bradley's description of the gendering of voices in dance music where the female is associated with soul-singing and the male voice is associated with rapping: 'male speech and female song, male rhythm and female melody' (1993: 167). In addition, they also demonstrate Reubin's use of imaginary simplifications or shorthand images for [white, young] female identities. By describing elements that female Drum 'n' Bass club-goers would value in music (melody, lightness, calmness) this informant ascribes oppositional shorthand 'masculine' values that privilege 'hardness' and 'noise' for his own identity.<sup>7</sup> This is particularly interesting as Reubin's valuing of 'hardness' is in contrast to comments that distance clubbers from the violent 'Othered' mainstream.

Tasha (2006) stated that Dark or 'Techy' Drum 'n' Bass would attract the least numbers of female club-goers because of a 'moodier' atmosphere, whilst Deefa described events organised by the Dark Drum 'n' Bass record label, Renegade Hardware, as 'one to go out to with the lads' (2006). This sub-genre is dominated by

industrial sounds, whereas Jump Up is fast paced and upbeat and Liquid Drum 'n' Bass more melodic and soulful. Despite the success of Liquid Drum 'n' Bass in attracting more women to Drum 'n' Bass clubs, a perception of Dark and Jump Up micro-genres as 'hard' appears to prevent some women from becoming more involved in the club scene. One informant told me that her female friends refused to attend Drum 'n' Bass club events because they thought that the music was 'too banging...they think it sounds all the same...it's too fast, [too] hard' (Tasha, 2006). Conversely, this also appears to attract some women to Drum 'n' Bass as Tasha describes liking 'dark' and 'heavy' tracks, whilst Rai (2006) told me she listened to 'really hard stuff', as well as Liquid. In reinforcing their valuing of 'hardness' these female informants validate their involvement in Drum 'n' Bass club culture, which may otherwise be marginalised by other male participants.

Club-goers' comments included in this section of Chapter Seven regarding the gender composition of Drum 'n' Bass events reveal the existence of complex hierarchies of value that privilege masculinity and the associated notions of intellectualism, complexity, seriousness and 'hardness'. These qualities are ascribed to (male and female) Drum 'n' Bass club-goers through their demonstration of knowledge of, and dedication to, the music, as well as an active distancing from the feminized, simplified and violent mainstream. Club-goers' disassociation from violence is in contrast to the embodiment of movement material that will be discussed in section 7.4 of this chapter, as well as the association of MCs and specific sub-genres of Drum 'n' Bass (Darkside) with hardness and noise. Internal strategies for differentiation also exist within Drum 'n' Bass, as Jump Up tracks, events and clubbers are characterised as simplistic and superficial. These shifting value systems are reflective and formative of the personal and collective identities of Drum 'n' Bass club-goers. In the following section I explore club-goers attitudes to dancing at club events in order to gain a deeper understanding of the construction and performance of gendered identities in UK contemporary Drum 'n' Bass club culture.

### 7.3 Boys don't dance: valuing the corporeal

Drum 'n' Bass informants posit dancing an integral part of a club experience and describe their most enjoyable events as those when they have spent all night on the dance floor: 'I will dance all night if all the tunes are just going good for me' (Tasha, 2006); 'when it's good, I'll dance the whole night' (FD, 2005). All Drum 'n' Bass informants sourced during this research describe how the number of people dancing in a club context can be used as a direct measure of the audiences' enjoyment of the event: 'if I'm not dancing I'm not enjoying the night...they go...hand in hand. If it's a good night then I dance, if it's no good then you don't dance' (Ben B, 2006). Deefa reinforces this by stating 'for the club to be dancing and bumping shows...the DJ he is doing well because that's what they are intended to do, is to make people dance' (2006). However, the value of dancing in the Drum 'n' Bass club is not considered independently, but as inextricably linked to the musical selection or mixing of the DJ. Participants describe their dance movement as a reaction to hearing particular tracks and as an important way to listen to and appreciate the music;

if there's a tune that's, like, something I'm really into or I've heard...something that I consider to be a wicked tune then I'll really wanna dance to it because it'll, like, I'm happy with what I'm hearing and I'll wanna get into the groove really...that's my way of enjoying it.

Tasha, 2006

Informant Chris describes how the practice of dancing intensifies the listening experience, 'not only does...[the musical style] make you feel the music, when you apply bodily movement to it you accentuate the feeling' (2006). Thus, in addition to providing a value judgement on the musical selection, dance in the Drum 'n' Bass club is as a way to experience the music, where its value is in its function: to appreciate another medium rather than as a pleasure in itself. The view of dance as subordinate to the music is supported by further comments from promoter and DJ, FD, who is part of a group of fans who promote, DJ and MC at their own Drum 'n' Bass club events. At their last event they had employed a group of female dancers to perform on a stage area in front of the DJ for part of the evening. However, he quickly distances himself from an association with dance:



We didn't want them...to us they were nothing to do...for us it was about the music...For me personally, having the dancers there brings nothing...maybe for the girls they might like it? Maybe that's a really rude, you know, gendering of it, I don't know. But for me it's nothing because I'm there for the music and if someone says to me 'oh have you seen er...Justin Timberlake's new video, its brilliant, like, his dancing is fantastic', I'm not interested, I wanna listen to the record.

FD, 2005

Whilst this informant partly questions his own simplistic gendering of dance and music, he uses this dualism to distance himself from a perceived femininity ascribed to the dance and to reinforce his own masculine identity through his focus on the music (which he genders as male). Whilst FD describes dancing at events 'if the music is good...then I will literally spend all night on the dance-floor' he also negates his association with dance (the feminine) by emphasising 'that's why I'm there...I'm there for the music' (2005). In the club space the subcultural value placed on engagement with and appreciation of the music permits male participation in dance activity that may otherwise be associated with a feminine identity.

All informants were passionate about their time on the club dance-floor, yet FD avoided describing his movement language as dance: 'yeh, I do it all the time [referring to a particular hand gesture with first finger and thumb extended] but it's not really dancing' (2005). Several male informants describe their movement as 'messing around' and 'going crazy', or if they did engage in dance it would be to make fun of others: 'you do get like proper rude boys...mashing with each other, and we do, do that sometimes, taking the mick' (FD, 2005). Ben A describes 'going mad' or 'brocking out' rather than dancing (2006), whilst Deefa states 'I've never taken dancing seriously – I'll be hopping around on one foot, just for a joke' (2006). Deefa also downplays the creativity demonstrated by other Drum 'n' Bass dancers by describing them as 'a load of nutters bouncing around on one foot with their hands in the air' (2006). It can be argued that these informants' disassociation of Drum 'n' Bass dance practice from notions of creativity is an attempt to reinforce Western traditional constructions of the masculine where the male is aligned with notions of competitiveness (Hanna, 1988). This is further supported by comments from two male informants who describe dancing as important to them as a form of physical exercise rather than expression (Chris, 2006; Deefa, 2006). In Chapter Eight of this

thesis I also explore club-goers' attraction to the notion of madness, which can be argued to provide 'white', 'middle class' youth the opportunity to embody a subversive, risky 'Other'.

Some informants describe dancing to Drum 'n' Bass as a form of 'free expression' of the music and regard this freedom as a very positive element of Drum 'n' Bass club culture (Chris, 2006). In contrast to other events, particularly those that play Hip Hop, the Drum 'n' Bass club is perceived by participants to allow them a freedom to move in any way they wish: 'there's no, sort of, standards...DnB is everyman for himself, do what you want' (Deefa, 2006). Whilst there is a perception of Drum 'n' Bass dancing as 'anything goes', fieldwork participant observation revealed a level of consistency in the movement vocabulary that is in contrast to these comments. Drum 'n' Bass club goers see their dance movement as an instinctive reaction to the music where its dynamic qualities create an impulse in the body: 'I dance because I can't help myself!' (Amie, 2006); 'hearing good music makes me naturally move' (Naz, 2006). Whilst participants clearly place value on dancing as a way to experience the music, their descriptions of movement as a natural impulse can be argued to de-value the dance as they remove agency from their decision to move;

the whole reason why I listen to it is because it...has good movement and the way your body reacts to it...it's amazing...You just become so absorbed with the atmosphere in the club and the music that, you know, you can't help but dance and move to it.

Reubin, 2006

Musicologists, such as Gilbert and Pearson, discuss the corporeality of musical experience as the 'materiality of sound' (1999). Reinforcing the notion that a listening experience is not merely mental cognition, these scholars describe how sound waves resonate through a listener's body with a '*literally* visceral quality' (Gilbert and Pearson, 1999: 46). They also note that different genres of music will have varying degrees of materiality. As bass sounds have the slowest vibrating sound waves music that is bass heavy, such as Drum 'n' Bass, will provide the listener with a greater degree of corporeality: 'it is the bass and sub-bass that are felt as least as much as they are heard' (Gilbert and Pearson, 1999: 45). When heard through a large sound system in a club environment the 'materiality' of Drum 'n' Bass is clearly felt through the vibrations travelling through the dance-floor and into the body. Whilst my own

fieldwork participation has allowed me to experience the 'materiality' of this musical style, it is also evident that the dance is not merely a reaction to the musical structures and sounds but reflects subcultural identity constructs that form the rhetorical features of the genre.

Whilst female DJs, MCs and club-goers are in the minority at Drum 'n' Bass events there has been an increase in all female dance troupes performing at large rave and clubs in the early 2000s. The Narni Shakers, the TNT Dancers and the Vixons are dance troupes that regularly perform at Drum 'n' Bass and other 'rave' style events in the UK.<sup>8</sup> Whilst performance groups have been a regular feature of club and rave culture since the early to mid 1990s, they have previously been associated with 'spectacular' rave and club events, where female participants dress in day-glow club wear (such as hot-pants, fluffy bras and fluffy, knee-high boots) and DJs play Funky House and Hard House musical styles. The growth of the success and prominence of these dance troupes indicates that these women have actively sourced financially rewarding opportunities to be a part of this male dominated subculture.

Male informants were positive about these women's interest in the Drum 'n' Bass scene, interpreting their performances as a genuine interest in the music: 'I personally don't rate them more than any other dancers, however, they can shake my hand anytime as they are still part of the scene, they are specific to DnB and they like the music, which is far more significant' (Chris, 2006). Deefa also commented positively on the girls' initiative 'they're starting up their own thing, which is really great, I love that' (2006). However, all informants acknowledged that the female performances were a form of erotic entertainment for the predominantly male participants. Naz described the troupes as 'eye-candy', whilst other male informants commented on the combination of the costumes and sexual movement content: 'they are quite raunchy to be honest but whether they would be that raunchy if they were fully clothed and doing the same thing is a different matter. But I reckon they are perceived to be quite raunchy' (Deefa, 2006).

The dance troupes typically wear flamboyantly decorated costumes comprising short hot-pants with a bra-top and boots. These women actively participate in the construction of their own sexualities both on-stage through dance movement content

and in their advertising found on club flyers and the troupes' websites. Movement language draws on generic 'street' or 'urban' dance styles, as well as acrobatics (many of the dancers' biographies hosted on their websites describe their experience in gymnastics and disco dancing). The groups generally perform their routines in groups of two or three depending on the size of the stage. As space is normally limited, the majority of movement is performed in one area, although cartwheels and runs are used to swap places with other dancers or to enter and exit. Movement is a combination of arm, head and torso gestures that are fast-paced and strong in dynamic, matched to the four-four (syncopated) rhythm of the music. Arms are pushed out to in front of the body with elbows straight, folded across the torso and straightened by the sides, the head looks to the side or tilts with the body following in a ripple movement. Other movement content includes more sexually explicit material, such as dropping down from standing with feet together to a squat position, opening the knees to each side with the hands with the back straight, bringing them back together and then pushing the buttocks up to straighten the legs before bringing the rest of the body back to standing.<sup>9</sup> The movement content performed by these groups is similar to the strong sexual images of women portrayed in contemporary popular music videos by RnB and Hip Hop artists such as The Pussycat Dolls.<sup>10</sup>

The websites of dance performance groups host personal biographies of each of the dancers alongside photographs of the women in erotic and playful poses that often feature them in underwear or revealing clothes. These glamour-style images are similar to representations of women found in contemporary male magazines, such as *Loaded* and *FHM*. Male fans are also encouraged to purchase troupe merchandise material such as the Narni Shakers calendar that features glamour-style photographs of the group. Sexualised and commodified images of women are also used by some fans when using internet Drum 'n' Bass discussion forums. When submitting comments to a forum a 'signature' is shown at the bottom of each 'post'. Glamour photographs or short erotic videos of women kissing are used by some fans, as well as profile names such as Muff Diver and Gyratepunarni that demonstrate an adolescent obsession with sex. Whilst a feminist critique of Drum 'n' Bass would suggest the disempowerment of women through the use of such images, it can also be argued that dance performance troupes are reclaiming power by actively constructing their own

sexualities and, in doing so, are playing a significant part in the organisational aspects of Drum 'n' Bass club culture.<sup>11</sup>

Whilst some male informants appeared appreciative of the dancers' performances, others disliked the distraction away from the musical focus of the event. Reubin describes feeling infuriated with male clubbers standing and 'gawping' at the women: 'I'm just kinda like "come on and dance", you know, "we're here for the music"' (2006). This informant positions the dancers as a threat to the [masculinised] club culture;

from my perspective they don't add anything to a rave, they don't add anything at all. In actual fact I think I would almost rather not have it because it's like, it's just a bit too obvious, you know, and it's like I've come here to listen to my music, you know...if I wanna see birds dance I go to a strip club, you know what I mean?

Reubin, 2006

Despite a perceived distance from 'mainstream' clubbing where sexual advances may be more common (Pini, 2001; Malbon, 1999; Thornton, 1995), several informants describe women receiving unwanted attention from male clubbers at Jump Up and Dark Drum 'n' Bass events: 'a lot of girls find they do get harassed and hit on by the sort of people they don't want to be harassed and hit on by' (Deefa, 2006). This was reiterated by three of the four female informants who reported incidents of strangers in the club attempting to physically grab hold of them (Naz, 2006; Amie, 2006) or 'checking me out, ...some guys are a bit lechy and stuff, kinda searching for the women really' (Tasha, 2006). During a small number of fieldwork visits I felt intimidated by male club-goers' behaviour. For example, at the regular Friday night Jump Up event, *Switch* at the Ministry of Sound in London, a man in his late twenties was trying to physically stop women from entering the toilets by grabbing them as they walked past. At the same event two men were harassing women at the back of the main dance floor by trying to dance with, or talk to them. In both instances the men observed appeared to be intoxicated with drink or drugs as their movement and speech was lacking in coordination. Amie (2006) suggested that the presence of the performance troupes meant that she received less respect from male club-goers during an event. She also commented that the sexual image the groups displayed was

disempowering for women as it placed them as inferior to the male audience: 'that's why the Narni Shakers get to me a bit, as they are pushing a stereotype and a feeling that women are inferior and I don't think it's the place for it' (Amie, 2006).

Although Amie describes attracting unwanted attention from males at some Drum 'n' Bass events she also depicts the dance floor as a space of freedom. She explains how dancing allows her to feel more confident about her body because of the level of anonymity the crowded space provides;

it's one of the only times that I feel confident about my body... usually it's a source of distress for me as I'm not too happy with my shape. In the dark crowded atmosphere of a club I can happily get lost in the masses and not have to worry about myself.

2006

Another female informant also described a relaxed approach to her image when on the dance floor: 'I don't care if I look like an idiot, when I'm dancing I'm there to just...cut loose and have a laugh' (Rai, 2006). These comments indicate that some women feel comfortable and relaxed in the Drum 'n' Bass club and are not concerned with maintaining an image based on promoting their gender and sexuality. However, Rai describes a recent increase in the numbers of female club goers that construct a more sexualised image through their dance movement and style of dress;

when I've been out recently I've seen girls raving in denim skirts and tight tops...I don't know, maybe it's just me being weird but if I go out clubbing I'm going out to dance and have a good time and...not to be looked at.

Rai, 2006

During fieldwork observations some female clubbers dance movement in the Jump Up Drum 'n' Bass club did focus on the display of their sexuality. One movement observed includes standing with the feet slightly apart and moving the buttocks up and down with the torso inclined forwards on a diagonal (causing the buttocks to protrude backwards) with a bouncing of the knees. One or both arms are often raised, bent at the elbow and touches or is placed near the forehead. This movement is frequently performed with a male club-goer standing behind the female, either close or with a shifting movement with each bounce to move nearer to them so that they touch. 'Booty' shaking was also performed in a circle of female friends, whilst laughing with

each other and in one instance included a crouching movement to the floor and a bounce back up to standing. This movement material is less explicit, yet similar in its focus on the woman's buttocks, to that found in Jamaican Dancehall performances as described by scholars such as Wright (2004), Hope (2004) and Noble (2000). As noted in Chapter Four of this thesis, Noble (2000) identifies how sexualised images of the black female body from Jamaican Dancehall have been employed in contemporary music videos by RnB and Hip Hop artists. In Drum 'n' Bass club culture these images are reproduced by [white] participants on the Jump Up dance floor and in the performances [and promotional images] of dance troupes.

#### **7.4 Class matters**

Skeggs notes how 'historically, there are strong and intimate parallels between the generation of classifications of social class and the production of sexuality and gender' (2004: 3). The close connection between these aspects of identity can be seen in Drum 'n' Bass informants' comments gathered during this research. The majority of female club-goers expressed strong views against the Drum 'n' Bass performance troupes that demonstrate a reading of class onto these sexualised, female dancing bodies. Tasha was concerned that the dancers detracted from a focus on the music and suggested that they were only used because of the unequal audience gender balance: 'coz I'm really into the music...why do you need to have girls with next to nothing on just dancing because there's no girls at an event, you know, is that what it's all about?' (Tasha, 2006). Tasha and Rai both suggested that performance groups would usually be found at Jump Up Drum 'n' Bass events, and Rai commented: 'I've seen them quite a few times but it tends to be at like proper raves...grimey raves, but you wouldn't see them in Fabric – which is quite a middle class club' (2006). These comments indicate that class-based affiliations and distinctions are employed by club-goers to distinguish between different areas of Drum 'n' Bass club culture and their attendant communities. Jump Up Drum 'n' Bass events, which feature sexualised performances of dance groups such as The Narni Shakers, are perceived by these informants to be working-class, whereas events (or venues) that would not host such groups are positioned by Rai as 'middle-class'.

An association of sexuality with working-class culture is noted by Skeggs (2004) who suggests that morality lies behind all ascriptions of value. For example, early moral readings of women's bodies and practices are posited as responsible for initiating the first class categories in Australia (Finch in Skeggs, 2004). Skeggs (2004) describes the working-classes as traditionally represented by excess, including explicit sexuality, whilst the middle-classes are represented by their distance from this quality and are thus characterised by restraint, repression, reasonableness, modesty and denial (Skeggs, 2004).<sup>12</sup> In addition the notion of modesty as a marker of middle-class femininity is contrasted to working-class representations of the feminine that were coded at a level of conduct: '*where appearance became the signifier of conduct; to look was to be*' (Skeggs, 2004: 100, emphasis in original). To pay too much attention to how one looked was a sign of sexual deviance or excessive sexual desire (Skeggs, 2004).

In the context of Drum 'n' Bass club culture Rai describes how she 'goes out to dance and have a good time...not to be looked at' (2006), which is in contrast to both Rai and Tasha's descriptions of other female participants' display of unwarranted sexuality through the wearing of 'next to nothing' (Tasha, 2006) or 'denim skirts and tight tops' (Rai, 2006). These comments indicate a reading of these dancing bodies as working-class and, of these clubbers as having a low [moral] value. Tasha describes how the performance groups bring a 'tacky' or 'porno' image to Drum 'n' Bass. In denouncing female fans and performers clothing and movement as excessively sexual, Rai and Tasha distance themselves from a working-class identity and in doing so ascribe themselves middle-class attributes of restraint, respectability and seriousness (see Skeggs, 2004). This desire is also seen in comments where they stress a dedicated interest in the music: 'I'm really into the music' (Tasha, 2006). However, their comments also contrast with club cultural values of 'madness' and 'cutting loose' that I explore further in Chapter Eight of this thesis.

Several informants commented directly on class-based identities in Drum 'n' Bass club culture during the interview process. When asked whether there was a particular type of person who would be attracted to Drum 'n' Bass, Rai responded: 'if you're gonna make a generalisation about it I would say it is probably more for working-class people' (2006). When asked how she could tell that they were working-class she



admitted that she could not know but aspects of a person's style of dress, language and dance movement were associated with a certain class:

Hackett t-shirt, cap, tracksuit bottoms – that sort of thing...all sort of bouncing around doing the same sort of dance moves and yeah ...I don't wanna use the word 'chav' because it's so overused now but...

Rai, 2006

The stereotype of the 'chav', a colloquial term that has gained popularity in the early 2000s, is particular to a working-class, white, male English youth. This image was also evoked by informant Jack who described a typical Drum 'n' Bass fan as having a 'chavy image', which he defined as a young, white male wearing a baseball cap '17-20 [years old] just dropped out of college...going to Drum 'n' Bass clubs to sell pills' (2005). This description connects closely with Skeggs's (2004) descriptions of popular representations of the working-classes, such as the characters in the television programme *The Royle Family*, who are associated with immobility and stasis, and Munt's characterisation of the working-classes as discursively associated with 'waste': 'fat, beer drinking men who have become a drain on the social body (they leak, they weep, *they rage*: excrescent and grotesque)' (2000: 8, my emphasis). Whilst Drum 'n' Bass club-goers are 'active' participants in the club environment, images of rage and aggression are clearly observed in the dance movement.

When dancing in the Drum 'n' Bass club participants often use movements and dynamic qualities that suggest strength, power and aggression.<sup>13</sup> The solo dancers' body posture varies between two positions that contrast by a difference in direction of focus and upper torso alignment. The first posture has the shoulders hunched forward of a curved upper back, often with them raised upwards towards the ears as if protecting the centre or collecting the body together. The remainder of the spine is more vertical, whilst the arms are positioned close to the body with the elbows bent and the forearm forward of the torso. This is similar to the hunched upper back, raised shoulder with elbows drawn in to the body position that would be assumed during boxing or fighting. Whilst retaining the curved posture of the upper back, the shoulders often twist from front to back (causing a movement in the whole spine) with one leading the movement, accentuating one side's forward thrust on the off-beat of the music. The dynamic of this movement is dictated by the music, becoming

forceful, thrusting and tense when the music becomes more driven and industrial, or with a rolling quality when tracks are more fluid. Whilst there is no clear dynamic division between the musical sub-genres of Drum 'n' Bass, Dark tracks often use more industrial sounds whereas Jump Up can vary between driven and intense drum and bass patterns to a more fluid and bouncing composition often led by a heavy, rumbling bassline.

The first body posture and accompanying twisting shoulder movement is accompanied by several different arm gestures: some dancers hold the hands in a (thumbs up) closed fist shape, low but contained under the upper body with the focus downward to the hands, whilst others perform sharper pointing movements with one or both arms, often with the first finger and thumb extended and the remaining fingers in a loose fist. Both gestures are performed moving the arms back and forth slightly in opposition to a simple stepping pattern, in place, from one leg to the other. When a baseball style cap is worn, dancers often touch or hold the front part of the cap with one hand keeping the elbow close in to the side of the shoulder. If no cap is worn some dancers touch their first two fingers to the same side temple as if to contain or hold concentration within the torso. The sense of containing energy within the body, of suppressing something within the centre of the torso, is a strong factor in much of the dancing observed in the Drum 'n' Bass club. Performing this dance movement creates a feeling of intense power and energy in the body.

A variation of the curved upper back and shoulders includes the dancer planting one foot diagonally in front of the other allowing the body to rock forward and back with a change of weight through the feet whilst bouncing at the knees. Here the dancer uses either counts 1 and + to move forward and back, or uses a double knee bounce at each point so that moving forward uses counts 1 + and back 2 + (or a combination of these counts). The body posture during this rocking movement varies from a straight torso (still retaining the curved upper back and hunched shoulders), to one where a shoulder thrusts strongly leading the movement, thus creating a more asymmetrical posture. Dancers were also observed holding one elbow tightly across the body with the other arm as if creating a straightjacket with their own body. The use of hunched shoulders combined with aggressive rocking or twisting of the torso creates an image (to the observer) and feeling (to the dancer) of strength and aggression, combined with an

awareness of potential loss of control in the body as pressure builds through the dynamic of the movement and music.

The second main body posture observed in the Drum 'n' Bass club is more vertical than the first, and at times 'lounging' back with one or both shoulders dropped past the line of the lower spine and hips. The feet move from one to the other in a stepping pattern in place, either by transferring the weight slightly from one to another (with bent knees) with full steps and a low bent supporting leg whilst the other is lifted upwards (often to the slower bassline rhythm 1-step +-lift, 2-step, +-lift), or by tapping the lifted foot on the ground in front of the dancer before stepping onto it (1-step, tap-2, 3-step, tap-4). This variation can also become a skipping movement as the energy becomes lifted and the dancer hops and the tap becomes a loose and low kick. The torso moves with the legs so that the shoulders and body twist forward and back in opposition to the feet (the extent of this movement varies between dancers, and their own absorption in the music and dance at different points of the evening).<sup>14</sup> The dancer's focus is held upwards when the torso is vertical or leaning backward and is often towards the DJ rather than around the dance space. The arms are heavy and appear long by the dancer's sides as they swing languidly in opposition, although they will also often hold a cigarette or beer can in one or both hands. Alternatively, some dancers rest one hand in the crotch area, whilst the other is gestured confidently to the DJ, across the dancing crowd. These gestures evoke images of anti-social youth, 'lager louts' and the 'vulgar' corporeality that Stephens (2000) describes as embodied by working class, Millwall football fans (see Chapter Four).

Physical energy, which often appears to be contained and held tightly inside during much of the movement vocabulary observed in Drum 'n' Bass clubs, is also seen expended through 'brocking out' or through physical aggression. At one Dark Drum 'n' Bass event one male clubber was observed punching the wall of the club three times at the climax of the musical track. Another dancer at the same event was observed hitting the table next to where he was standing. Male dancers often punch the air at the break of the music (after a repetitious section or series of rewinds), before continuing dancing.<sup>15</sup> At both Jump Up and Dark Drum 'n' Bass events clubbers were observed shouting obscenities and roaring across the dance floor.

These outbursts were not addressed to any other clubber but appeared to be a reaction caused by the intensity of the music and were a way of physical release.

Representations of the working-classes have historically been associated with excessive vulgarity (Munt, 2000). Rowe (1995) describes how images that perpetuate this stereotype can be seen in television programmes such as the American comedy series *Roseanne*. Whilst this scholar discusses the construction of female working-class identity, this description is also applicable to representations of their male counterpart: the working-class ‘scally’ or ‘lager-lout’. Skeggs (2004) notes how ‘lads’ and ‘scallies’ are often represented historically in gangs or groups, and rarely in the singular. En masse ‘scallies’ represent danger through their potential for loss of self-control and discipline and their vulgarity is often described as represented in their choice of particular clothing and loud, tasteless and potentially violent behaviour (Skeggs, 2004). Drum ‘n’ Bass informants interviewed during this research identified Jump Up events in particular as having the potential to attract a ‘rogue element’ who would have a ‘rude attitude’ (Reubin, 2006). As noted above, it is these participants who are typified by Rai as wearing the [tasteless] ‘Hackett t-shirt, cap, tracksuit bottoms’ or the ‘short denim skirt and tight top’ (2006).

Most informants interviewed described popular representations of working-class identities as displayed by ‘Others’ in the scene who occupy the more simplistic, mainstream-orientated, excessively sexual, aggressive and feminised Jump Up Drum ‘n’ Bass events. In doing so, these club-goers actively distance themselves from characteristics of vulgarity, tastelessness and potential loss of control in relation to the ‘rogue element’s’ rowdy or violent behaviour. However, the dance practices observed in Dark, Liquid and Jump Up Drum ‘n’ Bass events display the same movement lexicon.<sup>16</sup> Thus, whilst the majority of informants distance themselves from working-class identities, I argue that the dance movement they embody reinstates these representations in the corporeal. Participants simultaneously denounce *and* embodied popular representations of working class identities. It is the dance that allows these club-goers to experience loss of control, hardness, vulgarity, aggression and rage from the relative safety of a middle-class sensibility.

## 7.5 Conclusions

In this chapter I have explored the ways in which Drum 'n' Bass club-goers discuss their own engagement in the dance, view the dance of others, and the meanings and values that are suggested through their movement in relation to particular representations of collective identity classifications. Informants interviewed as part of this research ascribe positive value to notions of intellectualism and complexity that they associate with Drum 'n' Bass and distance themselves from 'mainstream' nightclub events that are typified by the presence of *dancing women* who place excessive emphasis on their appearance, as well as male violent and aggressive behaviour: 'cheese clubs = fights / pulling / getting smashed' (Adzh, 2008). In addition, the role of women within Drum 'n' Bass club culture is marginalised as participants describe female club-goers as the 'girlfriends' of authentic fans, as female MCs who are 'lacking' the required bass vocals and female DJs as 'lacking' in skill or employed because of their social or sexual contacts. Drum 'n' Bass club culture is constructed by these accounts as authentic, complex, intellectualised and masculinised in its polarised distance from the mainstream 'Other'.

I have also revealed the existence of complex hierarchies within Drum 'n' Bass club culture as Jump Up events are situated by some as for younger, less knowledgeable or discerning Drum 'n' Bass fans. As discussed in Chapter Five, Jump Up tracks are often attributed the negative values simultaneously accorded to 'mainstream' club culture, such as simplicity and superficiality. Some Drum 'n' Bass informants also distance themselves from Jump Up clubbers, who because of their explicit sexuality, 'rude' and aggressive attitudes or tasteless clothing, are ascribed a working-class identity. In the act of ascription of others female informants position themselves as deserving inhabitants of the [masculinised] club culture: 'I do enjoy mixing a really dark, sort of heavy set' (Tasha, 2006). Whilst these clubbers move away from traditional expectations of the feminine, other women forge their own space in Drum 'n' Bass club culture through the promotion of explicit sexuality, such as dance groups such as the *Vixens*. However, through an analysis of the dance I also argue that clubbers engage in movement material that demonstrates qualities of aggression, hardness, vulgarity, disorder and rage. The embodiment of values normally associated with a working-class masculinity suggests a *re-valuing* of these qualities; 'class is

made as a cultural property, a resource that can be used (or not) depending on the value attached to it and the markets in which it can realize value' (Skeggs, 2004: 99).

In support of this assertion, Skeggs (2004) explores how the American television programme *Sex in the City* regularly employs excessively sexual behaviour that has been traditionally associated with working-class women, and re-codes and re-values this association on the bodies of middle-class female characters. In this act of transposition the negative value attribution is re-evaluated as positive. In Chapter Four of this thesis I discuss how examples of popular music, such as Hip Hop, and film use representations of black working-class identities as associated with notions of authenticity and ghettocentricity, and subvert these negative values into valued constructions of 'cool'. In addition, Diawara describes representations of black working-class masculinity operating in popular culture as a mobile cultural style, which can be 'transported through white bodies' (1998: 52). The use of class as a mobile resource for some participants in Drum 'n' Bass club culture is acknowledged by informant FD (2005) who suggested that those clubbers who present an image of a working-class 'chav', by wearing tracksuits and baseball caps or creating trouble, were younger fans 'putting it on' because they are 'scared of their surroundings and trying to *look harder* than they are' (2005, my emphasis). Tasha also highlighted a distinction between Drum 'n' Bass music producers, who she describes as white, male and middle-class, and the working-class image that they used to promote their music:

Yeah, I think they are still pushing the whole working-class kinda thing, it's not cool to be sort of....like yeah, dunno, probably mainstream and kinda like, you know, well off.

Tasha, 2006

Drum 'n' Bass informants interviewed during this research were from a variety of economic, educational and social backgrounds. Many of them informed me of their experience of further or higher education, and consequent professional careers in IT, the retail industry or in business administration, whilst one had dropped out of college but was in full time employment. However, it was not my intention to collect information to generate an 'accurate' picture of the class positioning of Drum 'n' Bass audiences in the UK.<sup>17</sup> Instead I use their comments to elucidate *perceptions* of class in relation to judgements made between areas within Drum 'n' Bass club culture in

order to illuminate the ways in which clubbers appropriate and re-value specific discursive qualities in the construction and danced performances of their personal social and political identities.

In Chapter Five of this thesis I locate the historical development of Drum 'n' Bass in the UK at the intersection of the musical styles of Jamaican Reggae, Ragga, African American Hip Hop and European Hardcore Rave. I also describe how contemporary Drum 'n' Bass club culture demonstrates clear 'traces' from Jamaican Reggae and Ragga, and US Hip Hop musical cultures. Although Drum 'n' Bass is described as 'a music that reflects the diversity of cultures in Britain' (Watkiss in Garrett, 1998: 281), ethnographic data gathered during this research confirms that there is a lack of diversity in the clubbing crowd. Whilst Huq (2006) notes the racialisation of Drum 'n' Bass as a 'black' musical form, Reynolds (1998) suggests that this is operative through an association between the working classes and 'black' racial groups. In the following chapter I re-examine arguments regarding the ownership of cultural forms through an investigation of how representations of class and race (gender, sexuality and age) intersect in the Drum 'n' Bass dancing body;

Class cannot be made alone, without all the other classifications that accompany it...We need to think how bodies are being inscribed simultaneously by different symbolic systems; how inscription attributes difference and how we learn to interpret bodies through the different perspectives to which we have access. These different systems of inscription and interpretation may operate both in simultaneity and in contradiction.

Skeggs, 2004: 3

## Chapter Seven Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> Skeggs (2004) acknowledges the influence of Foucault in Lingis's (1994) concept of inscription as producing the subject, and controlling the body, in terms of classificatory schemas.
- <sup>2</sup> The term 'place' is taken from the movement analysis and notation system, Labanotation, and refers to movement that is performed underneath the body, where the dancer stands, without moving out into the space around them.
- <sup>3</sup> Although Malbon does suggest that the interview accounts gathered by McRobbie (1994), Pini (1997) and himself during fieldwork research may have '[downplay[ed] the sexual facet of clubbing' (1999: 45). I argue that these contradictory accounts are the result of a lack of specificity when analysing different areas of dance music club culture (see Chapters Two and Three).
- <sup>4</sup> The age ranges discussed are based on fieldwork observations at a range of Drum 'n' Bass club events, from speaking to club-goers at these events, as well as interview informants' own descriptions and textual research on internet discussion forums.
- <sup>5</sup> I use the term 'Other' here to make a connection with the racialised construction as discussed in Chapters Four and Five of this thesis. Whilst these comments ascribe identity according to gender discussions later in this chapter and the next will discuss how this positioning becomes coded in class-based as well as racial terms.
- <sup>6</sup> DJ Storm is arguably the most prominent female Drum 'n' Bass DJ in the UK at the time of writing.
- <sup>7</sup> By shorthand I refer to simplified, popular stereotypes of gender that circulate in popular discourse that continue to associate the female with body, emotion and nature and the male with culture, language and technology (Bradley, 1993). Whilst these essentialist associations have been challenged by feminist theorists they perpetuate quotidian gender relations (Bordo, 1993).
- <sup>8</sup> Rave events will often feature several related dance music styles, such as Hardcore Rave, Hard House, Breaks and Drum 'n' Bass, in different spaces throughout the event.
- <sup>9</sup> At the time of writing video excerpts of Drum 'n' Bass female performance groups, such as the Narni Shakers, are available on the internet website *You Tube* ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)). For examples of troupe performances see: Narni Shakers (2009) at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8r\\_hRAbYPk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8r_hRAbYPk) and ianwalpole (2009) at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GJ3UucY\\_VYs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GJ3UucY_VYs).
- <sup>10</sup> The Pussycat Dolls are an American, all female RnB music group whose image is strongly sexualised.
- <sup>11</sup> Some of the dancer's biographies describe them as founding members of the performance group, thus indicating their active participation in the construction of their sexualised identities. However, it has not been possible to identify whether these women are in full control of the marketing and promotion of the groups. The use of names such as Narni Shakers, which refers explicitly to moving the female genitalia, could be critiqued for defining the women by their sexuality. Alternatively it could be used by the groups as a marketing tool that plays on the interests of their young, male market audience.
- <sup>12</sup> Whilst Skeggs (2004) does not acknowledge that she works within particular cultural boundaries these perceptions relate to European historical traditions that were dominated by Protestant and Catholic religions.
- <sup>13</sup> Whilst the majority of Drum 'n' Bass participants are male the small number of female club-goers so use the same movement language (except when employing the sexualised dance movement described earlier in this chapter), although their performances are often more contained or limited, and the dynamics of the dance more reserved.
- <sup>14</sup> It has not been possible to include visual images of UK Drum 'n' Bass club dance practices within this thesis for the reasons outlined in Chapter Six. However, at the time of



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writing the internet website You Tube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)) does host videos of individuals demonstrating Drum 'n' Bass dance movement outside of the club context. For example, the excerpt by 1hhpp (2009) located at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whAjPW6CrQE&feature=related> clearly shows the hunched body posture described previously. In addition, the skipping movement is demonstrated by each dancer in this video, although the second soloist (1.24 mins) shows more similarity to the movement observed in UK Drum 'n' Bass clubs during this research. This dancer also demonstrates the downward, aggressive quality that I have described as shown in the movement in UK clubs. However, it must be noted that there are significant differences between these dancers' movement and that observed in UK Drum 'n' Bass clubs. Each of the visual images sourced from *You Tube* during this research (for further examples see alenenok89 (2009) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U8kzXHifLf0&feature=related> , Sensorexe (2009) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UcJspaD4rKI&feature=related> , AmusingGirl (2009) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ti4zQSXxyYU&feature=related> and top4er (2009) [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bjy\\_G3M3QAq](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bjy_G3M3QAq) ) have included stepping patterns that turn in a circle or move in the space, which was not observed during fieldwork in UK Drum 'n' Bass clubs. In addition, the videoed stepping patterns use a more pronounced twisting movement at the hip than that observed in UK clubs, which in some examples creates a turned out or rotated leg kick to the front of the body and a shifting of the ankle from side to side. This characteristic is notably prominent in the *You Tube* examples, which have all been created and uploaded by Russian Drum 'n' Bass fans rather than club-goers or fans from the UK. For a video example of the UK Drum 'n' Bass club environment see animalkraker29 (2009) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p15XBjjzFIQ> .

- <sup>15</sup> A rewind is a DJ-ing technique where the record is stopped manually by the DJ and spun backwards with the needle on contact with the vinyl. The record is then release to play the section again.
- <sup>16</sup> As noted above the dynamic of the music does alter the force of the twisting or rocking movements but the basic patterns remain the same.
- <sup>17</sup> This falls outside of the specific focus of this dance studies research thesis, and the expertise of the author.

## Chapter Eight

### Ambivalent identities: hybrid appropriations

#### 8.1 Introduction

In Chapter Five of this thesis I explore the historical, cultural and social development of the musical style of Drum 'n' Bass, and identify the ways in which African American Hip Hop and Jamaican Dancehall Ragga and Reggae musical cultures have been integral to the evolution of this British club / sub culture. Journalistic and academic writers characterise Drum 'n' Bass as a 'black' musical form (Huq, 2006; Reynold, 1998); yet early producers and artists proclaim the scene as 'multi-racial' (Shut Up and Dance in Belle-Fortune, 2004; Jumping Jack Frost in Collin, 1997). Whilst Reynolds describes 'Jungle's musical blackness as self-evident', he also notes that 'from Day One more than 50 per cent of the leading DJs and producers have been white' (1998: 247-248). This discourse evokes arguments regarding the racial 'ownership' of the culture, which has been further complicated by changes evident in the genre's evolution and fragmentation in the early 1990s. Gilbert and Pearson (1999) differentiate between 'black', 'working class' Jungle, and 'white', 'middle class' Drum 'n' Bass.

As discussed in Chapter Four the use of large-scale collective identity categories, such as 'Black', provides effective ways for marginalised groups to exercise political control over the way in which they are perceived and consequently treated in society. However, any articulation of group based rights presumes the existence of a homogenous collective identity (Appiah, 2000) and 'any unitary conception of a 'bounded' culture is pejoratively labelled naturalistic and essentialist' (Werbner, 1997: 3-4). Contemporary identity theorists, such as Bhabha (2004, 1994), Gilroy (2000, 1993) and Hall (2000, 1994), argue that all cultures are effectively hybrids. Moreover, Gilroy (1993) seeks to move away from Afro-centric claims to authenticity, which sees 'blackness' as an unwarranted holistic construction.

In dance studies research, scholars have explored the processes and politics of the inter-cultural and trans-cultural development of dance forms, yet their work often describes the 'appropriation' of movement practices and remains limited by

classifications of 'black' or 'whitened' dance forms (for example Desmond, 1997; Gottschild, 1996). Led by the convincing evidence of the continuing influence of African American Hip Hop and Jamaican Reggae and Ragga musical practices on contemporary Drum 'n' Bass club culture that I outline in Chapter Five, I begin this final chapter by exploring whether Drum 'n' Bass dance practices demonstrate an embodied appropriation of African diasporic expressive culture by comparing club movement content to Gottschild's (1996) descriptions of an 'Africanist aesthetic'.<sup>1</sup> However, I use this analysis to highlight the problematic nature of Gottschild's work rather than to endorse it. In response to this discussion I consider alternative ways to discuss the construction and performance of identity that move away from restrictive notions of ownership and authenticity by using theories of intertextuality and cultural hybridity. In the final part of this chapter I discuss how Bakhtin's (1984) concept of the *carnavalesque* can assist in understanding oppositional and subversive club cultural meanings and values that are articulated through the Drum 'n' Bass dancing body.

## 8.2 Traces from Africanist practice

The dance and movement practices observed and experienced in Drum 'n' Bass clubs during the period of this research resonate with characteristics of African dance practice as described by Gottschild (1996).<sup>2</sup> Gottschild describes the use of a grounded stance as typical of Africanist movement and this is a notable characteristic of the majority of static weight shift and stepping patterns observed in Drum 'n' Bass club events. For example, a stepping movement is performed underneath the body, in place. Moving from one foot to the other onto a straight leg, the dancer bends the same knee and repeats, in sequence, to produce a sense of heavy dropping from one side of the body to the other, whilst the upper body twists to follow the movement.<sup>3</sup> This grounded position is also used whilst standing in place with the feet slightly apart but with the upper body rocking forward and back whilst the knees bend and straighten. This is also performed with one foot placed in front of the other at a diagonal, causing the rocking movement to become more forceful and intense but still at a low level.

A second example from the Drum 'n' Bass club includes the feet being placed to the side of one another with bended knees. In this position the dancer shifts weight smoothly from one side to the other and may lift the feet off the floor alternately in place or move from the spot whilst maintaining the low level stance. The upper body can be hunched forward but twists slightly from side to side as the weight moves. The shoulders are raised whilst the arms, bent at the elbow, perform a sharp slicing or chopping movement.<sup>4</sup> The grounded position of the legs is also used to support a more extreme movement of the torso and pelvis. With a wide and deep stance the lower torso and pelvis thrusts forward and back. The dynamics of this movement varies, from loose and heavy to extremely powerful, according to the intensity of the music. The lower body is thrust forward and back by a movement initiated in the stomach whilst energy appears to ripple up through the body from above the pelvis to the chest and arms. The upper body is upright with relaxed shoulders and the arms appear long and loose. The force coming through the centre of the body causes the upper torso to follow the movement.

The principle of contrariety and conflict, or irregularity and juxtaposition, that Gottschild (1996) describes in Africanist dance as the existence of paired opposites existing side by side (for example smooth and awkward dynamics), can also be seen in dance movement in Drum 'n' Bass club events. In the performance of weight shift and stepping patterns described above, the arms appear long, relaxed, loose and fluid whilst the pelvis jerks and thrusts stiffly forward and back. In addition, a preference for poly-centrism: where movement may originate from any part of the body or where two or more centres may operate simultaneously, and poly-rhythm where different body parts may move to different rhythms, is also present in much Drum 'n' Bass dance practice. Participants often appear to be moving out of time with one another on the dance floor and lacking in holistic body coordination. The appearance of conflict and disunity is created by various body parts and dancers working to different rhythms of the music, which is characterised by broken beat drum rhythms and bassline poly-rhythms. Interviewees often commented on how they choose to dance to different rhythms within the music: Rai states 'some people prefer to...dance quite fast in time with the drums, and some people prefer to sway in time with the basslines' (2006).

Drum 'n' Bass dancers often perform a bouncing or 'jigging' movement where both feet remain on the ground and the knees are kept slightly bent (this movement is also seen with the curved torso). Whilst the body weight is transferred from one foot to the other (without lifting the feet off), the torso is jerked forwards, backwards and to each side in a random pattern. The dynamic quality of this movement is sharp and forceful but varies in intensity (often in accordance to the music). The upper body is lifted, whilst the shoulders are hunched slightly and the arms strike outwards in different directions, at different times. There is often a conflict between the rhythm and pattern (shape / direction / dynamic) of the movement occurring in the upper torso, arms and the lower body. A number of dancers extend this movement to include a number of more complex stepping patterns (often a combination of those discussed in the previous chapter), combined with the torso jerking movement in different directions, with thrusting and striking arm gestures. This free explosion of movement occurs when the dancer is fully absorbed in the musical track and he or she becomes focused on the listening and moving experience. Some internet sources referred to this type of dancing experience as 'brocking out'.<sup>5</sup>

Gottschild (1996) also identifies the use of a 'high effect juxtaposition': where mood, attitude or movements change abruptly appearing unconnected to create humour, irony and surprise, and Ephebism, from the Greek term for youth, where the dance reflects a sense of vitality, intensity and playfulness, as characteristics of Africanist dance. Whilst the majority of interview informants had difficulty describing their movement vocabulary, many commented on the playful nature of the dance. An informant who attends a variety of Drum 'n' Bass events described his and his friends' dance movement as mocking younger clubbers by exaggeration, and described them as particular comic actions rather than dancing: 'there's like milking the cow, that's one, pulling the pints, that's another one, shooting the floor, shooting squirrels' (FD, 2005). Tasha commented 'I quite enjoy sort of mucking around with my friends...we do silly kind of dances, like typical Jump Up...coz rude boys and rude girls...they sort of do these funny dances that we just take the piss out of really' (2006). The mockery and pastiche of other clubbers' dance practices encourages sociality between male, and some female, friends on the Drum 'n' Bass dance floor and indicates the existence of internal hierarchies within the club culture that I discuss in Chapter Seven. Another

informant describes how he enjoys mock fighting with friends and using gun hand gestures he refers to as 'trigger fingers' (Ben A, 2006).

The last movement characteristic that Gottschild (1996) describes is 'an aesthetic of the cool', and is all embracing as it resides in the previous elements. Gottschild explains this as a body attitude that combines composure and detachment with vitality and intensity, often in the same movement. It can be argued that this characteristic is displayed by participants in the Drum 'n' Bass club, both in their dancing but also in their movements away from the dance-floor. A sense of cool bravado and arrogance, juxtaposed with an intense excitement or energy, can be seen in the dancers' body postures when moving, as well as standing around the space and walking through the club. On the dance floor the two main torso positions display an intense build up and release of energy, as well as a languid, relaxed and arrogant confidence. As described in Chapter Seven, in the first torso position the dancers hold their upper back in a curved shape with the shoulders raised and held tense over the rest of the body as if containing energy within the torso. The arms are bent at the elbow and held tight to the torso or in front of the body to perform alternate sharp chopping or slicing movements with the lower arms and hands, whilst the torso twists around the centre and moves from side to side with a varying degree of force. The twisting in the body is initiated by either a more sedate and lilting dropping movement to alternate side, or a more intense forward and back rocking, both of which are accompanied by a variety of stepping and weight shift patterns (as described previously). The second more vertical body posture, where alternate sides of the upper torso sway back past the line of the spine as the shoulders twists through a smooth, rolling movement. In this position the arms are often held heavy and loose by the dancers' sides giving the appearance of relaxed confidence, yet self-assured bravado.

Drum 'n' Bass dancers also retain the raised shoulders and downward focus whilst using a more vertical torso. The dancer remains in place and bounces both knees at the same time (on either the bassline 1, +, 2, + or the faster drum beat 1, 2, 3, 4). This movement is accompanied with a pressing gesture with both hands, the arms being bent at the elbow, shoulders raised (although moving up and down slightly) as the flat palms (face down) try to contain or to pat something down with each knee bend.<sup>6</sup> The quality of this movement is sustained and fluid, yet with tension in the shoulders as if

containing energy beneath the hands. As noted in Chapter Seven, the suppression of energy is a clear characteristic of much Drum 'n' Bass dancing yet is contrasted with a sense of extreme release.

Explosive jumping vertically on two feet is commonly seen on the crowded dance floor. This movement is often performed when a clubber recognises a particularly well-known or favoured track. One or both arms are held aloft with a pointing finger and closed fist, or one arm with a first finger and thumb pointing or 'hand-gun' gesture, to signal appreciation to the DJ. If accessible, dancers may also move through the crowd to the DJ booth and jump up and down at the barrier between the turntables and the dance floor. This movement is also seen towards the end of a build up in the musical track where the components often sound like repetitious slamming, or when the DJ rewinds and plays one small drum driven part of the track repeatedly to generate excitement in the crowd. When the track 'breaks' following a musical climax or the DJ allows it to continue without further rewinds the crowd resume previous movement patterns. Alternatively some dancers perform this movement whilst shaking arms that are held aloft and bent at the elbow in front of them and their head vigorously.

Participants' behaviour moving around the club space also shifts between intense excitement and energy displayed by barging and pushing each other, a playful arrogance towards female club-goers and other friendship groups through cool and composed eye contact and brief, sharp head nods of acknowledgement, and more aggressive behaviour that may result in physical fights between groups (see section 8.4). During field visits I generally felt safe walking around club events, although the atmosphere felt notably more aggressive at some Jump Up events, which informants characterised as being more 'rowdy' (Rai, 2006; Reubin, 2006). When making contact with individual club-goers in the event context I found none personally aggressive and the majority were very friendly and open.<sup>7</sup> The atmosphere outside of clubs was also closely monitored by door security staff so that the immediate vicinity where participants queue to enter the venue felt safe.

In this section I have used the writings of Gottschild (1996) to show that it is possible to argue that the dance movement and other embodied practices within Drum 'n' Bass

club events demonstrate traces of Africanist movement. As noted in Chapter Five, other subcultural practices observed in the Drum 'n' Bass club also parallel those evident in the African American youth culture of Hip Hop, which Rose describes as 'propelled by Afrodiasporic traditions' (1994: 25). Drum 'n' Bass club events often feature an MC whose role is similar to that of Rap artists: to chant or 'toast' over the record to create an additional layer of sound. Drum 'n' Bass DJs use techniques that were originally created by African American Hip Hop artists, such as the 'rewind'.<sup>8</sup> At Jump Up and some Darkside Drum 'n' Bass events club-goers often wear hooded sweatshirts, tracksuits and baseball caps, which are often worn by Gangsta Rap artists and fans (Quinn, 1996).

Dancers, MCs and DJs in the Drum 'n' Bass club perform movement that is similar to that performed by contemporary male Hip Hop artists in music videos. For example, in the video for *Race Card* (Ice Cube, 2006, Lench Mob Records), Ice Cube uses a hand gesture that extends the thumb and first finger, whilst the other three are bent inward, in a pointing motion towards the camera. Dancers in the Drum 'n' Bass club use this gesture in a pointing movement with one arm, which is held above the head towards the DJ and MC. This movement can also be seen performed by a crowd of fans in the music video for the Hip Hop artist, Eminem's *Lose Yourself* (2002, Shady Records). In the Drum 'n' Bass club this gesture is used with a sharp flicking movement of the arm, held above the head and forward of the body, to mirror a drop in the music at the end of a climatic build up. In addition, it is used with the arms slicing vertically or horizontally in front of the body alternately, with the weight shift and stepping patterns described previously. Hand gestures that mirror those used by Hip Hop artists can be seen performed by Drum 'n' Bass MCs. Holding the microphone close to their mouth with one hand, the other arm points towards the crowd with the elbow held outward and shoulder raised, and slices long in front of the body or is held taught close to the genitals whilst one shoulder leans back (in the more vertical torso position described earlier).

As discussed in detail in Chapter Seven female performance troupes have become an increasingly common feature of larger Drum 'n' Bass club and rave style events (especially those featuring the Jump Up sub-genre). Some of the movement language used by these dancers is similar to female dance sequences seen in contemporary



music videos by Hip Hop and RnB artists, both of which have been described by scholars such as Huq (2006), Ware and Back (2002), and Bannerjea (2000) as 'black' musical forms.<sup>9</sup> Female movement material sexualises the dancing body by emphasising the hips and buttocks. Performance troupes combine gymnastic moves, such as cartwheels and the splits, with Street Jazz and Hip Hop dance material, and explicitly sexual movement.<sup>10 11</sup> All informants comment on the sexualised nature of these groups' performances, describing them as 'raunchy' (Deefa, 2006) and as 'eye candy' for the male clubbers (Naz, 2006) (see Chapter Seven).

During fieldwork observations some female clubbers' dancing replicated the movement used by female dancers in Drum 'n' Bass performance groups and contemporary Hip Hop and RnB music videos (see Chapter Seven). This movement material is reminiscent of the sexual performances of Jamaican Dancehall Queens, but is more regularly accessible to British young people through contemporary Hip Hop and RnB music videos that are screened on television channels such as MTV and internet video sites such as YouTube.com. Examples of music videos that feature this movement language include *Drop It Like It's Hot* (2004, Geffen Records) by Hip Hop artist, Snoop Dogg and *Buttons* (2006, A&M Records) by The Pussycat Dolls featuring Snoop Dogg.

It is not possible to assert confidently how these images have been transposed to the contemporary UK Drum 'n' Bass dance floor. However, I do argue that club-goers' movement language borrows heavily from popular representations of 'black' male and female identities in American Hip Hop and RnB music videos.<sup>12</sup> Such visual images are described as presenting 'black' bodies that play on 'orientalist' constructions of the 'black' woman as sexually licentious (Noble, 2000), and 'black' men as associated with criminality and violence (see Chapter Four). These symbolic markers are signifiers of 'black' identity, which are consequently consumed on a global scale and contribute to contemporary constructions of knowledge about 'black' expressive cultures. However, as explored initially in Chapter Five and re-examined in the next section of this chapter, narratives that describe an 'orientalist appropriation' reinstate arguments for the 'ownership' of cultural forms and perpetuate the internally homogenising and essentialist categories of 'black' and 'white'.

### 8.3 Re-visiting cultural appropriation

The influence of African American contemporary popular culture is evident in the embodied practices observed within the Drum 'n' Bass club. However, African American music, dance and style have become embedded at the heart of American popular culture, which, as Dyer (2000) notes, continues to dominate contemporary popular culture worldwide. Osumare (2000) describes how the global dissemination of Hip Hop has led to a previously exclusive African American male style now being embodied in a worldwide youth performativity. Gottschild acknowledges that the performance of Africanist elements is not always a matter of a conscious appropriation as 'Africanisms are not a choice but an imperative that comes to us through the culture' (1996: 23). However, she also states that representations of African American expressive style and culture demonstrate a particularly Europeanist perspective when presented as dangerous, illicit and 'hip'. Similarly, Hewitt suggests that the use of parole language by Caucasian, British youth in the early 1980s led to their physical embodiment of an Europeanist perspective on African diasporic movement and style; 'the stereotype of the audacious, "arrogant", black adolescent takes up its position in the array of motifs and symbolisms available to the narratives circulating within the white adolescent communities' (1986: 224).

It is possible to argue that club-goers' engagement in Drum 'n' Bass club culture can be seen as a 'participatory Orientalism', a phrase used by Bannerjea (2000, after Said, 1978) to describe 'white' participation in 'black' dance cultures as a form of 'carefully constructed exotica'.<sup>13</sup> Thornton refers to the work of Hebdige (1979) when discussing how British youth have 'borrowed' from African-American and African-Caribbean culture for many years: 'often with a romantic, "orientalist" appropriation of black cultural tropes' (1995: 105). Drum 'n' Bass informants are attracted to the music and club scene because of its marginal status; Rai informed me, 'it was quite cool, I felt quite exclusive, I was into this music and not that many people had heard of it' (2006), Tasha 'searched for...non mainstream stuff' (2006) and Jack described how 'Drum 'n' Bass people are quite proud of how kind of underground it is and how grimy and dirty and un-mainstream it is' (2005).

Drum 'n' Bass club cultural identity is positioned by participants as a marginalised 'Other' that they seek to embody through characterisations of the music and club scene as 'dirty' and 'grimy'. This appears to be particularly attractive for some female and younger male interviewees: 'I love really *dirty, dark* basslines' (Rai, 2006); '*dirty* bass, *dirty* tune' (Ben A, 2006); 'I do enjoy mixing...a really *dark*, sort of, *heavy* set' (Tasha, 2006). Amie is attracted to the subversive location of Mass club in Brixton and particularly to the atmosphere: 'especially like this club as its *dark* and *gloomy* and in a church...a more *dirty* atmosphere in the venue' (2006). The characterisation of Drum 'n' Bass as a dirty and marginalised club scene can be compared to historically determined notions of the racialised 'Other' as 'dirty...and almost animal-like' (Fine *et al.*, 1997: 58).

The attraction to the risky or subversive elements of Drum 'n' Bass club culture is in contrast to informants' descriptions of their backgrounds and everyday lives, and could be used to argue that Drum 'n' Bass club culture offers participants the opportunity to embody a risky 'Other' whilst maintaining 'safe' [i.e. white, middle-class] identities outside the club space. All informants described how their parents had encouraged them to conform to hegemonic societal values through emphasising the importance of gaining a good education and secure employment. As noted in Chapter Seven, most had been educated to degree level and were in full time employment, or were in full time further education. Mary Douglas's seminal text, *Purity and Danger* (1966), posits pollution and contamination as a socially constructed threat to social order that works to establish and maintain ideas about self and 'Other'. Douglas's (1992) later writings describe 'risk' as a socially constructed means by which contemporary western societies maintain cultural boundaries. Thus, by engaging in these 'risky' activities Drum 'n' Bass participants can be argued to be satisfying an orientalist desire to engage, temporarily, in a fetishized alterity, whilst maintaining a safe distance between self and 'Other'.

The representation of African-Caribbean identities as 'folk devils' such as the 'black mugger', the 'Rastafarian drug dealer', the 'rioter' and the 'Yardie', which Alexander (1996) discusses as constructed in the UK in late 1970s, also has resonance with identities performed and reiterated in the Drum 'n' Bass club. Whilst none of the informants openly approved of the levels of violence they had witnessed within clubs,

all down played references to crime and prejudice that circulate within Drum 'n' Bass culture through the lyrics of MCs and participant discussions on specialist internet forums.<sup>14</sup> During field visits MCs regularly used guns, drug taking and violence towards gay men as the subject of their chants, which could easily be interpreted as valorising these aspects of criminal behaviour. One informant told me that he no longer attends Drum 'n' Bass events because of the explicit homophobic lyrics of the MCs (Jack, 2005). There is also clear evidence that participants are involved in some aspects of criminal behaviour as many informants discussed taking drugs and Deefa commented: 'there's always a slight smell of skunk wherever you go in a DnB rave' (2006). Participants can be argued to be appropriating popular representations of 'black' identities in Drum 'n' Bass club culture.

However, the appropriation of 'black' expressive style and culture by 'white' communities, as discussed by scholars such as Gottschild (1996) and Hewitt (1986), infers a racial ownership of cultural forms that reifies difference. Despite Gottschild's acknowledgement of the intertextual nature of identity formation (1996: 3, 28) and assertion that 'there is no Other, we are it' (1996: 78), she continues to identify elements within cultural forms (such as dance and music) as Africanist, and others as Europeanist, thus perpetuating the divide between the socially constructed and internally homogenising, racial categories of 'black' and 'white'. Gottschild (1996) uses the writings of ethnomusicologist and folklorist, John Szwed, to demonstrate how the white, musician and singer Mick Jagger appropriates African American style in his performances, an action that she also attributes to a number of other white performers such as Elvis Presley. Szwed notes that these performances demonstrate 'the detachment of culture from race and the almost full absorption of a black tradition into white culture' (in Gottschild, 1996: 27). Gottschild argues that such acts of 'assimilation' are particularly problematic as the creators of Africanist cultural forms are excluded from recognition. However, she reinforces notions of cultural ownership and presupposes a relationship of cultural impersonation, and authenticity. Gottschild underestimates the complex variety of potential subject positions, as

the view that a dominant discourse produces and manages Others, universally appropriating and containing all dissenting positions within it, underestimates the tensions and contradictions within a discourse, the continual play of resistance, dissent, and accommodation

by different positions.

Lowe in Nielsen, 1994: 21-22

Developments in contemporary identity theory in response to increased global migration patterns, hybrid cultural identities and multiculturalism have challenged essentialist thought such as that articulated by Gottschild (1996). The representation of hybrid contemporary identities in popular culture is explored in the work of Gregory Stephens who, in an article entitled '*You Can Sample Anything*': *Zebrahead, 'Black' music, and multiracial audiences* (2000), describes how multi-raciality has been rendered invisible by a binary racial mythology in cultural studies in general. In support of this Stephens explains the enthusiasm with which scholars have described the American Hip Hop artist, Eminem, as a 'culturally black, white performer' (2000: 113), demonstrates an urge to portray him as an 'outsider' rather than to consider his work as an example of inter-raciality. Following Gilroy (1993), Stephens (2000) purports that as there are no pure cultural sources, multi-racial audiences have a claim to ownership on inter-racial culture. This argument is of particular interest to my research due to the intertextual, inter-generic and inter-cultural development of Drum 'n' Bass club culture that I discuss in Chapter Five.

In *Writing Between the Lines: Race and Intertextuality* (1994) Nielsen draws on the work of Bhabha (2004, [1990]) to explore the construction of African American identities in language and literature through hybridity. Similar to Gottschild (1996), Nielsen encourages 'readings of the blackness in white writing' (1994: 24), but argues that these racial identities are not separate, but intertwined. He reinforces the constructed nature of racial signifiers that exist only in relation to other signifiers, rather than pre-existent cultural facts; 'there is no localizable, essential point of origin in either blackness or whiteness' (Nielsen, 1994: 7). In addition, such systems of signification are unstable and open to constant re-signification through repetition: 'not a reproduction of the Same, but a repetition of the Different' (Deleuze in Nielsen, 1994: 11). Thus, through recognition of the heterogeneity of acts of representation that Lowe refers to as 'heterotopical', Nielsen (1994) evokes the plurality of positions at any given moment.

Nielsen (1994) suggests that intertextuality offers a powerful model for the reading of American racial identities, which sees the production of racial difference as constitutive of, rather than reflecting, social identities. Referring to Kristeva, he describes an intertextual transposition of sign systems that enables ‘a new articulation of thethetic – of enunciative and denotative positionality’ (Kristeva in Nielsen, 1994: 23).<sup>15</sup> Through intertextuality, Nielsen argues that it is possible to reveal writing and speaking positions that are simultaneously ‘*ours and other*’ from which a productive reading of race and difference may emerge. The double-voiced nature of ‘Othered’ [racial] identities is noted by Du Bois when he speaks of a peculiar sensation of double-consciousness: ‘one ever feels his two-ness – an American, a Negro’ (in Allen, 2000: 166). Nielsen argues that no American author writes without this double-voiced condition, and uses this to reinforce the view of modern subject as unfinished and palimpsestic.

Bhabha’s theory of hybridity, that uses the Bakhtinian notion of double-voiced discourse, can be used here to refer to the dialogical nature of Drum ‘n’ Bass dance practice. Whilst hybridity is more commonly used to refer to the experience of the postcolonial subject, who finds themselves situated ‘in-between’ competing subject positions (such as class, race, gender), in the Drum ‘n’ Bass club it is the white British participants’ embodied performativities, through dance movement, that reveal a double-voiced utterance that is ‘their own and yet replete with an “otherness” which we can associate with a socially orientated notion of intertextuality’ (Allen, 2000: 165). The dance is inflected with traces of, what Gottschild (1996) describes as, ‘Africanisms’, with particularly explicit similarity to African American Hip Hop performance practice. Yet, in Chapter Seven of this thesis I reveal how club-goers’ movement draws on white (working and middle class) racial signifiers (see Chapter Seven). In the spatialised performances of the Drum ‘n’ Bass club these signifying practices construct new identity positions that are localised and specific.

Russian literary analyst Bakhtin, who is described by Allen as ‘less an author from whose works a notion of intertextuality can be devised than a major theorist of intertextuality itself’ (2000: 16), emphasises that language exists in specific social situations. Bakhtin’s theories of language and communication are employed here to theorise intertextual dance practices and the hybrid nature of identity performance in

the social spaces of the Drum 'n' Bass club. In a critique of Saussurean linguistics, which Bakhtin and Volosinov (1986) describe as abstract objectivism, Bakhtin and Medvedev stress the human-centred and socially specific nature of language: 'the very presence of the utterance is historically and socially significant' (1978: 120). In addition Bakhtin and Volodinov (1986) note that there is no time when a language system can be seen as constructed, as it will always be in the process of becoming. This evolutionary approach to the construction of meaning leads these authors to assert that all utterances are 'dialogic' where their meaning and logic is dependent on the anteriority of the arbitrary sign. This concept is similar to how contemporary academics, discussed in Chapter Four, describe the construction of personal identity. In this sense all performances of identity encompass prior meaning and logic.

In the Drum 'n' Bass club, identities that are constructed, performed and reiterated through dance movement speak with traces of anterior (racial, gender and class-based) signs. Using a conception of club cultural identity that recognises cultural and historical situatedness (see Chapter Four), I argue that it is possible to gain a greater understanding of club-goers' performances by exploring the intertextual, inter-generic and inter-cultural development of Drum 'n' Bass club culture (see Chapter Five). Thus, Drum 'n' Bass club cultural identity will demonstrate traces of meaning and value from Detroit and European Techno, Jamaican Dancehall and African American Hip Hop. However, as Bhabha notes 'we cannot contextualise the emergent cultural form by explaining it in terms of some pre-given discursive causality or origin' (1990: 313). Instead, knowledge should be sought that is 'adjacent or adjunct but not necessarily accumulative' (1990: 313).

Intertextual theorist Kristeva asserts that the intertextual dimensions of a text cannot be studied as mere 'sources' or influences stemming from what has been traditionally called context or background (Allen, 2000). Following Kristeva and Bakhtin, Bhabha stresses the specificity of each social practice and warns against the homogenisation of experience through the assumption that cultural knowledge 'adds up': 'hybridity is never simply a question of the admixture of pre-given identities or essences' (1990: 314). The sociologist, Huq, asserts that 'contemporary youth cultures are cumulative rather than successive' (2006: 108). Whilst this statement acknowledges the influence of the anterior, the exact nature of the relationships between youth cultural movements

requires closer examination, which is possible through the Bakhtinian concepts of double-voiced discourse and heteroglossia.

Bakhtin's notion of double-voiced discourse refers to the understanding that no word itself has a single, independent meaning as it is always inflected with prior utterances and addressed to other speakers, and is essentially intertextual (Allen, 2000).

Heteroglossia, meaning 'other-tongued' or 'other-voiced', is the presence of such traces within an utterance. It refers to 'language's ability to contain within it many voices, one's own and other voices' (Allen, 2000: 29). These related concepts are of significance for research on the popular dance practices of Drum 'n' Bass club culture as they reinforce that, like language for Bakhtin, movement cannot belong to any one [racial or cultural] group: 'the word [movement] becomes one's own through an act of 'appropriation', which means that it is never wholly one's own, it is always permeated with traces of other words [movements], other uses' (my insertions, Allen, 2000: 28). This concept evokes Derrida's (1980) theorisation of the intertextual relationship between genres, where a text will never *belong* to a genre but will *participate* in several (see Chapter Three). Thus, whilst Allen (2000) uses the term 'appropriation', 'ownership' is only ever temporary, as each articulation (whether in language or movement) will be part of an on-going process of change and development. Applied to Drum 'n' Bass dance practice, movement is revealed to contain traces of prior discourse, yet is replete with new meaning and logic. This concept supports my central hypothesis of the thesis; that the dancing body in Drum 'n' Bass club culture is hybridized: a heterocorporeal.

At the beginning of this section I discuss how 'white' club-goers engagement in Drum 'n' Bass could be seen as an orientalist appropriation of black expressive culture as the characterisation of the club scene as dirty, criminalised and marginalised can be compared to historically determined notions of the racialised 'Other'. In addition, 'white' club-goers engage in activities associated with the 'black' musical cultures of Jamaican Dancehall and African American Hip Hop. However, questions of cultural ownership that seek a unitary outcome (is it 'black' or 'white?') fail to recognise the inter-generic and inter-cultural development of Drum 'n' Bass (see Chapter Five). An intertextual analysis of Drum 'n' Bass club cultural identities as constructed through hybridity enables recognition of a double-voiced discourse that is simultaneously



'ours and Other', producing conflict and ambiguity in club-goers' dance practices and associated values. In using Derrida's (in Sanders, 2008) theory of the discursive function of *différance*, which emphasises the complex inter-relationship between signs where meaning is always unstable, ambiguity can be read as productive instead of destructive of (multiple) meaning(s). In the following section I explore examples of contradiction and ambiguity in contemporary UK Drum 'n' Bass club culture using Bakhtin's (1984) notion of the *carnivalesque*. This concept is described by Allen (2000) as a spatialised theory of dialogism, which is essentially threatening to a unitary, hierarchical conception of society, art and life.

#### 8.4 The carnivalisation of Drum 'n' Bass

SE One Club, London Bridge

13<sup>th</sup> July 2007, 1.00 am

I stand at the back of the dark, hot club space and look out across the heads of the dancing crowd. Pressed up against the wall the thumping bass reverberates through the walls and floor to the centre of my chest, imbuing in me a sensation of urgency and tense excitement that forces me to move. The heavy pounding of the bass and relentless rolling and clattering drum patterns builds in speed and intensity as the MC shouts out 'are you ready? Are you ready?' I feel my heartbeat quiver with a sense of anticipation. The lighting suddenly switches to strobe and my vision is fractured into a series of freeze frames that capture the young men around me in wide eyed tableau. Torsos are stretched into contorted shapes with twisted shoulders and arms strike wildly through space. The lights shift back to darkness and the music stops – there is a moment of pause before a distorted screeching of the record being dragged back against the turntable stylus prompts clubbers to shout out to the DJ for the drop.

When it comes the room erupts into mayhem as 500 clubbers move with a positive vitality and sense of excitement that is infectious. A lad of about 18 in jeans and hooded top turns and pounds the wall with his fist, whilst another stands and roars across the space. They turn to each other and laughing fling their arms over each other's shoulders, stumble and barge into a group of clubbers to their side. I see one

of the group push back and step up towards them. He grabs one of the two lads and punches him squarely in the face causing him to fall towards me and onto the floor. A young woman, who had been standing up against the wall, screams and moves towards him. As the young lad rolls over I see a large and unsightly red lump forming above his eye, whilst blood runs down his face. The wounded lad's friend turns and headbutts one of the other group so they fall backwards awkwardly onto a stage platform. Suddenly two security men appear and grab hold of the wounded boy, hoisting him up and roughly dragging him away through the crowd. The girl and his male friend run after them and I follow to the entrance of the club where the lad is forcibly ejected out onto the street. When I return to the main room dancing has resumed as if nothing has happened.

Extract devised from personal fieldnotes, 2007

In an analysis of the sixteenth century French writer, Rabelais, Bakhtin (1984) examines the existence of what he refers to as the '*carnavalesque*' in popular humour and folk culture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Associated with folk festivals and spaces, such as the marketplace, the *carnavalesque* is a spectacle lived by the people where 'during carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom' (Bakhtin, 1984: 7). In the writings of Rabelais, Bakhtin (1984) sees the carnival as providing a space where folk culture can move against the official culture of the period (Dentith, 1995). Drawing on his distinction between the monological and dialogical forces of language in the novel, Bakhtin (1984) describes how the *carnavalesque* acts as a centrifugal force that promotes the unofficial dimensions of the society and human life (Allen, 2000).

The spatialised and ideological concept of the *carnavalesque* is of interest to my research as there are several parallels between Bakhtin's (1984) descriptions and the meanings and values that circulate in Drum 'n' Bass club culture; for example the oppositional nature of Drum 'n' Bass club-goers' ambivalent attitudes towards violence that are evident in the extract devised from personal fieldnotes above. There are also many similarities with how previous club cultural scholars have discussed the recreational spaces of dance music cultures since their inception in the late 1980s. Bakhtin (1984) describes the space of the *carnavalesque* as one where all people are considered equal and hierarchical precedence is suspended. This can be compared to

Sommer's (2001) descriptions of the House club as a liminal space (see Chapter Two).<sup>16</sup> Interview data from my fieldwork research indicates that Drum 'n' Bass participants are attracted to the club scene because of its egalitarian values. Amie describes how the dance connects people who may appear to be from distinct backgrounds:

JLH: Who attends Drum 'n' Bass events?

Amie: Everyone...there are always people who sometimes at first you think shouldn't be there but once the music starts, everyone dancing belongs.

2006

Despite fieldwork observations that note a lack of diversity at Drum 'n' Bass events, and a predominance of Caucasian clubbers, informants regularly comment on how they are attracted to the scene because of the mix of people: 'the Drum 'n' Bass crowd is a reflection of it's origin: London...is one of the most multicultural cities in the world, it is like an ethnic soup, a mish mash of cultures (sic, Livewire, 2006); 'total mish mash of different kinda people from different backgrounds, which is, you know, the fantastic thing about the music really' (sic, Reubin, 2006). Similarly, although there is a perception within Drum 'n' Bass club culture that the scene attracts people from a variety of economic and social backgrounds, all informants described themselves as either 'working class' or 'working middle class'. Whilst it is important to acknowledge the difficulties inherent in categorising class 'membership', interview data suggests that a *perception* of inclusivity is valued within Drum 'n' Bass club culture.

In the space of Bakhtin's carnival utopia is not a distant prospect of social perfection but is already realised as it functions as 'a second life of the people, who for a time entered the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality and abundance' (Bakhtin in Dentith, 1995: 76). Comments from informant Reubin demonstrate a perception of the Drum 'n' Bass club as providing this 'second' space: 'you get that feeling when you are in a club somewhere and everyone's into the same sort of music...you feel quite, sort of, unified with the people you are with' (2006). Informant Amie comments 'you can really get lost in the music, you can concentrate on your dancing and all your worries fade away. Being in a club is like escaping to somewhere I feel safe and free' (2006). This is a view echoed in several previous journalistic and

scholarly accounts of club culture (see Chapter Two). Informants also indicate that the notion of a Drum 'n' Bass community is greatly valued through their dedicated membership of online specialist music forums, as well as making contacts with event promoters, DJs and MCs involved in the Drum 'n' Bass club scene.

Bakhtin (1984) describes how spaces of the *carnavalesque* provide a place for the transgression of social order through a celebration of disorder and the grotesque. An aesthetic described as 'grotesque realism', which celebrates the 'anarchic, body-based and grotesque elements of popular culture' (Dentith, 1994: 66), is central to this concept. Through the construction of a 'grotesque body' writers, such as Rabelais, celebrate that which eats, digests and copulates in an exaggerated, wild and grotesque manner through a particular focus on the 'lower bodily stratum' or 'le bas corporeal' (Dentith, 1994). Bakhtin describes the essential principle of grotesque realism as degradation, which he asserts is simultaneously an affirmation as 'excrement is gay matter' (Bakhtin, 1984: 175). Citing the link between faeces and fertility as the 'intermediate between earth and body', Bakhtin describes 'the ambivalent image of excrement...as both joyous and sobering matter' (1984: 175). Whilst Drum 'n' Bass participants do not engage directly with excrement and waste as described in the writings of Rabelais, their comments and dance practices demonstrate a privileging of subversive values that position participants in opposition to hegemonic societal values: 'through acts of transgressive wastefulness, eroticism, drug-induced states, foul language and rejection of taboos, especially those associated with bodily wastes, the boundaries of social order are crossed and a challenge to the idea of order is made' (Hetherington, 1998: 147).

The aesthetic of grotesque realism can be argued to be evident in the dance practices and associated values of Drum 'n' Bass club-goers. In Chapter Seven I describe how movement material demonstrates qualities of aggression, hardness, vulgarity, disorder and rage. Performance troupes use sexually explicit movement language, which is replicated by some female participants (see Chapter Seven). In section 8.2 I note how Drum 'n' Bass dance practices are grounded, and focus particularly on the lower part of the body by the use of bended knees. Dynamic energy often moves from the centre of the body upwards or thrusts outward through the pelvis. Club-goers' comments indicate a valuing of the qualities of dirtiness, griminess, darkness and hardness, with

the sub-genre of Darkside Drum 'n' Bass described as particularly 'dark' as it employs harsh, industrial sounds combined with low, rumbling basslines. The subversive nature of this music is appealing to Drum 'n' Bass clubbers and male informants frequently describe the style as 'too extreme' for female clubbers to enjoy: 'I've been to Hardware and stuff at The End, which is always quite dark and grimy...it's one to go out to with the lads...because my Mrs and her mates would all sort of be going "errh – too dark" or whatever' (Deefa, 2006). However, female informants comment on their particular enjoyment of 'dark' events and records, and are attracted to the status they perceive this to give them:

I am really into [dark music], and that's something that's really weird really coz, like, well my boyfriend, he's not really so much so, and he can't believe some of the tunes I like because they are quite dark.

sic, Tasha, 2006

I like Liquid stuff...but I'm really into the dark stuff as well, like, I love really dirty, dark basslines. And when I first started going out raving people would be looking at me like "My God, who's that mental girl that knows all the really dark tunes?"

Rai, 2006

Bakhtin describes the use of abusive language in the form of profanities in the spaces of the carnival (1984). The term, 'billingsgate', is used to describe language of the marketplace such as that featured in the Prologue to Rabelais' *Pantagruel* (ca.1533). In this passage Bakhtin describes an ironic ambivalence that transforms praise into an insult and abuse into a gesture of friendship (Dentith, 1995). This specific use of language in Bakhtin's *carnivalesque* can also be observed in the Drum 'n' Bass club. During field visits MCs regularly used profanities in their lyrics, as well as chants about guns, drug taking and violence towards gay men, which could easily be interpreted as valourising these aspects of criminal behaviour. However, all informants dismissed the seriousness of the comments: 'it's all just part of it' (Rai, 2006); 'yeah, that's par for the course really' (Reubin, 2006). The subversive use of language, where terms of abuse are used as a sign of friendship, is discussed by Hewitt (1986) as forming an important part of young, African British and Jamaican British youth's inter-personal communication and can also be seen in Drum 'n' Bass club culture (as noted in Chapter Five). However, as discussed in the previous section

of this chapter, Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia disrupts a conception of language as belonging to a particular racial or cultural group.

The ambivalent and contradictory attitude, which is displayed by informants towards criminality in Drum 'n' Bass club culture, is also seen in the way in which participants describe the club dance floor as both a site of pleasure and excitement and yet as potentially dangerous and violent. Aggressive behaviour and fights are commonplace, alongside more serious criminal acts such as stabbings and muggings (referred to as 'jackings'). Informants Amie, Chris and Deefa all described witnessing jackings for mobile phones, money or drugs: 'I've known quite a lot of people who have been threatened or robbed at DnB events' (Deefa, 2006); 'when my phone got stolen they did it by punching and kicking my boyfriend who had it in his pocket. This happened on the dance-floor' (Amie, 2006). Jack described how he felt that the atmosphere at events was aggressive and that 'you don't wanna speak to the wrong people' (2005) through fear of violence. Whilst these informants were clearly disturbed by these incidents, violence and aggression is also permitted within a club environment through dance movement and physical interaction.

Male dancers perform playful, yet aggressive mock fighting between friends (particularly at Jump Up events) where they use headlocks, punches and barge each other around the space. At the front of the dance floor male dancers often place their arms over each other's shoulders and jump up and down, which is similar to the dance form, 'moshing', that is also associated with Rock, Punk or Indie music events. This physical behaviour often makes the dance floor a violent place at the climax of a DJ's set or the evening and groups of solely female clubbers often stand at the edges of the space. However, despite such violent action the atmosphere on the dance floor is overwhelmingly one of celebration, positive energy and vitality. As a clubber myself, I did not feel in danger. Informants, including women, consistently describe their dance floor experiences with enthusiasm and passion: 'we're always right down at the front, like just giving it 100%...you just get lost in the music' (Rai, 2006); 'I always dance. I just love it. I love dancing to Drum 'n' Bass. It's just wicked' (Tasha, 2006).

Movement material observed in the Drum 'n' Bass club also suggests contradiction and plurality that is evident through changes in torso position and dynamic quality of the dance. One torso position that is commonly used in Drum 'n' Bass dance practice holds energy in the body through the use of a curved upper back with raised shoulders and bent elbows held close to the dancer's sides (as discussed in Chapter Seven, section 7.3). The dynamic of this movement, often dictated by the music, can be forceful, thrusting and tense or possess a rolling quality that is more fluid. The containment of physical energy is in contrast to the second body posture where the dancer assumes a more vertical stance and appears more relaxed. Whilst the arms and torso appear to be looser in this movement, the pelvis thrusts forward and back (as described in section 8.2).

Physical energy contained and held tightly inside the body is also seen expended through 'brocking out' (a term used by informants to describe vigorous dancing), mock fighting or actual physical violence. As noted in Chapter Seven, one male clubber was observed punching the wall at the climax of the musical track. Another dancer at the same event was observed hitting the table next to where he was standing. Male dancers often punch the air at the break of the music (after a repetitious section or series of rewinds), before continuing dancing. At both Jump Up and Dark Drum 'n' Bass events clubbers were observed shouting obscenities and roaring across the dance floor. The atmosphere on the dance-floor at Drum 'n' Bass events can also change quickly from that of joyful sociality and intense excitement to violence. As described in the fieldwork extract at the beginning of this section, I observed a fight during a Drum 'n' Bass club event in London where one club-goer was punched in the face for knocking into a group of young men as he danced. Once security guards had evicted him from the club the other participants resumed dancing as if nothing had happened.

Further similarities between Bakhtin's descriptions of the *carnavalesque* and Drum 'n' Bass club culture can be seen in participants' references to madness and parody: 'in folk grotesque, madness is a gay parody of official reason' (Bakhtin, 1984: 39). Bakhtin contrasts folk madness, which he also describes as 'festive', with that seen in Romantic grotesque literature where madness acquires a sombre and tragic quality. Drum 'n' Bass participants, particularly those who attend Jump Up events, often

spoke of enjoying a loss of subjectivity and control in the club space. Rai describes feeling ‘like your head’s gonna explode’ (sic, 2006) and Ben A (2006) says he enjoys ‘going mad’ with his friends on the dance floor. Rai (2006) also comments positively on how other clubbers may perceive her as ‘mental’. Informants frequently describe the playful and parodic nature of the dance (see section 8.2).

In this section I have demonstrated similarities between oppositional and subversive meanings and values observed within contemporary UK Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture and Bakhtin’s (1984) descriptions of the *carnivalesque*. This analysis presents the club dance floor as a site for transgression and liberation from hegemonic values. However, the liberatory potential of Bakhtin’s carnival has been questioned by writers such as Stallybrass and White (1986), who accuse him of utopianism in his exaggerated celebration of popular cultural forms. Dentith (1995) describes a substantial body of discussion that negates the carnival’s anti-authoritarian potential through its very existence within the wider culture.

The spaces of the carnival, such as the market place and folk festival, are seen to permit temporary suspension of the bonds of authority, to act as a safety valve, rather than offering permanent release from the oppressive values of the Church and State. This mediated view of the utopian and transformative potential of the carnival is similar to discussions regarding club culture by scholars such as Buckland (2002, see Chapter Two). Furthermore, despite Bakhtin’s assertion that the carnival has the capacity to invert hierarchies and undermine boundaries, Dentith describes how some clearly functioned to reinforce communal and hierarchical norms: ‘the carnival inversions, the world-turned-upside-down of these festivities, were clearly aimed not at losing people’s sense of the rightness of the rules...but on the contrary at reinforcing them’ (1995: 74). However, writer Zemon Davis (in Dentith, 1995) stresses the dialogic potential for festive acts to both *reinforce* and *undermine* hierarchies and societal values through comic inversion. Thus, the dialogism of the carnival works to create ambivalence and multiple meaning. This of particular relevance to my research in Drum ‘n’ Bass club culture as in Chapter Seven I identify participants’ conflicting and contradictory systems of value. Bakhtin’s (1984) concept of the *carnivalesque* assists in understanding the plurality of subject positions evident



in Drum 'n' Bass club culture through an understanding that ambivalence is productive, rather than destructive of (multiple) meaning(s).

## 8.5 Conclusions

In jungle/drum n bass, electronic dance music's placeless hybrid cosmopolitanism came to a peak, and became associated with a critical multiculturalism.

Hesmondhalgh, 2001: 283

Despite Hesmondhalgh's assertion that Drum 'n' Bass is associated with multiculturalism, young 'white' males dominate the genre's attendant contemporary club culture. Fieldwork data gathered for this research reveals the construction, performance and reiteration of club cultural identities that draw heavily on socially and historically constructed representations of 'black' expressive culture, sexualities and style. Interview data suggests club-goers' fascination with, and attraction to identities constructed around ideas of a marginalised, dirty 'Other'. Scholars, such as Gottschild (1996), describe the use of Afro-diasporic style by white performers as acts of assimilation or appropriation. However, arguments that suggest the racial ownership of cultural forms reify difference and fail to account for the creation of new subject positions that occur at moments of inter-raciality and cultural hybridity.

Drawing on Nielsen who asserts that 'there is no localizable, essential point of origin in either blackness or whiteness' (1994: 7), I have explored how systems of signification are unstable and are open to re-signification through repetition. Using Bhabha's theory of hybridity I argue for the presence of a double-voiced utterance in the embodied performativities of Drum 'n' Bass club-goers: 'their own and yet replete with an "otherness"' (Allen, 2000: 165). However, the hybrid identities constructed in Drum 'n' Bass club culture are not simply an admixture of pre-given identities. Whilst dance movement contains traces of prior discourse it is replete with new meaning and logic.

The notions of ambivalence, parody and subversion that are an integral part of Bakhtin's (1984) descriptions of carnival are evident in participants' dance practices and their associated values in contemporary UK Drum 'n' Bass club culture. The

identities produced in the Drum 'n' Bass club can be characterised as an embodied *carnavalesque* where notions of dirt, aggression, explicit sexuality (in the performances of the female dance troupes) and ambivalent attitudes towards the practices of criminality, play an important role in participants' parodic and subversive activities. Whilst Bakhtin's descriptions of Rabelais' medieval market-place and fair are context specific, his work gives a new name to diverse and historically separate, cultural activities (Dentith, 1995). I argue for a conception of Drum 'n' Bass club culture that recognises multiplicity, contradiction and ambiguity. Through the productive acknowledgement of *différence* I move away from limiting narratives of appropriation to an understanding of Drum 'n' Bass dancing body as hybridized: a heterocorporeal.

## Chapter Eight Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> Gottschild (1996) analyses the ‘Africanist presence’ in examples of American performance, such as the theatre dance works by Balanchine, post-modern choreographers and blackface minstrelsy.
- <sup>2</sup> Gottschild (1996) has used characteristics of African dance taken from the writings of Asante (1987), Vogul (1986) and Thompson (1974) to identify five main elements that she describes as occurring in many forms of ‘European American concert dance’.
- <sup>3</sup> This sense of heavy dropping can be seen demonstrated by the second soloist (1.24 mins) in the video example by 1hhpp (2009), available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whAjPW6CrQE&feature=related> . See endnote 14 in Chapter Seven for a discussion of the differences between this movement language, which is performed outside of a UK club context and that observed in Drum ‘n’ Bass clubs visited during this research.
- <sup>4</sup> An example of the slicing hand movement can be seen performed by the silhouetted dancer (2.42 mins) in the video extract by 1hhpp (2009) at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whAjPW6CrQE&feature=related> , although this movement is notably more twisted and curved in spatial pattern than that observed in UK Drum ‘n’ Bass clubs during this research.
- <sup>5</sup> The phrase ‘brocking out’ refers to movement activity performed on the dance floor of clubs, and has been especially linked to Drum ‘n’ Bass. The definition currently listed on Urban Dictionary (an online popular dictionary resource that is editable by members of the public) demonstrates the negation of ‘dance’ discussed in Chapter Seven of this thesis but in its act of distancing reveals a close association: ‘Brocking: what people do to drum ‘n’ bass music i.e. compare with stomping...[to] hardcore rave music. It is not a style of dancing’ (2008). It was also used for the title of a Drum ‘n’ Bass record released in 1995 by Stakka & K. Tee *Brockin’ Out* (Liftin’ Spirit Records).
- <sup>6</sup> A visual example of this arm pressing movement can be seen performed momentarily by the dancer in jeans and black t-shirt (at 3.07 mins) in the video extract hosted by 1hhpp (2009) at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whAjPW6CrQE&feature=related> , although movement observed in the Drum ‘n’ Bass club used a flatter hand shape and was held forward of the body.
- <sup>7</sup> Although, as noted in Chapter Six, younger clubbers were especially nervous of speaking to me at length.
- <sup>8</sup> A rewind is a DJ-ing technique where the record is stopped manually by the DJ and spun backwards with the needle on contact with the vinyl. The record is then released to play the section again.
- <sup>9</sup> The term ‘black’ is used by these scholars to describe musical genres predominantly associated with African American artists and that are perceived to have developed as African diasporic forms.
- <sup>10</sup> The ‘splits’ is a position that demands great flexibility as the dancer sinks to the ground with legs either ‘split’, one forward and one backward, or the ‘box splits’ with legs to each side of the body.
- <sup>11</sup> Street Jazz and Hip Hop dance are popular forms taught in the UK in commercial dance studios or community settings. They have not, to date, been taught and examined by private dance organisations such as the Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) or the Imperial Society for Teachers of Dancing (ISTD) where syllabi are used to document and codify a style. These genres have been greatly influenced by the development of music video from the 1980s onwards when artists began to use a significant dance component for the promotion of their records.
- <sup>12</sup> I use the term ‘black’ here to echo scholars Huq (2006), Ware and Back (2002) and Bannerjea’s (2000) use in reference to the racialisation of musical forms. This raises arguments regarding the racial ownership of dance movement that I continue to debate in the remaining part of this chapter.

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- <sup>13</sup> 'Black' and 'white' are used here to demonstrate the crude nature of this socially constructed binary. Bannerjea (2000) also notes how those of Asian heritage are either excluded from, or lost within, these categories.
- <sup>14</sup> The only exception to this was Jack (2005) who no longer attends Drum 'n' Bass events.
- <sup>15</sup> The term 'thetic' is used by Kristeva to describe the phase of language following a subject's (as child) entry into the Symbolic Order (which follows the pre-linguistic phase) (Allen, 2000: 218).
- <sup>16</sup> In the following section of this chapter I continue describe elements of Drum 'n' Bass club culture that are similar to that noted by previous club cultural scholars' in their descriptions of dance music events; for example, participants describe the importance of feelings of inclusivity and community (see Chapter Two). However, I have chosen to use Bakhtin's (1984) theory of the carnivalesque to support this analysis rather than Turner's (1969) concepts of communitas and ludic liminality (used by club cultural scholars Sommer, 2001; Malbon, 1999 and Gore, 1997, 1995), as Bakhtin's notion of the carnival enables the positive recognition of contradiction and ambiguity that I describe as present within Drum 'n' Bass club events. As a spatialised theory of dialogism, Bakhtin's carnivalesque assists in understanding the plurality of subject positions evident in contemporary UK Drum 'n' Bass club culture.

## **Final Conclusions**

### **Heterocorporealities: the hybridized dancing body**

In this thesis I bring together theoretical concepts from dance studies, cultural studies, race and ethnic studies and genre theory to analyse the role of popular dance practice in the construction and performance of Drum 'n' Bass club cultural identity. Using empirical data collated from a period of fieldwork study I reveal how dancing is the central activity through which participants construct, perform and reiterate personal and collective identities in contemporary UK Drum 'n' Bass club culture. In the Final Conclusions I consider findings from each chapter in order to articulate the original contribution of this research.

There is a need for future scholars conducting research in contemporary club culture to recognise the diversity and specificity of dance music sub-genres. The fragmentation and proliferation of distinct styles of dance music since the late 1980s has undoubtedly complicated the generic matrix. However, previous club cultural scholars' dismissal of the need to account for such diversity, due to a perception of such a mapping becoming 'obsolete within days' (Malbon, 1999: 10), has led to homogenising and conflicting accounts of club culture. Whilst Malbon (1999) states that "genre-lisations" about musical trends are impossible to make because of a quickly changing club cultural scenery I argue that such a mapping is key to an understanding of the relationships between these subcultural groups.

I argue for the reinstatement of the dancing body at the centre of dance music club cultural research. Although scholars, such as Straw, describe 'dancing in public places, to records played by a deejay, [as]...a consistent and vital feature of youth culture' (2001: 175) there is little research that details the movement practices of these subcultural communities. As evident from Chapters Two and Three of this thesis, twenty years of social dancing in dance music clubs has passed undocumented. In this landscape my study of popular dance in UK Drum 'n' Bass club culture is a small contribution. However, it is significant as it clearly demonstrates the existence of a particular style or genre of movement that actively contributes to a sociologically

informed understanding of the affiliations and distinctions between contemporary club cultures.

In the introduction to this thesis I note how this research is concerned with an analysis of the popular dance practices performed in Drum 'n' Bass clubs and, thus, is firmly located within the disciplinary area of dance studies. However, an inter-disciplinary approach has broadened the contribution of this work. Dance scholars working within the fields of anthropology, ethnography and cultural studies have argued that a close reading of the dance can assist in understanding (sub)cultural values. However, sociologists and scholars of popular culture fail to recognise the growth of dance studies as a discipline and the expertise it can offer to researchers who focus on *dance* cultures. This is particularly evident in the review of previous scholarly work that focuses on dance music club cultures in Chapter Two of this thesis, where the dancing body is acknowledged as central but notably absent.

In investigating the similarities and differences between specific sub-genres of dance music I argue that intertextuality is a powerful methodological tool. As a musical genre, dance music is quintessentially intertextual and inter-generic. As discussed in Chapter Three, contemporary theorists such as Frow (2006), Altman (1999) and Kallberg (1996) have reinvigorated traditional genre theory by examining the intertextual relationships between literary, filmic and classical musical texts. I argue that genre theory can be used not only to explore the diachronic and synchronic relationships between musical genres, but also the affiliations and distinctions that exist between their attendant club cultural communities. Contemporary developments in the theorisation of subcultures reveal tension between accounts that depict fluid modes of sociality and those that highlight significant subcultural substance. In this thesis I contribute to this discourse by investigating the process by which Drum 'n' Bass club-goers associate and disassociate themselves from others in the Drum 'n' Bass scene and dance music more widely.

All genres possess historically specific and variable expressive capacities that act as frameworks for constructing meaning and value. A 'reader' will choose to engage with a particular 'text' because of the specific possibilities of meaning and value that it will offer. These 'truth effects' are generated by the discursive qualities of the

generic structure (Frow, 2006). However, I also argue that the expressive capacities of musical genres can be seen as extending further than the immediate features of the group of texts, to include the club / sub cultural communities that give them life through their usage. The shifting value systems that are created between related genres and the rhetoric generated by them are reflective and formative of the social and political identities of the users.

The conceptualisation of genre as subculture, and the relationship between subcultures as those that exist between genres, assists in deconstructing the complex patterns of affiliation and distinction that exist within contemporary club cultures. Whilst there is the potential for new club cultures [genres] to develop through mixing with any other club culture [genre] clear networks of association exist between them. I argue that identity based affiliations and distinctions are an integral part of the generic structure of dance music club cultures. This concept not only accommodates post-structuralist accounts of club cultures (Ueno, 2003; Bennett, 2000, 1999) but also accounts for the inconsistencies that exist between descriptions of club cultures: 'they all have validity if they are taken to apply to sectional audiences' (Huq, 2006: 105). Whilst dance cultures are multifarious and increasingly complex their organising force is real.

In accounting for the identities that form an integral part of Drum 'n' Bass club culture I have examined contemporary literature regarding the social, political and cultural production of particular personal and collective identities (Chapter Four). In 1997 Werbner noted 'we have moved away from the old discussions that start from certain identities, communities and ordered cultural categories into uncharted theoretical waters' (1997: 4). During the decade following this statement the growth in scholarship has left the waters somewhat muddied. Identity is a relational concept: we can only know the 'Other' from the place where one stands. This understanding of difference reveals how knowledge about cultural groups is socially constructed. It is central to my exploration of the shifting distinctions that exist between subcultural groups within Drum 'n' Bass club culture, as well as between Drum 'n' Bass and conceptions of 'mainstream' forms of music and sociality.

I use the theorisation of identity as a performative process, whereby signifying acts or citations 'materialise' the body (Butler, 1993), to explore the production of particular

social and cultural identities through dance movement in Drum 'n' Bass club culture.<sup>1</sup> For Butler (1993) materialisation is the process by which the body takes shape, comes to 'matter', or is recognised as particular gendered, classed, sexed or racialised identities. This is similar to Skeggs's (2004) use of the term 'inscription', which I employ in Chapter Seven, to describe the process of 'making' the body through 'marking'. The products of inscription are classifications such as race, gender, sexuality and class, and the process occurs through the marking of value on particular bodies. In Drum 'n' Bass club culture I argue that participants use dance movement to establish particular personal and collective identities, which are signified through the marking of value of particular movements and gestures, as well as articulating difference from 'Othered' identities through the use of parody.

All major forms of identifications that are central to contemporary identity politics, such as race, ethnicity, gender, class and sexuality, have sets of theoretically committed criteria that form the basis of ascription (of ourselves or of others) to the identity category (Appiah, 2000). Whilst 'identity markers' are temporally and spatially located, they are also contingent, dynamic and open to appropriation, negotiation and change. The beliefs about collective identities that circulate within contemporary society and which produce the criteria for ascription, whether articulated in terms of race, ethnicity, culture, class, gender, age or sexuality, are constructed through discourse. The discourse created within the realm of the social, political or economic, are the meaning and values by which people actively shape their actions.

A club-goer will choose to engage in Drum 'n' Bass club culture (or any other subculture) because of the specific possibilities of meaning and value that it will offer. Through an exploration of the historical and cultural development of Drum 'n' Bass in Chapter Five of this thesis I have been able to identify intertextual, inter-generic and inter-cultural influences from the musical cultures of African American Hip Hop, Jamaican Dancehall Ragga and Reggae., and Detroit and European Techno that have contributed significantly to the development of the generic frame and its associated 'truth effects'. This is evident in a club cultural privileging of the values danger, transgression, sexuality, criminality, intellectualism and complexity. I position the Drum 'n' Bass dancing body as a resource through which club-goers construct,



perform and reiterate particular personal and collective identities that are articulated in relation to social and cultural constructions of gender, sexuality, age, race and class. Such constructions are often popular representations or 'imaginary simplifications' of collective identities communicated through forms of popular media. In the re-articulation of particular identity markers clubbers engage in a complex process of re-valuation.

There are complex hierarchies of shifting values operating within Drum 'n' Bass club culture. The predominance of young, male club-goers, producers, promoters, DJs and MCs indicates a marginalisation of female involvement. A privileging of values that have traditionally been associated with 'white', middle-class masculinity is also apparent in the rhetoric of the club culture. Club-goers position themselves in polarized opposition to 'mainstream' nightclub events, which they typify as feminised, superficial, disorderly and violent. In the articulation of difference, clubbers associate Drum 'n' Bass (themselves) with notions of masculinity, complexity and intellectualism. From an intertextual mapping of the development of Drum 'n' Bass I suggest that these values are the rhetorical traces from the generic framework of Detroit and European Techno, which became more prominent in Drum 'n' Bass tracks from the mid 1990s (Chapter Five). In the club space the subcultural value placed on engagement with and appreciation of the music permits male participation in dance activity that may otherwise be associated with a feminine identity.

In opposition to previous accounts of dance music club cultures, Jump Up Drum 'n' Bass club culture is a site where female identities are constructed as sexualised within a dominant framework of heterosexuality. Female club-goers are subjected to sexual advances from male clubbers and MCs regularly use lyrics that demonstrate homophobia. Female dance groups forge their own space in the male dominated club culture by using explicit sexuality in their performances and marketing material. However, some women club-goers distinguish themselves from these groups through the ascription of specific class-based identities that infer negative value. Male and female informants distance themselves from Jump Up clubbers, who because of their explicit sexuality, 'rude' and aggressive attitudes or tasteless clothing, are ascribed a working-class identity. In the act of ascription of 'others' the women position

themselves as deserving inhabitants of a [serious, masculinised, middle-class] Drum 'n' Bass club culture, whilst the male informants confirm their dominance.

Drum 'n' Bass is replete with contradiction and ambiguity. This is clearly demonstrated in the complex hierarchies of shifting values that draw on representations of the working-class in conflicting moves of affiliation and distinction. Despite a distancing from working class identities participants attend a variety of club events and engage in dance and movement practices that demonstrate qualities of hardness, aggression, rage, disorder and vulgarity. In historical and popular representations of the working classes these qualities form part of the ascriptive criteria. In contemporary UK Drum 'n' Bass club culture class is used as a mobile resource to ascribe negative values to 'Othered' groups (the mainstream or Jump Up clubbers), yet these same qualities are positively re-valued when embodied as part of the dance and movement practices.

However, 'class cannot be made alone, without all the other classifications that accompany it' (Skeggs, 2004: 3). As noted previously, there are significant traces of African American Hip Hop and Jamaican Dancehall musical cultures evident in Drum 'n' Bass culture. The dance practices observed in Drum 'n' Bass clubs during the period of this research resonate with characteristics of African dance practice as described by scholar Brenda Dixon Gottschild (1996). Constructions of female sexuality, specifically in Jump Up Drum 'n' Bass club culture, draw on movement and images from popular representations of femininity found in 'black' musical cultures of RnB and Hip Hop. As Drum 'n' Bass club culture is dominated by 'white' participants it could be argued that these club-goers participate in an appropriation of 'black' culture. However, these signifiers of a 'black' identity are juxtaposed with values articulated verbally and through the dancing body that have been traditionally associated with the 'white' working and middle classes.

Scholars Middleton and Beebe (2002) describe hybrid Rock / Rap artists' use of popular representations of low class 'white trash' to buy into a form of class based authenticity (as a valued notion that equals a specific and desired construction of 'coolness') that is premised on a supposed (class-based) cultural affiliation with 'black' identities. The images of working-class masculinity and femininity that are

articulated through dance movement in Drum 'n' Bass club culture can be argued to re-map racial 'Otherness' onto class 'Otherness' to articulate a personal identity that is associated with the value of 'cool' alterity. Similarly, the rhetoric of Drum 'n' Bass club culture that values darkness and dirtiness, it could be argued, demonstrates a desire to embody a racialised risky 'Other', a fetishized subaltern identity, which could be seen as a form of 'participatory Orientalism' (Bannerjea, 2000).

Narratives of orientalist appropriation have dominated (dance studies) research that explores the transmission of cultural forms (dance styles). However, this work reinstates rather than decentres the problematic racial binaries of 'white' and 'black', which perpetuate culturally essentialist popular representations of particular groups. These scholars fail to recognise the potential re-valuation of identity constructs in the process of re-articulation. Claims for the 'white' appropriation of 'black' expressive forms in Drum 'n' Bass club culture fail to recognise the intertextual, inter-generic and inter-cultural development of the form. I relate this notion to the writings of hybridity theorists who argue for a conception of cultural identity that recognises all cultures are hybrid. Such work uses intertextuality to recognise and explore moments of cultural interchange that do not infer the existence of essentialised culture, but recognise the traces of cultural texts. I highlight the connection between the *intertextual* relationship between genres and club / subcultures of dance music and contemporary identity theorists' notions of cultural hybridity and interchange in order to propose a conception of club cultural identity that recognises cultural and historical situatedness but does not preclude the articulation of new meaning and significance.

I draw on Bhabha's (2004, 1994) theory of hybridity, which uses the Bakhtinian notion of double-voiced discourse, to conceptualise Drum 'n' Bass clubbers' dance practices as their own but replete with an 'Otherness'. In using genre theory I have established that the development of club cultures is inherently inter-generic and hybrid and examined how Drum 'n' Bass club cultural identity demonstrates traces of meaning and value from Detroit and European Techno, Jamaican Dancehall and African American Hip Hop. However, as Bhabha notes 'we cannot contextualise the emergent cultural form by explaining it in terms of some pre-given discursive causality or origin' (1990: 313). The identities that form an integral part of the generic structure of Drum 'n' Bass are not simply an admixture of popular

representations of European and African diasporic collective identities but are replete with new meaning, value and logic.

There is heterogeneity in all acts of representation and thus plurality of subject positions at any given moment. The Bakhtinian concept of carnival assists in understanding and accepting the ambiguity, plurality and parody that is apparent in Drum 'n' Bass club culture. As discussed in Chapter Eight, the force of carnival works to create multiple meaning. Thus, Drum 'n' Bass as a space of the *carnivalesque* permits expression of contradictory meaning and values. Racialised and classed values of aggressive masculinity, explicit sexuality and criminality are simultaneously embodied, parodied and denounced in shifting hierarchies that create affiliations with and distinction from others within the club culture. Subversive values of dirt, darkness and madness are positively valued and provide energy and vitality: a form of festive madness.

Scholars have critiqued Bakhtin's (1984) descriptions of the carnival as having the potential to invert hierarchies and undermine boundaries for its limited dualistic structure as 'disruption is followed by a restoration of a *status quo*' (Mulvey, 1989: 169, emphasis in original). This can be compared to characterisations of Drum 'n' Bass participants engaging temporarily in risky and alternative ('black', working class) identities within the club space before returning to their 'safe' everyday lives (and 'white', middle class identities) as discussed in Chapter Eight (section 8.3). However, Mulvey draws on Zemon Davis (1975) to suggest the potential for change that arises from such transgressions. Using the example of the image of a disorderly woman, Zemon Davis describes how 'play...is partly a chance for temporary release from traditional and stable hierarchy; but it is also part of the conflict over the basic distribution of power in a society. The woman-on-top might even facilitate innovation in historical theory and political behaviour' (in Mulvey, 1989: 169). Mulvey (1989) argues for a conception of carnival as a tripartite structure that moves away from the limiting binary inversion to one that suggests the potential for change.<sup>2</sup> Whilst in the context of this research I do not focus directly on Drum 'n' Bass club-goers' experiences outside of the club environment, this notion does support a move away from claims of a 'white' orientalist appropriation of 'black' cultural forms.

The assertion that Drum 'n' Bass club culture offers participants a 'third space' for the exploration, construction and performance of personal and collective identities enables a theoretical return to Bhabha's (2004, 1994) concept of hybrid identities and intertextuality. Whilst initially employed to examine the conflicts in colonial discourse, Bhabha's work also accounts for the various ways in which individuals live with difference. As noted by Back (2002a), increasingly intertwined and overlapping cultural histories in contemporary society make separation of self and 'Other' problematic. This is evident in journalistic accounts of the development of Drum 'n' Bass that describe the genre as reflective of 'identities that...[are] British, that reflect our experiences growing up in multi-cultural cities' (Garratt, 1998: 281). The globalisation of forms, such as Hip Hop (Dyer, 2000; Osumare, 2000), provides support for claims that images of 'black' identities evident within Drum 'n' Bass club culture are transmitted through forms of transnational, American popular culture.<sup>3</sup> For example, in Chapter Eight I describe how the sexualised dance movement of female performance groups, which is replicated by some participants in Drum 'n' Bass club culture, is similar to that used by women in Hip Hop and RnB music videos. Gestural movement used by MCs and male club-goers also replicates that used by contemporary Hip Hop artists. Bhabha's (1994) concept of hybridity acts as an interpretative mode for accounting for what he refers to as the 'juxtapositions of space'. In the construction of identity there is a process of negotiation between a sense of 'location' and a relationship with others. However, attention to place does not presuppose closure as it is at the point of displacement that representation of identity occurs: the hybrid is formed out of the dual process of displacement and correspondence in the act of translation (Bhabha, 1994).

I use Bakhtin's related concepts of double-voiced discourse and heteroglossia to reinforce that, like language, movement cannot belong to any one cultural group: 'the word [movement] becomes one's own through an act of 'appropriation', which means that it is never wholly one's own, it is always permeated with traces of other words [movements], other uses' (my insertions, Allen, 2000: 28). Whilst Allen (2000) uses the term 'appropriation', 'ownership' of movement is only ever temporary, as each articulation will be part of an on-going process of change and development. The transient and evolutionary nature of popular dance practices is acknowledged by

Daniel who describes them '[as] always borrowing, returning, imitating, shifting, reversing, inverting, [and] improvising' (in Malnig, 2008: 6). The recognition that 'ownership' is only ever temporary enables a move forward from limiting and essentialising discourse regarding the appropriation and ownership of cultural forms.

In Drum 'n' Bass club culture I argue that popular dance is integral to the construction, performance and reiteration of hybrid cultural identities. However, such identities are not articulated in sole categories of race, sexuality, class, gender or age but in complex and shifting arrangements where these different aspects of identity actively juxtapose and intersect. Popular representations of collective identities that circulate in social discourse are embodied and re-valued in the Drum 'n' Bass dancing body. Identity imagery associated with 'white' working and middle classes intersect as hybrid with historically derived images of the racialised and gendered 'Other', and alternate re-valued 'black' identities constructed as 'cool' through forms of popular culture. Drum 'n' Bass club culture is a site for the juxtaposition of these identities. However, as I argue in relation to the inter-generic relationship between musical genres, this process is not free but is limited by the historical and cultural development of the genre / club / sub culture. In Drum 'n' Bass club culture identities are multiple, ambiguous and contradictory; demonstrating traces of anterior logic but replete with new meaning. The dancing body is hybridized: a heterocorporeal.

## Final Conclusions Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> Butler (1993) describes a performative interpellation as the naming of an identity such as 'it's a boy!', which initiates the process of ongoing citation of regulatory norms that materialise the body as gendered. This concept is similar to Fanon's description of the labelling 'look mama, a black man' (in Hall, 2000: 147), from which a notion of racial identity is established.
- <sup>2</sup> Mulvey refers to Leach's (n.d.) use of Van Gennep's tripartite phasing of rites of passage and the work of Ladurie (1981) for this reconceptualisation of the transgressive potential of Bakhtin's carnival.
- <sup>3</sup> The use of 'transnational' and 'American' is intended to remind the reader of the dissemination and dominance of forms of American popular culture worldwide (Dyer, 2002), as discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis.

## **Appendix A**

### **Interview schedule**

#### **Biographical data**

(Ask for consent to use comments in research and ask for preferred name)

Can you please tell me some details about your upbringing? Where and when were you born? Where you grew up? What jobs do / did your parents do?

Can you tell me about your education?

What jobs do you / did you do after finishing it?

What was the attitude to work and education at home?

#### **Music and clubbing**

Can you tell me how you first got into to Drum 'n' Bass music?

What attracted you to it?

What function does this style of music have within your life?

Do you go out clubbing? What kind of events? Do you DJ / MC / go as a clubber?

Do you listen / and go clubbing to any other types of music?

How do you think women are regarded in the Drum 'n' Bass scene (as DJs)?

How do you think women are regarded in the Drum 'n' Bass scene (as clubbers)?

What purpose do you think dance groups, such as the Narni Shakers, have in Drum 'n' Bass club culture?

Have you ever experienced violence in a Drum 'n' Bass event? (please give details)

Do you think there is a particular type of person who is attracted to the Drum 'n' Bass scene?

Why do you think this is?

Why do you think Drum 'n' Bass may be male dominated?



## **Dancing**

Do you dance at the club events you attend?

Why do you dance to Drum 'n' Bass music at a club?

What does it make you feel? What is its function?

Is dancing important to you? (please expand)

Can you describe/demonstrate the movements that you use when dancing (e.g. side to side footwork, hand gesture pointing etc.)

Are the events you attend racially mixed?

Have you ever experienced racial tension in a Drum 'n' Bass event?

If you were to try to characterise the Drum 'n' Bass scene what would you say it was all about?

## **Social divisions**

Do you think England is a socially divided country?  
How would you describe these divisions?

Would you describe yourself as belonging to a class?  
If yes would you say you are working class / middle class / upper class?

How is your life shaped by your class?

How do you think you have been treated as a member of that class?

## **Race and ethnicity**

Do you think racism exists in the UK?

Have you ever experienced racism?

What do you think of London's cultural diversity?

Do you see yourself as belonging to any particular communities?

## **Appendix B**

### **Schedule of fieldwork visits and list of informants**

#### **Fieldwork visits**

DnB = Drum 'n' Bass events

Rotation at Time, Guildford (DnB)	3 <sup>rd</sup> November 2004
Breakaway at Club Supreme, London (DnB)	5 <sup>th</sup> November 2004
Classic Records at The End, London (House)	11 <sup>th</sup> December 2004
Warp Records: Surgeon at Plastic People, London (Techno)	18 <sup>th</sup> November 2004
Riot at The End, London (Hard House)	19 <sup>th</sup> December 2004
Shy FX Album launch at Herbal, London (DnB)	13 <sup>th</sup> October 2005
Swerve at The End, London (DnB)	26 <sup>th</sup> October 2005
Ram Recordings at The End, London (DnB)	4 <sup>th</sup> November 2005
Rotation with Essence of Chi at Time, Guildford (DnB)	7 <sup>th</sup> December 2005
Classics Launch Party at The Ministry of Sound, London (DnB)	20 <sup>th</sup> January 2006
Autopsy at Volks, Brighton (DnB)	16 <sup>th</sup> March 2006
Essence of Chi at Herbal, London (DnB)	29 <sup>th</sup> March 2006
Switch at The Ministry of Sound, London (DnB)	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2006
Jungle FX at The Carling Academy, Bristol (DnB)	8 <sup>th</sup> April 2006
Therapy at Herbal, London (DnB)	19 <sup>th</sup> April 2006
Jungle Instinct at Long Island, Sutton (DnB)	26 <sup>th</sup> April 2006
Wide Open at Legends Bar, Cambridge (DnB)	25 <sup>th</sup> May 2006
Raindance Drum 'n' Bass Special at SEOne, London (DnB)	7 <sup>th</sup> July 2007

### **Interview informants**

Ben A (male, 19 years old)	Dartford	18 <sup>th</sup> May 2006
Ben B (male, 20 years old)	Brighton	24 <sup>th</sup> August 2006
Deefa (male, 22 years old)	London	6 <sup>th</sup> April 2006
FD (male, 23 years old)	Guildford	6 <sup>th</sup> December 2005
Guy (male, 22 years old)	London	11 <sup>th</sup> April 2006
Jack (male, 19 years old)	London	22 <sup>nd</sup> December 2005
Rai (female, 24 years old)	Hemel Hempstead	29 <sup>th</sup> April 2006
Reubin (male, 24 years old)	Hemel Hempstead	29 <sup>th</sup> April 2006
Tasha (female, 23 years old)	Guildford	2 <sup>nd</sup> June 2006

### **E-mail informants**

Amie (female, 21 years old)	Received 6 <sup>th</sup> March 2006
Chris (male, 23 years old)	Received 26 <sup>th</sup> January 2006
Livewire (male, 27 years old)	Received 30 <sup>th</sup> January 2006
Naz (female, 25 years old)	Received 24 <sup>th</sup> April 2006

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