"Sort Drugs, Make Mates": The Use and Meanings of Mobiles in Dance Music Club Culture

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1 Introduction

This chapter examines contemporary clubbing culture and its relationship with the mobile phone in terms of the organisation of dance music consumption practices in clubbing spaces. It also examines the ways in which the mobile phone is being used to establish and maintain clubbing friendship groups and wider clubbing communities, which often coalesce around particular dance music scenes in localised contexts. This chapter presents the preliminary findings of research with consumers of dance music and 'dance drugs' (Lifeline 1992, Forsyth 1996) in club settings in the North-West of England. As a popular leisure pursuit amongst young people in the UK (Finch 1999), clubbing acts as an empirical probe with which to think about social and cultural aspects of the mobile phone as a leisure and leisure-organising technology. This chapter draws on extensive observational work, a small-scale questionnaire and interviews with young people who define themselves as 'clubbers'. These young people are consumers of dance music in all its many and varied forms, consumers of licit and illicit substances, and users of a variety of digital leisure technologies, including mobile phones. Mobiles are positioned as technologies which both create and enable clubbing-community activities and as technologies which enable music and attendant substance consumption within various clubbing spaces and clubbing 'times', that is pre-club, in-club, post-club and 'real-life'[1]. It is argued that given the historically and culturally-embedded relationship between substance consumption and dance music consumption within club culture[2], and evidence regarding the continuation of this relationship (Deeham and Saville 2003, Moore and Miles 2005 Forthcoming, Parker et al 2001), any consideration of dance music consumption enabled by mobiles needs to take into account the consumption of recreational drugs. Given the telecommunications interest in dance music-related services and applications, it is argued that we need to move towards an understanding of how 'clubbers' actually use mobiles in various clubbing contexts, and how they relate to their mobiles through the lens of an emotional commitment to clubbing (Moore 2005 forthcoming) and 'club culture' with its myriad of 'underground' and 'commercial' scenes (Thornton 1995), its destructive excesses (Harrison 1998) and its joys (Lasen 2004).

As a mundane artefact in people's everyday lives in contemporary times, it can be difficult to make strange (Cooper 2002) the use of the mobile in specific spheres

of socio-cultural life. Clearly young people involved in dance music club culture use mobiles, but exactly how and why do they use them? And what socio-cultural and emotional significance do particular patterns of usage have for them? Here the focus is on the ways in which 'clubbers' infuse their mobiles with certain meanings through their contemporary consumption practices. The mobile in this context becomes a technology with various meanings specific to the localised contexts of clubbers. The emotional and symbolic significance of mobile-enabled social practices such as the exchange of text messages (Taylor and Harper 2002) can vary across different clubbing times and in different clubbing spaces. An examination of music and drug consumption practices in pre-club, in-club, post-club and 'real-life' settings moves us towards a better understanding mobile usage amongst clubbers, an understanding which goes beyond the notion that clubbing is 'simply' a group of people coming together to listen to music at a set time in a set place.

In this chapter I start by looking at some of the mobile services and applications currently on offer to clubbers as dance music consumers, moving on to summarise ways of studying the mobile as a key socio-technical and cultural artefact in modern social life. I then look at the ways in which club culture has been studied and suggest that there has yet to be sufficient research undertaken on the role of new technologies amongst clubbers in clubbing contexts. Within the empirical sections I combine these two interests, concentrating on the use of mobiles to arrange clubbing nights out, nights out which are the focal point of music and drug consumption. I also examine how the mobile is implicated in the procurement of (illegal) substances, how it is utilised to initiate contact with 'randoms'[3] and sustain the clubbing friendships which can develop from such contact. When considering the possibilities for dance music-related services and associated design implications we need to unravel these socio-cultural, organisational and consumption practices, practices that make club culture what it is today. The illegality of some of these social practices can make research in this area difficult to undertake, yet I suggest that researchers into new (music) technologies should attempt to look at all possible aspects of music consumption (and production) amongst users. In the case of UK clubbers this inevitably involves engagement with debates about the role of recreational drugs in dance music contexts.

One example of these related social practices is the use of ketamine[4] amongst clubbers, a drug which can physiologically enhance music consumption, but which can also dissociate the user from his or her immediate physical environment (Dillon and Degenhardt 2001:11), rendering mobile screen displays indecipherable (Moore 2004a). The exchange of clubbing photos with context appropriate music file attachments is an apt example of the possibilities of the mobile as a clubbing community-enabler, and as a technological site of dance music consumption. However, the socially and pharmacologically embedded timing of such exchanges is vital given the physiological effects of certain club drugs such as aforementioned ketamine. In terms of developing mobile dance music services, this example reiterates the importance of in-depth knowledge of the nuances of UK club culture, including substance consumption. In order to better investigate the possibilities of mobile-enabled dance music consumption and community services and applications,

we need to explore the ways in which clubbers (as dance music fans) actually use and relate to mobile phones across clubbing spaces and times.

Within club culture I maintain that the mobile is viewed as essential artefact in the clubbers' socio-technical repertoire, just as decks and an I-Pod may be. The mobile is an artefact imbued with shifting meanings (enhancing or undermining personal safety for example) and deployed to strengthen and demonstrate the user's sense of 'belonging' to the clubbing community. Following a summary of my epistemological approach to the study of the mobile phone, I briefly review literature on club culture, focusing on work which deals with the relationship between technologies, identity and experiences. I then deploy my empirical work to consider the mobile phone's role in the procurement of club drugs such as ecstasy, cocaine and ketamine, in the organisational practices of clubbers, and in the creation and maintenance of clubbing friendship groups. The 'unholy alliance' between recreational drugs, dance music consumption and club culture needs to be properly considered when thinking about mobile music and mobile community services and applications. Throughout the chapter I keep this 'unholy alliance' very much at the forefront of my analysis of relevant literature and empirical material.

2 Mobile Clubbing Communities and Dance Music Consumption Services

Within the mobile industry there exists an interest in generating revenue through the provision of applications and community-specific content for particular 'pre-existing', 'interest-driven' or 'event created' communities[5]. The Mobile Entertainment Forum (MEF), created for and by the emergent mobile (entertainment) industry, has an ongoing 'mobile community' initiative, launched in 2002, to support those within the industry attempting to develop community-based applications and content. MEF states,

> *The concept of 'community' lies at the very core of telecommunication… In identifying opportunities for facilitating the growth of mobile communities and current obstacles, the MEF looks to explore the concept of mobile communities as a central revenue-generator for the mobile entertainment industry[6] (emphasis added).*

Yakara, a mobile company based in Edinburgh, UK, has a number of 'personal mobile community services', or more snappily 'm-groups', based around this version of community. One of their 'm-groups' is for clubbers or 'clubber friends'[7]. Another example of the telecommunication industry's offerings to clubbers, here in terms of mobile-enabled organisational activities, is 'CLUBFIND', a 'connected community' available on T-Mobile, Vodafone, Orange and O2 networks. CLUBFIND automatically matches a subscriber to the 'best available what's on, where listings' through location-based data and user-specified keywords e.g. FINDNCUK + LEEDS + DJ +HOUSE MUSIC + DATE[8]. Another more dance music-specific mobile service is O2's recently launched Dance Chart run in association with a number of dance music record labels. A Dancefrontdoor.co.uk

press release on the service describes how,

> *The chart will comprise of artists featured on O2's site and on their WAP services. With the launch of 'Ibiza Summer Anthems' at the end of August 2004 expect to see some of your favourite labels, including the likes of Skint, Southern Fried, Defected, Trusted Records, Pias Recordings, Positiva, Offset music, Hed Kandi, Rock Solid Productions, Born2Dance…Anyone who is using O2 as their service provider can now get their favourite Ibiza Summer Anthems downloaded to their mobile phones*[9].

For mobile network operators such as O2, collaboration with the vanguards of dance music offers the opportunity to re-deploy already-established (sub) cultural capital, here in terms of dance music producers and record labels. Thornton's (1995) seminal work on dance music cultures and subcultural capital highlighted the rapidity with which what is deemed 'cool' by clubbers can change. Given the ever-shifting sands of dance music and club culture, such 'borrowed' (sub) cultural capital may be vital to a mobile service's success, although no guarantee of it.

Clearly the mobile industry is interested in clubbing communities and dance music consumption services as potential sources of revenue. What exactly is meant by a community in this context, and what might being part of a 'clubbing community' mediated by mobile communication technologies involve? The term *community* has a diverse range of meanings within the social sciences (Anderson, 1991, Delanty, 2003, Lash, 1994, Maffesoli, 1996, Poster, 1995) and amongst mobile service developers[10]. Ahmed and Fortier (2003) ask, 'To what do we appeal when we appeal to community? When is community appealing? Who appeals to community and who doesn't? How else can we appeal for or to others if we do not do so in the name of community?' (2003:252). In raising such questions about 'community' Ahmed and Fortier (2003) highlight that the word 'community' does not itself secure a common ground from which to speak to and with others. 'Community' is sometimes used to refer to the decline of particular (often romanticised) ways of life and/or social 'institutions' such as 'the family' and religion. 'Community' may also refer to the creation and maintenance of new social and cultural formations such as virtual, post-traditional, and global forms of communication and experience (Hand and Moore 2005 forthcoming). Debates about the emergence of information and communication technologies, computer-mediated-communication and 'cyberculture' have led writers such as Poster (1995) and Stone (1991, 1995) to examine ideas around community and identity in attempts to explain apparently novel forms of interaction and representation.

Given the difficulty of definition in relation to notions of community and the avowed fluidity of contemporary forms of lifestyle 'identifications' such as clubbing (Malbon 1999), it may be problematic to insist that young people who regularly club amount to a 'clubbing community'. Yet the provision of stability and order to sometimes chaotic lives, the possibility of an internalised sense of identity from clubbing, and the creation of sustained friendships through involvement in club culture (Moore and Miles 2005 forthcoming), are all aspects of identification with a (imagined) clubbing 'community' which can be overlooked in talk of post-modernist 'style surfing'. It may be that this 'community' is imagined in the sense that it does

not reside in one specific locale, nor does it have constant symbolic markers through which membership is displayed. Not many clubbers wear clubbing-gear to the office. However clubbing remains in the imaginaries and the 'ways of being' (Jackson 2004) of its participants and, I argue, provides a sense of identity often built on resistance to societal norms which delimit the possibilities of pleasure through discourses of the 'youth problem', criminality, and of subjects depoliticised through ruthless and reckless hedonism. This said, clubbers' euphoric declarations of peace, love and unity are sometimes at odds with the 'snobbery, ignorance excess and ignorance' that continues to exist within contemporary club culture[11].

People who identify themselves as 'clubbers', and who see themselves as part of 'club culture', which has local and globalised aspects (Hunt and Evans 2003), already use mobiles extensively, although perhaps not always in the ways in which the mobile industry envisages, and perhaps not always in ways which can be translated into the creation and/or maintenance of a 'mobile community' based more explicitly on commercial interests. The historical and socio-cultural alliance between dance music and (illegal) substance consumption in a sense 'disrupts' commercial narratives of mobile (dance) music consumption. However, given that the mobile is already used by clubbers to organise the consumption of dance music across clubbing times and spaces, and to enable the establishment of friendship groups built on the enjoyment of dance music, the possibilities for services and applications built on a thorough understanding of club culture seem highly promising. Having explored notions of community and the possibility of mobile-enabled dance music and clubbing community services and applications I now present my epistemological approach to looking at the mobile phone as a socio-technically-shaped and socio-technically-shaping technical artefact.

3 Studying the Mobile

The mobile is a key socio-technical and cultural artefact in modern social life within 'developed' countries (Cooper 2002). Just as club culture in the UK is an ever-shifting landscape, meaning different things to different social groupings, so the mobile phone can be understood, from a non-essentialist perspective, as a technological artefact imbued with meanings which shift across space and time. In the UK at least a number of sometimes conflicting and continually shifting meanings have been ascribed to mobile communication technologies. They are 'status symbols'. They are devices which can secure a loved one's safety if his or her car breaks down at night. They are health-damaging devices. They are convenient for conducting one's social life (and conducting affairs) and inconvenient when trying to sleep on a commuter train. They are regarded as invaluable devices to some. In Green's (2002) research on gay men's perceptions of their mobiles, one participant in response to the question 'Which piece of technology that you own could you not live without?' answered 'My mobile phone definitely, without a doubt, I couldn't live without it' (2002:6). They are devices owned, loved and personalised by millions of teenagers who use them to 'manage' interactions and 'surveillance' from their parents (Ling and Yttri 2003). They are mundane devices that we have quickly

got used to having. Finally, despite their perceived mundanity and 'pedestrian' nature, they are often produced as being 'cutting-edge', and even 'futuristic' (Moore 2004b).

Using the 'social shaping' or 'constructionist' approach to technology involves locating technology (here the mobile) as a heterogeneous network of the 'technical' and 'social' (Bijker 1985). Technologies become part of the social world we live in, rather than being an outside 'force' which 'impacts' upon the social, as the prevalent technological deterministic view holds. We can argue that the very idea or notion of mobile communication technologies is socially constructed. This means that the ways in which we make sense of mobiles, what we think them to be capable of, and not capable of, are produced within and across the 'social' sphere, predominately through discursive means with material implications.

To adopt a purely social constructivist approach to the study of the mobile as a digital (leisure) technology would involve a concern with the ways in which human actors are involved in constructing the device; the rhetoric they employ to make their notions of 'the future' of mobile communication technology 'commonsensical' for example (Moore 2004b). Here the temptation is to cast technological artefacts as 'merely' the product of texts, rendering their materiality invisible. Conversely a strong programme of technological determinism would involve looking at the 'impact' that certain technological artefacts, in this case mobile communication devices, may have on the social sphere. As Akrich (1997) points out, to adopt one or other of these approaches involves a separating out of the 'social' from the 'technological'. Rather than concentrating on the ways in which technical artefacts 'impact' upon human society, we may be better served thinking about the associations between the two, the ways in which the human and non-human implicate one another in attempts to stabilise 'society' (Latour 1986). It is these associations, between 'young person', 'clubber' and 'mobile' that are of interest to me in this chapter.

I do not consider the mobile as a technological artefact which has had a discernable and traceable 'impact' on British club culture. Instead I think of 'it' as a technology which is imbued with a variety of different meanings and is used in a myriad of different ways by those involved in club and/or dance music culture. As Sorensen (1997) suggests, technology and the social world can be analysed as rather 'messy' contingencies. By exploring the usage and meanings of the mobile within club culture, one can start to illuminate the ways in which the 'social' is implicated in 'technical' spheres and vice versa, until this well-worn binary becomes rendered messier than either social constructivism and technological determinism allows for.

Studying the mobile phone through ethnographic fieldwork is one way to disrupt the technological determinist stance and explore the design possibilities that social context-specific usage suggest. Taylor's and Harper work (2002) on mobile-mediated 'gift-giving' amongst teenagers is an excellent example of how social research can inform design. They explore, in relation to the exchange of text messages amongst their teenage participants, the ways in which 'gifts', as material offerings, can embody meaning, making 'tangible something of us as givers and our relationship with the recipient (2002:2). The 'embodiment', through mobile text,

mobile pictures and possibly mobile music, of memories of clubbing nights out is one example of the importance of studying actual usage embedded in the social practices that constitute contemporary clubbing. This chapter does not deal explicitly with the design implications of club-related social practices. However, reference to Taylor and Harper's (2001, 2002) work on the importance of the emotional, symbolic and organisational work that goes into phone usage offers an alternative to technologically-driven research into mobile development, whilst providing a framework with which to think about the symbolic meanings of the mobile for contemporary clubbers.

4 Studying Club Culture and 'Clubbing Communities'

Clubbing is a popular leisure pursuit amongst young people in Britain, and one with which legal and illegal drug use is closely associated, both historically (Beck and Rosenbaum 1994, Wright 1999) and in contemporary times (Measham et al 2001, Moore and Miles 2005 forthcoming). According to the consumer research group Mintel (whose figures only include the UK's 'official' 4,000 nightclubs, excluding many of the other leisure spaces young people consume licit and illicit drugs in), one in two 18-24 yr olds are regular clubbers (Finch 1999). Of the four million people who go out clubbing in the UK, it is thought that about half of them are regular (dance) drug users[12]. The National Criminal Intelligence Service indicates that users may be spending up to £10 million a week on ecstasy[13]. However, all figures regarding club culture and in particular dance drug use should be treated with caution given the difficulties of procuring a representative sample of users and producing reliable and valid statistics (Measham et al 2001).

Given the extent and popularity of clubbing in the UK, it is reasonable to assert that clubbing can have an impact upon a person's sense of self, their identity, identifications and 'belongings' (Malbon 1999:68). As Thornton maintains, 'The sense of place afforded by these events is such that regular attendees take on the spaces they frequent, becoming "clubbers" or "ravers"' (1995:3). Her point mirrors my findings on young people in dance clubs and events in the North-west of England. Of the 54 survey participants, 24 said they thought of themselves as 'a clubber', whilst 12 said they did not, and a further 18 responding 'don't know'. Even among those respondents who did not necessarily think of themselves as clubbers, or were unsure, mention was made of the sense of community, identifications and friendships with others that can be garnered from regular excursions into 'clubland', as the following quotes demonstrate,

MASH questionnaire, Respondent 10: Q.43.

"It's always nice to make new friends".

MASH questionnaire, Respondent 2: Q.43.

"It's a great feeling of togetherness, just happy people enjoying themselves as much as you…I love the closeness to other people around you".

"I don't know if I'm a clubber but I definitely love me clubbing like. It's well easy to make friends if you go clubbing. It gives you a sense of place in the city. I never feel lonely now as I can always hook up with me clubbing friends" (Female clubber, MASH, 13th September 2003: Sheffield: Tidy Magna 7 dance event).

'Clubbing' has been identified as a crucially important development in youth culture (Measham et al 2001, Redhead 1997). Contemporary club culture in the UK is open to a myriad of interpretations and can be studied from a wide range of perspectives. Researchers from criminology, sociology, psychology, pharmacology and cultural studies have all written extensively on 'club culture' in Britain, Europe, America and Asia (Hunt and Evans 2003). Given that British young people are the most drug-experienced of any European country (Griffiths et al 1997) and given Britain's place in dance music history, it is perhaps unsurprising that much of the work on clubbing focuses on Britain.

There has been a concentration on substance use amongst academics writing on UK club culture, with Akram (1997) noting a strong association between the use of certain substances (predominately ecstasy, speed, LSD, and 'ubiquitous' cannabis) and the popularity amongst some young people of dance events, particularly clubs and 'raves'. Ketamine (Ket) and GHB (liquid ecstasy or GeeBee) are also associated with club culture in Britain (Moore and Miles 2005 forthcoming). Work on substance use within club culture includes analysis of the 'pathways' that young people take into substance use and dance culture (e.g. Coffield and Gofton 1994), the harm reduction strategies they adopt (Hart and Hunt 1997, Boys et al 2000), patterns and meanings of drug usage amongst young people in general (Parker et al 1998) and amongst clubbers in particular (Measham et al 2001, Moore and Miles 2005 forthcoming). The possibility of a trend of 'normalisation' surrounding recreational drug use (particularly cannabis, ecstasy and powder cocaine) amongst British young people has also been explored at length (Measham et al 2001, Parker et al 2002). Other writers have concentrated on the place of music within club culture and youth culture more generally (Bennett 2000) and the role of DJs in club culture (Haslam 1998). Gender, ethnicity and sexual identity race relations within dance/club culture have also been extensively explored (Collin and Godfrey 1997, Henderson 1999, Huq 1996, Lewis and Ross 1995, Pini 2001, Reynolds 1997). However, despite the continued academic interest in dance/club culture, and its place within youth culture more generally, there has been only limited work on the usage and in particular the meanings, of digital (leisure) technologies amongst (self-defined) 'clubbers' in the UK. I now turn to some examples of research on technologies which are of significance for my consideration of the usage and meanings of mobile communication technologies in UK club culture.

5 Technologies, Identities and Experiences

There have been research precedents with regards the usage and meanings of digital leisure technologies amongst particular social groupings. Green et al's (2002) work on the integration of new technologies into the lives of British gay men is one example of writing which concentrates on the intertwining of identity and community with 'new' technologies such as the Internet and the mobile phone. Green et al (2002) argue that for the gay men in their interview sample, the Internet was viewed as a 'technology of freedom' (Sola Pool 1984) in that it offered the opportunity to,

> *...explore the gay world and meet like-minded others, i.e. it is the effects of the technology that are valuable to this group because it enables them to do something that is highly significant in their lives that they couldn't do before (Green et al 2002:3).*

This quote indicates that those who have, or at least see themselves as having, and/or are perceived by others as having, a 'non-mainstream' identity and/or lifestyle, tend to value information communication technologies for the opportunities they proffer for meeting others with similar 'world-views'. I suggest for example that for many (self-defined) 'clubbers', the Internet (and e-mail usage) provides the opportunity to visit chat rooms, listen to dance music online that may or may not be 'club-branded' (e.g. www.digitallyimported.com), buy records online (e.g. www.chemical-records.co.uk) and (virtually) meet other clubbers. Club-specific message boards[14] and clubbing-specific message boards[15] are used by clubbers across the world. These are all social practices implicated in the production and maintenance of a clubbing-related identity. Taylor and Stone (2004) also look at technologically-enabled social practices through the use of mobile and networked technologies by a musical and visual community of artists centred around 'The Festival', an annual UK event which has spawned friendships and artistic relationships, as well as 'spin-off' events and a record label. Referring to the conversations with their informants regarding the online forum that has built up around 'The Festival', Taylor and Stone (2004) note,

> *The exchanges on the Festival forum are recounted in such a way that they articulate the presence of a heterogeneous collective. The forum is described as a space where members meet; the many styles and tastes blend into one another and catalyse to assemble The Festival collective. As part of the collective, the forum is enrolled to stand as evidence-documentary information-of the collective (2004:5).*

Here we see the ways in which technologies are 'enrolled' by human actants to both produce and 'stand for' communities, communities which are constantly shifting from online spaces to off-line spaces. As with 'Club Culture', 'The Festival' becomes a meaningful entity in its own right (Taylor and Stone 2004:4) which technologically enables and emotionally signifies togetherness, collaboration and socio-cultural exchange by those who identify themselves as 'members' and/or participants.

Digital technologies have long had a role within dance music/club culture, most

obviously in terms of musical production, and music consumption within dance music spaces such as clubs. Work on music-related (and visual) technologies and their role in the consumption/production of dance music/club culture (Cunningham 1998, Gilbert and Pearson 1999, Goodwin 1992, Milestone 1996) is vital to an area of research in which people's experiences are mediated by and through technology (i.e. laser and lighting displays, the 'decks' and mixer in the DJ booth, the club's sound system, even entry to clubs via metal detectors). All such technologies produce the 'spectacular spectacle' of clubbing. Yet there has been a neglect by researchers of the more 'mundane' technologies that shape and are shaped by clubbers' experiences and perceptions of club culture, such as the mobile phone and the digital camera. The latter technology could be an interesting focus given the usage of digital cameras in club culture to 'capture' nights out, with the resultant photos posted on dedicated club-specific and/or clubbing websites. Indeed 'photo galleries' are now an expected feature of club-specific and clubbing websites, with pictures usually falling into four categories as below (all images accessed April 2004);

Figure 1: Clubbing photos: 'The DJ', at Riot! London

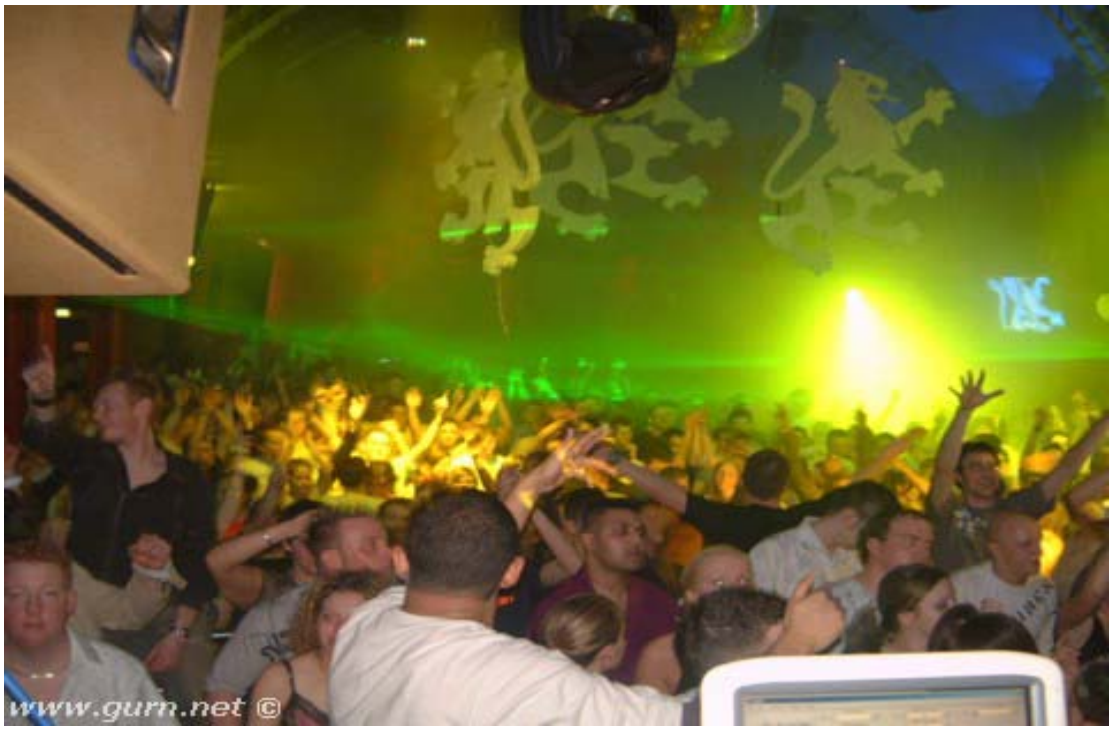

Figure 2: Clubbing photos: ‘The Crowd’, at Crasher, Sheffield

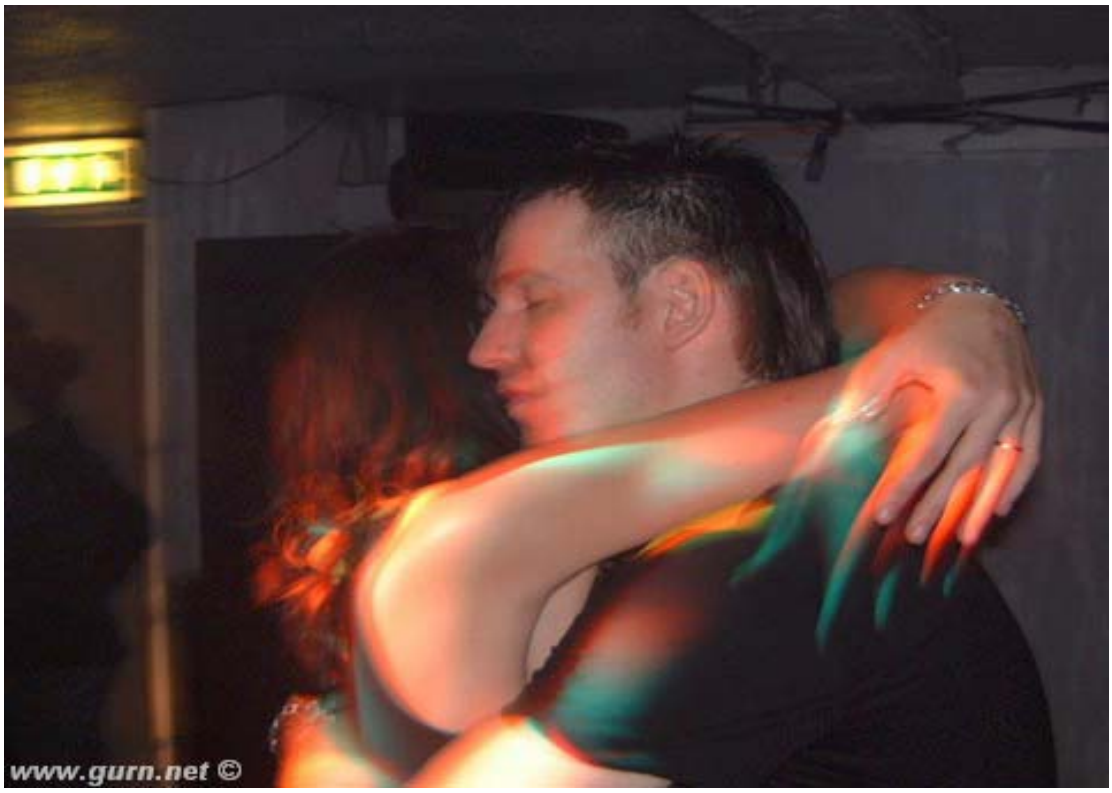

Figure 3: Clubbing photos: ‘The Hug’, at Pure Filth, Manchester

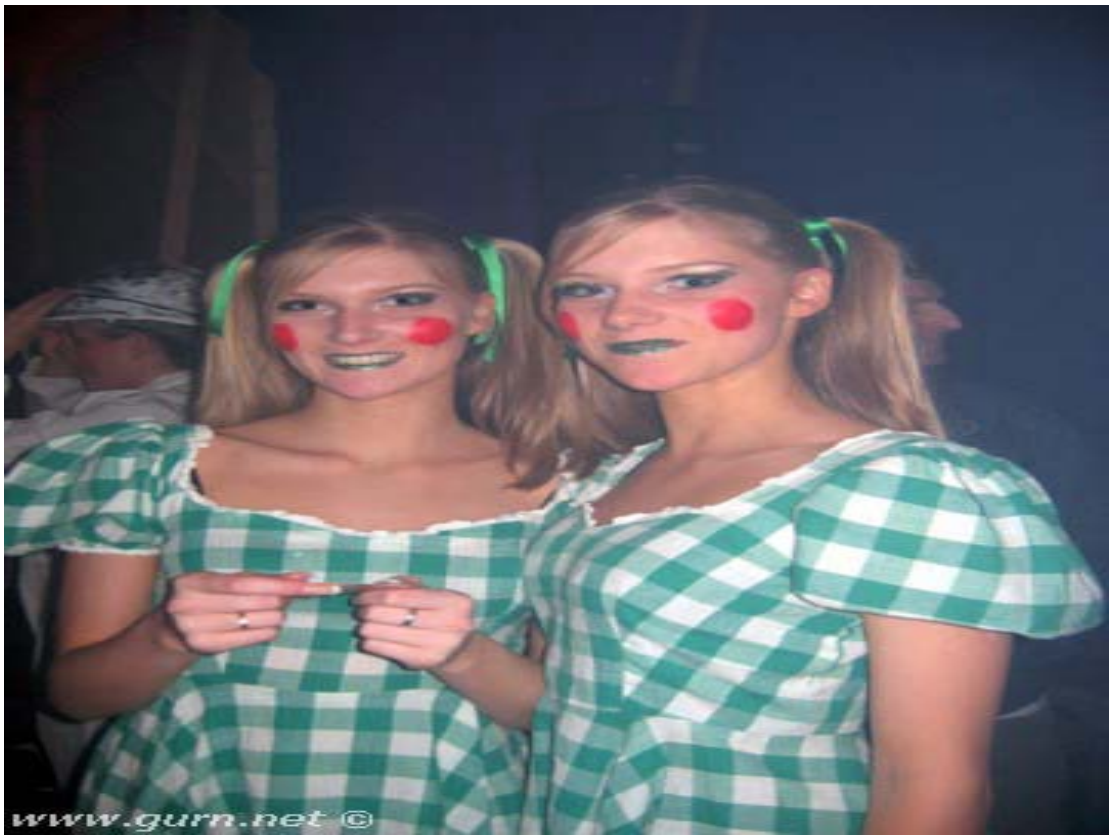

Figure 4: Clubbing photos: 'Playfulness and Performers', at Federation, Leeds

Such images are part of the enactment of clubbing identities, mediated through the use of now relatively familiar and 'mundane' digital leisure technologies. The common elements of such photos (i.e. of the crowd, of groups of friends, of the DJ, and of clubbing 'playfulness') offers the researcher an insight into the production of an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1991) or re-imagined community (Ahmed and Fortier 2003) which is ever-changing yet has repetitive elements of identification 'markers' that can and have been 'captured' through the use of technologies. Again the exploration of the use of digital technologies by clubbers can challenge the notion that clubbing is predominately about a group of people dancing to music in a fixed time and space. Rather 'doing being' a clubber involves interacting with a variety of technologies (across various clubbing and 'real-life' times and spaces) that enable (feelings of) involvement with 'club culture'. By not separating out the use of technologies from social contexts of usage we begin to see possible design implications, say in relation to the 'ritual exchange' of clubbing-related photos and context-dependent music files via the mobile. Regarding the aims of design-

orientated sociology, Taylor and Harper (2001) note,

> *Specifically we have aimed to show that mobile phones enable young people to perform what they see as common sense, everyday practices-to use the rituals of exchange to cement and demonstrate their social networks: that phones have, if you like, provided young people with new ways to perform old rituals (2001:32).*

Hence by looking closely at the ways in which technologies such as digital cameras (and mobile phone cameras) are used by specific groups of people (here 'clubbers') to 'cement and demonstrate their social networks' (Taylor and Harper 2001:32), we can begin to understand the management of space, time, boundaries of the self and relations with others which make up social contexts of technology use, social contexts, including social 'rules', which may in turn inform design (Murtagh 2001:89-90).

One writer who has concentrated on the use of technologies in terms of the ways in which they may be used to manage space, time and boundaries of the self is Michael Bull. Whilst his work is not directly related to club/dance culture, Bull's writings on the Walkman (2000, 2001) and more recently the iPod (Bull 2004), demonstrate that technologies can mediate experiences of one's surroundings, and in particular contemporary urban spaces. Bull (2001) notes how choice is a key element of this mediation, since choosing one's aural 'surroundings' reclaims some of the world, with music acting as a 'shield' or 'cocoon'. He writes,

> *Walkmans allow the user to prioritise their experience in relation to their geographical, social and interpersonal environment and as such enables them to attempt to exist within their own private soundworld. The site of experience is therefore reconstituted through the medium of the Walkman (2001:181).*

Technologies can mediate, and perhaps give the 'illusion' of experiential control over, one's surroundings. As I suggest in the final sections of this chapter, the mobile phone may be used by clubbers to garner experiential control over their surroundings, by texting absent friends and thus creating a 'personal space' within the sometimes 'overwhelming' in-club and/or after-club space. From sociologically-orientated research precedents, I think it is reasonable to at least explore the possibility that the mobile phone can mediate clubbers' experiences of 'being a clubber' and 'belonging' to club culture. In turn, the mobile, as a non-essentialist technological artefact, is imbued with shifting meanings by 'clubbers' and so is socially shaped through their very consumption practices.

6 Studying the Mobile in Club Culture

This chapter draws on data from my on-going work with 'clubbers' in the North-west of England. It is part of a wider project (the MASH project) looking at the music, dance and substance related leisure pursuits of young people in this geographical area (see Moore and Miles 2005 forthcoming, for more details). The

main sources of data for the MASH project are field notes from numerous nights out clubbing in the North-west of England, and a questionnaire developed specifically to target clubbers in Manchester and more generally the North-West of England.

Questionnaire respondents were contacted through 'snowball sampling', which involves identifying possible participants who are then used to refer researchers on to other respondents. The snowball sampling method is particularly effective for reaching hidden and hard-to-reach populations but does have considerable disadvantages (Atkinson and Flint 2001), not least the sacrifice of the possibility of representativeness (Van Meter 1990). The questionnaire, which thus far has been filled in by 54 young people, aims to gather data on clubbing in terms of the ways in which 'mundane practices' work as a 'foundation' for a night's activities. Participants, for example, were asked to detail the ways in which they procured (illegal) substances for their clubbing nights out, including questions about their use of mobiles to contact 'dealers'. They were also asked about their use of mobiles to contact friends and 'randoms' in pre-club, in-club, post-club and 'real-life' settings. In hindsight the questionnaire may have included more or different questions on the usage and meanings of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) and other digital (leisure) technologies, perhaps with a section on participants' use of the Internet, e-mail, Walkman/iPod and (digital) cameras. However, the survey remains in its initial stages and is likely to be adapted in the future following feedback from this round of respondents and from other researchers[16].

In terms of the demographics of the questionnaire sample, of the 54 respondents thus far, 24 are female and 30 are male. The youngest respondent is 19 years of age and the oldest is 33 years of age. The average age of respondents is 23 years of age. In terms of socio-economic background the survey (snowball) sample consisted of 20 students and 34 young people currently working in a wide variety of occupations. All respondents reported lifetime use of dance drugs (ecstasy, cocaine and amphetamines) and all reported lifetime use of cannabis. All respondents reported consuming dance drugs in the past month, apart from one respondent who reported that he had 'given up drugs about a year ago' (MASH Questionnaire, Respondent 17). Respondents also reported having tried a variety of other substances, including acid/LSD, 'magic mushrooms', ketamine, and GHB/liquid ecstasy. All respondents had attended a 'dance event' within the previous month, the average attendance in one month being two nights out clubbing.

The participant observational work began before the questionnaire was developed, and continues today. As a regular clubber in the North-West of England I have used my interest and participation in dance music events to generate field notes on my own experiences of clubbing and observations on the experiences of others. In terms of process, my participant observational work involves attending dance music events (be they clubbing nights or dance music festivals) and directly observing the social practices undertaken by other participants (i.e. other clubbers) within the sites of dance music and drug consumption such as pre-club bars, clubs, dance tents and after-parties. Following my attendance I write notes about my observations which are of course directed by my research interests, my sociological training and my own past and present experiences of the night-life. Given a prior interest in mobile communication technologies (Moore 2004b) I have made

exploring the use of mobiles in these settings a research priority.

7 Meanings and Belongings

My key question with regards the mobile phone relates to the ways in which they are used by clubbers in three clubbing times/spaces (i.e. pre-club, in-club and post-club) as well as this usage's relation to usage in 'real-life' or 'the straight world' (Malbon 1999). In addition I focus upon the meanings with which clubbers imbue this technology, thus producing 'the mobile' in these varied contexts. To explore the organisational practices undertaken by clubbers via their mobile phone may seem a long way from community-based mobile services, and indeed from mobile music services and applications. However, I would like to re-iterate the view that without sufficient research-based exploration of these (organisational) practices, it is unlikely that we will reach a rich understanding of the emotional and symbolic significance of mobiles amongst clubbers. Comprehension of the emotional and symbolic significance of mobiles for users has proved useful elsewhere in terms of design possibilities (Harper and Taylor 2001). To be a clubber is not solely about one spectacular 'moment' of music and drug consumption at a set place and time-it is also about engaging with (here mobile) technologies, technologies which enable those spectacular moments to occur.

7.1 Procuring Illegal substances

Of the 54 young people who have so far participated in the MASH clubbing survey, all regularly purchased the substances they planned to take on a clubbing night out *before* entering the club. Several respondents did indicate that they had previously bought substances in-club from a friend, although the interpretation of 'friend' here is obviously dependent on the respondent's perception, and of course friend and drug distributor, or 'dealer' may be one and the same person (Dorn and South 1990, Parker et al 2002:954). Other participants indicated that they had previously bought substances in-club from a 'dealer', with most reporting that they felt slightly uncomfortable doing so, as the quotes below demonstrate in answer to the two part question "Have you ever bought pills from a dealer inside a club? If yes, how did this make you feel?",

Mash Questionnaire, Respondent 15, Q.34.

"Bad, it felt dodgy and I only advise it if no one else can 'sort out' a friend".

Mash Questionnaire, Respondent 12, Q.34.

"Paranoid that the bouncers were watching me and thought the drugs would be rubbish".

MASH Questionnaire, Respondent 47, Q.34.

"Didn't care, was battered at the time!".

However, in line with Measham et al's (2001) analysis of in-club dealing, some clubbers with whom I spoke during my field-work were relatively at ease with buying drugs in-club from familiar dealers who were perceived as being sanctioned or condoned by (door) staff. In one Northern England city centre club, regular clubbers knew who the sanctioned dealer was, and expressed few reservations about purchasing ecstasy from him or his 'runner' (salesman) who circulated the clubbing space. Whilst respondents to the MASH survey indicated their preference for purchasing substances before entering the main clubbing space given concerns about purchasing in-club, it would seem that a combination of the two practices are being undertaken.

All the 54 MASH survey respondents bar one reported regularly using their mobile phone to procure substances *before* entering the club. These substances range from ecstasy and cocaine for pre and in-club use, through to cannabis and ketamine for 'chilling out' purposes in post-clubbing spaces/times. All respondents used voice as opposed to text to contact a dealer and /or dealer-friend, with indications that texts are viewed as 'evidence' of a drugs transaction (Male clubber, MASH, 10th March 2004: Manchester). Respondents used their mobiles to make initial contact with dealers/dealer-friends. Respondents indicated that dealers/dealer-friends would either 'do delivery' (that is drop the substances off at the buyer's house) or would make arrangements to meet in a public space (the latter being less the norm, again presumably given the risks involved of being in a public space). Deals were made usually on the evening that the respondents were planning to go out, although 7 respondents indicated their preference to procure drugs in the days running up to their clubbing night out. Such preferences are likely to be due to the (perceived) unreliability of dealers, as this quote indicates,

"Our bloke (dealer) is well hard to get hold of sometimes and he's always late, does my head in, but you can't exactly complain about crap customer service can you? (laughs)" (Male clubber, MASH, 10th March 2004: Manchester)

I suggest that the perception that the mobile phone is an individualised technology, belonging to a person rather than a household (and an address), means that it is perceived by clubbers as a 'less risky' technology to use in the procurement of illegal substances than fixed line telephones. This point also relates to the 'social etiquettes' surrounding the procurement of drugs. One participant noted for example that she did not like using the fixed-line phone in her house as she shared it with other people and did not think it "fair to them if some dodgy bloke (dealer) had their number" (Female clubber, MASH, 25th Oct 2003: Manchester: Tomcraft All-nighter). Little or no concern was voiced by the survey sample with regards the

tracing of mobiles through cell data. However, other clubbers suggested that the mobile is in a sense a 'riskier' technology than the fixed-line phone given the mobile's 'individual nature'. One participant wondered whether, if her dealer was under police surveillance, her call could be traced, or whether the presence of his number on her phone implicated her in his activities (Female clubber, MASH, 27th Sept 2003: Manchester after-party).

No mention was made by my research participants about concerns over the possible security implications of Bluetooth, now a standard feature of many high-end devices. It is possible that those in my sample did not own Bluetooth-enabled devices or had yet to consider the implications of Bluetooth for security in relation to their drug procurement activities or their clubbing activities more generally. Bluetooth technology allows users to exchange data between mobile phones, PDAs and notebook computers located in close proximity to one another. It would seem that the peer-to-peer networking capabilities of Bluetooth may undermine the perceived relative 'safety' amongst clubbers of using mobiles to source illegal substances. However, any consideration of the risks of exchanging information (e.g. the numbers of drug dealers or of new-found clubbing friends) through Bluetooth, or of the security implications of Bluetooth 'hackers' (who may connect to mobiles and download personal information such as address books) is likely to be assessed by clubbers as a context-specific risk understood in association with the perceived risks of other communication technologies (e.g. the fixed line phone). It is is this sense that clubbers simultaneously manage the risks, anxieties, pleasures and 'identifications' (Malbon 1999) of 'doing being' a clubber partially through technology use. Further empirical work into the use of Bluetooth-enabled devices by UK clubbers may throw some light on possible relationships between technologically-based security models for Bluetooth, socio-culturally significant usage and more general risk perception and risk management strategies amongst clubbing 'communities'.

My research indicates that mobiles are profoundly implicated in activities related to the purchase of illegal substances. In terms of dance music/club community-enabling mobile services, this finding is important due to the emotional connotations of using this 'personal technology' to procure Class A and Class B drugs. One participant for example noted that, "I delete all records of my calls to the dealer as soon as I've made them. Kind of makes my phone seem safer" (Female clubber, MASH, 27th Sept 2003: Manchester after-party). Some clubbers wondered how people procured illegal substances before the advent of mobiles, highlighting the ongoing production of the mobile as a mundane and 'indispensable' communication technology. Coupled with this mundanity is the perception of the mobile amongst clubbers as simultaneously a 'less risky' and 'riskier' technology, as compared to the fixed line, 'home' phone. Here we see how the mobile can be made to mean relative to other 'similar' technologies, and in a seemingly contradictory manner; 'less risky' and 'riskier'. Perceptions of risk shape the meanings of mobiles, technologies which are embedded in the specificities of clubbing-related activities, with clubbers prepared to take the risks associated with drug dealing and drug procurement through their 'commitment' to the clubbing scene (Measham et al

2001:116) and the enjoyment that clubbing offers (Lasen 2002). The mobile thus becomes a technology understood and emotionally related to through the strategies of risk management undertaken by clubbers. These strategies are necessitated and given meaning by perceptions of, and interactions with, private corporations such as mobile operators and public bodies such as drug law enforcement agencies, the judiciary system, and government policies.

7.2 Organising Clubbing Nights Out

Aside from procuring illegal substances, clubbers also use mobile devices to organise their nights out. As suggested in previous work, being 'a clubber' can be hard work,

> *Young people who regularly go clubbing in the North of England can be said to invest considerable time and effort into ensuring that their nights out, dancing till the early hours of the morning, will be fun, and to a certain extent trouble-free (Moore and Miles 2005 forthcoming:12).*

The mobile phone is implicated in the organisational practices clubbers undertake. Of the 54 respondents to the MASH questionnaire, 49 used their mobiles 'Always' to organise nights out, with the remaining 5 indicating that they 'Occasionally' used their mobile to do so. These organisational activities take several forms and are spread across the different spaces and times of club culture.

Clubbers indicated that they use both voice and text to 'round up' groups of friends and sometimes 'randoms' to go clubbing with. This activity takes place in 'real-life' or sometimes in 'pre-club' spaces. One male clubber described how he would usually write a text to three or four friends a few days before the event. "Like fancy going to Sankeys, so-and-so is DJ-ing?" (Male clubber, MASH, 17th August 2003: Manchester: *Addiction* after-party at *Presha*). If they responded positively they would talk on their mobiles to finalise details. In addition, he described how, if a big clubbing night (i.e. an all-nighter, or a one-off monthly event) was approaching, he would "Just write a text and send it to all the randoms on my phone. The more the merrier like" (Male clubber, MASH, 17th August 2003: Manchester: *Addiction* after-party at *Presha*). Other participants described how they would send a 'standardised' or group text to everyone that they thought might like to go out, sometimes including 'randoms' whose numbers they had collected on previous nights out, "I like to see how many people I can round up" (Female clubber, MASH, 19th July 2003: Sheffield: After-party).

Here we see the enactment of clubbing-related identities and 'belongings' being mediated through the mobile, specifically mobile text. The female clubber mentioned above told me that she was out with a group of about ten people, some of whom she did not know in 'real-life'. To be able to 'round up' a considerable number of people via text and voice can be viewed as a technologically-mediated enactment of the 'friendly vibe' (Jackson 2004) which clubbers value so greatly, and

which is employed in (sub)cultural distinction practices, i.e. the 'drinking club' crowd/atmosphere versus the 'pilling club' crowd/atmosphere (Thornton 1995, Moore 2003a). Contacting 'randoms' via text prior to a night out acts as a demonstration of the (supposed) inclusive and tolerant 'attitude' of clubbers. In terms of community-enabling mobile services, an awareness of clubbers' management of collective and self-presentation as one of friendliness and tolerance is important for the development of clubbing community content and for the security models of emergent peer-to-peer technologies such as Bluetooth. Bluetooth could undermine the perceived 'safety' amongst clubbers of using mobiles to procure illegal substances. However, peer-to-peer applications may simultaneously prove to be one way in which mobile technologies could be utilised by clubbers to enable the 'friendly vibe' (Jackson 2004) that many value so greatly. These are tensions which may have to be (at least partially) resolved in the minutae of usage contexts i.e. Does this club feel safe? Is the crowd friendly? Does this 'random' seem trustworthy? Should I switch my mobile to 'hidden' mode or switch off the Bluetooth functionality?[17].

Many clubbers highlight the friendliness of clubbers, and subsequent feelings of connection with others, however temporary or nomadic (Pini 2001:167), as key to their enjoyment and commitment to clubbing. So mobiles are used by clubbers to organise nights out in terms of gathering together groups of people before entering pre and in-club spaces, in turn becoming implicated in the symbolic production of a 'subculture' (Bennett and Kahn-Harris 2004). Here we see the use of the mobile in terms of creating (small-scale) clubbing 'communities' that shift and mutate over time. Clubbers in my fieldwork described how some 'randoms' become part of a circle of clubbing friends, whilst others seemingly disappear, "I texted him but he's fallen off the radar" (Male clubber, MASH, 30th April 2003: Manchester: Sunrise All-Nighter). Contacting other clubbers, be they 'friends' or 'randoms', is thus integral to organising a night out with the mobile playing a central role in this practice. Again, as argued elsewhere (Moore and Miles 2005 forthcoming), the 'spectacular' aspects of clubbing valued by clubbers (i.e. communicating with strangers, making new friends, 'connecting' with people on the dance floor) are predicated on organisational practices which may become mundane to the clubber, and which are now mediated in part by mobile communication technologies. It is at this point that community-enabling mobile services may intervene with design and application predicated on 'real-world' practices via an understanding of emotional investments in technologies, the social contexts of usage (Taylor and Harper 2001, 2002) and consumer perceptions of contemporary and future-possible mobile entertainment services (Moore and Rutter 2004).

The use of mobiles to organise clubbing nights out was perceived by some clubbers in the survey sample as a source of annoyance and frustration. This negativity with regards the mobile centred on the mutability of arrangements for a club night out. Clubbers sometimes experience anxiety and nervousness before a night out (see Moore and Miles 2005 forthcoming), not least because ecstasy remains a Class A, and, culturally-speaking, 'dangerous' drug which, unlike cannabis, is only 'normalised' amongst relatively small groups of people (Parker et

al 2002). The mobile enables changes in times and places of (pre-club) meetings, changes which were reported as adding to general feelings of anxiety (Moore 2003b). As Ling and Yttri (2002) write, drawing on empirical work on mobiles in Norway,

> *One of the impacts of mobile telephony is the opportunity for nuanced instrumental coordination…With the use of mobile communication systems, one need not take an arrangement to meet at a specific time and place as immutable. Rather those meeting have the ability to adjust the agreement as the need arises (2002:139).*

Whilst clubbers in my research highlighted their frustration with the mutability of time/place arrangements for a clubbing night out, they simultaneously highlighted the 'benefits' of the mobile for enabling this mutability, hence imbuing the 'disrupting' mobile with positive attributes. Fluidity of arrangements becomes a signifier of an (already) valued aspect of clubbing amongst this particular 'community', that of the 'flow' (Moore and Miles 2005 forthcoming) of nights out, which are "always the same but so different each time. Try not to make any plans like" (Female clubber, MASH, 12th July 2003: Manchester: *Logical* after-party at *Satan's Hollow*). The sense in which clubbing nights 'flow smoothly', but are punctuated with "funny things" (Female clubber, MASH, 12th July 2003: Manchester: *Logical* after-party at *Satan's Hollow*) and unexpected events and experiences (Moore 2003b), is not necessarily perceived as 'spectacular' by clubbers, but is perceived by some as an integral part of clubbing. Perhaps due to the practices of searching out after-parties and after-hours clubs in the post-club time, and meeting with friends in post-club spaces who have attended events at other venues, the mobile becomes, for clubbers, an emotional 'symbol' of the centrality of making 'new friends', conversation and 'communication' and living in and for the present moment (Pini 2001:167). The designs of mobile (dance) music services and clubbing community services need to account for and hopefully enable those social practices (already) valued by clubbers, thus further securing the mobile's place in clubbers' socio-technical repertoires.

7.3 The Mobile Phone's Role In-Club and Post-Club

Mobile phones are also being used by clubbers to 'account for' their friends when in main clubbing spaces, and in particular when leaving the main clubbing space and moving onto the post-clubbing space (be it an after-hours club or 'chill-out' at friends' houses). The following text message and excerpt from MASH field notes highlights this point,

> *"Hey trouble, where are you?!!! Going to Presha? Wanna meet us here or shall we come and get you?" (Female clubber, personal text message, 4th October 2003, texted from Manchester: Presha, after-hours club).*

> *The venue was massive with really high ceilings. Seven rooms (although I only found five of them). In a way it was too big as I spent a bit of time worrying about where*

everyone was, hard to keep track of 15 people! Getting everyone together to get the minibus back to Sally's flat was a nightmare, but managed it in the end. We had to text Nick and James and get them to meet us in the car park as 7,000 messy people attempted to get out the main door (MASH field notes, 13th September 2003: Sheffield: Tidy Magna 7 dance event, names changed).

Here 'organisation' by clubbers through the mobile is predominately related to concern for other's and one's own safety and wellbeing. Indeed it exceeds notions of 'organisation'; signalling the further enactment of clubbing friendships as mediated by mobile text, and the emotional significance that such (voice and text) exchanges hold for people in terms of embodying thoughts, feelings, memories and meaningful events (Berg, Taylor and Harper 2003:4). It is clear from my survey data that the mobile is a valuable and valued device to clubbers. Concerned about losing the device when in the main clubbing space, some respondents preferred to leave it (in a bag or coat pocket) in club cloakrooms, although the majority of respondents would keep it in their own or a friend's pocket/bag. Some spoke of the mobile as a kind of 'safety talisman',

"Just having it with me makes me feel better" (Male clubber, MASH, 12th July 2003: Manchester: Logical after-party at Satan's Hollow).

"I like having my phone on me just in case something nasty happens to me or my mates" (Female clubber, MASH, 30th April 2004: Manchester: Sunrise Allnighter).

Concepts of safety, and experiences of violence and intimidation by club staff, the police and other young people, depend to an extent on gender and sexuality (Measham et al 2001: Chapter 6). It has been suggested that young people taking 'time-out' often inhabit physical and symbolic urban 'wild zones' which are characterised as 'beyond the panopticon of modern regulatory culture where crime and leisure are linked on a continuum between ordinary consumer culture and deviant play, where speed and movement are prioritised…' (Measham et al 2001:159, see also Stanley 1997). Clubs may be located either in city centres, where levels of alcohol related crime at the weekend tend to be high, or in areas within or at the edges of the urban space which are yet to be 'gentrified'. *Sankey's Soap* in Manchester for example is located in the run-down industrial 'Northern Quarter' of Manchester, which is peppered with massage parlours, has inadequate street lighting and generally feels 'unsafe'. Given such contexts it is perhaps unsurprising that clubbers in the MASH survey indicated that their mobile made them feel safer on the way to and from clubs.

Perceptions of security, safety and co-ordination related to mobile ownership and usage have been highlighted by other researchers, most notably Ling and Yttri (2002, 2003). Specifically in relation to mobile usage amongst clubbers, there are mobile service possibilities surrounding the importance of personal and friendship-group security, safety and co-ordination. Mobile services could for example offer club drug health and safety advice, practical information regarding the location of services such as police stations, hospitals and public transport and 'find-your-

friends' services all presented in such a manner as to appeal to contemporary UK clubbers. Such services need however to acknowledge that clubbing spaces and times may be experienced differently according to gender, sexuality, substance usage and the like. For female respondents in particular the mobile represents a point of contact to various means of safety,

MASH Questionnaire, Respondent 42, Section 8.

"I've got a couple of reliable cab firms' numbers saved on my mobile just in case".

MASH Questionnaire, Respondent 13, Section 8.

"I can always phone my housemates or my boyfriend if I get stuck".

"I always carry my phone as I don't get in cars with people that pill" (Female clubber, MASH, 10th March 2004: Manchester: Tangled All-nighter).

Here the mobile is perceived as a device that safeguards personal security, and acts as a 'link' or 'lifeline' to others (Ling and Yttri 2002:142). Such feelings of technologically-mediated 'security' (one thinks of CCTV cameras here) also extend to in-club spaces. Here the mobile symbolises a 'link' to the 'straight world' (Malbon 1999). As one male clubber indicates,

"It's like a link to people who aren't fucked" (Male clubber, MASH, 30th April 2004: Manchester: Sunrise Allnighter)

Here technologically-mediated 'security' differs to the sense of 'security' offered by the mobile in terms on contacting cab firms or calling friends or family if one becomes stranded. Here 'security' relates directly to both the pharmacological 'effects' of ecstasy and to specific in-club settings. 'Coming up' on ecstasy can be an 'intense' and sometimes overwhelming feeling (Thomas 2002). It would appear that some clubbers are using the mobile to manage this 'intense' experience. Drawing on my participant observation I maintain that some clubbers use their mobile to call and/or text absent friends both in an enactment of friendship and as a means of creating a personal 'safe' space within the wider in-club space, as the following quotes indicate,

"I just focus on the screen and listen to the music and I'm fine" (Male clubber, MASH, 22nd April 2004: Manchester: Venomous).

"I don't really like coming up, gets a bit much for me, but I usually just sit down, chat to my friends and text people, gets me through it" (Female clubber, MASH, 10th April 2004: Manchester: Toast: Alice in Wonderland 12 Hour Spectacular).

"It's Traffic honey, Tiesto is messing with us!!! Wish you were here ;o)" (Male clubber, personal text message, 30th May 2004, texted from Sheffield: Crasher One).

Texting absent friends when 'coming up' and/or when favourite 'tunes' come on entails the creation of perceived personal 'safe' spaces, the maintenance of social networks and the demonstration of clubbing subcultural capital. Such activities, mediated through the mobile, also shape the ways in which clubbers understand their mobile, that is as a 'link' to other people and other physical and symbolic spaces (i.e. the 'straight world') which are situated 'outside' the urban 'wild zone'. It is in this way that the mobile becomes implicated in clubbers' experiences and perceptions of urban spaces and clubbing spaces, making them 'friendlier and safer' through contact with 'straight world' friends for example.

7.4 Creating and Maintaining Clubbing Friendships

The mobile is also being used by clubbers to collect contacts. Amongst clubbers, exchanging mobile numbers, as with giving hugs and exchanging smiles, amounts to an enactment of the 'friendly vibe' that clubbers still (self-consciously) evoke, are in a sense are proud of, and which they sometimes perceive as 'spilling over' into 'real-life' (Jackson 2004:98). It would seem that the mobile is currently facilitating the building of the often temporary and 'nomadic' friendships borne of participation in and commitment to contemporary club culture. In answer to the question 'Have you ever contacted a 'random' and become friends with them outside of the clubbing space?' (MASH questionnaire, Q.45) 45 of the 54 young people who have participated thus far answered 'Yes', with 9 answering 'No'. All of the 45 participants who answered positively used either text only (12) or a combination of voice and text (33). Here we see the role of the mobile in creating and maintaining clubbing friendships. Clubbing and related drug consumption acts as a source of stability for many young people with clubbing as a resource through which young people create 'parallel lives' that counter-balance the uncertainties of everyday life (Moore and Miles 2005 forthcoming). One of the key aspects of these 'parallel lives' is the production of clubbing identities and identifications (Malbon 1999) of which clubbing friendships are an essential part. Indeed the fact that there is a particular widely-used word (at least in the UK) for acquaintances one meets in clubbing spaces, i.e. 'random', indicates the acknowledgement amongst those committed to 'club culture' that meeting new people and perhaps making new friends (who become part of 'real-life' friendship groups) is a valued aspect of being a clubber. The following quotes from the MASH survey highlight this point,

MASH Questionnaire, Respondent 2: Q.52: 'What do you love most about clubbing?'

"The closeness to the other people around you".

MASH Questionnaire, Respondent 3: Section 8

"When the night gets going it is really good as it is easy to talk to anyone, not just friends but strangers as well".

MASH Questionnaire, Respondent 8: Q.52: 'What do you love most about clubbing?'

"Music, dancing, meeting people, the release of letting yourself go".

Given that the mobile phone is being used by clubbers to create (clubbing) friendship groups it would seem reasonable that the mobile industry can exploit this as a resource for the creation of 'community' related applications and services. However, from my research at least it would appear that clubbers are quite able to create and maintain clubbing communities using applications and services currently available (particularly short messaging services, and to a lesser extent multimedia messaging services). Further user-orientated research into the possibilities for clubbing community services and applications is needed to explore possible patterns of user acceptance and resistance. Such research should be mindful of the nuances of club culture, with its ever-shifting definitions of 'cool' and 'uncool', and should not be naïve to the fact that mobiles are profoundly implicated in illegal activities within and across clubbing spaces and times.

8 Conclusions

Communication, identifications and friendships however defined are all highly valued amongst clubbers, whether it be a fleeting exchange with a never-to-be-seen-again 'random', or a 'comedown' conversation with a close 'real-life' friend. Notions of what 'counts' as communication are expressed by clubbers as any exchange with a person or persons which is deemed a 'friendly' exchange, so exchanging smiles with a stranger can mean as much to a clubber as a lengthy conversation (Moore 2004b:12). In this chapter I have explored the ways in which mobiles are used within club culture, at least club culture in the North-west of England. This exploration has led to tentative suggestions for dance-music/club community-enabling services and mobile music applications and services, such as context-specific music file downloads linked to the exchange of texts across various clubbing spaces and times.

I have focused upon the ways in which (self-defined) clubbers imbue the mobile device with different emotional and symbolic meanings. For clubbers the mobile is a valuable and valued artefact. It is a key technological 'tool' used in order to procure illegal substances. It is employed to perform the 'mundane' tasks of organisation on which the more 'spectacular' aspects of clubbing rest. The mobile can create a personal 'safe' space for the clubber in the in-club setting, helping to manage feelings of nervousness and anxiety. It is also used to 'account for' friends in main clubbing spaces and in post-club settings. Given the majority of clubbers in some dance events will have consumed at least one substance this use of the mobile to account for friends, and enhance personal safety could be exploited by agencies

concerned for clubbers' welfare, through 'Dance Safe' mobile text campaigns linked to Greater Manchester Police's 'GM Club Safe' scheme for example. However, it is suggested that further research is needed to better explore the possibilities for mobile services and applications specifically aimed at UK clubbers.

The mobile is used to create and maintain clubbing friendships, and aids in the enactment of the 'friendly vibe' that those committed to club culture value so greatly. The mobile is also implicated in the enactment of subcultural capital in terms of dance music-related logos and ringtones (*Crasher* logos for one's mobile for example, see www.gatecrasher.co.uk) and dance music downloads. The usage and meanings of mobiles are likely to shift given the ever-changing nature of British club scene (the recent 'explosion' of Breaks and Beats nights in Manchester is one example of this fluidity) and the advent of 'new' mobile applications and services. Some patterns of mobile usage amongst clubbers (such as picture messaging) warrant further investigation. For now this chapter contributes both to our understanding of the mobile's place in contemporary British culture, and the ways in which technologies are used, and clubbing identities and friendships enacted, in the club 'scene' (Newcombe 1991) in the North-West of England.

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Notes

[1] I use the term 'real-life' here in a similar way to how it is used by clubbers in my sample. 'Real-life' refers to any spaces/times deemed 'outside' of clubland such as time at work and/or university. The term 'real-life' indicates time/space relations with the sometimes 'dream-like' or 'surreal' experience of clubbing and the 'time-out' and 'escape' from 'normal' responsibilities that is a valued quality of clubbing amongst many young people (Measham et al 2001).

[2] Thornton (1995) defines 'club culture' as 'the colloquial expression given to youth cultures for whom dance clubs and their eighties off-shoots 'raves', are the symbolic axis and working social hub. [They are] associated with a specific space which is both continually transforming its sounds and styles and regularly bearing witness to the apogees and excesses of youth cultures' (1995:3).

[3] 'Random' is a term currently used by clubbers in the UK to denote a stranger one interacts with in a clubbing space and with whom one may or may not develop a friendship with in 'real-life'. 'Real-life' is used by clubbers to differentiate spatially and symbolically between clubbing settings (such as pre-club bars, clubs, and post-club parties) and non-clubbing settings (such as work and university).

[4] Ketamine is a short-acting general anesthetic for pediatric and veterinary use. Positive effects sought by recreational users include temporary paralysis, dissociation, heightened visual/aural awareness and novel experiences of body consistency such as being made out of rubber or wood (Curran and Monaghan 2001). It is consumed recreationally by clubbers in the UK both in-club and post-club settings, although predominately use occurs post-club. The exact extent of usage amongst UK clubbers remains difficult to evidence due to the 'hard to reach' nature of the using population. Some research has been undertaken on the experiential elements of use (Dalgarno and Shewan 1996, Jansen 1993, 1997, Tori 1996, Dillon and Degenhardt 2001).

[5] See for example *Mobile Communities: Building loyalty and generating revenue through chat and other community applications*, Baskerville, September 2002, available at <www.telecoms.com>.

[6] The MEF Mobile Communities Initiative, see <http://www.mobileentertainmentforum.org/activities-initiatives.html#4> for more details.

[7] Yakara 'M-groups: Clubber friends', see <http://www.yakara.com/text/txtx_products.html> for more details.

[8] See http://www.nightclubbinuk.com/uknightclubs.htm for more details of this service.

[9] From http://wwwdancefrontdoor.co.uk, accessed September 2004. See http//:downloadso2.co.uk for the Dance Chart service.

[10] As acknowledged in the *MEF Mobile Communities Initiative*, see <http://www.mobileentertainmentforum.org/activities-initiatives.html#4 (accessed August 2004).

[11] I would like to thank Barry Brown for these helpful comments about the need to be more cautious with regards to clubbers' euphoric claims.

[12] 'Home Office Research Study 224 – Drug Misuse Declared in 2001: results from the British Crime Survey', *The Home Office*, 2001, <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/hors224.pdf>.

[13] 'United Kingdom Threat Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime: Class A Drugs Trafficking', *NCIS* 2003, <http://www.ncis.gov.uk/ukta/2003/threat03.asp>.

[14] See www.filthy-music.co.uk/forum.htm and http://www.tangled.info/forum/index.php for Manchester specific examples.

[15] See www.harderfaster.net, www.skiddle.com and www.4clubbers.net for examples.

[16] I would like to thank all those who attended the second event (held at the University of Surrey) in the Digiplay seminar series (26th April 2004) for their comments on this chapter.

[17] These actions are recommended by Nokia in response to concerns about Bluetooth security. See http://www.nokia.co.uk/nokia/0,,65909,00.html for more details (accessed January 2004).