

*Organised Crime in Red City:*  
*An Ethnographic Study of Drugs, Vice and Violence*  
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## *Abstract*

### *Summary*

Illegal drug trafficking and retail drug sales constitute the most common activity of organised crime groups in the UK and draw the largest share of resources from the police and prison services, whilst also generating considerable social costs. There are few contemporary studies in the UK on the supply of drugs, its organisation, culture and risk management practices, and even fewer on active dealers themselves. There remains limited ethnographic research into the drug trade, missing important insights that can be gained from observing distributors in a natural setting. A key absence in criminological literature is the voice of offenders who commit serious crimes and how they perceive and mitigate problems related to their activities. This research aims to fill gaps in the knowledge base by investigating the nature of the drug market, the crime risk management practices of drug dealers, and possible reasons for their involvement and patterns of activity. The study examines the criminal careers of offenders who operate in one of Britain's largest cities, termed here anonymously as Red City. The participants in this study distribute and manufacture a range of illicit substances, both offline and online. They distribute drugs on local, national and international levels (retail, wholesale, import and export). To complement the fieldwork, interviews were conducted with official actors from the criminal justice system, the private sector and the third sector. The thesis seeks to provide a more nuanced and grounded picture of illicit drug dealing and 'organised crime', that provides an account that corrects popular stereotypes. The chapters proceed as follows:

### *Outline of the thesis*

Chapter one provides the introduction to the thesis. It identifies the research problem, sets the contexts of the study and explains how the thesis contributes to the field. Chapter two outlines the theoretical framework for the thesis; it combines life course criminology with perspectives taken from research on organised crime. It examines organised crime in terms of markets, networks, and organisations. Chapter three describes the methodological approach employed in this study and considers the ethical and practical challenges of researching illegal activity. Chapter four addresses the 'start' of the criminal career when actors first become drug dealers. It follows the lives of the 'lads', who make up a core of the participants in the study. Chapter five examines how drug dealing is conducted in the city streets. It draws upon ethnographic data from two parallel drug markets that sit at opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of their harms and 'legitimacy'. Chapter six provides a sociohistorical analysis of organised crime in the nightclub scene to the present day. It draws upon insights from bouncers and drug dealers working in the field. Chapter seven addresses the effects of emergent technology in the drug trade. It examines how offenders employ digital technologies, both offline and online. Chapter eight addresses the desistance phase in the life-course. It discusses the factors that facilitate and inhibit desistance for individuals and groups of offenders. Chapter nine outlines and evaluates the key findings in the thesis. It makes policy recommendations to mitigate problems related to drugs and organised crime in the future. Throughout all chapters of the analysis, comparisons are made between offenders working in different drug markets and settings, to assess the relationship between their activities and the characteristics of the marketplace in question. The study finds that drug markets that are closest to 'legitimacy', in terms of their legal status and the public perception of the drugs, can have less risks for distributors. In light of this, they may be sold more openly and accrue lower levels of exploitation in the trade. Overall, this thesis demonstrates how serious offenders operate in rapidly evolving criminal markets, providing a significant contribution to the knowledge base.

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## 1) Introduction

### The 'War on Drugs' on the Door

*Since my ten years working as a bouncer, I've seen Red City's drug market change remarkably in some ways but in other ways stay exactly the same. I started out my foray into the industry in a club called Inertia; a venue that was in a white working-class area and a fair few miles from the city centre. Inertia catered mainly to the local hooligans whose idea of a good night was a few lines of cocaine and a punch up. The brawls were inevitable once the punters became fully intoxicated and somewhat frustrated due to their lack of success with the women. If social status could not be found through sex, it was found through violence. I myself had a pint glass rammed into my face a few years earlier after getting dragged into a dispute because of some girls we had 'pulled' and a rival 'gang' who felt they were in the wrong company. The dress code was sharp, and bloodied shirts were a regular feature of the door staff at the end of the night. The bouncers were a combination of bodybuilders jacked on steroids and professional fighters. At 6 feet 5 inches tall and 18 stone of muscle mass, I fitted the part quite well. I moved on from Inertia quickly as I needed more hours to pay my bills, and in truth, I did not like the violence. I settled at a popular club called Space in the city centre, where I became close friends with some Iranian 'gangsters' who ran the door. This was early 2009 and the music scene was in the process of change. Space held a variety of events from live music to underground drum and bass raves that were popular with the burgeoning student crowd. Drum and bass raves had become more hospitable and less violent than they were in my youth but still had a cohort of the inner-city urban poor; a mix of second-generation English Jamaicans and local white English. These were the city's 'outcasts' left behind during its rapid economic development. The structural inequalities that led to their harsh socio-economic backgrounds pushed them to drug dealing and often robbery. If you were a student in the rave scene, seeking drugs from these guys was always a risk.*

*The policy on the door of Space was loose, searches were irregular, and many punters got in with dubious IDs or none at all; not to mention the drugs they were carrying. Depending on the night, the drug of choice was cocaine or MDMA. A few people risked smoking cannabis inside but were easy to find due to the drug's pungent odour. Drug dealing was not permitted, and toilet searches were common. A couple of regular dealers were given a pass as long they were discreet and did not cause any trouble. Although anti-drugs, the Iranians felt it was better to control who was allowed to sell inside rather than go after everyone. The dealers also acted as informants, reporting on people causing trouble. It was an arrangement that worked until the dealers became too brazen. In the same year, a 'legal high' called M-Cat (mephedrone) hit the market and was hugely popular. With gurning effects similar to MDMA, and a strong smell of 'cats piss', the users were readily identifiable. M-Cat was a potent drug, cheap at £20 per gram and easily available from head shops, the internet or local drug dealers. Many of the dealers were middle-class students who got pulled into the trade eager to cash in on this white powdered 'gold rush'. Ketamine also spiked in popularity, although was more of a niche drug. Again, its usage was highly visible due to its paralyzing effects when consumed in large doses. It was not uncommon to see people pass out on the dance floor as it suddenly kicked in. I saved who I could, but others were not so lucky and pummelled into the floor face first and defecated themselves. More experimental users would combine a number of drugs together (M-Cat/MDMA, ketamine, cocaine and alcohol); this was the fabled 'monkey mix', named so due to its combination of gurning, paralysis and stimulatory effects on the user; it was not a good look. M-Cat has now all but disappeared from the city since it was classified as a Class B drug following negative press stories. Nitrous oxide has also seen a continual rise of popularity;*

however, its availability has decreased somewhat since the Psychoactive Substance Act 2016. The larger 'official' enterprises with their websites and delivery services have withdrawn, leaving violent street vendors who get into regular territorial disputes outside the clubs. Again, the media did a thorough job of stigmatising the drug, however, its popularity has not waned dramatically.

I write this vignette in the early evening whilst working on the door of a small bar called Jax. It is a popular bar on the outskirts of Drayton; an inner-city area in the later stages of gentrification. There are few altercations at Jax, and the nights can be quite mundane; the days of resolving constant fights at places like Intertia are, fortunately, long behind me. The management gave up asking me to put my phone away years ago and are content to put up with this due to my competence at other aspects of the job. It is difficult to get hold of competent door staff, since the industry has become flooded with unskilled, inexperienced bouncers from a variety of backgrounds. These are people who are unable to manage the door or deal with disputes effectively. I am good at my job and get paid far too little for what I do. Even if altercations are infrequent, I still receive regular death threats. The wages have increased little since I started in the industry and some companies scarcely cover the minimum wage as, in a time of austerity, people are desperate for work. As I stand here writing this, the atmosphere out on the street is lively and jovial. The punters pass by in buoyant conversation, and early evening positivity, that is often expressed in anticipation of the 'good' night ahead. A couple across the street are not doing so well and a heated dispute ensues around some personal issue I can't quite make out. A number of beggars capitalise upon the rapid flow of people and skitter around feverishly, amassing what small change they can to fund their drug addictions. The heroin, crack and spice markets cater to this user group to which drug deals take place away from the club scene in sheltered streets, back alleys or people's homes. These dealing patterns are common to all types of drugs, and many users come into the club pre-prepared for the evening ahead. Others will try and source drugs on the night itself and may spend their evenings trying to get hold of them.

Since 2008 I have worked in around 30 different venues and was head of security in a number of them. My longest stay was in Space and the club has changed significantly in terms of its clientele, its music and also its drug policy. Searches are now a regular feature of the club and people found with drugs are stopped and arrested. The police have a close relationship with the venue, as part of their intensified multiple agency approach. There are a few clubs in the city that follow this regime, but most do not and will simply confiscate drugs, destroy them, keep them for personal use or, in some cases, sell them on. Whatever the case, drugs are a pivotal feature of the club scene and are here to stay. It is now approaching 11 pm and a queue is beginning to form on the door around me. It is time for me to put my phone away and get on with the job. I am just but one of many people in the night-time economy, whose work is channelled in ways to extract as much money from these punters as possible. The distribution of psychoactive substances, whether legal or not, is an essential part of this process, as clubs would not be popular without them.

*Organised Crime in Red City*

‘Organised crime’ is an umbrella term used to describe a variety of criminal acts now defined by the government as ‘serious’ in nature. These include drugs trafficking, cybercrime, modern slavery, theft, fraud, corruption, money laundering, and counterfeiting. Generally, organised crime involves the supply of illicit goods and services and is carried out by a number of collaborating conspirators. There remains no agreed upon-definition and its vagueness is a matter of contention (Von Lampe 2019). Nonetheless, it is a problem that is costly to society and generates considerable harms. It is estimated that organised crime costs the UK £37 billion annually (HM Government 2018a). In 2018 the National Crime Agency published the Serious and Organised Crime Strategy, which set organised crime as a national priority above terrorism (ibid). Nonetheless, there remains a shortage of rigorous empirical studies documenting and analysing the problem in the UK. Official conceptions of organised crime are plagued with stereotypes that depict the problem as being undertaken by violent mono-ethnic ‘alien’ groups. In regard to drugs, the common image of the dealer is that of inner-city street gangs dominating the retail level, whereas international trafficking is said to be carried out by foreign crime groups of exotic and ‘dangerous’ origins. These stereotypes have been further reimagined in the so-called phenomenon of ‘county lines’ where vicious drug gangs spread to rural areas in search of market opportunities, exploiting vulnerable adults and children to distribute their products: a concept which has been uncritically accepted by some academics (see: Coomber and Moyle 2017; Spicer 2018; Robinson et al. 2019).

Whilst there may be an element of truth to the representations of the problem, there is a tendency for the media and police to distort and amplify crime issues into grotesque caricatures that then feed back into the policy discourse (Pearson 1983; Cohen 2002). The simplicity of notions of organised crime fails to account for the intricacies of criminal networks and crudely depicts the actors who constitute them. This study aims to redress several gaps in knowledge in the field of ‘organised crime’, and enhance our understanding of criminal networks, markets and of organised criminals themselves. It draws upon accounts with criminal actors across a range of social demographics, ethnic backgrounds and genders. It examines the criminal careers of offenders who distribute a variety of different drugs in a number of different settings; with a particular focus at the retail level. To complement the fieldwork, interviews were conducted with official actors from the criminal justice system, the private sector and the third sector. The majority of the offenders in the study are white English citizens of UK origin, reflecting the fact that most organised crime in the UK is conducted by UK citizens (Hobbs 1998, 2013). The research involved fieldwork with a variety of criminal actors, such as those who did not distribute drugs but who engaged in extra-legal governance, exacting extreme forms of instrumental violence (Campana and Varese 2018). Whilst organised crime is primarily about money, it is also significantly about respect and social status. For many, it is an outlet for their physical talents that have limited use in the legitimate economy, since deindustrialisation has ravaged traditional jobs of the working class. For others, it is part of a lifestyle choice that reflects the hedonism of the party in the 24-hour city. According to the convention of the UNODC (2004), organised crime is defined as:

“a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit” (UNODC 2004, p. 5).



This definition is so broad, however, that it accounts for all of the participants in this study regardless of how they operate. The UK takes a slightly different tack by adding the term ‘serious’ to the mix to denote crimes that are more harmful in nature:

“we define serious and organised crime as individuals planning, coordinating and committing serious offences, whether individually, in groups and/or as part of transnational networks” (HM Government 2018a, p. 14).

This second definition is equally problematic as not only does it refer to groups but also individuals. In this respect, organised crime has become any criminal act that is ‘serious’ but what counts as serious is another matter entirely. This all-encompassing ambiguity provides little use when it comes to actually analysing criminal acts. According to Levi (2012), the concept of organised crime is “‘a floating signifier’ of social danger, allowing interpreters to read what they like into it” (Levi 2012, p. 595). The label is socially constructed by official actors who place it upon certain criminal acts and types of offenders (Becker 1963; Von Lampe 1999). It is a highly subjective process and open to interpretation.

The conceptual problems with the term have not stopped UK police forces operationalising it in order to identify and map out criminal groups across the country. The Organised Crime Group Mapping System generates numerical scores which are assigned to criminal groups in local areas. These groups are placed into bands based on the severity of their acts, their level of capability and also their sophistication (HMIC 2015, p. 36). This method, however, presents a simplified and static representation of criminal activity that fails to recognise its dynamic and often chaotic nature:

“interpreting data, the result of the actions of the police, as if they represent real criminal activity or criminal trends can give the impression of a stable, ‘mappable’ community, rather than a volatile, market-based series of fluid and mutating collaborations. Beyond the computer-generated network charts that are designed by the police to freeze frame and simplify complex interactions, there is a chaotic, emotional world of loyalty, distrust, wealth, debt, cold business calculation, fierce hedonism and impulsive risk-taking.” (Hobbs 2014, p. 16).

There is a tendency to conceive organised crime as a singular definable and measurable *thing* whereas in reality, organised crime is a *process* which is both situated and changeable (Edwards and Levi 2008). Criminal actors adapt to fluctuating opportunities and constraints that are available to them, throughout the course of their criminal and non-criminal careers. Instead of accepting official definitions, this thesis applies a more nuanced approach by examining how illicit drug dealing is organised through criminal collaborations and the relationship this has with the life-course of offending. It attempts to examine what affects the organisational, and operational, features of drug dealing both within the criminal act and also within the criminal career. Moreover, it looks toward conceptualising the issue on a case by case basis through grounded ethnography that uncovers both the process and meaning of the activity for the very actors that carry it out. Criminology does and always has had an unreasonable distance from the people who make the discipline possible, the criminals themselves. Yet, it is through spending time with offenders and being out in their natural environment that a detailed picture of their life-worlds can be drawn.

*Drugs in the UK and the Framing of the Problem*

The UK has a long history of social problems relating to the use and distribution of psychoactive substances, although they were not always illegal. The 1920 Dangerous Drugs Act in Britain was the first act to criminalise drugs, responding to concerns around the use of opium and cocaine. The act marks the birth of the current prohibition system (Seddon 2009), which has been significantly reformed until present day. Illicit drugs are now governed legally by the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016. The framing of the drug problem in terms of organised crime, however, emerged in the mid 1980s, influenced by international developments on the political stage, alongside a sense that young people in the UK were 'at risk'. The apparent threat of organised crime moved to the forefront of political discussion, triggering a number of policy reforms, legislation and international treaties. The growth in the trafficking of narcotics at this time was a major concern as suppliers responded to the increased demand for their products in the developed world. In 1987, for example, Reagan's Presidential Commission amassed a 500-page interim report on drugs, compared to a 2-paragraph statement in a previous report 20 years earlier (Albanese 1988). In his words, "illegal drugs were every bit as much a threat to the United States as enemy planes and missiles... we're going to dry up the drug market and kick the dope peddlers right out of this country" (Reagan 1986). Margaret Thatcher, then UK prime minister, expressed similar sentiments, "it is perhaps the most lucrative form of crime and the most terrible that the world has ever known. One of the most terrible in its fundamental effects and how rapidly it can spread if you do not stop it" (Thatcher 1986). In an effort to address this 'new menace', the UK introduced the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986, the first act to tackle the financial proceeds of drugs in the UK. In a similar vein came the 1988 United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. Again, the issue was framed in terms of organised crime. Overall, the 1980s marks a time where drugs were seen as a significant threat to the UK, with the primary contributors being organised criminals of foreign origin. The rhetoric remains much the same to this day, however modest the impact on the availability of drugs.

In the UK (2017-2018) it is estimated that around 9% of adults aged between 16 and 59 have taken illicit drugs in the last year (around 3 million people). Class-A drug use among people aged between 16 and 24 has also increased since 2011. Cannabis remains the most common drug of choice with 7.2% of adults aged between 16 and 59 having used it in the last year, followed by powdered cocaine at 2.6%. MDMA is also popular at 1.7% of the same age group. Drugs such as heroin and crack are also consumed regularly, as are a number of other drugs including a plethora of new psychoactive substances that mimic the effects of existing substances. According to the EMCDDA (2018), deaths from drug overdose are now at record levels. In 2018 the UK had a total of 3070 deaths from drug overdoses; the highest rate in the EU (ibid). Since the financial crisis of 2008, the UK has consistently cut funding to the treatment and rehabilitation of addicts. Indeed, around 60% of local authorities have had their budgets cut for drug and alcohol services in the last year (Independent 2019). Criminal groups step in to supply drugs that are in popular demand, and governments appear powerless to stop them.

In terms of distribution, county lines currently dominates the policy and media discourse on drugs around concerns of violence and exploitation in the trade. Criminal groups are depicted as being predatory, highly organised, hierarchically structured and geographically far reaching (in line with popular conceptions of organised crime more generally). The thesis finds, however, that most drug markets are relatively civilised and do not operate in this way

(although, there are some that do). These popular representations can disrupt proper thinking about the drug trade and what is actually threatening or harmful. Previous UK research on organised crime has found that criminal groups tend to be local, loosely organised, limited in size and scope, and often ephemeral (Hobbs 1998; Matrix Knowledge Group 2007; Hobbs 2013; Salinas 2018). A central argument of this thesis is that drug markets are far from homogenous and have particular features that alter the modus operandi of the very actors that engage in them. The structure and methods of criminal groups differ depending on the type of drugs sold, their place within the supply chain and the setting in which they operate (online and offline). This also relates to both entry to and exit from drug markets throughout the criminal career. The study finds that drug markets that are closest to 'legitimacy' (Smith 1980) in terms of their legal status and the public perception of the drugs, can have less risks for distributors. In light of this, they may be sold more openly and accrue lower levels of exploitation in the trade. This study argues, therefore, that drug dealers operate across an ecology of risk that presents opportunities and contingencies in relation to the activities of state and non-state actors within the settings they operate. Relationships around trust are essential to reducing these risks, but this relates to the type of drug market and also the level of the supply chain.

A further salient topic of concern, which is central to county lines offending and drug dealing in general, is technology and crime; however, there are few ethnographic studies that examine this aspect of offending. Technology allows old crimes to be committed in new ways and enables entirely new types of crime altogether; some of which are fully dependant on it (McQuade 2006; Levi et al. 2015). The central argument of this thesis is that technology reduces risks for distributors and increases the availability of drugs, which has the effect of increasing purity levels and reducing costs. It alters the methods criminal actors use as well as their geographical movements. It can replace human actors as tasks are delegated to it (Latour 1994), as well as providing new environments in which to offend. There exists a continuum between the analogue and the digital in which traditional forms of organised crime are enhanced by emergent technologies but also reconfigured through their application. The study finds that rather than replacing the physical territories of the terrestrial city, ICT extends them into online environments with the effect of re-orientating the movements of criminal groups as they interact with and within them. Whilst ICT can enhance crime, it also poses additional risks due to the significant amounts of data that it generates. Indeed, we live in an era of ubiquitous digital surveillance in which technologies provide new tools for state control. Within these conditions, offenders and crime controllers adapt and alter their practices whilst gearing up on new hardware to outmanoeuvre and derail their opponents. It is this mutability that drives the technological uptake within enforcement agencies and the criminal networks they seek to control (Dorn 2003; Ekblom 2017). The study examines the impact of digital technology within the illicit drug trade, drawing upon the experiences of offenders who distribute drugs both offline and online. It examines how offenders operate within different settings under conditions of heavy digital surveillance. The remaining chapters proceed as follows:

### *Outline of the Thesis*

Chapter 2) Literature Review: Theoretical Framework. This chapter provides the theoretical framework for the thesis. It combines life-course criminology with perspectives taken from research on organised crime. It examines organised crime in terms of markets, networks, and organisations. Developmental and life-course criminology (DLC) and research on organised crime have, until fairly recently, remained independent criminological subfields utilising

distinct theoretical frameworks that are suitable to their lines of enquiry. Although the separation between these two disciplines has begun to fade, there still remains more that can be done to harness the theoretical and methodological contributions of each (especially in cases where researchers aim to study the criminal careers of serious offenders). Drawing upon the work of Sampson and Laub (1995), the research demonstrates how criminal careers develop through particular trajectories and turning points that relate to significant changes in their lives and the environments in which they are in. This is combined with the work of Kleemans (2013), who argues that involvement in organised crime can be determined by social opportunity structures that present themselves at different times throughout the criminal career. The research thus employs an age-graded theory of opportunity structures that examines the trajectories and turning points of serious offenders whilst considering the effects that close social bonds have upon them.

The first half of the theoretical framework is dedicated to providing explanations of the criminal career but does not account for the actual doing of crime in which offenders coordinate themselves to conduct their activities. The thesis thus proposes three ideal types of social coordination that relate to their respective theoretical positions used in the study of organised crime. 1) Markets: organised crime is a market-based activity that involves the supply of illicit goods and services. In this regard, crimes may be governed, to some extent, by economic laws of supply and demand. 2) Networks: organised crime cannot exist without networks of people. Networks provide the skills, resources and opportunities to conduct crime. It is the relationship to the network and the place within it that determines the behaviour and activities of offenders. 3) Organisations: organised crime involves collaboration between both networks and groups of individuals. Organisations work towards shared goals and provide different levels of resources to commit crime. Networks and organisations are distinct analytical categories (Von Lampe 2016).

Chapter 3) Methodology: Ethnographic Research in Criminal Settings. This chapter describes the methodological approach employed in this study and considers the ethical and practical challenges of researching illegal activity. The research involved me observing criminals who were active in the community committing serious crimes, some of whom are unknown to the police. Researching crime in action can be risky, and there may be obligations to disclose information to the police. Furthermore, covert research of any kind is often rejected by ethics committees due to issues around consent and personal safety in the field (whilst the dealers knew who I was, their customers did not). This chapter explains how I went about resolving these issues whilst getting my informants to trust me with highly sensitive information. The participants revealed information on crimes that could put them in prison for many years. As an insider to the group, I have privileged access to this information, but my relationship to the participants created further dilemmas that outsiders may not have experienced.

Chapter 4) Entry: A Journey into Drugs. The first analysis chapter addresses the 'start' of the criminal career when actors first become drug dealers. It follows the lives of the 'lads', who make up a core of the participants in the study. It examines the factors and mechanisms that lead people towards crime in specific settings throughout their lives. Understanding why people begin offending is of particular importance in reducing crime: if interventions can be put in place to stop offenders from embarking on these journeys, significant social and economic benefits can be gained. Previous research in this field demonstrates that social networks provide opportunities to distribute drugs and determine the roles that people assume when they first become dealers (Murphy et al. 1990; Matrix Knowledge Group 2007; Werse and Müller 2016). These studies, however, do not consider the relationship between age and

settings in generating these networks to begin with. Overall, this chapter finds that personal circumstances, life experiences, and opportunities to sell drugs, largely dictate whether people will go on to sell them.

Chapter 5) Street Dealing: Illicit Enterprise in Parallel Markets. The second analysis chapter examines how drug dealing is conducted in the city streets. It draws upon ethnographic data from two parallel drug markets that sit at opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of their harms and 'legitimacy' (Smith 1980). Drug markets are diverse heterogeneous systems that have particular features that determine their structure. Drug markets differ in terms of their social acceptability and legal status, which can increase risks for distributors. There are few studies that actively compare the structure of the drug market, depending on the product sold. This chapter compares the heroin and crack trade against a semi-legitimate drug, nitrous oxide. It demonstrates how drug policy differentially constrains drug markets, observing more harm in those that are closest to illegality.

Chapter 6) Organised Crime in the Night-Time Economy: Drugs, Vice & Violence. The third analysis chapter provides a sociohistorical analysis of organised crime in the club scene to the present day. It draws upon insights from bouncers and drug dealers working in the field. Night clubs are renowned for drug use, making them ideal places for drug dealers to occupy. The private sector controls the monopoly of violence in the industry employing private security staff to control access to the venues and keep them safe. The study found that bouncers involved in organised crime dispense a form of quasi-legal governance in which their role as licenced door supervisors allows them to control the drug markets within their premises. To minimise the hold that organised crime groups have on the sector, the government introduced Security Industry Authority (SIA) licences in 2001 to bar criminals from taking on these roles. Nonetheless, there remains little academic research that assesses the level of organised crime in this field today.

Chapter 7) Dealing in the 'Virtual': Emergent Technologies, Drugs and the Internet. The fourth analysis chapter addresses the effects of emergent technology in the drug trade, with a particular focus on ICT. The UK has seen a dramatic shift between open, semi-open and closed drug markets (May and Hough 2004). These changes can be explained mostly by advances in technology and the need for protection and concealment from the law. Technological advances have benefited both criminals and the police resulting in what has been described as a digital arms race between these two groups (Ekblom 2017). Questions remain as to how criminal actors communicate and conduct their activities within these circumstances, and how they perceive and use emergent technology to meet their ends. Studies of online drug markets are growing but tend to ignore the offline lifeworld of those who engage in them. This thesis examines how criminal actors employ emergent technology in both physical and 'virtual' environments.

Chapter 8) Exit: Kill My Name; The Road to Desistance. The final analysis chapter addresses the desistance phase in the life-course. It outlines the cycles and shifts between crime and legitimate work. Although research in this field is growing, it suffers from an actor orientated approach in that it does not consider the life-course of criminal organisations themselves. This chapter discusses the factors that facilitate and inhibit desistance for both individuals and groups of offenders. It demonstrates how they strategically select market opportunities, position themselves within their networks, or desist from crime entirely, to reduce the risk of prosecution. The study examines the relationship between settings, social networks and group

dynamics, providing an important contribution to the knowledge base. Overall, the analysis chapters can be roughly differentiated along the lines of *becoming, doing and withdrawing*.

Chapter 9) Conclusion. The final concluding chapter outlines and evaluates the key findings in the thesis and makes suggestions toward further research in this field. It makes policy recommendations towards the legalisation of drugs to help mitigate the economic and social costs of organised crime in the future.

## 2) Literature Review: Theoretical Framework

### Introduction

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework for the thesis drawing upon insights from developmental and life-course criminology (DLC) combined with concepts on organised crime. Research into these fields has developed significantly, yet they remain relatively distinct from one another, leaving a conceptual gap in the knowledge base. Academics researching organised crime can benefit from the concepts and findings of DLC based research, especially when examining criminal careers. Similarly, research on DLC could benefit from a synthesis of organised crime literature when investigating the careers of organised criminals. The fields themselves are far from homogeneous, however, as is evident in the split between developmental and life-course criminology. Research into organised crime is much the same with researchers applying sometimes contrasting methods and theoretical frameworks to the object of study. This chapter aims to draw upon the most relevant contributions of each to devise a theoretical framework that is best suited towards the aims of this study and investigating the problem more generally. It will critically evaluate these works to highlight their benefits whilst recognising the limits of each.

It must be kept in mind that the theoretical positions identified in this review are social constructs and as such, are open to scrutiny. They represent ideal types of social life that systematize features of empirical reality by focusing on some elements and excluding others to isolate patterns in behaviour (Psathas 2005). The resulting output, however, may be somewhat abstract from the phenomenon itself. It is unlikely that criminal actors perceive their life-worlds in this way, and this is important because the way they see the world has implications for how they act within it. By imposing a priori categories, the social scientist may miss social activity that goes against commonly held positions and force social life into boxes that it does not belong. Here we can take insights from cultural criminology which:

“actively seeks to dissolve conventional understandings and accepted boundaries, whether they confine specific criminological theories or the institutionalized discipline of criminology itself” (Ferrell et al. 2008, p. 5).

It is not, therefore, only the framing of structures which can be challenged but the relationships that structures are said to have on the actors within them. To grasp the process in which crime is organised, we need to understand how actors perceive their world as this may lead them to action. This is where a cultural analysis which locates structural dynamics within lived experience can help (Ferrell 1998; Young 2011). Organised crime is a process emerging from constant negotiations between actors of varying beliefs and cultures that are situated within the structures we identify.

### *Criminal Careers*

Developmental and life-course criminology is a wide-ranging multidisciplinary perspective that draws upon biology, psychology, and sociology. Its foundations lie in earlier theories of the criminal career that became popular in the 1980s. Developmental criminology focuses on background causal risk factors that are said to increase the likelihood of offending and the development of the criminal career. Life-course criminology similarly attends to these factors but also considers the consequences of life events and transitions (Farrington 2003). Both approaches use mainly statistical methods, although some life course-studies have combined them with qualitative narrative interviews (Sampson and Laub 1995, 2005), whether with 'offenders' and families or with control agencies such as police data and commentaries. The positivist risk factor paradigm is dominant in criminology and provides foundations for the 'what works' approach to evidence-based policy and crime control (Farrington et al. 2003). Static risk factors that occur early in life are said to be the most important element in predicting future criminality. This model has been criticised for its determinism with offenders seemingly 'locked in' to their trajectories with little consideration of human agency (Sampson and Laub 2005). The consensus within DLC is that people desist with age regardless of the differences between them (Benson 2012), although it may be that at least some have become better at avoiding arrest so do not show up in statistics (Ouellet and Bouchard 2017; Gundur 2019). Age is associated with maturation and competence in criminal activity (Hirschi and Gottfredson 1983).

The majority of DLC studies are explicitly or implicitly founded upon variations of social control theory and differential association. Differential association is a social learning theory of crime. The central point of the theory is that crime is learned through association with others, particularly through close social ties. Learning includes motives (criminality) as well as techniques for deviant activities (crime itself). Differential levels of association with criminals and non-criminals will result in different levels of criminality (Sutherland et al. 1995). The main tenets of social control theory are that people turn to crime when their bond with society is weakened. Latent deviant tendencies are restrained by internal and external forms of social control, which are enforced by control agents. Conformity is attained through informal mechanisms of socialisation from family or peers or formal mechanisms relating to institutions such as the police. When the bonds to these agents are weakened, people deviate from the norm and engage in criminal activity (Hirschi 2002).

The application of social control theory and differential association to the study of organised crime may be limited. Not everyone who engages in organised crime will originate from a disaffected background where their bonds to society are weakened or will spend time with deviant peers (Kleemans and de Poot 2008). This is partly a methodological issue: DLC concentrates on the usual suspects whilst ignoring the crimes of the powerful (Drake et al. 2014). Criminal groups do, however, use mechanisms of social control to reduce risks and enforce order in the underworld (Reuter 1984; Jacques and Wright 2011) so the theory may gain some traction here. A further issue is that these are general theories of crime, which approach the object of study with broad brush strokes. By following this line of reasoning,



DLC studies unwittingly align themselves with the nomothetic impulse of criminological positivism that attempts to establish general laws of human behaviour (Young 2011). There are, however, manifold differences between types of organised crime, and between the effects of contextually contingent factors that impact upon them (Von Lampe 2016). An idiographic approach that is orientated towards the study of localised phenomena can provide a deeper understanding of the process in which organised crimes occurs (Edwards and Hughes 2005). This thesis utilises ethnographic fieldwork grounded in the experiences and cultures of indigenous criminal actors to provide a more nuanced understanding of the careers of organised criminals that avoids gross generalisations. Extensive research strategies that employ risk factors and or general theories of crime may not be enough.

DLC studies are typically longitudinal and map the criminal career over the course of many decades. This method is well suited to the analysis of statistical datasets and also interviews with offenders (if they can be accessed for follow up interviews later in their lives). Ethnography, however, involves the researcher being present in the life-worlds of the informants on an often, daily basis, which is resource-intensive and difficult to achieve. One of the only ethnographic studies on drugs and crime that has achieved anything near the DLC standard is MacLeod's (2008) 'Ain't no makin' it', in which he followed the lives of two groups of teenage boys in a deprived housing estate in a northern city of America. MacLeod first got to know the boys by spending time with them in the community before approaching them for his study. After documenting their activities, he then returned eight years later once they had reached adulthood: The 'Hallway Hangers' were mainly white, were pessimistic about their life chances and rejected the education system. The 'Brothers' were mainly black, were optimistic about their futures and valued education as a means to achieve their goals. Upon returning, MacLeod found that neither groups fared well; the Hallway Hangers had experienced poverty, addiction and unemployment, whereas the brothers had experienced racism, discrimination and were unable to find well-paid, meaningful work (despite their aspirations). Although longitudinal research of this kind can be difficult to achieve ethnographically, life histories can be accessed through the reflective accounts of the informants. A number of ethnographic studies on drugs and crime have employed this method successfully (e.g. Bourgois 2003; Sandberg and Pedersen 2011; Goffman 2014; Briggs and Monge Gamero 2017). Perhaps the most concerted ethnographic study to trace the careers of offenders through interviews is Heal's (2015) 'Journeys into Drugs and Crime', where she employed life-history, narrative interviews with UK based Jamaican drug dealers. Overall, these studies demonstrate the harsh reality of poverty and social exclusion that often leads people to crime. Distributing drugs only compounds their issues resulting in chaotic lives marred by violence, addiction and incarceration. The concentration of these studies on minority groups experiencing economic deprivation, however, is a limitation (Salinas 2018). These studies also focus on particular types of drugs, and or aspects of the market, at the expense of others (these methodological points will be returned to in the following chapter).

### *Turning points and trajectories*

A significant contribution to studies on the life-course is provided by Sampson and Laub. They employ large quantitative data sets but combine these with life history narratives to provide a deeper analysis. They are critical of the determinism of developmental criminology which

purports that criminal careers can be predicted from early risk factors. They stress the importance of time specific contextual events and emphasise the importance of human agency (Sampson and Laub 2005). Criminal careers are not fixed; they are shifting dynamic movements that form organically into pathways of stability and change:

“background variables are surprisingly modest prognostic devices in the prospective explanation of trajectories of crime over the life course. Within-individual changes in criminality are not called forth from the distant past but are mediated by proximate and time-varying social processes grounded in *life transitions, situational interactions, routine activities, and turning points.*” (Sampson 2000, p. 712).

Transitions are changes in the life-course that are marked by events such as getting married or starting a new job. Transitions lead into trajectories which are distinguished by more long term stability in a particular field: “transitions are always embedded in trajectories and give them distinct form and meaning” (Elder Jr 1985, p. 31). Turning points, on the other hand, entail sudden transformations in life, events that can “knife off the past from the present” (Sampson and Laub 2005, p. 7). Turning points into crime can knife off legitimate opportunities, as well as connections with law-abiding peers, especially if one finds oneself incarcerated. Desistance from crime may require that non-criminal ties are gained whilst criminal ties are cut. Turning points can result not only in a change of activity but also a change of identity (Elder Jr et al. 2003). Sampson and Laub emphasise the notion of situated choice within turning points, arguing that life events are the consequence of continuous social production rather than a process of unfolding inevitability (Sampson and Laub 2005, p. 14). Turning points do, however, relate to wider social structures that are encountered during age-specific times such as starting school, work and later marriage. It is here they present an *age-graded theory* of social control that provides the foundations to their approach.

### Age graded opportunity structures

An alternative approach to researching organised crime is to dispense with motives and look specifically at opportunities that enable crime itself. The argument here is that crime cannot take place without opportunities to do so, therefore, background factors are not relevant. This theory, however, is undermined by the fact that not everyone who has an opportunity will take it. The most widely cited theory of criminal opportunities is routine activities theory (RAT). According to Clarke (1980), crime occurs when a motivated criminal finds a suitable target that is not in the presence of a capable guardian. These opportunities arise in the routine activities of the offender’s everyday life. RAT is a social control theory of crime but differs by the fact that it is situational rather than normative. In the criminal career, routine activities are age-graded, meaning that people are likely to engage in different types of activities depending on their age, for example, school, work and marriage. The consensus within DLC studies is that engagement in education or work provides less time for unstructured and unsupervised activities where crime can take place, and that commitment to legitimate activities raises the

social and economic costs of engaging in crime. Research has shown that unstructured socialising outside of school relates to greater levels of violence and cannabis use in young people (Anderson and Hughes 2009) and employment in high quality jobs reduces the likelihood of offending. Good jobs and meaningful work, however, are more important factors than the presence of work alone (Uggen 1999; Tripodi et al. 2010). Marriage is also a key factor in desistance, leaving offenders with less time for their criminal peers (Warr 1998; Sampson et al. 2006).

Commitment to legitimate fields is generally viewed as a positive factor in the life-course, however, organised crime has distinct logistical requirements meaning that engagement in legitimate fields may be a precursor to it. Legitimate work can provide the actor with skills and resources for crime (van Koppen et al. 2009), and it can hide illicit activities such as the use of cash businesses to launder funds (Gilmour 2015). Furthermore, events such as marriage may encourage the offender to move into less risky and lower profile crimes, something that official data might not capture. According to Kleemans and de Poot (2008), organised criminals do not necessarily exhibit the typical characteristics of general offenders and may start their criminal careers in adulthood with no previous history of offending. They argue that social opportunity structures provide the greatest explanations for engagement in organised crime at any stage in the career. If criminal opportunities arise later in life, this can lead to late onset in offending. As with RAT, the issue with opportunity models is that they do not explain why some people take opportunities when others who are in the same position do not. Differential association may, in fact, provide a better explanation of criminal motives in this instance. Furthermore, opportunity models leave human agency by the wayside as criminal opportunities are simply responded to as they arise. This is not the case; offenders create their own opportunities as much as they respond to them (Steffensmeier and Ulmer 2005). Perhaps then, a more fruitful approach to the study of the careers of organised criminals is to employ an *age-graded theory of opportunity structures* that draws upon differential association and social control theory but is aware of the limits of each, whilst paying due credit to human agency.

### *Markets, Networks & Organisations*

The review so far has mainly attended to the literature on criminal careers and its applicability to the study of organised crime but has given less consideration to the literature concerning organised crime itself. Questions remain as to how criminals coordinate themselves to carry out their activities whilst responding to market opportunities and threats. To account for this, the following section outlines three ideal types of social coordination which relate to their respective theoretical positions used in the study of organised crime: markets, networks and organisations. The integration of these approaches with DLC provides further conceptual grounding and sets the theoretical bases of the study.

For the purpose of this study, a network is referred to as all actors who are connected by one or more social ties that engage in a related activity. Within the network, there are people who work independently or those who work as a team (an organization). What the actors within

these structures have in common is the activity they engage in; the distribution of illicit goods and services. They engage in a market-based activity that will be governed (to some extent) by the laws of supply and demand. These perspectives, however, represent ideal types of social coordination so cannot be taken as a given. The reality of social life is much more complex than can be perfectly delineated here.

### Markets

The first approach that I will be referring to is the neoclassical model of market economics that is dominant in criminological research on organised crime. The fundamental argument is that organised crime is a market-based activity, so is best explained with theories and models from mainstream economics. A market can be defined as any structure that allows buyers and sellers to exchange goods, services, and information. The exchange of goods or services for money is called a transaction (Lefebvre 2013, p. 116). Markets usually have a name which often refers to the type of product being traded, but what is sold does not necessarily determine how markets are structured. Markets are characterised by choice, evaluation and competition (Aspers 2011). Studies using this approach address supply side characteristics such as product pricing, profits, distribution systems, production and retail, and demand side characteristics such as consumption habits, costs of purchases and price elasticity (Ritter 2006).

For products to sell, they need to be pitched at a reasonable price for both the distributor and the customer. This is what is called fair market value, a price that can be mutually agreed upon (Naylor 2003, p. 85). If drugs are priced too high and they can be sourced alternatively at a lower price, then customers may go elsewhere. Price also relates to purity, so users may be prepared to pay more for an unadulterated product (Caulkins and Padman 1993). The costs of illicit drugs are relatively high due to the risks. The structural effects of drug policy and law enforcement drive up the price, which has the side effect of making it more lucrative and appealing for distributors (Barnett 2012). At street level, however, dealers tend to make very little for their actions (Levitt and Dubner 2009). Structural forces differentially constrain illicit drug markets, meaning that the prices of some products may be more inflated than others. Government intervention prevents illicit markets from reaching a natural equilibrium and distorts them in ways that increase harm and reduces their efficiency. Chemists producing new psychoactive substances, for example, were more concerned with tweaking their drugs to bypass laws rather than reducing harm to the end user (Wainwright 2016). Although, even legitimate pharmaceutical companies may be more concerned with profit than their customers' wellbeing (Goldacre 2014). The structure of society also determines how easy it is for funds to flow between actors and legitimate spheres. Anti-money laundering policies can make it harder to use or invest accumulated market capital (Rose-Ackerman and Palifka 2016; Albanese 2018).

Drug dealers can improve their service by increasing product quality, reducing price, giving credit, making timely deliveries, and maintaining discretion (Caulkins and Padman 1993; Hales and Hobbs 2010; Moeller and Sandberg 2015). To differentiate themselves from other

suppliers, they can create brands allowing customers to identify with them and their products. By branding a product, customers can expect goods to be of a certain standard based on previous experiences or through a recommendation from others (Forsyth 1995). Legal issues mean that distributors must operate in concealment and cannot openly advertise their services unless they find loopholes in the law. A possible negative consequence of branding is that it may allow enforcement agencies to tie drugs to a particular source. Moreover, other distributors may clone the brands of their competitors in order to benefit from their reputation, so there may be more sources than anticipated (Duterte et al. 2009).

From the market perspective, people sell drugs specifically to make money. Offenders are presented as utility maximisers who organize themselves to exploit market opportunities and diversify into new areas as they see fit. As rational actors, they will only engage in crime if the returns are greater than what they would make in the legal economy relative to the additional risks incurred (Caulkins and MacCoun 2003; Dwyer and Moore 2010). Caulkins and MacCoun (2003), however, comment on the limits of rationality and question the ability of offenders to 'perceive and estimate the relevant probabilities and consequences' of their actions accurately enough to make 'choices based on expected payoffs'. They conclude that decisions to sell drugs are not based on 'careful calculations' but are often in fact 'not well thought out' (Caulkins and MacCoun 2003, p. 456). With limited information, offenders at best operate with a bounded rationality (Cornish and Clarke 2008). Moreover, the rational choice model unwittingly demonises drug dealers by aligning to media stereotypes, which describes them as calculating 'pushers' who have little care for the harmful effects of their products (Langer 1977). This may be more true of legitimate pharmaceutical companies, as is the case with the recent opioid epidemic (Haffajee and Mello 2017).

The neo classical model is criticised as a taken for granted explanation that is not well suited for accounting for distortions in the market that are the consequence of cultural values or the (il)legality of actions (Dwyer and Moore 2010). In the drug market, commodities are not always sold along commercial lines and may be traded on norms of reciprocity and gift giving. Indeed, illicit drug markets have been demonstrated to exist along a continuum between commercially and non-commercially ordered in which motives for selling drugs are either financial or non-financial (van de Ven and Mulrooney 2016). Drug dealing can be a community-based exercise in which exchange is centred on a culture of helping or providing an experience, rather than purely making a profit (Langer 1977; Sandberg 2012; van de Ven and Mulrooney 2016). This type of altruism is a common characteristic of those who engage in the social supply of drugs. Social supply is the most common type of dealing, although, some have said it should not qualify as dealing at all (Coomber and Moyle 2014). In Briggs and Gamero's (2017) ethnography in Madrid, they found that addicts would often share drugs with their peers in the expectation that the favour would be returned later down the line. This informal economy enabled users to have a steady supply of drugs when they did not have the funds to pay for them.

Cultural characteristics may be unique to the market in question (partial market culture) or span across markets (general market culture). They can determine who is allowed to contact each

other, who is allowed to make offers (Aspers 2011), how disputes are settled and if they will end in violence (Taylor 2007; Sandberg 2012). Violence is not solely related to illegal market disputes, but can also be affected by the psycho-pharmacological effects of the drugs in question (Goldstein 1985). In some markets, cultural knowledge may be essential for entry (Langer 1977; van de Ven and Mulrooney 2016). Culture both orders a market and delineates it from others (Aspers 2011).

Criminal markets are significantly different from legal markets because transactions are not protected by law, and the state itself poses a risk to them. To overcome legal risks, criminal groups incorporate transactions into pre-existing trusted relationships based on kinship, friendship, locality or ethnicity, whilst limiting the number of customers and employees (Paoli et al. 2009, p. 204). Indeed, trust is a defining feature of criminal markets. Buyers and sellers need to be confident that their contacts will honour the exchange (ensure that the correct funds are given for the correct product) and maintain discretion and secrecy where required. According to Gambetta:

“trust (or, symmetrically, distrust) is a particular level of the subjective probability with which an agent assesses that another agent or group of agents will perform a particular action... When we say we trust someone or that someone is trustworthy, we implicitly mean that the probability that he will perform an action that is beneficial or at least not detrimental to us is high enough for us to consider engaging in some form of cooperation with him” (Gambetta 1990a, p. 217).

Uncertainty in regard to other peoples’ actions is essential to the nature of trust. Agents always have partial knowledge of other agents’ motives and how they are likely to act within certain situations. Trust is a way of coping with this uncertainty (ibid). The issue with illicit drug markets is they exist in chaotic environments whereby information sharing is suppressed by the activities of law enforcement (Moeller and Sandberg 2015), this leads distributors to prefer operating with people they have established long term relationships with ‘where there is mutual trust tested over time’ (Gambetta 1993, p. 232). Spending time in prison is also an important factor which ‘establishes credibility and generates trust’ (Matrix Knowledge Group 2007, p. 25). Indeed, trust may be found in various forms.

Von Lampe and Johansen (2004b, pp. 169-171) identify four forms of trust within criminal markets that underly the basis of criminal activity. 1) ‘Individualised trust’ refers to trust placed in individuals. It is based on direct observations of an individual’s previous behaviour. If no direct access to this information exists, it may be provided by intermediaries; the trust is mediated. 2) ‘Trust based on reputations’ relates to publicly held information on certain actors, which may be acquired through the ‘grapevine system’. 3) ‘Trust based on generalisations’ refers to commonly held perspectives on particular social groups rather than individuals. Finally, 4) ‘abstract trust’ refers to the trust placed in broader institutional structures and systems, which set particular conditions within the environment.

In the drug market, products are often provided on credit: this resolves issues when drugs are in demand, but customers do not have the funds to pay for them (Moeller and Sandberg 2015). Individualised trust, whether mediated or not, presents a certain probability that loans will be repaid. Creditors can also use coercive mechanisms to bolster trust through the threat of sanctions. In the drug market this is often achieved through the threat of violence; however, other informal mechanisms can be employed. According to Jacques and Wright, non-violent

forms of social control include actions such as ‘retaliatory theft and fraud, negotiation, avoidance, and toleration’ (Jacques and Wright 2008, p. 240). Indeed, violence may negatively affect the reputations of distributors and dissuade others from working with them (Dickinson 2019). Moreover, excessive coercion in any form can foster distrust from those on the receiving end of it (Gambetta 1990a). Dealers may instead pursue leniency by allowing those in debt greater time to make repayments. Maintaining positive relations can result in greater profits in the long term (Dickinson 2019). The police can also be employed as a form of social control by informing to them on others; however, police involvement may be a risky tactic and can cut off ties with customers if they are jailed. Such methods are mainly reserved for the competition (Skolnick 2011; Goffman 2014; Bacon 2017). Overall, successful exchanges based on credit can strengthen trust (Desroches 2007), which may be over and above those where no credit is given.

In regard to distribution, there are at least three stages in the supply chain: local, national or international levels. Drugs may be sold retail or wholesale and distributed from the bottom up or top down depending on where they are manufactured. In the UK, the drug market has been defined by 1) open street-based markets, 2) semi-open club and pub-based markets, and 3) closed private markets. In the first two marketplaces, sellers will often do business without prior introductions (May and Hough 2004). Open markets are the most visible and accessible of the three and had declined until headshops began selling new psychoactive substances. However, after the Psychoactive Substance Act 2016 was introduced, this trend began to reverse (Reuter and Pardo 2017). Illicit drugs are also available from the internet, which may be both open and closed depending on the product sold. On the ‘dark-web’, sellers are protected through anonymity reducing risks, allowing them to supply a range of illicit substances. Drugs that are on the lower end of the classification system, or have medical purposes - such as anabolic steroids - are of lower risk to the distributor and are readily available on the internet without having to resort to crypto-markets (Paoli and Donati 2014; van de Ven 2016). Drugs which cause more harm to the community, and are less socially acceptable, are likely to pose a greater risk to the supplier, as the community are a key source of information for the police (Fielding 1995; Gill 2000), second to insider informants (Bacon 2017). There is, therefore, a relationship between the level of risk associated with the classification of the drug, the harm it causes and the visibility of the distributor. I define this relationship as an *ecology of risk*. A similar argument has been put forward by Smith, who suggests that illicit enterprises operate across a spectrum of legitimacy. Those closest to the side of legality are said to encounter fewer legal risks and operational constraints (Smith 1980; Smith 1994). How criminals perceive risks, however, may not be so clear cut.

Indeed, the variability of drug markets between open and closed relates to the level of risk involved (perceived or otherwise) and the ability of distributors to put mechanisms in place that reduce it. To gain intelligence on suppliers, the police attempt to infiltrate drug markets through the use of informants, surveillance tactics and undercover officers who act as drug users and make test purchases (Dunnighan and Norris 1996; Loftus and Goold 2012; Walker and Hyland 2014; Bacon 2017). Closed markets present the greatest challenge to the police as they are not easily accessible from the outside. According to Bacon, ‘it is very difficult if not impossible for police to infiltrate closed markets where access is limited to known and trusted

participants or social network markets that are primarily based around friendship and existing acquaintances' (Bacon 2017, p. 206). Furthermore, as drug use 'is a victimless crime; the drug purchaser is unlikely to complain about his supplier' (Bean and Billingsley 2001, p. 25). This is in line with the work of Bittner (1970) who describes this as a challenge in policing more generally:

“no conceivable human interest could be opposed to fighting illness; in fact, it is meaningless to suppose that one could have scruples in opposing disease. But the evils the police are expected to fight are of a radically different nature. Contrary to the physician, the policeman is always opposed to some articulated or articulatable human interest” (Bittner 1970, p. 8).

Due to the mutual interests between buyers and sellers of illicit drugs, a more proactive 'intelligence-led' approach is required to gain information on them (now commissioned within the UK National Intelligence Model). This is in contrast to more typical reactive policing whereby crimes are reported and responded to (Ratcliffe 2008). In reality, however, the policing of drug markets is a mixture of the two (Maguire 2008; Bacon 2017).

To conclude, drug dealing is a market-based activity that is both commercially and culturally ordered. In the most part, dealing is about making a profit, but on the other hand, some exchanges are better explained through culture. The risk of distributing drugs affects their price and availability, whilst trust is important for ongoing interpersonal transactions. Distributors operate within the confines of illegality unless they can find loopholes in the law. Lastly, the UK has seen a dramatic shift between open, semi-open and closed drug markets. These changes, however, can be explained mostly by advances in technology (Natarajan et al. 1995; May and Hough 2004). Technology has altered the manner in which transactions take place and has brought new drugs into the market. The following section discusses both the role and impact of new technologies on the drug market and considers how they might be used in the future.

### *Market Technology*

Whilst there is a range of technologies that are of relevance here, the discussion will concentrate on three types that are of particular significance – manufacture technology, distribution technology and information communication technology (ICT). The central argument is that technology reduces risks and increases the availability of drugs, which has the effect of increasing purity levels and reducing costs. It must be noted that the technologies described in this section have been designed to meet certain ends and be used in specific ways. Technology, however, is not rigorously bound by the prescriptions of its designers and may often serve the user in unanticipated ways that can be innovatively applied to local problems (De Laet and Mol 2000). To fully understand how technology mediates the modus operandi of the criminal actor requires a local level analysis of technology in action.



### Manufacture

The benefit of manufacturing drugs is that it reduces costs and enables producers to acquire large amounts of substances without having to rely on other distributors in the supply chain (although precursors may need to be acquired). The price of drugs at the manufacturing stage is the lowest, as actors avoid the mark-ups that occur as they are passed down the supply chain. Drugs at the manufacturing stage also have the highest levels of purity (Arkes et al. 2008). Technological advances have increased the potency of drugs bringing a more potent yield at a lower price. The potency of cannabis has risen markedly since the 1990s due to genetic modification of the plants and advances in hydroponics (Mehmedic et al. 2010; Chandra et al. 2019). As technology reduces in price and becomes easier to access, producing drugs becomes a more viable option. In the UK, cannabis was traditionally imported from Morocco in its weaker resin form, but now the majority of cannabis is grown locally and is of the significantly stronger ‘skunk’ variety that has a higher ratio of THC (Potter 2008; Kirby and Peal 2015; Giommoni and Gundur 2018). Drugs such as cocaine and heroin are imported into the UK, as their main precursors (poppy and coca) do not have the right conditions to be grown locally at scale. Scientists, however, have found ways to synthesise real opium and cocaine from yeast, although in very small quantities (Galanie et al. 2015). When this technique is refined, it may mean that these drugs will also be produced locally, reducing the need for international supply.

Advances in chemistry have resulted in a plethora of synthetic variants emerging on the market to bypass drug laws, although this has not had a significant effect on the demand for traditional drugs such as cannabis, cocaine, heroin and MDMA (as demonstrated by usage statistics) (Lader 2015; HM Government 2018b). It is likely that as technology develops, the skills needed to produce drugs will decrease. 3D printers have been developed that can produce pharmaceutical drugs automatically (Sanderson 2012). If these technologies become available cheaply en masse, it is possible that they will be taken up by local actors, leading to increased domestic production for a variety of drugs; this has been described elsewhere as the ‘democratisation of technology’ (Manyika et al. 2013). A side effect of manufacturing drugs is that it increases risks. Producers face tougher penalties if they are caught by the police and may make them more attractive targets for other predators in the field. Manufacturers are also less mobile, as they are tied to the production site and may have difficulty relocating it elsewhere. This may mean they are less responsive to threats. Manufacturers can avoid this issue by setting up ‘factories’ in other peoples’ addresses and have other people run them.

### Distribution

Distribution technologies, on the other hand, are used specifically to deliver products. Advances in this form of technology have enabled suppliers to reach a broader geographical range of destinations. There are three interrelated factors in their ability to fulfil their roles. Firstly, how much they can carry; secondly how fast they can travel; and thirdly how well they can conceal themselves and their payload (Von Lampe 2011). International imports may be

shipped through air, land or water. Inland, drugs are typically moved by automobiles or when in small amounts on foot. A more recent phenomenon is the use of drones to smuggle drugs across borders and into prison (Sanchez 2015). Drones benefit from being unmanned so are less risky, but can only carry a limited payload. Unmanned vehicles can replace drug couriers, which reduces risks by stymying the flow of information. Driverless cars could be particularly beneficial to criminal actors in this regard: however, there will always be a person who will have to pick up the drugs at some point in the supply chain where they can be targeted by the police. The handing over of drugs is often the most risky aspect of the operation, especially if done in a public space (Jacobs 1996). If supply chains can become fully automated, this may pose a significant problem for the police if they cannot trace who is operating these machines. The end result of this could be greater purity levels at destination zones and lower prices, depending on technological expenses.

### Communication (ICT)

The primary benefit of ICT for criminal activity is that it allows actors to communicate with each other without being physically present. This has changed the drug market in a number of ways. In the UK, open markets were common at the street level as they enabled suppliers to work from a fixed location where customers knew where to find them. The issue with this is that it created additional risks: their high visibility made them easy targets for the police and led to higher levels of violence, due to territorial disputes. The advent of the mobile phone changed this, as customers could contact suppliers directly without having to be physically present, allowing them to be more mobile (May and Hough 2004). This resulted in a shift to a less violent closed retail market where distributors only worked with people who had their contact details and had been vouched for. This enabled police to directly monitor calls and messages once they had established that a dealer was active. ICT creates records of conversations in a way that face to face communication does not. One method that dealers use to resolve this was by talking in code; another involves changing numbers on a regular basis and not registering phones in their names (Natarajan et al. 1995; Salinas 2013). The newer smartphones allow stakeholders to communicate via encrypted messaging services and can be encrypted themselves, making access to these conversations much more difficult; the phones do, however, collect more data. Even if the police cannot access these messages, they can still locate peoples' whereabouts using cell site data or GPS tracking on the mobile device, which may be enough (Mellars 2004).

The internet has significantly changed the drug market, by not only enabling anonymous communication but also providing virtual platforms where markets can grow. At present drugs can be purchased on either the clear net or the dark net; the latter of which requires specific software to access. The dark net is the safer of the two as it anonymises stakeholder activity by bouncing internet traffic through various relays around the world. Within these crypto-markets, users can purchase goods anonymously, using digital currencies. Drugs sold on the internet are usually distributed via post creating risks for the customer if they receive them in their name. Whilst monetary transactions occur online, the drugs as well as the people are grounded locally

(Hillebrand et al. 2010; Aldridge and Askew 2017). Buyers can rate the service provided by the distributors, much like in legitimate online marketplaces, increasing quality standards, and providing a safer environment than found on the street (Buxton and Bingham 2015). Online markets reduce local systemic violence in the drug trade due to the anonymity they provide. Without the threat of violence, illicit markets become more like legal ones, as distributors employ softer strategies (Aldridge and Décary-Héту 2014). The security of the Dark Net is not as impervious as initially assumed, however: there are cases of vendors being blackmailed after hackers have gained access to their personal information from their accounts (Zajác 2017). The police also managed to gain control of an entire crypto-market before they shut it down, resulting in seizures of millions of dollars in assets (Afilipoaie and Shortis 2018) Social media platforms also provide an effective means to purchase and supply illicit drugs. The police rarely have the capacity to access these communications, making them more appealing to local dealers (Fraser et al. 2018).

Current criminological research of the distribution of drugs online is growing but in its early stages. The focus of these studies has been on the illicit marketplaces themselves but tends to ignore the offline life-worlds of the actors who engage in them. This is partly the result of their methods: access to these distributors has been gained online, where researchers have visited websites sites and approached suppliers via email or other messaging services. There are few studies which have accessed online vendors of drugs offline face to face. Furthermore, previous studies do not discuss the process of transfer that unfolds when illicit enterprises move their businesses online. Some online vendors might not have a background in offline distribution, but for those who do, their criminal pasts may have implications for how they conduct themselves. This study aims to bridge this gap by using data gained from face to face interviews and real-world observations with distributors and manufacturers of drugs who operate both online and offline. It will outline how these actors adapt to these virtual environments and manage the risks they face in their course.

### Networks

The second type of social coordination that I will be addressing in this framework are social networks. The network model is a relatively recent approach to the study of organised crime. It examines social relations in criminal networks in terms of webs of direct and indirect ties (Von Lampe 2016). The central argument is that offenders' behaviour cannot be accounted for without considering their relationship to the network and their place within it. Scholars have used this approach to provide both static and dynamic representations of criminal groups and their activities, making it well suited for an analysis of the criminal career. One of the key issues of analysing social networks is that they have no clear boundaries, so can be difficult to measure (Felson 2003, p. 155). It is ultimately up to the researchers to define network boundaries to suit their agenda. For the purpose of this thesis, networks are defined as *all actors who are connected by one or more social ties that engage in a related activity*. The activity, therefore, sets the boundaries of the network. This means that everyone in the supply chain is part of a network even though they may not know each other or interact directly. They can,

however, still have effects on these distant others through their activities (adulterating drugs, for example).

A social network consists of various types of social ties; a dyadic tie is the most common unit of analyses and represents the relationship between two people. A triadic tie represents the relationship between three people and so on. Certain actors may be more central to the network, and this determines the degree to which it is structured around them (Aspers 2011). Network density (the number of ties between actors) has been associated with increased delinquency. Those who with many ties to criminal peers are more likely to become criminal themselves (Haynie et al. 2006), thus lending support to Sutherland's theory of differential association (Sutherland et al. 1995). The types of social connections an actor has largely determine the opportunities that are available to them. Strong social ties such as between family members or close friends are associated with greater knowledge sharing (Hansen 1999); however, having many weak ties is argued to provide greater access to opportunities (Granovetter 1983). Information about opportunities does not circulate freely through networks, so having a greater number of ties can increase the likelihood of gaining access to it. Burt contends that successful market competition is a matter of relationships rather than personal attributes because relationships generate entrepreneurial opportunities (Burt 1993). This is supported by research in the UK showing few barriers to entry at all levels of the illicit drug market. Contacts rather than skills or proficiency determine entry (Matrix Knowledge Group 2007). Where an actor is positioned in the network can also determine the amount of benefits they can extract from others. An individual who bridges structural holes (gaps between networks) has significant leverage as they can dictate access to resources and information between groups. Brokerage has been associated with increased earnings for offenders (Morselli and Tremblay 2004; Morselli 2009).

In terms of the career, people accumulate contacts as they become embedded in crime; a side effect is that they become detached from actors within legitimate fields. This can reduce access to legitimate opportunities, making it more difficult to desist (Sampson and Laub 1997; Morselli and Tremblay 2004). Progression in the career, however, leads to greater autonomy as offenders become less dependent on others and position themselves in ways that make others more dependent on them (Kleemans and Van De Bunt 1999; Kleemans and de Poot 2008; Gundur 2019). Greater human agency not only increases the capacity to make choices but also enables people to capitalise on the limited agency of others. Criminal actors typically develop personal preferences and social networks that align with the identity of their 'working-selves'. The prospect of what that relationship may bring, in terms of long-term costs and benefits, can be enough for the actor to instigate a significant shift in the sense of self in an attempt to modify their career. Desistance is the result of criminals wilfully changing their identity by working towards a positive future self and re-orientating themselves in the networks around them (Paternoster and Bushway 2009).

According to Morselli et al. (2007), criminal networks are structured in ways that attempt to maximise efficiency whilst minimising risks; however, there is a trade-off between the two. Increased security may reduce efficiency and vice versa. Trust and secrecy are central to

security and become manifest when criminal networks are mobilised into action. Because offenders rely on ties with trusted others, this can reduce their ability to operate quickly or capitalise on new opportunities. The time to task within criminal networks is increased because of policing pressures, which increases mistrust between actors (Ibid). Nonetheless, distrust can be a selling point for criminal actors if their presence in the market can resolve it (Gambetta 1990b). One means by which distributors can increase security is through the usage of ‘information networks’. Dealers can attempt to find out new developments within the drug market by seeking out information from their known associates:

“information networks are used to seek out new suppliers, better-quality product at better prices, and help dealers locate reliable distributors to expand operations. Networks can help to gain introductions and verify the identity, reputation, and trustworthiness of all actors” (Desroches 2005, p. 130).

In the UK, criminal networks have been found to be highly flexible and adaptable. They are more responsive to changes in their environment given that their boundaries are more malleable and less defined than a hierarchical organization (Vy Le 2012). If law enforcement concentrates its efforts on taking down so called ‘kingpins’, it will usually have limited effects on the market, as network fluidity means it can reconfigure itself quickly as actors displace into new areas. Displacement has a number of forms: Offenders can change the time at which they commit crime (temporal). They can switch from targets in one location to targets in another (spatial). They can change from one type of target to another (target). They can alter the methods used to carry out crime (tactical). They can switch from one form of crime to another (offence) (Guerette 2009, p. 3). Lastly, they can diversify across targets so that if one is removed, others are still available (diversification) (Rubin et al. 2013). Their ability to displace effectively, however, may be determined by the social contacts to which they have access.

A fundamental critique of the network approach is its preoccupation with network structure. This has the effect of discounting the personal attributes and agentic capabilities of the actors within it. The social network approach thus: “fails to show exactly how it is that intentional, creative human action serves in part to constitute those very social networks that so powerfully constrain actors in turn (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994, p. 1413). Agents and structures are not separate entities but are mutually constitutive elements. Action shapes structure as much as structure shapes actions (Giddens 1984). Furthermore, the network approach is aligned to rational choice theory where network formation is seen as the result of a strategic optimization process (Easton and Karaivanov 2009). Ties, however, are not formed purely around achieving strategic outcomes and maybe more to do with cultural affinities or the types of places people visit in the routine activities of their lives. Lastly, the social network approach suffers from social determinism in which all action is the consequence of social relations. The ecological effects of the physical environment are generally ignored. Settings, however, facilitate crime by providing suitable places in which these networks can form:

“We arrive at a view of the underworld that does not deny or minimize the role of social networks and groupings, yet depends on recurrent settings where criminal

cooperation can grow... Even if specific participants change, the criminogenic setting can persist” (Felson 2006, p. 10).

In the life-course, convergence settings are age-graded; young people may frequent informal meeting places such as parks or other hangouts, whereas adults might socialise in pubs or clubs. Each setting provides different criminal opportunities meaning that patterns in the life-course are likely to relate to patterns in the settings people visit.

### Organisations

The third and final type of social coordination that I will be addressing in this framework are criminal organisations. The origins of this approach can be traced back to Cressey’s (Cressey 1969) functionalist model of organised crime, but its features are common in the illicit enterprise model forwarded by Smith (1975), and Reuter (1983). For the purpose of this thesis, I define an organisation as *three or more actors who work together towards a shared goal*. Organisations are differentiated from networks to avoid the conceptual confusion that occurs when criminologists use the terms interchangeably. Organisations evolve out of networks but are distinct analytic categories characterising different dimensions of relational structures. They are, however, not empirically discrete (Von Lampe 2009, 2016). Organisations provide different levels of resources for crime than working alone.

A key feature that differentiates organisations from networks is their organisational culture. They have a system of norms and codes of practice that members must adhere to regardless of their individual interests (Von Lampe 2016). Organisations have a division of labour, a degree of specialisation and stratification of roles. They may vary in how these roles are coordinated as well as how rules and codes of conduct are devised and enforced. Moreover, they may vary in the purposiveness in which they pursue and achieve their goals (Best and Luckenbill 1980). According to Smith (1980), there are two primary factors which determine an organisation’s structure: 1) the type of service it provides and 2) the task environment (setting) it operates in. A dealer of illicit goods has specific task related requirements that are somewhat different to a loan shark and hence will be organised so. It is worth remembering, however, that some criminal activities may encompass a range of activities within them. Drug dealers can act as loan sharks by giving drugs on credit, they may rob other drug dealers and sell their drugs on, they may fence stolen goods taken in exchange for drugs, they may corrupt official actors, and if they accumulate enough capital, they may launder their funds. What we can take from this is that the structure of an organization may have to change to carry out these sub tasks; this may mean altering the modus operandi and bringing new actors into the fold.

Organisations have a life-cycle much like the actors within them. They go through stages with turning points and trajectories of their own. Organisational and individual life-cycles are likely to have interrelated effects. For example, as actors are recruited into criminal originations, their career is accelerated as skills and knowledge are transmitted down to them (Kleemans and de Poot 2008). The loss of a key enabler, however, may signal the death of an organisation (Tafoya

2014). This relationship has been largely missed by DLC due to the actor-centric methodological individualism that underpins their approach. A combination of theory from individual and organisational life-cycles may provide additional insights into the trajectories of both.

According to Lester et al (2003), there are five stages in the life-cycle of an organisation. 1) *Existence*: this is where an organisation comes into being. Here its members focus on the viability of the organisation to meet its goals. 2) *Survival*: organisations pursue growth in this stage whilst developing some formalisation of structure and consolidating strategies of action. 3) *Success*: organisations have now matured to the extent that formalisation and bureaucratic control become normalised. Roles, policies and procedures are fully established. 4) *Renewal*: to foster creativity, the organisation seeks to return to an earlier stage where its structure was less formalised. Decision making returns to a more decentralised state as the organisation takes on a matrix like structure. 5) *Decline*: this is the end of the organisation and can be entered at any stage. Organisational breakdown in this stage is the consequence of politics and power. People become more interested in pursuing their own goals rather than the goals of the organisation (an organisation is still an entity as long as its members are collectively pursuing the same goal). Criminal organisations tend to stay decentralised and meet the decline stage rather quickly to avoid the risk associated with formalism. Career criminals temporarily organise themselves on an ad hoc basis to complete specific criminal activities before dispersing and reforming into new groups elsewhere (Levi 2012). Whether these actors are able to diversify and reform into new markets or crime types is questionable.

The structural effects of the task environment constrain organisations in a number of ways. Firstly it limits the size in which they can grow; criminal organisations often keep a small membership base to avoid detection even though they may benefit in the short run from a larger size (Morselli et al. 2007). Greater size is associated with increased revenue but also increased complexity of operations (Von Lampe 2015). Criminal groups must look out for signs and signals to ensure that new recruits are trustworthy (Gambetta 2009; Densley 2012). Learning how to read these signs and strategically presenting oneself (Goffman 1956) is a skill in itself that may need to be nurtured. Social structure differentially constrains criminal organisations meaning that some will be able to grow larger than others. Large criminal organisations have difficulty forming in strong states where mechanisms for enforcing laws are greater (Patrick 2006). It is perfectly logical for them to take on a looser structure to avoid interdiction (Reuter 1983). Organisations with a larger membership are more integrated into the legitimate economy as they become reliant on outsiders for logistical support (Von Lampe 2015). If legitimate actors are aware that they are facilitating illegal means, then they may need to be paid off. Recruiting staff may be difficult as organisations cannot openly advertise, and people may not wish to take on the risks of their roles. Risk is not evenly distributed between members of the group: those within higher positions may assign the riskiest tasks to peripheral members who are easy to replace. These actors are given limited information about the operational core to reduce their utility to the police (Dorn et al. 1998). In this respect, increasing membership can reduce risks, depending on the roles and information these actors receive.

Threats to criminal organisations come from both the inside and the outside. Internal threats occur when actors jockey for power or and cannot work together to achieve their goals (Lester et al. 2003). Disputes can occur over operational strategies as members cannot agree on how things should be done or how the benefits of their actions should be distributed (Slade 2013; Tafoya 2014). External threats come primarily from law enforcement and market predators. The police aim to disrupt and dismantle criminal organisations by arresting their members, placing sanctions and confiscating proceeds. Market predators also compete for resources and may attack the organisation with violence or robbery. To protect against such threats, organisations can maintain a low profile, employ deterrence mechanisms and use surveillance tactics to monitor others. Violence is the primary form of deterrence but generally cannot often be employed against the police. Criminal groups in the UK do not have the critical mass necessary to deter police through violence so rely on corruption where possible (Woods 2016).

Organisations are said to form because the costs outweigh the benefits of doing so; however, this may not be the case. Like the market and network approaches, this model is rooted in rational choice theory and can be criticised along the same lines. Furthermore, conceiving organised crime in terms of a group aligns with the more stereotypical views that criminal groups are highly structured and hierarchical. It promotes the idea that criminal organisations are sophisticated entities employing well thought out strategies run by charismatic mafia bosses who are the architects of the criminal underworld. It is questionable how far ahead into the future organisations look to plan their actions, and even if they do, how realistic they are. The same can be said of the leaders of these organisations and the power they hold over others. In the UK, criminal organisations tend to be more informal and loosely structured (Spapens 2010; Hobbs 2013).

### Conclusion

The review has set out some of the major contributions to the study of criminal careers and organised crime to provide the conceptual bases for the thesis. The first section of this chapter began by outlining the main characteristics of developmental and life-course criminology, whilst considering their suitability for an analysis of the careers of organised criminals. It argued that the theoretical roots of DLC lie in differential association and social control theory which, although useful, do not account for non-typical developments in the life-course that may be better explained by opportunity structures across age grades. The second half of the chapter was orientated towards the activity itself. It outlined three ideal types of social coordination relating to their respective theoretical positions in organised crime: markets, networks and organisations. The market is the platform for the activity whilst the criminal networks and their organisations are the means for delivering it. Overall, this chapter can be roughly split into perspectives on *the life of crime* and perspectives on *the doing of crime*, and this sets the bases for the structure of the thesis.



### 3) *Methodology:* *Ethnographic Research in Criminal Settings*

#### *The Researcher's Journey*

My interests in studying crime and deviancy stem from my life experiences and immersion in deviant groups from adolescence to adulthood. I was raised in a disaffected, single-parent family home and lived in relative poverty throughout youth. By the age of 14, I had lived at 12 addresses, attended numerous schools and had dropped out of education entirely. My longest stay in secondary school was at Summer Park School, where I befriended the lads who make up a core of the sample in this study. I began studying at college at 15 but did not get into university until 21, as I struggled to make up for my lack of education. My difficulties in college were compounded by my friendship with the lads who had developed an anti-school, anti-work, culture in response to the structural inequalities and limited opportunities that were available to them (Willis 1977). They looked towards drugs and music production as a way out of poverty and a means by which they could gain social status and respect (Bourgois 2003; Urbanik and Haggerty 2018). My undergraduate degree was away from home: a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology at the University of the West of England. I felt an instant affinity with the subject as it enabled me to understand the broader structural and social processes that underscored the many difficulties that my family and friends experienced in life. In 2008 I was required to write a dissertation as part of the degree, and it was here that I had my first experience conducting ethnographic research with the lads. The lads were in their early 20s and had broadened their social networks, bringing more friends into the group: some of whom were from middle-class backgrounds. A number of members were DJs, rappers and music producers who performed to Drum and Bass, UK Garage and UK Hip Hop. As hip hop was originally an American artform, I became interested in how it had been appropriated and 'glocalised' by local artists along social class lines (Bauman 1998). I found striking differences in the choice of lyrics, with artists from poorer backgrounds expressing more violence in their vocabulary whilst also buying into the principles of conspicuous consumption: gold, cars and designer clothing. Violence is an integral part of street culture (Sandberg 2008). Embodying these values produces social status whilst minimising future victimisation on the street (Urbanik and Haggerty 2018). Many of the artists sold drugs to make money as a well-paid career in the music industry was not realistically attainable, although they did not recognise this. Talent and hard work will not guarantee success in a capitalist society, especially if you are poor.

After graduating, I began looking for work and became close friends with a bouncer called Ollie, who was my training partner at a local gym. I had taken up bodybuilding alongside some of the lads in the group, and was of significant stature due to my height and build. Ollie believed I would be well suited as a bouncer, so I enrolled in the Security Industry Authority (SIA) training program and applied for my licence. Whilst working as a bouncer, I became fully engrossed within the local music scene and extended my social networks. I started producing dance music at a professional level and was signed by a record label, but made little from sales. After four years with limited career opportunities, I decided to return to study and enrolled in

a part-time MSc in Criminology at Cardiff University. As before, I was required to write a dissertation as part of the degree. At this time, the lads had been selling drugs for a number of years and were well established in the drug market. I became interested in the reasons why they got into dealing, what affected their level of embeddedness in the trade, and how this changed throughout the life-course. To answer these questions, I interviewed 7 of the lads but decided against conducting fieldwork due to the limited scope of the study. After completing the MSc, I took the research to PhD level and was awarded a prestigious scholarship from the Dawes Trust. The PhD effectively builds upon my master's thesis, adding the ethnographic component and drawing upon a broader range of criminal actors: the majority of whom I met whilst working as a bouncer. I have also interviewed a number of actors from the criminal justice system (police), the third sector (drug and alcohol services) and the private sector (bouncers). I have now been working as a bouncer for over ten years.

It is difficult to estimate the exact number of hours I have spent working as a bouncer, as my time on the job has fluctuated. The club scene also has peak times throughout the year, where work becomes more frequent. At a minimum, I have worked 2 shifts per week at around 14 hours total (weekends). I have also worked up to 7 days per week at around 40 hours total (shifts are shorter during weekdays). Over a 10-year period, this amounts to something between 7,280-20,800 hours of work as a bouncer. I have also worked in around 30 different venues and was head of security in a number of them. During this time, I have built up a substantial knowledge of the drug market, added to my daily experiences of being around users and dealers from childhood onwards. My life immersion in the field has helped me to develop contacts with a broad network of offenders whose accounts form the basis of this thesis.

### Red City

The research takes place in Red City, a multicultural post-industrial city with one of the largest populations in Britain. It is a popular destination for tourists throughout Europe and home to many citizens of varying descent. Red City's modern economy is centred upon media, electronics and other creative industries but it has not always been this way. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was associated with traditional manufacturing industries before they went into decline. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, traditional industries were replaced alongside increasing commerce, import and exchange. As commerce increased, so too did its population leading to the creation of the suburbs that remain populated by the wealthy to this day. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Red City was heavily bombarded during the second world war. It was rebuilt in the 60s, drawing upon a large immigrant labour force of mainly Afro-Caribbeans. The immigrants were housed in an inner-city area named here as Drayton. The residents of Drayton had previously been wealthy but fled to the outskirts of the city as the area was bombed heavily. It was neglected by the council during the city's rebuild, leading the area into a rapid decline. What was once a prosperous place had become an impoverished ghetto; a place with some of the highest crime rates in the country. Drayton has been home to some of the most notorious gangs in Britain; these gangs once waged war on the streets in deadly battles as they strived to control the local drug markets. At present Drayton is in the process of gentrification, but crime rates in and around the area remain high, and it has a significant drug problem. The gentrification process has led to a number of small cafes, restaurants and bars that cater to the new middle class 'hipsters'

(Schiermer 2014) and student population. The white middle classes working in the city's service sector capitalised on the cheap housing ideally located close to their workplaces, a common trend throughout the UK (Hamnett 2003; Watt 2008). The council estates on the outer edges of the city that sprang up after the second world war, however, remain disaffected.

The night economy in Red City is particularly booming, with pubs and clubs throughout the city centre that are regarded as some of the best in Europe. The clubs host big-name international DJs, bringing in clubbers from afar who can be seen pouring out of the central train station on a Friday and Saturday night. With several universities, it also has a huge student population who make up a large proportion of the punters in the club scene. The city also holds a number of festivals throughout the summer which sell out fast despite their pricing. Even after the last venues shut their doors, there will always be a house party somewhere in the city for those willing to keep the party going. On busy periods the taps of the bars flow freely whilst drug dealers busy themselves selling various 'party drugs' to meet the demand. The bouncers in the city pride themselves on their physical prowess and may take the odd course of steroids, which they believe helps them perform in their role (Goldstein 1990; Tutenges et al. 2015). Red City's recreational drug scene, however, is counterpoised by much darker markets of powerful addictive substances such as crack cocaine, heroin and more recently, the highly toxic synthetic cannabis 'spice' (Rose et al. 2015). The benefits of the city's burgeoning economy have not been received equally across the social strata, with the government's austerity measures leaving many in poverty. Indeed, the number of homeless in Red City has increased significantly in recent years, and with illicit drugs in such high demand, it is inevitable that people will step in to provide them. If you want it and know where to look, the drugs can be found.

### Research Design

#### Aims

There is a variety of aspects of this research, whose dynamics will be better expressed through a discussion of the unfolding properties of the illicit drug trade in Red City. However, among the questions examined are the following:

1. What influences the decision to establish oneself as a dealer, progress in terms of roles and amounts sold, and/or desist from it?
2. How are relationships between suppliers and customers created and maintained within the drug market?
3. How do drug dealers manage the risks of detection and reprimand from the state and other criminal actors in the drug market?
4. What role does emergent technology have in facilitating drug sales?

To answer these questions, the following methods and analytical procedures were employed:

- Ethnographic fieldwork of drug dealing in various locations throughout the city.
- Narrative interviews with drug dealers and other criminal stakeholders.
- Semi-structured interviews with official actors.

- Thematic analysis of two illicit vending websites belonging to two participants in the study.
- Descriptive analysis of nitrous oxide sales data.

### Participants

The original core of participants is a group of friends described here as ‘the lads’ whom I have known since childhood. The majority of the lads attended Summer Park school; others joined the group later on. Additional dealers, I met whilst working in nightclubs or were introduced to me through gatekeepers. Official actors were also solicited through the social contacts I have gathered in the field. Some of the dealers had worked in nightclubs as bouncers and provided information about their role. All of the bouncers in this study were criminally involved in the drug trade to some extent. Due to the limited space of the thesis, not all of the actors are featured in the study, but their accounts went towards conceptualising the many processes and structures of the drug trade. The dealers distributed and manufactured a range of substances during their lives; the typologies presented are loose approximations of their role in the drug market. The total number of participants was 37 (informants marked with an ‘\*’ did not wish to be digitally tape-recorded but agreed to hand-written transcription instead).

### The lads

- Bubbles – retail cannabis dealer.
- Sam Stone – retail cannabis dealer, anabolic steroid manufacturer (personal use).
- Andy Stone – retail cannabis dealer (Sam’s brother and partner in the trade).
- Derrick Wright – wholesale cocaine dealer.
- Simon Wright - retail cocaine dealer (Darren’s brother and his drug runner).
- Patrick – cannabis cultivator, wholesale supplier.
- Ryan – poly dealer, retail level.
- Darren – nitrous oxide dealer retail level.
- Ben – retail cocaine dealer.

### Additional dealers/manufacturers

- John – M-Cat dealer retail level.
- Buster – drugs courier/trafficker (ex-bouncer).
- Claire – MDMA dealer retail level.
- Sarah – hallucinogen dealer, wholesale level.
- Lucy – cannabis and cocaine dealer, retail level.
- Mat – wholesale MDMA and spice dealer (ex-bouncer).
- \*Charley – anabolic steroid manufacture, international supplier.
- Rocco – heroin dealer, wholesale level.

- Blake – poly dealer, retail level.
- Calvin – retail MDMA dealer.
- Wolf – wholesale cocaine dealer.
- \*Teeth – retail heroin and crack cocaine dealer.
- \*Hector – retail heroin and crack dealer (Teeth’s drug runner).
- \*Brian – retail heroin and crack dealer (Teeth’s drug runner).
- \*Maximus – retail nitrous oxide business owner.

Enforcers – the Iranian ‘Mafia’.

- Ade Bizhan – protection services (bouncer).
- Kamin Bizhan – protection services (brother of Ade, bouncer).

Official actors

Third sector – (drug and alcohol services)

- Laura
- Sharon
- Jacob
- Johanna

Criminal Justice

- Peter - senior police officer.
- Tom – financial investigator.
- May – police officer.
- Neil – prison officer.

Private sector (bouncers)

- Adam
- Lenny
- Liam

The data were collected through a number of phases over a five-year period. The first phase involved interviewing offenders and took place during my master’s degree. In the second phase, additional criminal actors were enrolled, ethnographic fieldwork with offenders was

also initiated at this stage (first year of the PhD program). The third phase took place over six months during the second year of the PhD, which involved interviewing official actors. Ethnographic fieldwork with offenders was interrupted at this time. The fourth stage involved resuming fieldwork with offenders and conducting follow up interviews. This took place during the final two and a half years of the program. Fieldwork with offenders was interrupted whilst gathering data from the police, as it was deemed too great a risk to collect data from criminal sources concurrently.

Participation in the study was completely voluntary, and no material incentives were offered, in order to minimise the risk of subject coercion. Fully informed consent was gained from all participants who were interviewed. Observational fieldwork was semi-covert as only the distributors of drugs were aware of the research agenda. The dealer's customers and other individuals they associated with were not informed of the project and could not give their consent. Revealing my role as a researcher to the buyers of drugs would have put both myself and my participants at risk, whilst disrupting the opportunity to gain data in the field. I did not provide informed consent forms to the criminal actors as this would increase the risks of their identity being discovered: consent was sought and obtained verbally. Informed consent forms were provided to all official actors except those who engaged in crime themselves (bouncers).

Interviews were conducted at a secluded space of the participants' choosing. Public spaces were avoided due to the sensitivity of the information but were used when no alternatives were available. The interviews were recorded with a designated digital device or written by hand, depending on the participants' preference. Only five of the offenders in this study did not wish to be digitally recorded. All interviews were transferred to a securely encrypted hard drive, including handwritten notes which were digitised. Fieldwork was conducted in various places throughout the city, such as in the participants' homes, in their cars, out on the street or in pubs, bars and nightclubs. Field notes were written up at the end of the day to avoid suspicion whilst out in the field. At times I used my mobile phone to write down key words to facilitate recall. Where possible, this would be done in a secluded space such as in a toilet cubicle. I also drew upon experiences I had witnessed throughout my life, drawing upon my time spent with those participants whom I knew since childhood (the lads). Due to the fallibility of memory, I discussed these events with the lads to ensure my recall and interpretation of them was accurate. All data that was not encrypted was destroyed. Anonymity was sought at all times, pseudonyms for participants and places were used throughout the research process.

### *The Ethnographic Approach*

Ethnography is an approach which involves the researcher immersing themselves in the life-worlds of the people they wish to study (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). The etymology of the word originates from Greek, with *ethnos* meaning 'the people' whereas *grapho* means 'to write'. Ethnography is both 'something to know and a way of knowing'; it is a 'method, theory and style of writing' (McGranahan 2018, p. 4). Typically, ethnography involves observational methods that capture the behaviour of actors in a more natural setting. These are often

combined with interviews to allow the researcher to probe deeper into the area of study. Ethnographic research on offenders is invaluable as it allows the researcher to comprehend the social worlds of criminals in ways that other methods cannot (Sandberg and Copes 2012). The intersubjectivity that is achieved through immersion in the same social space, can allow the researcher to interpret the meaning of accounts and actions that could be misunderstood by outsiders (Blichfeldt and Heldbjerg 2011). The method requires time, however, which most research programs cannot afford (Copes et al. 2011). Moreover, the canon of natural science based positivism continues to dominate criminology (Young 2011), especially in the United States, with the majority of published articles employing quantitative methods (Jacques 2014). This may lead researchers to favour these research strategies to secure publications and later employment.

### *Ethnography with offenders*

Many articles and textbooks on conducting ethnographic research with criminal populations present themselves as ‘how to guides’ for the novice researcher. The field is envisaged as an exotic place of inherent danger that one has to get into, get to know and get out again (Edwards 2002). The researcher emerges from the field like a hunter on safari, with a bag full of trophies, tales to tell, and a pat on the back from the academic community. Such ‘blitzkrieg’ ethnography (and journalism) continues to rear its head but can be illuminating. Whilst it is not without merit to immerse oneself within marginalised populations so that the voice of the underdog may be heard (Becker 1967), there is a danger of reproducing stereotypes that all crime is committed by the poor or other marginalised groups:

“the drug offending populations and participants examined in most relevant academic literature are the same ones who feature (disproportionately) within criminal justice figures, the media, and political discourse” (Salinas 2018).

Salinas (2017) provides a detailed overview of this empirical issue using examples of drug dealers who do not follow the typical pattern of holding criminal records and being unemployed. The participants in his study are all working class males, however, making his ‘unusual suspects’ more usual than he claims. In a society where drug use is becoming increasingly normalised across social groups, it is questionable whether ethnographic research on drug populations has represented the full reality of the problem. Indeed, a report from the Social Metrics Commission (2018) found that youths from middle class backgrounds are more likely to have tried illicit drugs in the last year than those from poorer ones. Substance use, misuse and distribution, whilst potentially linked to poverty, is not necessarily a problem of the poor. Ethnographic research on drugs also tends to focus on specific types of drugs or aspects of the market at the expense of others. Whilst recognising that ethnographic research does not aim to be representative or generalisable in ways aligned with quantitative work, it is worth noting that my research includes male and female informants from a variety of social class backgrounds, who distribute a variety of different drugs, in a number of different settings (a point I will return to later). This meant being strategic in terms of who I chose to include in

the study and in my use of gatekeepers. Indeed, there were a number of dealers in my network of potential participants that I chose not to approach. The point made here is not simply methodological, but rather indicates something of the complexity and variance in and across drug dealing networks and scenes that are not reducible to standard measurement criteria.

### Access

Criminologists looking to access offenders will often go through official channels. Secrecy is essential to the success of most criminal organisations, making them difficult to penetrate from the outside. Although this route is easier and less time consuming it may result in a biased sample which can reflect the organisational structure of the criminal justice system and its many prejudices. Hobbs (2013) makes this point:

“Law-enforcement-based research seldom reveals the organizational decisions, assumptions, and prior knowledge that impact upon their selection and sampling, and as a consequence research derived from these sources should always carry a disclaimer that ‘the content of this file are the fruits of police activity’” (Hobbs 2013, p. 7).

Serious offenders who are proficient at their craft may go completely unknown to the police and cannot be accessed through official means. Other low-level offenders may go unnoticed from the authorities because of their gender, ethnicity, or social class. Furthermore, criminals that are already known to the police are often failed offenders who are easy targets for arrest (Hobbs 2003). Knowing these facts, I attempted to enrol participants across a range of social demographics. I succeeded in interviewing offenders of different genders, ethnicities and social class backgrounds. Many of the participants had no criminal records and were unknown to the police. The participants ranged from retail to wholesale drug dealers, operating on local, national and international levels. I also interviewed two participants who did not distribute drugs but enforced order and provided protection in the criminal underworld through acts of serious instrumental violence. Ade and Kamin are brothers and are well respected in many circles.

There were some aspects of the field that were fairly new to me. Although I had witnessed the selling of ‘hard’ drugs such as heroin and crack and ‘soft’ drugs such as nitrous oxide in the past. It was not until I was out in the field with dealers of these substances that I began to get a detailed picture of how these markets operate. The lads are the participants that I spent most of the time with over the years, and their products of choice are cannabis, powdered cocaine and MDMA, they also operated mainly on the street level. The field is not a uniform social zone and comprises of many different illicit economies that have their own internal structures and codes of conduct (Aspers 2011; Sandberg 2012; van de Ven and Mulrooney 2016). Navigating access to other parts of the drug market required work and learning. Fortunately, I knew enough dealers across the city to make this happen, but where I could not, I used a snowballing technique and was introduced to dealers through friends. There were only two



participants in the study who agreed to take part without having met me before: Sarah and Lucy, both of whom were willing to let me interview them alone in their homes.

It was important that I approached prospective participants in the right way. My primary tactic was to tell them about my own life history (if they did not already know it) or explain what I had been doing since I saw them last. By telling my own personal story, I had hoped that this would convince them that I was not working for the police, whilst building rapport as we exchanged shared experiences. In regard to the project, I would tell them that I was opposed to drug policy as it stands and the way that drug dealers are often demonised and presented as ‘bad people’. I explained that it was important to get their perspective, so I could tell their side of the story. Getting the participants to feel that I was on their side and wanted to help was key in the recruitment phase.

### *Trust, status and the self*

The management of self-presentation was key in getting participants to trust me, whilst blending into the field. The types of clothes I wore, the way I held myself, the types of language I used, and the topics I talked about, all had a part to play in this. Knowing the majority of the participants personally significantly helped in this matter:

“You should get the ‘feel’ of their world by extensive and attentive listening - get some sense of what pleases them and what bugs them, some sense of their frame of reference, and some sense of their sense of language... Until the criminal's frame of reference and language have been learned, the investigator is in danger of coming on either too square or too hip” (Polsky 1967, pp. 128-129).

To gain trust in the underworld, I had to embody the style of the underworld but was aware that this was different throughout the field. Having grown up with the lads and been part of the same subculture, this was not something I had to adopt artificially, but something I had to maintain and revert to. I became increasingly aware that my language had become more sophisticated, and my local accent began to fade as I spent more time in academic circles. Continuing my work as a bouncer and spending time in the field kept me grounded, however.

The status of being a bouncer was well received among participants who respected me as someone who was ‘tough’ and engaged in violence when necessary (at least from their point of view) (Winlow 2001; Hobbs et al. 2003). From a professional perspective, violence in a club occurs when you have lost control of the venue or are not able to manage it effectively. Having to actually fight with punters, rather than split up fights, is a rarity and not something I enjoy. Nonetheless, these incidents provided me with a legitimate narrative and a point of conversation that participants could relate to. Like the drug market, being subject to serious violence on the job is uncommon, but these events when they do happen, allow actors to build their reputations and culminate their identity as someone not to be ‘messed with’. Being close friends with people like Ade and Kamin, who held a significant reputation, went especially in

my favour. Having serious offenders as friends allowed me to convince people that I was not an officer, and the project was safe. Some of the participants were not known to me before the study, giving me a limited time frame to build trust.

As an insider to the field, I had a pre-existing level of closeness to some of the informants that would be difficult to achieve from an initial outsider position. The tight bonds I have with my participants has given me an intimate knowledge of their lifeworld's and involvement in crime. Immersion is viewed as an essential characteristic of 'good' ethnography, however, the need to create distance is something that is often overlooked (Ybema and Kamsteeg 2009). The downside of being an insider is that the researcher may overlook familiar details that do not seem important (Edwards 2002). In this respect, there is a need to 'make the familiar strange' (Gordon et al. 2001, p. 188) by creating analytical distance from the field. When I initially began writing I had to create this distance so that I was generating a sociological account of what was happening, drawing from my position, rather than simply writing from the perspective of 'one of the lads'. The same was true when I was out in the field. Rather than living in the field as a native, I had to begin to analyse the events *in situ*, in a way that I had not done until the research began. Indeed, the problems I encountered did not result from 'going native' but instead from 'being native' (Kanuha 2000), as a non-criminal insider (not everyone who associates with drug dealers will use drugs or sell drugs themselves, nor will they be expected to do so). I had to manage multiple states of mind but also personas as I moved from the field to the desk, to working as a bouncer. Engaging with criminological literature helped me to develop a more reflexive and analytical perspective overall. The greatest issue with my criminological mindset was being able to turn it off. Being in a constant state of heightened awareness was emotionally demanding. Ethical and emotional characteristics of fieldwork are intensified in the process of data collection (Briggs 2009) in often unremarked ways (Baird 2018).

Perhaps the most difficult element of self-presentation was when it came to witnessing troubling and emotionally disturbing events (a concern flagged by the ethics committee). Whilst the vast majority are not, some drug dealers are in fact, calculating predators and will regularly engage in violence and intimidation: particularly in markets that are comprised of vulnerable drug addicts. Teeth, for example, entrapped his drug runners and customers through debt bonding and physiological manipulation, leaving them largely under his control. Meeting with desperate customers who had their teeth pulled, going to the houses of street prostitutes with missing limbs, or watching Teeth's runner cry as he belittled him in front of me, was not easy to witness (see chapter 5). Hector had been doing well apparently, and only had to be hit around the head with a Maglite on one occasion since working for Teeth. I did not wish to challenge Teeth on his behaviour as I was concerned for my own safety and knew that if I was not impartial in his presence, the opportunity to spend time with him would be lost. I distanced myself from Teeth after he sent me a video of one of his runners injecting himself. Teeth had created the video with the research in mind as he said he wanted to give me some more insights into the trade:

The needle went deep into Barry's arm as he got ready for the dose. He steadied his hand and aspirated quickly before slowly injecting the brown fluid into his bloodstream. I could hear Teeth talking in the background as he filmed the video, avidly enjoying the show: "that's it you know what to do". A few moments later, Barry pulled out the needle leaving a thick trail of blood oozing down his left arm. He licked it off and smiled drearily at the camera with a bloodied grin and rolling eyes. "Barry is as good as gold" Teeth remarked, "but if you cross him, he will come at you with an infected needle".

I was not sure if the comment was an implicit threat to me regarding the information I held on Teeth or something else entirely. Nonetheless, I realised that I had become part of Teeth's psychological power play, and people were being exploited. It was time for me to move on.

### *Access in the night economy*

Whilst the majority of the fieldwork was conducted outside of the club scene, I used my time there to generate contacts from both offenders and official actors. A number of dealers frequented clubs where I worked and were friends with the managers and owners of the establishments. I became friends with them and gained their trust, some of whom were bouncers themselves. Many of these actors I knew before the research began, whereas others came to my attention during the project. As I got to know them better, I would tell them about my research and study their response. Many participants were quite forthcoming and offered to take part without me asking. They enjoyed telling their stories as it allowed them to perform their identity, which had gained them significant respect on the street (Sandberg and Pedersen 2011). Others needed to be asked directly, and whilst some agreed when asked in person, they did not return my messages and could not be traced. In these cases, I would wait until I saw them again and allow them to bring up the matter in conversation. I knew that pressing further could ruin my chances. Buster was one of these people. I initially saw Buster in a nightclub when I was out drinking with Kamin. I already knew Buster from working on the 'door' (bouncing) so I decided to approach him to ask if he would participate in the study. He agreed but seemed awkward at the prospect due to the seriousness of his offence. I waited a couple of days to contact him, but he ignored my messages. A few months later, I was informed that he had been attending a martial arts class in the city, so I went along to train. As a martial artist myself, this was not something out of the ordinary. After subsequent visits to the class, he began to trust me and succumb to the pressure of the 'elephant in the room'. It was then that he approached the subject and said he would be willing to participate.

### *Interviews*

I loosely employed a Schutze (1978) methodology of open narrative-based interviews combined with semi-structured questioning that probed deeper into specific areas (as referred to by Bauer (1996)). The interviews were respondent-driven rather than being dictated by the interview schedule. The 'question response schema' of structured and semi-structured

interviews can impose concepts onto the data that emerge from the interview schedule rather than the topic under investigation (Bauer 1996, p. 2). A level of reflexivity can assist in this process, however. As I was interested in the life histories of the participants, I began the interview simply by asking them to tell me their life story from childhood. This stage of the interview was designed to allow the interviewee to talk openly in a natural manner, eliciting stories that are constructed in a 'self-generating schema' (Bauer 1996, p. 3). According to Sampson and Laub (2005), qualitative life history narratives can provide a deeper exploration of the life course where quantitative methods may fail.

The first stage of the process was to conduct a number of pilot interviews alongside writing a brief literature review on the topic as I analysed the accounts. This allowed me to formulate an interview guide of significant 'exmanent' issues that I hoped to cover (Bauer 1996, p. 5). As more interviews were completed, I added additional topics to the guide that had come to my notice through the interview process. The guide was theoretically driven by both the literature review and the participants' accounts in an adaptive manner (Layder 1998). The literature review was revisited and altered throughout the research project as new information came to light. At certain times if the participant had directed the conversation towards a salient topic but had not covered all aspects of it, I would probe deeper and ask further questions on the matter. To avoid disrupting the flow of the conversation, topics in the guide were written into a question format. Throughout the interview, I ticked off topics that had been covered and those that had not were introduced at the end of the interview. Some structuring of the interview was necessary to ensure all aspects of the guide had been fleshed out.

I employed a more structured approach when interviewing official actors. I created a list of semi-structured questions on specific areas of their working role, combined with questions that reflected their opinion on certain aspects of the drug trade and their official response to it. The reason for the more structured approach was that I was not looking to assess the life-story of these actors, which required a more open format. I wished instead to further corroborate aspects of the drug trade whilst broadening my perspective of it. 'Partiality is a perennial characteristic of criminological theory' (Young 1987, p. 338), by interviewing official actors I hoped to increase the scope of the study by bringing in a wider range of perspectives from the field.

Qualitative interviews have long been employed in developmental and life-course studies of crime and deviancy (e.g. Glueck and Glueck 1952; Robins 1966; Sampson and Laub 1992); however, they align to a realist position in which reality is said to exist independently of the mind and can be objectively studied through sense data (Williams 1988). Life narratives are thus deemed to be accurate and stable representations of events to which causal claims around life changes can be made. This epistemological stance has been heavily criticised by narrative theorists due to the variability in which events are interpreted and constructed:

"Language is viewed as a transparent medium, unambiguously reflecting stable, singular meanings... Critics of the realist assumptions of positivism challenge these views of language and knowing... Informants' stories do not mirror a world "out

there." They are constructed, creatively authored, rhetorical, replete with assumptions, and interpretive." (Riessman 2005, pp. 4-5).

Stories are often framed depending on what the teller believes the listener expects to hear, which will vary between one audience and the next. Such 'vocabularies of motives' (Mills 1940) are context dependent and contain justifications for behaviour that attempt to influence others on reasons for conduct (Gerth and Mills 1953, p. 117). Indeed, narratives do not represent 'windows' into 'private experience'; they are 'dependent on discursive and cultural conventions for their form and content' (Atkinson 2009, pp. 2-6). According to Presser (2009), narratives do not need to be viewed as accurate to be applicable to realism due to the effects they have on the future. Narratives can 'circumvent' realist occupations with truth by 'recognising their role' (Presser 2009, p. 190). Indeed, narrative construction has important implications for involvement in and desistance from crime (Paternoster and Bushway 2009; Stevens 2012; King 2013). However, this does not resolve problems around inferring causal relations around past behaviour from socially constructed accounts, only that these accounts may be causal in themselves. Moreover, the recognition of the self-fulfilling prophecy of discourse emerges from interactionist approaches to social life that stand in direct opposition to realism (Wiley 2003). 'If men define, situations as real, they are real in their consequence' (Thomas and Thomas 1928, p. 572). In rejection of the realist approach, this thesis aligns itself with a social constructivist ontology (Berger and Luckmann 1991), as a means to examine how drugs and organised crime is constructed through social practices, including narrative and discourse. It also treats the testimonies of the participants as existing again as constructions that represent their experiences of crime and the meanings they attach to it (more on narratives later).

### Analysis

Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to an hour and a half in total. The initial interviews were shorter but increased in length as the interview guide was developed. My ability to interview effectively improved over time, which, when combined with the expanded interview guide led to richer data overall. The interviews were transcribed in NVivo and coded as nodes. Fieldnotes and website data were also coded in this way. Webpages from the distributor's sites were saved as documents and imported into NVivo. Max had a website advertising his nitrous oxide delivery service (Nos Man), whereas Charley's site was dedicated to distributing image and performance enhancing drugs (Pharma-Labs). Charley did not run the site himself but worked within a team of actors who had different roles within the organisation.

I employed thematic analysis (TA) to create a coding frame using concepts generated from the literature review and themes that emerged from the data. Reducing and simplifying information in this way allows the researcher to 'expand, transform, and reconceptualise data' to generate analytical structures (Coffey and Atkinson 1996, p. 29). According to Braun and Clarke (2014), thematic analysis is a tool for:

"systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set... This method, then, is a way of identifying

what is common to the way a topic is talked or written about and of making sense of those commonalities.” (Braun and Clarke 2014, p. 57).

Braun and Clarke offer a six-step framework that allows researchers to develop codes and themes that relate to the research questions of the study. Although I did not follow their prescription religiously, the method proposed helped me to find themes across my data sets, whether it be fieldnotes, interview material or website data. I was aware that my personal background could influence the construction of the coding frame and analysis. Academic research does not generate knowledge in an unbiased manner, it may reflect certain interests or target certain audiences (Gouldner 1968). In light of these facts, I adopted a reflexive and critical gaze upon all aspects of the research (see below). The process of creating codes and themes was not straight forward, the topic of organised crime is wide, and at times I would try and include too much and be pulled off in different directions. This was also due to the amount of data I had amassed, which was easy to get lost in. At a certain point, I had to stop planning, stop ‘thinking’ and get down and write, it was then that the analysis began to flourish. The final output can be seen as a translation of a diverse range of elements, perspectives and processes (Law 2004).

During the research process, I was also able to secure sales data of nitrous oxide from Max (N=1212). Two months of sales data were obtained but due to the late stage in the research, it was decided that descriptive statistics would be suitable to incorporate the data. Ethnography is a process of discovery (Whitehead 2005), meaning that the researcher may come across data that they had not initially planned for. Data of this kind is rare: drug dealers do not usually log their sales as it could be used as evidence against them. The logs had details of amounts sold in pounds sterling, the date and time in which sales were made, and the postcodes of where the products were delivered. The data were coded into SPSS, which was used to provide descriptive statistics for the study.

### *Validating the ‘Truth’*

An issue with interviews is that respondents may be motivated to lie about their actions or bend the truth. Offenders may wish to hide their activities for fear of being prosecuted. In other cases, they may embellish in order to gain social status for actions they have not committed (Presser 2009; Sandberg 2014). People may also believe they are telling the truth when their actions appear otherwise to others. Take the dealer who asserts he is getting out of the game but needs to make a few more sales first. Testimonies will always be distorted in some way:

“We also often rely on individuals to tell us how they feel, what opinion or belief they hold, or what they did during a certain time. This is affected, however, by many things, such as their understanding of the worlds that make up the question, their memories, their mood, and their motivation to provide valid answers.” (Hoffmann 2017, p. 12).

From a social constructionist standpoint, the participants' accounts need not be treated as either 'true' or 'false' representations of reality but as 'displays of perspectives and moral forms' (Silverman 2011, p. 199). Consideration then should be given to how narratives have been constructed and for what purposes (Sandberg 2014). Nonetheless, if the researcher is able to cross-reference a respondent's account, they may be able to elicit more information as to why it has been given in a certain way, rather than taking it at face value. This mitigates the potential issue of the 'naïve ethnographer' simply describing the world as it presented to them by informants. My time in the field and intimate knowledge of the participants was especially useful here. In some cases, I was able to confirm when the participants had completely changed a set of events to suit their preferences. I was also able to probe with questions related to actual experiences I had shared with them in the past. If I knew that a participant had significantly altered the story (something of a rarity), I would not interrogate them on the matter as I did not want them to feel like they were being cross-examined. There is always an issue that the researcher may interpret testimonies incorrectly, however, in which case member checks can be employed.

### Member checks

Member checking is a process which involves the researcher sharing data and or its subsequent analysis with the participants to assess whether they and the subject matter have been properly represented. Member checking is said to increase the validity of the data (Koelsch 2013). As an insider, I had not initially intended to employ this method due to my depth of knowledge of the field; however, as the project progressed it became necessary for a variety of reasons. One of the lads, for example, questioned me on the purpose of the research and asked whether I had become an undercover officer "it's funny you've been doing this research, but I've never seen any of it... I was just thinking wouldn't it be cool if one of my mates was CID...". With that, I produced my literature review, which I had downloaded to my phone. Ben seemed quite dissatisfied after reading it as he said it was like a 'policy document' and not like 'real life'. After this event, I decided to share my chapters with my participants where possible to get their feedback. I also shared academic books on organised crime with my participants in this manner. Ade, for example, had become quite interested in the subject and had personal dealings with some of the criminal actors in Varese's 'Mafia Life' (2017). I decided to share the book with him, but like Ben, he was unhappy with Varese's portrayal of these actors. He believed the book was a sensationalised and conflated representation of organised crime, likening it to his own treatment by the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA). Whilst it may not be possible to produce a truly objective account of reality, we must be aware that accounts can be good or poor depending on what is taken into consideration (Liebling 2001). Member checking not only allowed me to check the data and analysis for inconsistencies but also served as a tool to convince participants I was not working for the police. Furthermore, as I knew that some of the offenders would be reading the thesis, I decided to describe them as 'participants' rather than 'informants', as the latter term is often associated with the 'grass' who informs to the police, which I was certainly not doing.

### External validity

Without elaborating further due to constraints of anonymity, Red City is a modern urban environment that has particular features that are common in other major cities throughout the UK (although local contexts will vary); thus, some of the findings in this study may be directly generalisable to other areas. Furthermore, illicit drug markets involve systems of exchange that are applicable in all cases; they involve the trading of goods where trust between parties is essential. Indeed, human practices may contain their own means of generalisation due to their commonly shared features. Nonetheless, the limits of external validity in ethnographic studies can be resolved by a commitment to a depth of analysis, achieved via immersion in the field. It is through a ‘thick description’ of events, which avoids surface explanations, where readers can begin to grasp social worlds as they resonate with their own personal experiences of them (Geertz 1973). It is then up to the reader to decide how *transferable* (rather than statistically generalisable) these findings are to their own context (Tracy 2010). ‘What generality it contrives to achieve grows out of the delicacy of its distinctions, not the sweep of its abstractions’ (Geertz 1973, p. 25). However, where findings confirm to ‘established concepts and theories’, they can be said to have achieved ‘analytical generalisability’. The same is true if theories that emerge from the research can be confirmed elsewhere (Smith 2017, p. 5). To conclude, forms of narcotic distribution may be recognisable as common regardless of location, although there are also significant differences (take, for example, the differences between criminal cartels in Mexico and UK drug dealers). This study does not, therefore, attempt to present findings which are universally valid; however, it may indicate some broader trends in narcotic distribution and criminal activity in the UK.

### Ethics

Before I could begin collecting the data, the project needed to be approved by the department’s board of ethics. There are differences between institutions within and between countries, but in the contemporary era, requirements of institutional review boards (IRB) are stringent, making research into illegal activities difficult. Research that involves fieldwork in high-risk settings may be turned down, which in effect silences the voices of vulnerable and marginalised populations within them (Swauger 2009). IRBs have been criticised for representing the universities’ interests above all else (Wallace 2003; Hedgecoe 2016). Universities do this to protect themselves from criticism and negative exposure in the press that might lead to a withdrawal of funding. It may also reflect a lack of cultural affinity with ethnographic work in the ‘big science’ mindset that prevails in contemporary academia (Young 2011). The process of gaining approval is often seen as a static ‘box ticking’ exercise that does not reflect the fact that many ethical issues in the field are situated and cannot be anticipated in advance (Calvey 2008). Fieldwork on illegal activity is a messy business (Ward 2008). Yet, if we do accept ‘research ethics as negotiated’ this does not answer the question on how we ‘judge what is justifiable’, a perennial problem (Taylor and Smith 2014, p. 547). Covert research is especially difficult to get approved and is frowned for being deceptive (Calvey 2017). Participants are not able to give their consent and have no say in the research process and how they may be represented (Homan 1980). Nonetheless, covert research can benefit participants by



illuminating hidden injustices (Calvey 2008, 2017). If data is anonymised fully, detriment to personal interest can be avoided.

My personal experience of gaining ethical approval was one where it became clear that the exercise was an assessment of me, rather than of my methodology. My moral character came under scrutiny from the committee in and through the discussion of a series of hypothetical scenarios. It was even proposed that an ordered list of crimes was written up in terms of their 'severity' and if I were to observe any that breached a certain predefined threshold, I would have to report them immediately. I had to explain that although I intended to spend time with drug dealers, and already did so, by association, in my personal life, this did not make me a 'bad person', 'taint' my moral compass or impact upon my ability to conduct an ethical study. I was (and am) fully able to make appropriate decisions in the field and respond to them, without a list to refer to and, in any case, would not wish to be bound by abstract pro-hoc moral criteria. The negative stereotypes of drug dealers had, in effect spilt over to me through association: an issue I had to grapple with throughout the research process. This also exposes the boards' desire to rank and quantify social life into abstract risk matrices. Fortunately, this proposal was dropped. In regard to personal risk, the fact that I was already embedded in these networks and witnessed drug dealing on a regular basis went in my favour. These were 'risks' I chose to take as part of my everyday life, and not something that would be imposed upon me through the research process: I was already 'in the field', and witnessing crime was not an unusual occurrence for me. The fact that the data gained from observations could not be gathered in any other way was also taken into consideration.

If it were not for my background and physical stature, it is questionable whether the project would have been approved, further silencing attempts to conduct research of this kind in the future. Nonetheless, this thesis does not advocate an 'anything goes' philosophy in which every social scientist should be given clearance to do this type of research (Calvey 2018, p. 13). I worked with dangerous people in sometimes dangerous settings, which could be especially risky had it not been for my prior knowledge of the field. As a bouncer I am well known and trusted with many criminal actors in the city. I am also familiar with the environment and how to act within it. Whilst it is true that many ethical dilemmas are situated, prior knowledge of the field can help to resolve these issues when, or before, they emerge.

### *Observing Criminal Acts*

The research involved both witnessing and collecting information on criminal acts. Witnessing and recording crimes that are not known to the police is risky and could put the researcher in a position where they are legally obligated to give up the information. Run-ins with the police are not out of the norm in this type of research. Bourgois (2003) was stopped by the police a number of times who questioned him on his presence in a high crime neighbourhood. In an extreme example, Scarce (1994) was sent to prison for 159 days after refusing to disclose data to a federal grand jury. According to Elliott and Fleetwood (2017), researchers in the UK generally have no legal obligation to report a crime except in regard to terrorism. Researchers can still come under scrutiny, however, if they hold information on a specific case:

“Although no absolute legal protections of respondents’ confidentiality exist, the legal processes that would force a researcher to break confidentiality are quite specific. The court could only apply to access research data in a circumstance in which researchers were thought to have information relating to a specific criminal case, and where the public good outweighed the duty of confidentiality.” (Elliott and Fleetwood 2017, p. 8).

Indeed, in 2016 Boston College was subpoenaed by the Police Service of Northern Ireland in a court case regarding recorded interviews with a former IRA prisoner (Guardian 2016). Anthony McIntire gave testimonies on loyalist paramilitaries, which the university had promised not to publish in his lifetime to protect him from harm. To avoid identifying the participants in the study, all data have been completely anonymised. I have promised the participants that under no circumstances would the data be made available to the authorities even if I was summoned to court. Like Scarce, I would go to jail to protect my data, my friends and also myself. There are worse things in this world than going to prison, such as being on the wrong side of violent criminals.

Whilst I did not have any issues with the police when out with dealers in the field, an intelligence officer whom I approached put me under pressure to work for the police as an informant, in return for access to his department. I informed him that I could not provide the police with such information as I was legally bound by the board of ethics to provide confidentiality to everyone in my study. Nonetheless, he saw that my research could be valuable, so put me in contact with a senior officer who agreed to be interviewed. I had met the intelligence officer through a friend of the family who was himself a police informant. Gupta ran a local corner shop that was in an area of concentrated drug use and had a considerable hatred towards both users and dealers. In light of his views, I provided him with ‘Good Cop Bad War’ by Neil Woods (2016). Woods was an intelligence officer who had written about his experiences tackling drugs in the UK and the benefits of legalisation. It was after reading this book his perspective began to change. According to Becker (1967), it is not possible, nor desirable, to avoid taking sides in the research process. What is more important ‘rather is whose side we should be on’ (Becker 1967, p. 3). Indeed, it was my partiality (to some aspects of their work) that allowed me to gain the trust of many participants in this study. Positionality is a social problem, which can have serious consequences for the researcher within the field. Something that even Becker failed to recognise.

### *Too close to crime*

It is not always possible to foresee the ethical dilemmas that occur in the field nor remove oneself completely from criminal activity. Ferrell calls for deep experiential immersion in criminal worlds to the extent that legal boundaries may be breached. For him, an abandonment of the objective, detached stance of positivism is necessary to gain insights that have remained

hidden from mainstream criminology (Ferrell 1998). Although I had no intention of breaking the law there were times when my presence as a researcher worked to facilitate crime:

Mat, an ex-doorman, had come to the city for the day after being released from prison. He had told me that the experience had changed him, and he wanted to go straight but was struggling for money. He needed to save for a car of his own and afford a place to live. Mat had a cheap source of MDMA, so came to sell a few ounces to make a quick turn over. He told me he was meeting a customer who was taking the drugs on credit and wanted me to come along. We parked up on a side street in the city centre in a car that Mat had borrowed from his mum. When his contact arrived, Mat introduced me as a bouncer, someone who was “hard as fuck” and “connected”, reeling off many names of my associates. Mat was using my status to bolster his own to ensure he got the money back, which he did the following week.

I spent the night with Mat and ended up in a drum and bass rave where I bumped into Charley, a producer of anabolic steroids. Charley had fallen out with Mat over some ounces of poor-quality M-Cat he had given him some years back and had not seen him since. I was alone at the bar when Charley approached me “what the fuck are you doing with that dick head you know he ripped me off right”. Not wanting conflict, I explained that Mat had just got out of jail and was trying to turn his life around “he’s changed mate seriously”. Charley took my word for it and decided to make amends. The two resolved their differences and before long were discussing how they could use Charley’s industrial pill press to produce ecstasy pills.

Whilst I had unwittingly facilitated this exchange by acting as a mediator between the two parties, there was no way I could have foreseen this event. The reality, however, is that this was not an artefact of the research but a normal facet of social interaction that was facilitated through the environment we were in. Criminals make contacts through people they know or by being in the same environments that other offenders frequent (Felson 2006). This is the same process I used to gather my participants and reflects the fact that organised crime bears much of the same mechanisms as many legitimate social and economic pursuits (Smith 1975, 1980). Nonetheless, navigating disputes between friends who had become rivals was not straightforward: I had to ‘control my associations’ (Goffman 1989). The participant’s associates would spot me out with their enemies resulting in questioning phone calls the next day. When I explained it was for the research project and only temporary, this was usually enough. The participants wanted to maintain their friendships with me rather than break them.

### *Doing it covert*

As the research was semi-covert, both myself and my participants intentionally kept the nature of the study secret from the majority of the people around us. In this respect, there was a strategic shift between levels of openness and deceit. I was either presented to the customers as a friend and a bouncer or not introduced at all. In the latter case, we would allow people to make their own assumptions. This was all the more interesting on the rare occasions I took written notes in public view. The first evening I spent with Teeth, for example, involved me

taking notes on a pad of A4 paper in a number of bars throughout the city. Teeth had made it explicit that he did not want to be tape recorded.

We sat outside a bar in the city centre on a benched area that became increasingly more crowded as the interview wore on. As I scribbled away insistently during the conversation, Teeth reminded me to keep my voice down as he did not want people outside to hear. A couple of lovers sat a few meters away glanced over occasionally, trying to assess what was going on “keep it down, they think you are my social-worker” Teeth observed with a cunning smile.

Teeth was enjoying the attention he was getting from both me and the onlookers, particularly in being able to deceive them. For him, it was a game. Similarly, when I was out with Max making his nitrous oxide deliveries, I took notes as I sat in the passenger side of his car. His customers did not seem bothered by this and may have assumed I was logging the sales. Although there was no way to know what they thought without directly asking them, I imagine they would have been concerned if they knew the real purpose behind my scribbles. In a similar example, Rosenhan (1973) secretly sent a number of sane researchers into a psychiatric ward to test if they would be diagnosed correctly. The researchers began by writing notes in private but soon realised that no one seemed concerned when they took them openly on the ward. When examining nursing records, it was revealed that the writing was interpreted by the staff as a characteristic of the patients ‘pathological behaviour’ (Rosenhan 1973, p. 388). People make assumptions on the motivations and purposes of other’s behaviour based on ideal types and symbolic identifiers that relate to the context they are in.

### *Managing Relations with Friends*

Managing field relations with friends was difficult and put us in positions that were not normal. Interviewing friends and asking them questions about their lives is not something I would engage in if it were not for the project. Ryan, for example, remarked on how his experience of being interviewed by me was “weird”, he said it was as if I had become “a different person”. I had hoped that by using an interview schedule that allowed the participants to speak more freely would ameliorate some of these tensions, but regardless of how it was carried out, it was still an interview. Being an insider, however, allowed me to see how my presence as a researcher had changed the environment, which provided important insights in itself. This level of reflexivity could not have been attained from an outside perspective:

“The point is that minimizing the influence of the researcher is not the only, or always even a prime, consideration. Assuming we understand how the presence of the researcher may have shaped the data, we can interpret the latter accordingly and it can provide important insights, allowing us to pursue the emerging analysis.”  
(Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, p. 102).

Interviewing the people you know can be a benefit as a level of trust will have been preestablished. Trust is essential in conditions where participants are reporting criminal

activity. Knowing participants well can increase their motivation to provide accurate accounts as the researcher may know if they are embellishing or posturing (Sandberg 2014).

### *Exiting the field*

The process of exiting the field is something that is seldom discussed in ethnography (Iversen 2009). Many qualitative research textbooks completely ignore this process and concentrate on gaining access or managing field relations (Delamont 2016). Researchers can encounter methodological issues when leaving, but the process is often taken for granted. As some of the participants are close friends who I had known long before I began the research, exiting the field is not something that I would want, nor am I able to achieve. Many of these friends I no longer saw on a regular basis until the research began, but was still in contact with them. Friends become distant as a normal part of life, as other commitments make it difficult to spend time together. Although the lads were no longer hanging out on a daily basis, we stayed in touch and got together on important occasions. Social media allowed us to maintain relations where we could not see each other in person. When contacting participants for the research project or moving away to write it up, there was no 'entering' or 'exiting' the field, but rather a shift between distance and immersion. These oscillations were determined by the opportunities to gather data (participant dependant) and the research schedule itself.

#### 4) Entry: A Journey into Drugs

*It all started when I moved up here to Red City, I'd never been anywhere near drugs until that point, not even seen them. I went down to this house in Westcroft where a few people were that I know. Baker who I got working for me had got himself into a bit of trouble. Lennox was a big player and was pissed at him over something and they were going to kill him, right there and then. When I walked in the house they had him tied to a chair, they were taunting him, kicking the legs out, beating him round the head, and you know what, I took pity on the cunt. I told them I wasn't going to have that, no one was doing any killing on my watch. I said "he's mine now, I own this man" and they didn't like it but there was nothing they could do. Baker was my entry point, he had been selling dark and knew where to get it. So I saw it as a business opportunity...*

#### Introduction

The entry point into the illicit drug market marks a stage in life that can progress into a life-long commitment to criminal activity. For some, selling drugs is a conscious decision, a practical and economic investment in drugs that becomes a sustained routine activity. For others, it is but part of the lifestyle of being a drug user. Not everyone who distributes drugs will define themselves as a dealer, especially those involved in social supply. It is the path to which offenders take on the 'dealer' identity that is of most interest to this study. This chapter examines the start phase of the drug dealing career, where the participants in this study first establish themselves as distributors. Previous research in this field demonstrates that social networks provide opportunities to distribute drugs and determine the roles that people assume when they first become dealers (Murphy et al. 1990; Matrix Knowledge Group 2007; Wersé and Müller 2016). These studies, however, do not consider the relationship between age and settings in generating these networks to begin with. This chapter demonstrates how opportunities to sell drugs are age-graded, reflecting entry and exposure to different criminogenic settings through the life-course.

There are a number of possible (and mostly compatible) explanations for becoming a dealer: structural inequalities, the normalisation of drugs, the drive for capital and the 'high life' of conspicuous consumption (Adler and Adler 1983; Bourgois 2003; Coomber et al. 2016). But even these provide only shallow answers to the issue. Every drug dealer has a unique life story that may not be generalisable to the wider population. Furthermore, a truly representative sample is unknowable as long as some drug dealers remain concealed. Following the ethnographic tradition, the study aims, perhaps more modestly, for depth in the analysis and provides a critical description of the participants' accounts, to outline how, in some cases, people become drug dealers. It examines offender narratives around life trajectories and turning points (Sampson and Laub 2005), that they believe has led them to crime. As these accounts are socially constructed, the turning points they refer to cannot be deemed as objective causal mechanisms in the realist sense. They are reflective narratives that help make sense of particular life experiences that are contextually framed by the present (Riessman 2005; Atkinson 2009; Presser 2009). 'A narrative is not a report on one's entire life so far. Rather, a narrative always draws selectively upon lived experience' (Presser 2009, p. 179)

### The Lads

I was first introduced to the lads in the playground of Summer Park School in 1999 on a dreary English mid-Autumn day. Summer Park was one of the worst performing state schools in the UK and still is today. Many pupils left with no qualifications; others counted themselves lucky to pull together a few low-ranking GCSEs. The school had a large cohort of students from Drayton, a low-income neighbourhood that was in a terrible social condition. Crime was rife in Summer Park: drug dealing, stabbings and robbery were not out of the norm. The old Victorian building resembled a high-security prison. Its parameters enclosed by tall barbed wire fences, whilst CCTV cameras loomed out from the crumbling brickwork, doing little to provide any sense of security. Groups of youths frequently loitered around the entrances robbing students for their lunch money as they walked in. Fortunately, I never had any cash as was clearly evident from my 'school uniform' (shabby clothes my mum had purchased from a local charity shop). I hated the school with a passion, but the lads provided me with a sense of belonging and the security that is found in numbers. The boys were a few years older than me, but we got on well, and they took me under their wing. As a younger member of the group, they shielded me from the various deviant and criminal activities that they engaged in, but I was there throughout to witness it. Some members of the group went on to become long-term career criminals, and their stories are present throughout the chapters of the thesis; others did not engage in crime apart from being users of illicit drugs.

### Social supply

The lads first encountered drugs during school hours. The local cycle path was a secluded space in disrepair and provided an ideal spot for the boys to hang out at lunch. Home to an assortment of burned out scooters, shopping trolleys, disused needles and syringes, it cut through the city like a malignant vein. The pupils from the Drayton would often spend their time there so they could smoke weed in relative privacy and sell small amounts to the students to fund their habits. Bret was the first to come in contact with the drug. He came from a relatively wealthier family home and had a larger supply of pocket money, so was able to make purchases on a regular basis. He would sometimes share with Sam, Andy and Ryan who would chip in when they could. Andy and Sam Stone were brothers and lived in a poor single-parent home with their father. Not having a place of their own, the boys would smoke away from adults in places such as the streets, parks, graveyards and a camp they built in the woods using the gear they stole from a local primary school. The boys learned deviance through association at a young age (Sutherland et al. 1995) and enjoyed the thrills of edgework (Ferrell 1998).

Social supply is regarded as the most common form of drug dealing. It is a part of the user culture in which drugs are consumed and shared among members of one's immediate social group. The sharing of goods is a fundamental part of our social fabric. The sharing of food, for example, can be found in all societies across the world and is a bedrock of social bonding. Psychoactive drugs are no different (Taylor and Potter 2013; Chatwin and Potter 2014). There is no agreed-upon definition of social supply, but there is a general consensus among academics

that it is distinctively different from formal dealing (Coomber and Moyle 2014; Moyle 2014). This has spurred calls for a softening of our laws, but these suggestions have landed on deaf ears. As of now, the sharing of drugs between friends is still classed as dealing and carries a significantly greater sentence than possession alone. If you were to ask Bret if he thought he was a drug dealer for sharing a ‘spliff’, the answer would have inevitably been “no”.

As time went by, the boys became tired of smoking out in the cold; at the age of 16, the older lads from the group had left school and were in search of somewhere more suitable. It was at this time that Bret was introduced to Gerald, a hash dealer who lived in a block of flats a short distance from his house. Gerald was an overweight middle-aged white guy with a messy beard and a hook on his right arm. The boys did not know it, but Gerald was a paedophile and had lost his arm in an incident involving an industrial metal grinder on account of molesting a local builder’s daughter. Bret began spending time in Gerald’s apartment as it was a convenient location to get thoroughly stoned. It is not easy smoking bongos on the street. Ryan and the brothers spent less time at the apartment as their father had agreed to let them smoke in the family home. From his perspective, they were safer smoking weed under his roof than they were out on the street. He was right. Bret continued spending time in Gerald’s company away from his friends as he became tired of sharing. He eventually fell victim to Gerald’s exploits and was sexually abused in his sleep. Gerald had been drugging Bret with Rohypnol during the nights he slept over. It was not until Bret spied him spiking his drink one night, he fully realised what had been going on. Bret tried to pretend it had never happened and frequented the apartment as usual. He was introduced to heroin from another lad who dossed there, and before he knew it, he was hooked.

As the other members of the group could not afford to keep buying cannabis, they devised a cunning plan to grow it themselves. The weed they purchased from their dealer would sometimes contain seeds due to the grower not removing the male plants from the crop, a matter that stopped the female plants budding to their full potential. The lads decided they would try to cultivate the seeds and grow them in the cupboard of Andy’s bedroom, but they had an issue. They did not have any of the equipment necessary and could not afford it either. Not being perturbed by this shortcoming, they decided they would steal some light fittings from the block of flats where Gerald lived. Another friend from Summer Park School called Oscar, had just started an apprenticeship working for an alarm fitting company. He assured the boys he could safely take the light fittings out without tripping the main fuse board. He would have to cut the wires in a certain sequence in a similar manner to defusing a bomb, the boys mused. Late one night in the early hours of the morning the lads snuck into the building and successfully removed the fitting without being apprehended, but they blew the fuse board to the entire block and fled the scene in laughter. A few days later, they took a trip to a hydroponics store and bought a UV bulb using money that Ryan had acquired selling video games he stole from WHSmith. The boys did not realise it, but they had just embarked into the realms of ‘organised crime’, from the perspective of law enforcement at least. Breaking and entry, theft, and cultivating cannabis from a legal perspective are very serious crimes, but the lads did not see it this way. For them it was just a bit of excitement and a way to pass the time. They did not think they were causing any serious harm.



The first batch of weed the lads grew was fairly dismal as they did not know the correct procedures to follow, such as setting timers for light and dark sequences or using the appropriate plant food (Potter 2010). Criminal activities can require skills that do not come naturally to everyone; the boys had heard that they required a hydroponic setup through people in their social circles, but had limited information other than this. At the time of writing, information regarding the cultivation of cannabis is readily accessible on the internet, but it has not always been this way. It was not available to the boys at that time and with limited resources at their disposal, they bumbled through the process with little success. This begs the question as to how 'organised', organised crime needs to be before it can be defined as such: very little, it seems.

After the first crop, the brothers' father stepped in and told the boys he would have no more. Smoking weed in his house was one thing; growing it was a different matter entirely. During this time, Bret continued using heroin and spending time with Gerald. He used the drugs to kill his psychological pain, but with no other space to take them he ended up in a cycle of abuse and spiralled deeper into addiction. As part of my fieldwork, I spent time interviewing staff from Red City's addiction treatment centre. Like Bret, the heaviest drug addicts were those who had experienced significant trauma in their lives. The following conversation is taken with a senior member of staff. Jacob has an extensive history of working in the field:

Jacob: A lot of the people who currently use drugs here have become very well-established drug users, if you like, a harder end of drug use of the furthest end of addiction. Very high percentage of these people have led traumatic damaged lives as a result of their personal history, as children or later in life and which is then compelled by the institutions they live in, prisons, hostels and hospitals. There's a very insensitive response to many of the problems... There's a lot of other people who come into it because it's fun and exciting. Most people start using drugs and alcohol as a result of fun, thrill seeking adolescent behaviour. They also use cigarettes and then move on to alcohol probably. Everybody says cannabis is a gateway drug, so is nicotine, so is alcohol... Most of us in the society moderated our alcohol use. I think there are different groups, there are people using for different reasons. What I think brings them together is the point where you start to manage your emotions, "I can't cope with all this, I take this or that with alcohol or heroin or something else, so I don't have to think about it". That emotional coping strategy somehow becomes this universal, widely shared relationship with drugs and alcohol and that's it if you like, that's what people have in common.

The emotional link between drugs and addiction is strong. Psychoactive substances alter chemical processes in the brain that can diminish or enhance moods and states of mind. Whilst it is true that addiction can be the result of trauma and be used as an emotional coping strategy, it is not necessarily the outcome of this in all cases. Anyone who uses an addictive substance on a regular basis has the potential to develop a habit as their body becomes dependant on the drug. America, for example, is experiencing an epidemic of addiction to opioids as a result of

doctors over-prescribing painkillers (Kolodny et al. 2015). When the addiction has become too strong, some have moved into the black market as they can find cheaper variants such as heroin or fentanyl more easily. These drugs can be even more addictive and significantly more deadly (Frank and Pollack 2017). To say that addiction is a universal emotional coping strategy is too much of a generalisation, even though the evidence linking addiction and trauma is robust (Hanson et al. 2017).

Overall, the boy's case clearly resonates with Jacob's description. Bret became a heroin user after experiencing significant trauma from the time he spent with Gerald. The boys noticed the change in Bret's behaviour but could not fully understand it. The once leader of the group was acting increasingly out of sorts, and they wanted him back the way he was before. They decided they would invite Bret over and enact their own type of radical 'therapy'. They tied him up in a duvet cover and hit him repeatedly with rubber bats. The lads were hoping to 'beat' the addiction out of him but had little success. Society often blames users for their addictions and somehow feels that they need to be punished for their actions, but this could not be farther from the truth. The best methods for dealing with addiction are treatment and therapy (Leshner 1997; Van Wormer and Davis 2016) or, more importantly, wider structural change (Briggs and Monge Gamero 2017). The boys did not understand.

One night when Bret was sleeping over at the apartment, Gerald had a heart attack. Upon hearing the commotion, Bret jumped up from where he was sleeping to find him gasping for air as he writhed in pain. Standing in shock, he watched as the life faded from Gerald's eyes. By the time he called an ambulance he was already dead.

### 'Real dealers'

A couple of years passed, and the brothers had left school and started at a local college. At this point, they had stopped smoking weed but still spent a great deal of time with their friends. With a network of potential buyers in their immediate vicinity, they decided to capitalise on the opportunity and set out to become bona fide weed dealers:

Mark: You mentioned that you sold cannabis for a while, can you explain the reason why, why you did that?

Andy: It was just a business poking in there. All my friends smoked, I had friends who sold cannabis before, so I saw that it was something that I could do. When I saw my friends doing it and making money, I thought "well hey, you know, that's something that I could do". I didn't smoke so I knew I didn't have to worry about smoking my profit or whatever an um, I'm quite self-disciplined in most areas of my life. Apart from when I get drunk sometimes so. It looked easy, and it was easy, and I saved up some money from my giros and it was my brother's idea I think, and we went and bought like an ounce of weed and we got a whole bunch of people that we knew who smoked all the

time, so we started just selling little bits to them. And it worked out. It just sort of built up from there and uh I guess ah... I guess I wasn't scared of repercussions. I didn't really care at that point in time because like I said I was kind of at a low end anyway, it wouldn't have made much difference in my life had I got caught. Maybe I would have got a slap on the wrist or something like that. So, I just thought "what the fuck it doesn't really bother me getting in trouble over it".

Andy and his brother weighed up the legal risks of dealing cannabis and felt it was a relatively safe drug to distribute. The fact that they had given up smoking themselves meant that they would not consume their profits, a common issue for drug sellers. At the time, cannabis was a Class C drug carrying the lowest penalties for possession with intent to supply. Even now, after having been reclassified upward to the B category, it is still perceived by the participants as one of the least risky drugs to sell. This is supported by interviews I undertook with the police:

Mark: So, are you targeting the more harmful types of drugs more so, like heroin and crack rather than cannabis dealers and people that are cultivating cannabis?

Peter: Well when we assess, harm, threat and risk, the class of drug will come into it. It won't be the be all and end all. But heroin and crack undoubtedly cause more harm to individuals and more violence in the criminal justice system than any other drug. So, yes, if you get to a situation where everything's the same, it's just the class of drug is different, then we are gonna go to those drugs that cause most harm. The trouble is that we have Class A, B, and C, that are supposed to reflect harm, but in reality don't -- There's a hell of a lot drugs in Class B and C that are more harmful than I would suggest powdered cocaine.

Mark: MDMA?

Peter: Well, I have reservations on that because I know there's a lot of different opinion on MDMA, but MDMA is a very potent - very dangerous drug. There's no coincidence that an awful lot of our deaths, after ketamine and crack are MDMA. So, I don't think it's quite like professors have said that it's not as dangerous as horse riding or some stupid quotes like that, which are totally ridiculous. But actually, it's quite a powerful drug. But what I mean is you've got things like ketamine, for instance, was a Class C, been moved to Class B - should be in Class A, in my opinion. There are reasons why it wasn't put there, because it's a legitimate, very useful anaesthetic drug. But far more powerful and far more dangerous than cocaine.

Peter's account demonstrates some of the longstanding issues with UK drug policy. The ABC classification system in the 1971 Psychoactive Substances Act was initially devised to represent the harm that drugs cause, but this is not the case in practice. Drugs tend to be classified in the aftermath of media scares and other political interests. Alcohol companies, for example, were a significant force in the fight against cannabis legalisation in the USA due to

concerns over losses in revenue (Fidler 2016). David Nutt is the professor that Peter refers to in the latter part of the discussion. He was a lead expert in the Advisory Council for the Misuse of Drugs. His job was to advise the UK government on drug policy to enable appropriate responses. Nutt and his colleagues set out to assess the harm of illicit substances using the strongest evidence that was available to them. Alcohol came up as the most harmful drug when considering both harms to the user and wider-society, whereas MDMA was deemed to be relatively safe. What makes MDMA harmful is the fact that users have to purchase the drug on the black market with little guarantees on its purity. If a user takes a high dose without knowing, this can have fatal consequences. The media are quick to blame the drug in these instances leading to moral panics that result in the drugs being ranked up the classification system (Nutt et al. 2010; Nutt 2012). Nonetheless, Nutt's work has received substantial critiques from other drug policy analysts (e.g. Caulkins et al. 2011).

The police operate with very modest resources at their disposal; this means that they have to exercise discretion when deciding which cases to pursue. The perceived relative harm of drugs affects investigation probabilities; however, there are a number of other factors at play. The type and source of intelligence they have on suspects can determine whether cases are followed up. Calls received from the local community, for example, are generally perceived as poor information sources; whereas information received from informants from within the drug market is highly valued (Gill 2000; Bacon 2017). Once a suspect becomes a target of an investigation, further information on their activities can be acquired. The various sources of information that are gathered in an investigation are collated, constructed and framed into legal products, which can be used as evidence in court (McConville et al. 1991; Smith 1997). These sanitised policing outputs seldom reveal the ethically ambiguous and procedurally dubious skulduggery that often underpins police operations. Drug detectives bend the rules to make cases in ways that undermine the current national intelligence model. Such methods can limit the effectiveness of the police force, although detectives believe they are a necessary evil to loosen the restrictive straitjacket of procedural policy (Bacon 2017):

“In many respects the rules of criminal law and procedure are enabling for the creative accomplishment of desired outcomes. They allow police to gain compliance through tacit contracts with suspect populations, effect efficient crime control without much bother of due process and account for their actions in legally acceptable terms” (Ericson 2007, p. 394).

If intelligence is received on a suspect that is already known to the authorities, this greatly increases the probability they will be pursued (McConville et al. 1991; Gill 2000). The fact that the brothers had no criminal record went especially in their favour. Their foray into the cannabis market marks the beginning of a prosperous career of dealing the drug. After nearly a decade of daily transactions, they experienced no direct issues with the police.

### Status

From an economist's perspective, the motives for drug dealing are economic gain. Whether it is for a "free smoke" or cash, the dealer benefits economically from his actions. The brothers' primary motivation for becoming cannabis dealers was indeed the money. After having left school with little academic success, they attended college but had little income of their own. Money is not the only reason people are attracted to dealing, however. Selling drugs can generate social status and respect on the street that people cannot find elsewhere (Sandberg and Pedersen 2011). Structural inequalities and limited opportunities can bar people from finding respectable roles in legitimate fields. In this instance, dealing drugs brings not only income but a sense of purpose in life (Bourgois 2003). In other cases, people buy into popular representations of the drug dealer high life, and this is what attracts them to the role (Adler and Adler 1983). For Max, however, it was a little different.

### Max

Max: So, when I moved into foster care things were completely different, I had a totally normal family, I had slipped into a family that I had always wanted, they were just a nice average family they were perfect for me. Prior to being relabelled from a trouble maker I had done a lot of naughty shit, but I never got caught. I think it's a driving force behind what I do, getting a kick out of not getting caught. But once I was moved into care I was introduced to a new social network, I was a clean slate no one knew me, no one knew anything about my past, I was an unknown quantity. I made friends quite easily I found a good position in the social network, it led to my first opportunity to start making money. It was a class mate he gave me a template for printing fake ID, it was on floppy disk this is how long ago it was. I remember him saying "whatever you do don't sell it to anyone else". So, you know what I did, I started making and selling them. I got away with it because no teachers knew about me, there were no adults around who could say "what are you doing?". I made decent money from doing that, that was around the age of 16-17 I started doing it. Two things resonate with me from that time, A) I was making decent money and B) everyone who wanted one licked my ass. It's about giving people things they can't get anywhere else, it raises your status in the social ladder.

Mark: Right.

Max: After a while we didn't need fake ID anymore, were all old enough to get into clubs and we started going out frequently and drinking. It got to a point where me and my mates were getting fucked around by drug dealers cos we were kids they would fuck us around. Keep us waiting on a street corner for an hour and not turn up or we would call them, and they couldn't be bothered to come out and meet us they would turn us down. This was when I realised that I could do a better job and started selling weed.

I was first introduced to Max on a night out in the early stages of my fieldwork. He was a slim chatty white guy with a wicked wit that had me laughing for most of the evening. Max spoke rapidly, dropping ‘one-liners’ at will with the confidence of a seasoned comedian. His eyes glistened as he sat across the table and he sniffed in a way that most people do when the pollen count is high: it was the cocaine. Max was highly intelligent, but he loved the party a little too much. I noticed it then, but he was very popular, he seemed to know half the people in the bar, and he liked it. His charismatic personality and years of dealing drugs had made him a popular person in the party scene. Illicit drugs have an element of scarcity that makes drug dealers sought after people (Werse and Müller 2016), something Max identified early on. The dealer is as important to the customer as the customer is to the dealer. If you have a lot of customers, you can become an important person to many. There is a downside to being labelled as a dealer, however: it can block access to the legitimate sphere and create self-fulfilling prophecies of criminality (Becker 1963). If you are an “unknown quantity” you are less likely to be suspected of crime, making it easier to go about your business. The dealer image is something that must be managed, so it reaches the right social circles.

### *Female Dealers*

The female drug dealers in Red City play more of a marginal role in the drug market. Nonetheless, it is important to consider their accounts as there are particular gender-related factors that impact upon the reasons why they became dealers as well as their positions within the trade. Drug markets tend to be dominated by male figures both in terms of the numbers of dealers and also in terms of the social hierarchy. This is not surprising considering the level of violence that is common in particular segments of the drug trade, especially at the retail, street level. Without the embodied physical capital that male dealers espouse, female drug dealers may be at greater risk of robbery or other threats to their livelihood (Grundetjern and Sandberg 2012; Fleetwood 2014). Nonetheless, females do have involvement in the trade and will distribute drugs in particular circumstances. The following example is taken from an interview with Claire, who distributes ecstasy pills (MDMA):

### *Claire*

Mark: Alright, can you tell me a little about your life growing up?

Claire: Yes, I had a really nice life. Me, my mom, my sister and my dad were really quite comfortable. My dad left my mom when, I think, I was 12 at the time. He had been cheating on my mom, having an affair with someone for about a year. She didn’t have any idea about it, we didn’t have any idea about it. He literally just walked out on Christmas day, and that was it. Going from the perfect family; nice little house just outside of South London, it was in a nice area, and so that was fucking hard. My mom was completely devastated. She refused to ever speak badly about my dad in front of

me and my sister, but I think I was just at that age where I kind of saw the effect it had on her. So, I was much more resentful towards him than my sister.

Mark: So, you just have the one sister?

Claire: Yes just one. She's four years younger than me. So from then, that was just when I was starting secondary school, and I went off the rails (laughs). I would say probably, I got arrested when I was 14 for breaking and entering into a house. I used to get drunk at school all the time, I was smoking weed, drinking a lot. I started really young, in terms of that kind of lifestyle. At the time I didn't relate that to what happened with my mom and my dad but looking back now I think definitely it had something to do with it. For so many years I was in complete denial about that having an effect on me. I was like, "No, it doesn't." And I just shut him out and refused to acknowledge that, that situation having an effect on me. So secondary school I nearly got kicked out just because my attendance was so bad but they kept me there because I was quite academic. I got really good GCSEs considering I wasn't really there at all. I got my first long term-ish boyfriend when I was 14-15. He was a bit older than me, his mom was a drug addict. There were lots of situations where we were really close, he ended up moving into my mom's house. He lived up the road from us.

Mark: How old was he then?

Claire: He must have been three years older than me, which isn't much now, but at that age it was quite a big difference. I think I was 14 when I started going out with him, and he was 17. So I used to spend a lot of time at his house and he had three little younger brothers and a sister, they were quite younger. His mom used to go out and ask to baby sit and she wouldn't come back for three days. So we would just have to deal with that situation. I was kind of around that, and used to that kind of stuff young. I was going to raves when I was around 15 with him and his friends and doing pills, probably when I was 15.

Mark: Really, from him?

Claire: Yes through him, and our mutual friends. I had friends outside of school, who all lived in my area, we would hang out but they were a bit older so they didn't go to school with me. Yes, probably doing a lot of pills by the time I was 16, 10 pills a night, we used to go raving every weekend. Then broke up with him, got into another relationship which was completely different, but we would still go out and do a lot of stuff, we used to smoke a lot of weed. We did quite a lot pills.

Claire began using drugs in her early teens as a coping mechanism due to the traumatic effects of her parents' divorce. The split marks a sudden turning point in life, which resulted in negative behavioural changes that impacted many areas of her life. In a similar manner to other drug users in this study, she began using drugs through her friends. To add to this, she started

a romantic relationship with a boy who also had traumatic experiences in life. Her partner had direct access to drugs and actively encouraged Claire to use them by supplying them to her. Research demonstrates that couples can facilitate use by providing drugs to their partners when they do not have the funds to buy them themselves (Briggs and Monge Gamero 2017). Drugs also have a social element as many users prefer to take them in the company of others (Coomber and Turnbull 2007). If you live with a partner who is also a drug user, this could lead to heightened consumption as there will be someone to share drugs with on a regular basis. Substance use can have a negative effect on relationships, however, depending on use patterns of the partners (Fleming et al. 2010). Claire's drug use was also tied to the Rave scene; a place where people can escape from the troubles of daily life and enjoy the music through pharmacologically attenuated states of mind. MDMA is 'love drug' that creates feelings of happiness and euphoria that may have been missing from other aspects of her life. It was through her romantic relationships and embeddedness with the rave scene that eventually lead to her becoming a dealer:

Claire: Yes, I met a guy when I was 20. He's my longest relationship I've ever had we were going for four years. We had a great group of friends, I met really great friends from him, he was seven years older than me, and had really great friends. They were all older but they were really nice people. They all partied and did lots of coke but they were all much nicer people than what I had hung out with before. Not that the people I grew up with weren't nice they were just a bit scummy, (laughs) basically. They didn't have jobs or anything like that. These guys were really sound and I'm still really good friends with them all now. They are my good mates I'm still friends with. I met a lot of people, when I was 19, 20ish, from Pizza Shop (employer) that were all really sound who are all still my friends now. So that was kind of the age where I met a really good group of people whom I'm still friends with now. I was like living in this small town, kind of place, where all we would do was go to the pub, and get fucked, get coke. Go back to somebody's house and stay up for the night. That was our life for years, you know?

Mark: Sure.

Claire: It was a cycle of doing that, that was from 19, 20 to about 25. I reckon I did coke every weekend for that, unless I was away in another country which was maybe like once a year. I was doing coke every weekend for those five years I think. Not many other drugs, occasionally I'd do MDMA if someone had some, mainly just a cokey lifestyle. There was a little stage when Methedrone came out, one summer when we all did a lot of Methedrone (laughs) which was horrible, at the time it was amazing. We were all like, "We've found the perfect drug." It was great getting high off it, but then it would quickly deteriorate. It was so fucking addictive, really. It was horrible; you can stay up for fucking days on it. It was gross. And also around that sort of time when I started going out with Zack, around 21, I started going to festivals. I got into that Festival kind of lifestyle, I was going to like 6-7 festivals every summer with those guys. Not working, just messing around. And I think with Zack, when I would occasionally start selling a few drugs. For example, Glastonbury we took loads of ketamine and MDMA



to sell. It was just a summer thing; we would occasionally get a bit to sell at some festivals, just to sell to our mates basically.

Music festivals are renowned for drug use, making them ideal places to sell them. They can enable people to make money quickly in a way that does not interfere with their daily life. Dealers may feel less at risk in these environments when the majority of the punters are there to have a good time. Occasional dealers may attract less police attention than those who sell on a daily basis. By going with her boyfriend and selling only to their trusted friends, Claire reduced the risks of her activities even further. However, I have known Claire to sell to friends of friends, provided they have been vouched for. Studies demonstrate that female drug dealers can reduce the risks of being robbed by embodying the image of their male counterparts (Grundetjern and Sandberg 2012; Holligan et al. 2019), enlisting support from enforcers (Denton and O'Malley 1999), or employing heightened secrecy by restricting information and limiting contacts (Hutton 2005). Claire is a white middle-class female who is university educated and, although streetwise, does not embody a 'street' identity. By restricting her operations to certain markets that have non-violent and altruistic cultural features, she can operate with less risk of reprisal and maintain her 'natural' identity. In this respect, trust can be placed in the market itself due to the cultural values that affect the behaviours of people within it. We can thus add an additional level of trust to the framework provided by Von Lampe and Johansen (2004b): 'trust based on market cultures'.

The participants in this study report that females receive less police attention and lighter searches from security staff, making them well suited to carrying drugs. During my time in the field, there were also some cases of female dealers operating in high risk environments. Fiona was a drug runner who worked for one of the lads called Derrick and his crew. She would deliver cocaine around the city, driving around in her car, sometimes alone. Fiona is white, working-class, slightly overweight and embodied some masculine attributes but not overtly so. It was the reputation and backup of her male crew that provided her with safety when she was out on the rounds. Generally, women occupy more marginal positions in Red City's drug trade.

#### Late starters

The majority of the dealers in this study entered the drug market at a young age. However, this is not always the case. Organised crime requires access to resources such as the drugs themselves. If you have no access to a supplier, then it is impossible to become a dealer regardless of what age you are. Teeth and Buster are the only dealers in this study who began selling drugs in adulthood. Their transitions into the market do not represent the typical user dealer scenario (or user-to-dealer as in Andy and Max's case) that is common throughout the study. Furthermore, the drugs they sold were Class-As and at the harmful end of the scale. For Teeth, it was heroin and crack cocaine at the retail level, whereas Buster got in deep trafficking wholesale amounts of heroin and powdered cocaine. How they were able to justify the risks and consequences of distributing these drugs is in question, especially considering the fact they had not sold drugs before.

## Teeth

The first time I met Teeth was in my late teens. His partner Sandra was a friend of Ryan's mum and lived a few houses down from where they lived. Sandra ran a brothel and had personal experience selling her body as a private escort. Her husband Teeth was a black stocky Londoner who had moved into the city after meeting her in a nightclub. Teeth sold heroin and crack and would always have one of his drug runners following in toe. At the time, his runner's name was Baker, a heroin addict with a gangrenous leg who slept in Sandra's shed. Teeth would feed the poor soul scraps of food from his plate and would punch him in his leg if he stepped out of line, causing him to yelp and sob with pain. Teeth was a hardened career criminal with psychopathic tendencies and very little pity for drug addicts. His ability to dehumanise addicts is one of the factors that enables him to participate in this trade without conscience, that alongside his belief in providing a 'good service' due to the quality of his drugs. Whilst he was a dealer when I met him, he had started his life of crime in the motor industry. Teeth speaks with a deep cockney accent, pronouncing each of his words with authority, whilst holding an unwavering stare:

Teeth: Back then you could do a day release from school to attend college once a week and that's when I started doing mechanics, I left school and got an apprenticeship and by the time I was 19 I was a fully qualified mechanic. I worked on trucks, you need the skills to do that and there's a lot more money in it than just working on cars. I've still got all the certificates that I did and I'm quite proud of them. I could always go back to that if I wanted to get away from the dark (heroin). So, I started knocking around with bad company, I wanted parts for the cars, and I didn't have the money so we would steal them. That's how it started. It was easier to break into cars back then, you just hot wire them, no hassle. When we got deep into it one of my boys bought a tow truck and he would just jack up the cars and tow them off. He didn't give a fuck. He would wave to you as your car was being towed down the street and you would never see it again.

Mark: What about the drugs?

Teeth: It all started when I moved up here to Red City, I'd never been anywhere near drugs until that point not even seen them. I went down to this house in Westcroft where a few people were that I know. Baker who I got working for me had got himself into a bit of trouble. Lennox was a big player and was pissed at him over something and they were going to kill him, right there and then. When I walked in the house they had him tied to a chair, they were taunting him, kicking the legs out, beating him round the head. And you know what, I took pity on the cunt, I told them I wasn't going to have that, no one was doing any killing on my watch. I said "he's mine now, I own this man" and they didn't like it but there was nothing they could do. Baker was my entry point, he had been selling dark and knew where to get it. So, I saw it as a business opportunity...

Teeth grew up in what he describes as a good family home with a good education, he left school with qualifications, career prospects and had never been involved in any serious criminal activity before that time. At the age of 16, he began training as a mechanic but did not have the means to buy the parts for his own vehicle as he was still an apprentice. Having got mixed up in a bad crowd, he turned to crime realising he could use his skills to steal cars for himself. He then progressed to the point where he was stealing cars on a regular basis. As the locking systems on the vehicles became more difficult, he decided to move into a less risky line of work when the opportunity presented itself: dealing drugs.

The demand for illicit drugs has generally not wavered over the years, creating opportunities for people to make money if they choose to engage in it. As a staple criminal enterprise, the illicit drug market is often the go-to activity for criminals who cannot make money through alternative criminal pursuits. When safe cracking became more difficult due to technological advances and increased surveillance, many professional thieves switched to armed robbery, before moving into the drug market, as their skills became redundant (Hobbs 2010). Similar examples have been found in other criminal groups: Varese notes how Italy's mafia moved back into drugs after the government had imposed policies making extortion of local business more difficult (Varese 2017). The ubiquity of the drug market is itself one of the reasons why the participants in this study got involved in it. The opportunity to sell drugs is everywhere; all that is required is the correct social contacts or access to the internet.

Although Teeth had been involved in crime for many years, this event marks a significant turning point in his career as he had no previous involvement in the drug market. He was able to capitalise on this opportunity because he had enough criminal capital to save Baker from his attackers. Opportunities must, therefore, be examined within the context they unfold. Furthermore, dealing heroin is not an occupation to be taken lightly, due to the ravenous effects it has on its users. Even if the possibility to sell the drug was there, it is likely that many people would not choose it. Teeth, however, is an individual who cares more about making money than the harm the drug causes. Inflicting pain and having power over others is something he relishes, such 'perks' he would not have found working legally as a mechanic or in other less violent drug markets such as cannabis for that matter (Sandberg 2012). Nonetheless, it would be a gross generalisation to suggest that all dealers who operate in this market are of this disposition. Other crack and heroin sellers in this study did not demonstrate these kinds of tendencies and instead justified their actions by differing responsibility, "if I didn't sell them, someone else would..." is the common line of reasoning. That being said, even Teeth had his own moral code, "I don't sell to kids, disabled people or someone who's never tried it before, if they are really in a bad way and beg me for it, I might give them something else to ease their pain". Whether or not Teeth strictly followed this code in practice is debatable, especially in respect of drug addicts who have become disabled through their activities. Nonetheless, narratives are 'an extremely powerful tool for creating, negotiating, and displaying the moral standing of the self' (Linde 1993, p. 123); however, even politicians may lie to themselves as well as others. As Teeth himself remarks, "people will believe anything":

“the evolution of misconduct from identifiable and culturally intelligible causes positions him/her as less bad or wrong than ascribed labels suggest (e.g., ‘offender’). The ‘whole story’ complicates and historicizes who he/she really is.” (Presser 2009, p. 179).

### Buster

So far, the dealers in this study started their criminal careers in their youth; Teeth was in his late twenties when he became a dealer but had a background in car theft, making his transition into drugs normatively easier. There is only one participant in this study who started out in his adulthood, and that is Buster (someone I met working as a bouncer). What is significant about this case is the seriousness of his offending. He went from a relatively non-criminal background to a wholesale drugs courier responsible for transporting millions of pounds worth of heroin and cocaine:

Buster: I had a really good job when the flats were being built, I was the supervisor for the company, for installations and I was working on the door (as a bouncer) Thursday, Friday and Saturday... So, the drugs (use) start getting a bit more, started to do it like weeknights go out, obviously working on the weekends and I started ended up not turning up for work... I skipped days off and basically, I got reported... I was instantly dismissed from work.

Mark: Sure.

Buster: And then from that the only work I had obviously was the door work, obviously money got tight, and basically, I met a guy working on the door, thinking back now. Over the space of probably about a year was recruiting me as I would say.

Mark: Battering you up?

Buster: Yeah opening my eyes up to like, not giving anything out straight away, just didn't notice it at the time, looking back now and it's like, planting little seeds. And then he started off with a few small little jobs picking people up, “go meet this person, entertain this person for a bit”. The person lived in Sweden and Lithuania for quite a few years, so I knew he had international connections so basically it was like “I got a friend coming over from Lithuania or Amsterdam, entertain them for a bit” stuff like that “cos I'm not available at the moment”. I would take them for coffees and everything else, after a while of things like that going on it was basically laid out in front of me this is an operation that is going on. Um and basically spelled it out. Importation.

The logistics of a criminal operation may require individuals who possess certain skills or are willing to take on risky tasks. Handling and transporting illicit goods is considerably risky, especially when moved in bulk. If an individual is caught with a consignment of drugs, the police will have enough evidence to charge them immediately. By paying couriers and drug mules to take on this role, the risks for key members of the group are significantly reduced (Dorn et al. 1998). Couriers are provided with restricted information about the organisation so have limited use for the police and the organisation can continue to function. The trafficking group who recruited Buster told him just enough information for him to be able to carry out his role. The true extent of the operation was later revealed to him in court in a high-profile case that resulted in the arrests of many of the key members of the group. Buster's job was to meet a contact at London Docks travelling from Amsterdam and pick up their vehicle. The contact posed as a business-woman who liked to shop in London. Buster would drive her car that had the drugs hidden inside to Red City and deliver it to a mechanic who would remove them. He would then take the vehicle and return it to his contact in London.

According to Kleemans, social opportunity structures that arise later in life explain why some people turn to organised crime in later years (Kleemans and de Poot 2008). Without suitable contacts, it would not be possible for Buster to take on this type of role. It has been well documented that the night economy holds the largest market for the distribution and consumption of psychoactive drugs. Night clubs are criminal convergence settings (Felson 2006) that are generally only accessible after the age of 18. This could explain why this type of opportunity was not available to the lads in their youth. The fact that they could not drive would have made this role an impossibility. After losing his job, Buster was in a poor financial position and needed additional income to fund his lifestyle. It was here that his recruiter, whom he describes as "Mr X", spotted the opportunity and introduced him to the operation; this was a significant turning point in his life. The combination of opportunity and financial hardship does appear to be what led Buster to take on the role. That being said, as a user of cocaine, he would have had access to a supplier and potentially could have retailed the drug himself with lighter consequences if apprehended. It was Mr X who took advantage of Buster's position and used neutralisation techniques (Sykes and Matza 1957) to bring him on board without revealing the extent of the risks. It was not until he was arrested that the seriousness of his involvement began to sink in:

Buster: I was charged with conspiracy for fraudulent evasion of importation of class A drugs and they estimated the street value at four million, four hundred and ten pounds worth.

Mark: And how often were these things coming across?

Buster: It depends every two three weeks depending... Basically if I had known, the depth of what I was getting involved in, like I knew it was illegal no point me saying I didn't but when I got into court and they were threatening me with life imprisonment, with a minimum of twelve to fourteen years.

Mark: Fucking hell.

Buster: I was like well, it was really not worth it, the money was like good but that's the other side of it, buttered up and recruited, "oh it takes you two hours".

Mark: Two hours easy money.

Buster: Yeah.

Mark: How much were you making from it?

Buster: About two thousand pound a trip. Yeah, but for the risk that's nothing is it really.

It is possible that what attracted Buster to this role was the infrequency of the drops. His role required relatively infrequent trips that would be easy to hide from his close friends and family. If he had decided to retail cocaine instead, he would have been required to make many transactions on a daily basis, which would have been harder to hide and significantly altered his routine activities. Although the offence was serious, the transition was gentle.

It is interesting to note that Buster's description of events is much more clinical and detached than many of the other participants in this study. It is possible that this is because of his limited immersion in the market and the level of the trade in which he operated. It could also relate to the fact that he was no longer involved in crime at the time of the interview. Teeth's reflections of the past are much more positive, boastful and littered with argot. Teeth is heavily immersed in the crack and heroin market, operates daily and enjoys what he does. Indeed, the framing of narratives and construction of self-identity relates to the likelihood that people will commit crime in the future (Stevens 2012; King 2013; Bachman et al. 2016). When offenders begin to frame their criminal activities in a negative light, they can 'construct a new [non-criminal] view of who they would like to be' (Paternoster and Bushway 2009, p. 1127). (There will be more on desistance in chapter 8).

### *Discussion & Conclusion*

This chapter examined the start phase of the drug dealing career, where the participants in this study first establish themselves as distributors. It aimed to understand how people become dealers of drugs and the reasons why they took this role. The majority of the participants in this study used drugs before they began selling them. They began using drugs in their teens, often beginning with cannabis as this was the drug that was most readily available. It was more culturally accepted and received fewer penalties for arrest. Distribution in youth was mainly in the form of social supply and was not be defined as actual dealing by the majority of participants. The majority of the participants established themselves as dealers in their late teens when they had access to money to buy larger amounts of drugs either through work or the benefits system. Acquiring drugs on credit requires trust and older dealers may feel that youths are too much of a risk (early to mid-teens). Users in their late teens may have been

exposed to drugs for a number of years and benefitted through social supply, making the thought of dealing normatively easier and more appealing. In this respect, there is a slow transition of drift from drug use to drug supply, although by no means all users of drugs ever sell drugs, let alone become regular drug dealers.

Personal circumstances, life experiences, and the opportunities to sell drugs influence whether someone will sell them. Distributors require the correct social contacts to be a dealer, and these are found through exposure to different environments at different age ranges. The extent of policing, and social acceptability of the drug, can affect decisions to take these opportunities. Criminal groups may also seek out suitable targets to take on the riskiest aspects of the trade, as was the case with Buster. This opportunity came to him in adulthood, however, as he made contact with a drug trafficker in the nightclub where he was working. Nightclubs are criminal convergence settings that largely bar young people from entry and limit their criminal opportunities in youth. The youngest person to sell drugs in this study was Wolf, who began dealing hash at the age of 14. This was supplied by his father after Wolf had moved out of his mother's home. It is these close social ties that facilitate entry into the drug market. At around the age of 17, he had been dealing for a few years when he assaulted a "nonce" who had inappropriately groped one of his female friends. Due to the severity of the attack, Wolf gained the respect of some older dealers who set him up with heroin, crack and larger assignments of hash. Hash was the main drug he was selling at this age.

It must be noted that the dealers in this study were interviewed in adulthood and began selling drugs from around the year 2000 onwards. At this time, the internet was in its infancy in comparison to today's standards, as were mobile phones. Indeed, people are increasingly living their lives through social media and can get access to drugs from peers within these sites. There are a number of dealers in this study who communicate through social media by using the messaging service or making phone calls directly through apps, as these can be more difficult to trace if they employ end-to-end encryption (Moyle et al. 2019). Peter (the senior officer) was confident that all forms of ICT could be accessed by the police if they were given enough resources. Yet, he remarked that a single Apple iPhone would cost over £1000 to access. Given the heavy cuts to public services that the police have faced in recent years, they may be fighting a losing battle in this respect (this matter will be discussed in more detail in chapter 7). Nonetheless, entry into the drug market via social media may now be quite common.

Lastly, in recent years there has been an increased focus from the government and media on the relationship between the illicit drug market and the exploitation of vulnerable children; see, for example, the Children's Commissioner (2019) report on gangs. None of the participants in this study employed youths to act as their drug runners. In regard to county lines, it is interesting to note that some participants started their drug dealing careers in rural areas before moving into the city to sell them at a later date. Moving outside of the city to sell drugs was relatively uncommon. Nonetheless, engagement in the drug market does make young people more vulnerable as they try to avoid the authorities and hide their activities. They may consume drugs in places away from adults or guardians who would condemn their drug use. The very illegality of drugs creates the conditions in which people can become victims of crime, as is

the case with Bret who was sexually abused. For the most part, decisions to sell drugs emerged from within the participants themselves rather than from outside sources looking for recruits. Motives to distribute drugs were tied to economic factors and social status.



5) 'Street' Dealing:  
Illicit Enterprise in Parallel Markets

*I pick it up and go back into the room, plain as day. Grabbed him by his hair and push his head back into the chair. With that I put the blade to his temple and start cutting. Now I could feel the blade grinding against skin and the blood starts spraying everywhere. The people there they started laughing cos it didn't look real, they had never seen anything like it before, they thought it was fake blood. They thought it was a fucking party trick. So I think this is really fucking funny, and I'm sawing in deeper, and I'm laughing my fucking head off. I got in real deep and you could see all this white membrane near his skull, so I figured I'd done enough. He can't pay me back if he's dead.*

Introduction

The following chapter examines how drug dealing is conducted in the city streets. It draws upon ethnographic data from two parallel drug markets that sit at opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of their harms and 'legitimacy'. No two drug markets are the same; they each have distinctive features, depending largely on the type of drug sold, their place in the supply chain and the setting in which they operate. This chapter compares the operational structure of two criminal groups; it outlines the risks they encounter and how this affects their visibility and ability to expand. It demonstrates that drug dealing is not a singular phenomenon as it is widely portrayed in the media. Dealers can act very differently depending on the market they are in. Some dealers are highly ethical in their practices whilst others are not (although, this may change throughout their careers). Nonetheless, a drug dealer is a term that has negative connotations no matter what drugs are sold. The street is a place where all types of illicit drugs can be bought and sold, although, certain areas may have a prevalence for certain products depending on their demographic makeup.

Organised crime is a form of enterprise in that it shares much of the same characteristics of legitimate business. It involves the supply of goods and services, albeit illicit ones. According to Smith (1980), illicit enterprises work across a spectrum of legitimacy. Those that are close to legitimacy will function in ways that closely resemble legal enterprises. This is largely due to the 'task environment' which shapes market structures by exerting variable pressures upon them. Indeed, the institutional effects of drug policy and policing differentially constrain drug markets by making certain products riskier to sell. To add to this, some drugs are more socially acceptable to the community who are the primary source of information to the police. Drugs which cause the most amount of harm are generally those that pose the greatest risk, although this is not always necessarily the case. There is, in fact, a whole ecology of risk that relates to what is sold and where it is sold. Class A drugs such as heroin and crack arguably pose the greatest risk for distributors because they are highly addictive, harmful to the community, receive the greatest probability of police intervention and the greatest legal penalties for distribution. At the other end of the spectrum sit semi-legal drugs, such as nitrous oxide, which are difficult to prosecute against and are relatively harmless. How offenders perceive these

risks, however, may not be so clear cut (Gibbs 1975; Jacobs 1996; Jacobs and Cherbonneau 2018).

There is little criminological research that actively compares the structure of illicit drug markets, depending on the product sold. To test Smith's claim, this chapter compares two illicit enterprises that sit at opposite ends of the spectrum. It examines the activities of Teeth who sales heroin and crack, before moving on to discuss the exploits of Max, who distributes nitrous oxide. Both dealers distribute at the retail level.

### Teeth

A few used nos canisters glisten in the gutter as I wait on the road contemplating the night ahead. These are the signs of a drug market that functions healthily beneath the pressure of city policing. The remnant of drug use breaking through the cities' skin like pimples beneath cheap foundation. It is nearing 10pm and I bide my time waiting for Teeth. This is the first time I have been in the field with him since I started the project and he is eager to show me his work, "you been hanging around with all these fucking muppets Mark, I'm gonna show you, what it's really all about". A few minutes later and I look up to see Teeth creeping up the road in an ageing sedan. The paintwork is a worn navy blue that matches his modest clothing. On the surface, it might be easy to assume that Teeth is a poor middle-aged black guy with a beat-up motor he can barely afford, but this could not be farther from the truth. Beneath the hood of the saloon lies a beast of an engine that would put most modern vehicles to shame. Whilst at work Teeth has the look of a pauper, but when he is out in a nightclub, he is a different character entirely: silk shirts, gold and gleam. I get in:

Mark: You alright, how's things?

Teeth: Good, good... listen, I want to give you a real insight into what I do, I've some business to do then I'll sit you down for a chat. I don't like to talk in the car as it could be bugged you never know when they might be listening... Right, first of all we need to pick up Hector, he's my top runner at the moment, then I need to pick some money from this nurse Shelly. You'll see her she's fucking rotten, real shame about that one. Used to have a decent job working at the hospital but she got involved with this bloke. Now he was a nasty cunt, real piece of work, got her on the dark (heroin). Once you go to the dark you don't come back. She lost her foot but that doesn't stop her.

Mark: From shooting up?

Teeth: Yeah, they'll inject anywhere they can, if it becomes infected and you don't sort it, you'll lose the limb.

Teeth takes me on a short drive through a residential zone before pulling in down a side road. A gaunt looking white guy in his early 30s appears from a house with his head held low. He jumps in the vehicle behind Teeth.

Teeth: Mark this is Hector, Hector this is the man I've been telling you about. I'm going to show him what we do and we're gonna have a little chat.

Hector appears to have had a hard life. His face is a pale calloused white with deep wrinkled grooves; dark purple bags weigh heavily under sad looking eyes. I start making casual conversation, and he tells me he has known Teeth for a few years. His face twitches as we speak, and he stammers repeatedly. Teeth's phone begins to ring:

Teeth: "It's me" (pause as there is talking on the other side of the line) "ok I'll make it eleven, five minutes you know the place".

It is another few minutes' drive, and we make the stop. A dark-haired woman, who bares much of the same physical description as Hector, waits impatiently on the side of the road.

Teeth: This is her. I don't really want her getting in the car, she's hanging... yeah alright, let her in.

Shelly gets in the back, and a faint smell of unwashed body and cheap perfume fills the air. She looks over and says hello. It seems she recognises me and starts talking as if we know each other well. Shelly speaks with a strong local accent:

Teeth: Do you know this man?

Shelly: Oh sorry I thought he was your son, I was going to say that he looked like he's got big. His face is familiar.

Teeth: Well there's a bit of a difference (skin colour).

Mark: Ah, don't worry you probably know me from Space. I've been working that club for years, you been there before?

Shelly: I've been there a few times but not for a long while. I bet I've seen you there on a night out but I didn't realise it was you... look I'm not a skank alright, I only smoke a bit of white (crack).

Teeth raises a dubious eyebrow and looks her over with disdain. He puts the car into gear and takes a slow cruise up the road. I look back to see Hector reaching deep into his groin where he removes a few marble sized cellophane wraps. He waits for Shelly to hand him the cash before counting it out and passing it to Teeth. The drugs and money are passed low beneath

the level of the window, well out of sight of onlookers. We drive a few more blocks before letting her out.

Drug dealers aim to carry out their movements in ways that blend into the flows of city life. By picking up customers and dropping them a few blocks away, Teeth is hoping to minimise suspicion from onlookers. If a customer gets in the car and gets out shortly after, it looks, as Max puts it “dodgy as fuck”. To remain ‘invisible’ organised criminals can operate under the cover of activity that replicates the activities of something or someone else. Sacks makes this point:

“the police are occupational specialists on inferring the probability of criminality from the appearances persons present in public places... given the orientation of the police, those routinely engaged in illegal activities will attempt to construct a front such that their routine appearance in a territory will (or can) be treated as a normal appearance of the territory by its patrolmen.” (Sacks 1972, p. 282).

Officers in the city confirm this fact:

Mark: When you're out on patrol, what things are you looking out for?

Officer May: Just people acting suspicious, really. If they're out on foot if they're acting suspicious, hanging around certain areas which you think might be a bit of a drug spot, quiet lanes, vans late at night, two, three in the morning, those vans hanging around.

Mark: Do you try and look at the way people dress and stuff like that?

Officer May: Yes. You shouldn't really but yes, everybody does to a certain degree, yes. Or another thing on the evening if there's a car with three or four people, you'd massively think, "Why is there so many? What are they doing".

The vast majority of investigative work is conducted by uniformed officers like May as part of their normal policing duties. More specialist investigatory work is assigned to detectives who employ more ‘proactive’ measures. ‘Drug detectives spend much of their time trawling the streets for signs of drug market activity, ‘wheeling and dealing’ with informants and using covert and deceptive techniques in order to obtain information on possible operational ‘targets’” (Bacon 2017, p. 26). Detectives on the front-line also work in tandem with desk-based intelligence officers and civilian analyst that are responsible with collecting and analysing raw information. Intelligence can be shared from the top down or bottom up, although this system is undermined due to incongruities between actors, departments and resistance to procedural change (Cope 2004). According to a thirty-year old study by McConville et al. (1991), police investigations generally involve the monitoring of suspect populations of particular social characteristics and known offenders with the aim of constructing cases against them. These actors are often judged to be guilty prior to establishing any proof of their activities. Furthermore, some detectives demonstrate prejudice towards

certain known offenders and pursue personal ‘vendettas’ against them (Bacon 2017, p. 149), which may not always relate to their perceived danger to the public. In this respect the policing of drug markets often revolves around the usual suspects as the police target offenders which conform to their personal and institutional biases:

“proactively, more or less formal decisions will be taken that will result in either information - or evidence gathering operations against specific individuals and/or groups... But if as seems often to be the case, police believe they ‘know’ who has committed some crime or crimes then the objective of information gathering is to obtain not knowledge in the sense of ‘finding out’ something but rather, confirmation of that belief” (Gill 2000, p. 131).

Teeth is well aware of the signs that the police look out for when they are conducting surveillance. This is why he dresses modestly, does not drive a flash vehicle or wear jewellery when on the job. Teeth is known to the police, however, having spent time in prison for drugs, making his efforts at blending in more difficult. By having Hector carry the drugs and make the transactions, he is also reducing the most-risky element of the business, a technique used by many drug traffickers. The difference in this instance is that Hector knows Teeth personally and has built a level of trust, whereas drug mules and couriers such as Buster (see chapter 4) are generally given limited information about the core of the criminal organisation. Drawing upon the work of Williams (1990), Gambetta (1990b) argues there are four central factors that underly cooperation in any human activity: coercion, interests, values, and personal bonds. Teeth works across all of these dimensions with his drug runners but with a specific focus on (economic) interests and coercion. His runners benefit economically from their actions by working in exchange for drugs that they otherwise could not afford; however, they are bonded by debt which is enforced through the use of violence. The primary issue for Teeth is ensuring his runners remain loyal and do not act as informants for the police. Yet, because drug addicts lead chaotic lives, engage in crimes such as robbery and take on the risks of handling drugs, this makes them more likely to get arrested. Such actors rarely work for the police out of goodwill and are pressurised into doing so through the threat of legal sanctions (Bean and Billingsley 2001; Bacon 2017). This can override any loyalties they have to their supplier, especially where personal bonds are weak, and distrust has been fostered through violent coercion (Gambetta 1990a; Tzanetakis 2016).

The conversation I had with Shelly is interesting because she did not want to be seen as a heroin user but was content to be seen as someone who smoked crack cocaine on occasion. People construct their identities through the narratives they provide to others. The narratives of drug users contain ‘symbolic boundaries’ which locate them within desired social groups, whilst distancing them from those that are deemed less so. According to Copes et al (2016), this boundary work is a normal aspect of social interaction but is especially important for those within stigmatised social groups. In these settings, however, boundaries can have an adverse effect in that they can facilitate drug use and constrain recovery. Evidently, Shelly had attempted to provide a positive image of herself by describing herself in this way but was, nonetheless, addicted to crack cocaine.

After making the drop we head into town, Teeth has decided the best place for us to talk is in a bar - somewhere we can relax and have a drink. It is a ten-minute drive before we reach the city centre and I busy myself making small talk. We eventually arrive at a well-used multi-story car park. The dilapidated condition of the stairwells speaks equally of drug use. A secluded space with some protection from the elements making it a convenient place to deliver injections and bed down for the night, albeit without sanitation. Teeth stops us before we get out of the car; it seems it is time for him to make a demonstration:

Teeth: You see Mark, Hector here he does everything for me, he checks my money, counts it makes sure it's right. He will do anything I want, and when I say "anything" I mean anything. I don't open doors he does, that's why he walks in front, you'll see... Hector, we're gonna go to the bar, and you know how I like to look when I go out, and right now I feel a bit scruffy.

Hector: That's no good.

Teeth: No it's not. See the thing is it's my shoes, there's a bit of dirt on them and I can't have that.

He reaches into the glove compartment, pulls out a pack of wet wipes and hands one back to Hector.

Teeth: Here you go, that's right come round here and clean my shoes.

Hector pauses for a brief moment before getting out of the car. He walks around to the driver side where Teeth is waiting for him. I can see the look of shame on his face as he gets on his hands and knees and starts scrubbing. A couple of minutes later and Teeth tells him to stop.

Teeth: "Alright that's enough... See I told you, Mark, he is mine. Anything I want doing he will do it for me. I own you don't I Hector".

Hector: Yes. Uh, yes Teeth.

The fact that Hector is addicted to heroin and crack gives Teeth significant power over him. The withdrawal symptoms from these drugs are severe and kick in rapidly. Addicts will go to great lengths to reduce the pains of withdrawal even if this means becoming servants to drug dealers like Teeth. Teeth provides the drugs on credit, keeping his runners continually indebted to him. He then assigns them with tasks, as a form of employment, to pay off what they owe. Teeth combines this debt bonding with psychological manipulation and physical violence to keep them under control. These are the techniques that drug dealers use in the so-called phenomena of 'county lines' (Coomber and Moyle 2017): a policing concept constructed on stereotypes to suit their agendas. One minute he is all niceties and treats his runners with kindness and respect, at others he is mean, cold and threatening. Teeth relishes the power he has over his runners and has no pity for their plight: he bears all the characteristics of a

psychopath. This type of ‘modern slavery’ is endemic within this marketplace, but like Teeth, the public has little pity for drug addicts and treat them with contempt. It is this stigma and marginalisation that contributes to feelings of shame in the drug user that worsens their condition (O'Connor et al. 1994; Accenture 2015) and subsequent servitude.

Hector gets up off the floor and dusts himself off; his eyes glisten with tears. We take a short walk to the bar, and I notice how exceptionally aware he is of the environment around us. He continually scans for signs of police and opportunities to steal things. Hector picks up on the smallest of details, body language, facial expressions, clothing, and feeds this information back to Teeth at regular intervals. This type of environmental scanning is a common technique used by burglars to establish their targets, something which Hector is well versed in. Drug addicts often resort to thievery in order to fund their habits, resulting in increases in burglary in drug-ridden neighbourhoods. Hector trades the stolen items for drugs, giving Teeth a ready supply of illegal goods which he fences off for a profit. In areas where addiction is rife, the informal economy can become flooded with these items, deflating their value (Wright and Decker 1994, p. 184). The fact addicts are desperate for their fix often means they will sell or trade them at a low price for a rapid turnover. Hector opens the door for us as we arrive at the bar; we walk in to find it relatively busy. Teeth points to a quiet corner, and we take a seat:

Teeth: Hector, get us some drinks what do you want Mark?

Mark: Pint's fine cheers.

Teeth pulls out a small wallet from his pocket as Hector gets in the round. He flicks it open, showing a thick wad of cash and a number of credit cards in other people's names. One of them is Hector's.

Teeth: See Mark, I don't keep anything in my name, I sub-let I'm not on the voters list, even the social (social security/DWP) don't know where I live. I've put myself down as homeless. I don't use any of my cards, I use my friends' cards. I use their own money to pay for things and sometimes I'll get them to put money in their account for me.

Mark: Right, so you're using your runner's cards and your customers, the people who buy from you, I guess you give them some money back right?

Teeth: No I don't give them a penny. I'm meeting someone later, he's crazy a mad man, not right in the head, you'll see what I mean. I get £200 every week from him, that's his money from the social. That money goes to me, the other goes to me. I take everything they've got.

Mark: How do they survive?

Teeth: If you're hungry, you'll find a way. Dustbins mainly, they eat from the bins.

The pains of addiction make Teeth's clients fully complicit to his demands and enables him to use them as conduits to cover his activities. Credit cards are designed to allow people to make payments without having to carry large amounts of money, but this has a downside. It enables criminals to gain control over other people's finances and launder their funds. Depositing money in other people's accounts is a common technique used by criminals to launder cash and is relatively unsophisticated (Levi 2015). Such straw men are often friends and family members, people within one's immediate social circles. People who can be trusted and agree to help for a fee. These ties are strengthened through personal bonds and mutual economic interests whereby enablers do not necessarily need to know the criminal activities they are supporting (Gambetta 1990b). Providing limited information not only protects the core of the criminal organisation (Dorn et al. 1998; Matrix Knowledge Group 2007); it can also protect those on the periphery who may feign ignorance to the authorities. These actors might still be required to prove they received the funds legitimately, however (Johannes Teichmann 2018). Teeth has used similar techniques by registering his home address and the cars he drives in someone else's name. He owns an expensive Mercedes convertible, which is registered to a family member. He never drives this car in the city. Hector arrives at the table with the drinks, he takes a seat next to me and continues to keep a lookout:

Mark: You ever have any problems with people owing you money?

Teeth: Not so much anymore. There was this one guy owed me a few grand, he thought he was right funny. I found out he was saying shit about me behind my back, talking it up, that he was never going to pay and there was nothing I could do about it. I got a tipoff that he was at this house party, went in with one of my runners and there he was sitting in this chair, high as a kite. A few girls and some other people were there doing drugs, and nobody realised what was about to go down, they didn't have a clue. First thing I do is I go straight into the kitchen, laying out on the side is one of those knives, you know the long ones with the rough jagged blade?

Mark: A bread knife.

Teeth: Yeah, a bread knife. So, I pick it up and go back into the room, plain as day. Grabbed him by his hair and push his head back into the chair. With that I put the blade to his temple and start cutting. Now I could feel the blade grinding against skin and the blood starts spraying everywhere. The people there they started laughing cos it didn't look real, they had never seen anything like it before, they thought it was fake blood. They thought it was a fucking party trick. So I think this is really fucking funny and I'm sawing in deeper and I'm laughing my fucking head off. I got in real deep and you could see all this white membrane near his skull, so I figured I'd done enough. He can't pay me back if he's dead. With that I take a step away and told him that he made a real bad mistake fucking with me.

Mark: No shit.



The supply of goods on credit is common to most illicit drug markets. Keeping customers indebted is a sure way to keep them loyal. Customers appreciate being able to get drugs when they do not have the funds to buy them, and once they have settled their debt, they may need to borrow more. The targeting of finances has become a significant tool for the police in disrupting criminal operations. According to Naylor (1999), ‘follow the money’ is a key rhetorical device guiding law enforcement agencies aiming to ‘hit criminals where it hurts most’. This approach assumes that once criminal assets are seized (if they actually have any), the perpetrators will have difficulty continuing operations in the future, whatever sentence they are given. It is well known that drug dealers can rely on credit and often do so. If their assets are seized, however, they can simply increase the size of their loans, providing their creditors are willing (Levi 2015).

Because loans are made through informal agreements, there is no legal recourse that drug dealers can appeal to if their customers do not pay up. In these cases, drug dealers rely on violence, or the threat of it, to ensure that debts are paid. By going to extremes, criminals not only punish the transgressor but also send a message to deter others from taking the same action. The reality is that these violent events are less common than one might assume, but those that are leave a legacy to deter others later down the line (Reuter 2009). Violent acts become glorified in stories that are regurgitated by criminals on a regular basis. The more exotic the story, the more it catches the imagination, and the more likely it is to be passed on through social networks. ‘The offender like everyone else, acts in ways that are mindful of ‘the narrative possibilities’ of the action. In acting, one is playing out a moral tale of some sort, one that posits its protagonist as a particular sort of person’ (Presser 2009, p. 185). Avoiding violent confrontation is preferable as it can become deadly for both parties and draws unwanted attention from the police. Avoiding police attention is one of the primary reasons Teeth restricts himself to the retail market:

Mark: So, in terms of levels of your business, where would you situate yourself.

Teeth: I’m local level, I know some people who are far up in the chain, some smugglers but I’m not interested in going up that high. It’s a big risk and the police get excited when you go to that level. I could move up if I wanted to no problem, but you know, why fix a bike if it’s not broken. I know how to work the game and I do it well, it’s enough for me. I’ve got a good life, I’ve got money, I can relax, read the news, sleep in, have a siesta, I’m happy.

Mark: You get much problems with the police?

Teeth: Sometimes. You’ve always got to be careful but the cops you got to watch out for are the ones who don’t follow protocol. There was this super cop I used to have a problem with he was a real nasty piece of work, had a PhD and all that so he knew the game real well. This cunt would appear from nowhere he would just keep popping up. One time they caught me and I’d thrown the drugs on the side of the road, but they didn’t see me do it. I got arrested again and the next day I got to see my brief (solicitor), he tells me

the good news is I'm not going to jail today. The thing with the police is they are all about box ticking. They got to have some form of physical evidence to do you. You got to build up a rapport with them, make them like you, make them feel good about themselves. The guy who was interviewing me I could tell he liked me. So, I'm chatting to him, and I put my hand out for him to shake it. Now that's a show of friendship. He took my hand and all of a sudden, he puts my car keys down on the table, then he puts my £400 that I had on me down and four mobile phones. I was out the same day. He told me my car was parked outside of the police station.

The police interview suspects to gather information to build their cases. Not all suspects are guilty of an offence, but those who are may look to find ways to convince the officer that they are not guilty. By building a rapport and demonstrating friendliness, Teeth was hoping to display an image of an honest, law-abiding citizen. Someone who had nothing to hide. A show of nervousness and hostility in the suspect may be a sign of someone who is hiding their crimes. Rapport is defined as "a relationship marked by harmony, conformity, accord, and affinity" (Bernieri et al. 1996, p. 110). It is a major investigatory technique used by the police to gather information and is believed to be the most effective tool in successful interrogations (Vallano and Schreiber Compo 2015). By getting the suspect to talk freely, it is hoped they will reveal incriminating information as they become more relaxed, open and cooperative. The point here, however, is that if a criminal does enter into a state of rapport without incriminating themselves, then the officer may believe they are in fact, innocent. This is a skill that requires someone who will not get flustered or tripped up by police questioning. It may be something that comes naturally or something that is learned. Indeed, criminals with higher verbal intelligence are more likely to avoid arrest for their crimes (Boccio et al. 2018). Furthermore, the more exposure one has to difficult situations the more they feel at ease with it; as therapists who deal with phobias are well aware (Muris et al. 1998). This may make career criminals exceptionally proficient at this performance, yet their criminal records may cheat them of any law-abiding image they hope to portray. Teeth, however, went to extreme lengths to develop a positive image of himself, and even signed up to volunteer within the third sector:

Teeth: Before I went to jail I did a bit of voluntary work, it gave me insider's perspective on what they do, I was up working in the police station where they keep all the radios and that, they didn't have a clue how dirty I was. I wanted to build up a good profile to keep the police off my back and it looks good if you go to court. But the Judge put a stop to that, he had one look at the papers and thought this doesn't ring true, he wasn't stupid he knew what I was up to, so he made them disappear. I hadn't been in any sort of trouble for ten years; he knew something was up with it.

Mark: Right.

Teeth: I didn't do the voluntary work for very long, but I did enjoy it... I used to do a bit of counselling, they put me on a five-track counselling course, so I did a bit of that. The good thing about voluntary work is a lot of women sign up for it, they do it to build up their career and there weren't many guys there, especially not many black guys like me.

There was two blokes and fifteen women, and they were curious about me. Yeah, I had a couple of them, took them out and showed them a good time, obviously I had to be careful with what I told them, but people will believe anything.

Covert strategies are not only restricted to the police or researchers such as me for that matter. In this instance, Teeth went undercover and infiltrated the criminal justice system through his role in the third sector, to gather information and build a humanitarian, law-abiding image of himself. Going undercover is a conventional technique that the police employ to gather information on criminal groups. Undercover officers will need to create a false identity to do this successfully. This means employing contextually appropriate clothing, language and adopting the lifestyle of their given role (Dorn et al. 1992). The police are also known to create false social media accounts to gather intelligence (Guardian 2017). Teeth does not use any form of social media specifically for this reason. Drug dealers such as Hector pride themselves on being able to identify signs of undercover operatives. If an officer is to pose as an addict, having a dishevelled appearance may not be enough to quell suspicions. This may mean that they have to engage in criminal activity, something which can be evidentially problematic in court as well as ethically questionable (Joh 2009). Indeed, the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, which set the legal framework for carrying out covert operations, gave ‘considerable latitude to authorising officers and thus allow[s] them to legitimise illegal activities that are deemed necessary and proportionate’ (Bacon 2017, p. 201). This includes the unofficial ‘licensing’ of criminals, whereby informants are permitted to continue their criminal activities provided they work with the police and provide information (Reuter 1982; Bean and Billingsley 2001; Bacon 2017). Such practices, however, are highly unethical. It remains to be seen whether this will be changed by the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 and its subsequent regulations.

As for Teeth, voluntary workers are perhaps the least likely people to be suspected of dealing heroin and crack cocaine but getting this close to the police is risky. A heroin dealer named Rocco did not need to employ such extreme measures. He had a contact in the police force who gave him the heads up when the police were conducting drug raids in his area. The officer in question was a friend of the family. It is these close social ties that facilitate corruption of official actors (Rose-Ackerman and Palifka 2016; Albanese 2018).

We spend a few hours at the bar talking about Teeth’s exploits before moving on. We visit a few other venues before he finally decides to take me home. Hector points out a few expensive bikes locked to a railing as we walk back to the car. He weighs up the difficulties in stealing one. With the right tools it would take him a few minutes he explains; fortunately, he does not have any at hand, “what we used to do when I was younger was get an aerosol can on it, that would freeze the metal and then you just hit it with a hammer to break it”. A few minutes later and we are back at the car. Teeth makes a couple more drops on the way home; heroin, crack, and the odd zopiclone as an added extra to help his customers sleep. It is now 2am and the streets are relatively deserted. A police car passes slowly on the opposite side of the road. The officer turns his head towards us. He seems to be scoping us out.

Teeth: Hector get your head down and get ready to run.

Mark: What's up, you worried they might find what he's got stashed there?

Teeth: Nah it's not that. In this game you only carry what you need, and Hector can stick a tennis ball up his arse if I need him to. One of my old runners could swallow a whole durex condom full of drugs. One time he had swallowed a lot of my gear and he couldn't get it up. The dick head says to me that I'm going to have to wait for him to pass it. I told him your having a fucking laugh aren't you? So, you know what we did?

Mark: What's that?

Teeth: We gave him the bleach. We mixed it up with a load of salt and some other nasty shit and made him swallow it.

Mark: I bet that worked?

Teeth: It worked alright. You should have seen his face after he had the bleach, he was as white as a ghost (laughs). The problem with Hector is he is a bit of a celebrity. The police are after him for two armed robberies and I don't want them to see us together. They've got nothing on him, but I could do without the heat.

We drive a little further up the road and Teeth looks back in the rear-view mirror to check if we were followed.

Teeth: Do you think that was Smith, Hector?

Hector: Couldn't tell

Mark: Who's Smith?

Teeth: This copper he's a bit of a jobsworth. I only usually get stopped twice a year but since he's been on the scene, he's stopped me three times this year already. Last time I just pulled over as soon as I saw him. I'm not going to take any chances though.

Teeth makes a sudden turn down a side road; he drops a gear and puts the pedal to the floor. The modified engine kicks in and I'm pinned to my seat as the car speeds forward - 40, 50, 60, 70 miles per hour and still climbing. The residential houses become a blur around me as we hit the 80 miles per hour mark. We reach a road with a slow arcing bend, but due to the speed, Teeth has to cut across and drive in the oncoming lane. All the while, he has a calm relaxed demeanour, without even the slightest tension in his face. I can tell he is enjoying the demonstration. He makes a few more gut-wrenching turns as he navigates his way through the city streets and drops his speed.

Teeth: See this is why police don't fuck with man. Back in London, I used to be a getaway driver, that's where I learned to drive like this.

There is an element of excitement in living on the edge that Teeth clearly enjoys. The sensual attractions of doing evil, as Katz (1988) puts it, motivates criminals in ways that economic explanations of crime cannot account for. These motives are rooted in the experiential 'foreground' of the criminal act, whereby offenders push risk-taking to its limits. Those who work the edges play on the boundaries between success and failure, employing well-honed skills to achieve the spectacle of their craft. It is this artful mastery of the criminal act at its most dangerous form that fuels the experiential adrenaline surge that these 'edge-workers' crave so highly. Research in this field has been taken up most readily by cultural criminologists of the left who reinterpret these acts as a form of resistance to the repression of capitalist society. The excitement of edgework is counter fact to the drudgery of labour (Lyng 2004; Ferrell 2005). This may be true of the lads' experience (see chapter 4), but in this case, there is something more. Organised crime has been defined as a script in that it has a number of steps and sequences that must be completed for the offence to be accomplished (Cornish and Clarke 2002). The script is like a movie script, as it will have a range of actors and props (tools), which are assigned into certain roles. The example of the late-night getaway demonstrates that events within the script cannot always be predetermined. A certain amount of improvisation is required to manage situations that arise in situ. Risk-taking in some parts of the script may also be necessary to reduce risks in others. Teeth's high-octane police evasion was a risky endeavour that saved himself and the passengers of the vehicle from police questioning: an ethical dilemma I appreciated not having to engage with. Furthermore, associating with criminals who are under investigation, or known to the police, increases the likelihood that one will become a police priority (Bacon 2017). It is also likely that Hector had given some of the goods from the robbery to Teeth to be sold on; hence, why he was so keen to get away.

### Max

Having discussed some of the aspects of the heroin and crack trade, the next section of the chapter looks at an entirely different drug market in the city, nitrous oxide (nos). Nitrous oxide is a drug that is fairly benign, it is relatively harmless and is not physically addictive. The effects are short-lived as the drug is eliminated from the bloodstream within minutes. Whilst the user is heavily intoxicated after inhalation and will experience dizziness and distortions of vision, there are little side effects to the drug (Nutt 2012). This is the gas that is given to women who are birthing to control their pain. In regard to the law, it can be sold for catering purposes without a licence, making dealers difficult to prosecute when it is sold illegally for human consumption. At the time of writing, there have been no successful prosecutions of illicit sales of nos in the UK, making dealers of the drug relatively immune from the authorities. In Red City, the drug is consumed recreationally at nightclubs and house parties, alongside other party drugs such as MDMA, cocaine, and of course, alcohol. A number of street vendors sell the drug outside clubs on weekends; however, since the Psychoactive Substance Act 2016 has been introduced, the police have been cracking down by stopping street dealers and confiscating

supplies. There are also a number of enterprises that will deliver the drug and required paraphernalia (balloons and dispensers) on demand. Max is one of these people and counted himself as one of the largest suppliers in the city. In his eyes, his business was entirely legal. He registered his sales and paid his taxes. The following account is taken from my time spent with him in the field:

I take a seat on the auburn two-seater sofa in Max's lounge as he potters around cleaning up the kitchen. He owns a modern two-bedroom flat that was recently built on the outskirts of the city. Max is in his early 30s and has been running the business for a little over a year after having invested his funds from drugs. His primary motive for this transition was to protect his daughter. He worried that he might end up in prison but felt he could not go back to working for someone else. He enjoyed the freedom of being his own boss. Somehow, Max needed to find a way to continue his lifestyle in way that was not going to get him arrested. He saw a gap in the market and capitalised on it. It is around 10pm, and Max's work phone is a little quiet, he is a little concerned about the lack of business but explains people are saving their money after the Christmas 'blow out'. It seems that New Year's Eve was a very busy night for Max, although, it did not come without fault:

Max: Ah mate New Year's Eve was a fucking nightmare, I had all my staff on but one of their cars broke down at 11pm just as it was kicking off. It's one of those things there was nothing we could do about it, he called out the AA but they weren't able to fix it on the spot, so I was a man down.

Mark: Fuck, so what happened did you have to turn people down or?

Max: Nah it was just a case of telling them they would have to wait an hour and a half but by the time we arrived their phones would be off, and we missed loads of deliveries. I usually give people a hard time if they cancel but I couldn't say anything, we missed out on money and it damaged the reputation which is something I've been building for a long time. People see our service as better than our competitors as we are more reliable.

Max prides himself on his quality of service, and it is this that he believes has made him so successful. A large majority of his customers are repeat purchasers and have built a positive relationship with his business over time. Research on the fast food industry has demonstrated that customer satisfaction is essential to long-term success of the business. 'High customer satisfaction leads to greater loyalty, which in turn leads to future revenue' (Gilbert et al. 2004). Customer satisfaction relates to what is sold and also how it is sold. In illicit drug markets products are often adulterated by suppliers in an attempt to increase profit margins (Caulkins 2007). Nitrous oxide is almost impossible to adulterate at this level. Legitimate wholesale manufacturers compress the gas into small canisters for one-time usage. The mark up on the drug is significant, making it a lucrative product to sell without adulteration. In this respect, the product will always be of a certain standard regardless of who distributes it.

Nitrous oxide suppliers compete by aiming to provide a superior service than their competitors, namely through availability (providing a twenty-four-hour delivery service), price, and speed of delivery. Interestingly the major suppliers of nos in the city did not try to undercut each other and pitched their products at the same price. The matching of product prices within supermarket stores has been demonstrated to keep market prices high (Hess and Gerstner 1991). Undercutting rivals can lead to a price war, reducing profits for all parties (Rao et al. 2000). It may, therefore, be in their interests to match the prices of other suppliers rather than undercut them. We get on to a conversation about Max's staff. Max informs me that he only employs friends and people whom he can trust, but this has its difficulties:

Max: It's hard because I don't like having to tell them off, but sometimes I have to talk to them like a cunt to get them to listen. If people fuck up there has to be repercussions, else people know they can take the piss and get away with it. It's good working with friends because I know I can trust them more or less, but it means that I find it hard to get staff sometimes. I had a guy who approached me and started asking loads of questions about the company. He said he worked for one of my competitors but felt they weren't treating him fairly and was asking if I would give him a job. I didn't give him much information about the business as I don't like to give information out especially if my competitors get hold of it and are able to use it against me. I talked with him for a long time on the phone and mined him for information. He sounded good and I could use someone like that, but I find it hard to trust people. I think it's trust that enables me to run better. If my competitors find out how I run business I don't want them to perform better. I can't risk outsiders passing on the structure of business to our competitors.

Mark: Do you think that limits how much your business can grow if you can't get the extra staff?

Max: Yeah it does, one of my competitors has franchised, he's set up outside Red City, he's got business in two other cities. There's a financial incentive to get others on board.

Trust-based employment is a persistent trend across illicit drug markets (Von Lampe and Johansen 2004a). Whilst Max contends that his business is entirely legitimate, he runs the operation with suspicion and is highly risk averse. One of the primary reasons that Max entered this market was that it was less risky in terms of prosecution than his previous work in the illicit drug trade. While these markets rely on trust to function, they are inherently marked by distrust. Robbery in the drug trade is common as is infiltration from the police (Jacobs 2000). Max traded the potential of increasing the efficiency of his business to maintain its security (Morselli et al. 2007). He was concerned that the person who contacted him might pass on 'trade secrets' about his business conduct. The relationship between secrecy and trust in Max's enterprise revolved around the need to maintain a comparative and competitive advantage in the industry, rather than protection from the law. The protection of methodological trade secrets is seldom discussed in the literature on trust in criminal markets (e.g. Gambetta 1990b; Von Lampe and Johansen 2004b; Taylor and Potter 2013; Moeller and Sandberg 2015; Jaspers 2019). This is likely because of the types of risks involved in the criminal activities they are referring to, which are not directly applicable to Max. The legal protection of intellectual property is essential to the success of many legitimate businesses (Risch 2007); however, this is not a

recourse that is available to drug dealers, even semi-legitimate ones. Whether or not this is an issue, may depend on the market itself; crack dealers may be more concerned with avoiding police attention than their competitors knowing their strategies.

The barriers to setting up an enterprise like Max's are relatively low: all that is required is some level of economic resources and technical skills or contacts to set up a website. One might ask why other drug dealers do not migrate to this industry, considering the risks of what they do. One possible reason is that criminals work with a bounded rationality and can become locked into pathways based on their past histories and current environment. Making a leap into a different line of business may seem difficult, or it may not even be recognised as an option at all:

“The options available for current decisions (opportunity set) are, therefore, neither independent of individual history (the past) nor from the specific social environment and social configuration in which he/she lives. Thus, even a perception of the future might be partially conditioned by past behaviour. In other words, at an individual level, some form of path dependency may be prevalent.” (Anxo and Erhel 2006, p. 10).

The phone is still quiet, and one of Max's members of staff is about to finish the shift without much by way of sales. Max begins to pace the living room like a caged animal. He checks his phone repeatedly to see if any new orders have come through.

Max: I need to have people on even if it's quiet just in case it picks up: but I'm worried that my staff will be averse to working if their last shift was shit.

Mark: You pay them commission don't you, so I guess when it's dead they don't make much money?

Max: It's true but I was speaking to one of the guys who works for someone else and he gets a flat hourly rate which is good when it's quiet but when you're busy you aren't being rewarded.

Max's staff get paid on commission, which he believes makes them work harder when nos is in high demand. If one of his workers makes more drops within the hour, they will get paid a larger amount giving them an incentive to reach his customers in short succession. This is similar to the taxi industry, whereby drivers aim to get more profit by increasing the number of fares within the hour (Zhang and Ukkusuri 2016). In the fast food industry, delivery time has been closely related to customer satisfaction (Church and Newman 2000), even long before the Deliveroo and UberEats 'revolution' (Dablanc et al. 2017). The illicit drug market is no different, whilst some users may buy their drugs in advance, the vast majority purchase their drugs around the time in which they wish to consume them. This is demonstrated in the table below. Max provided the sales data that he used mainly for tax purposes:



Figure A

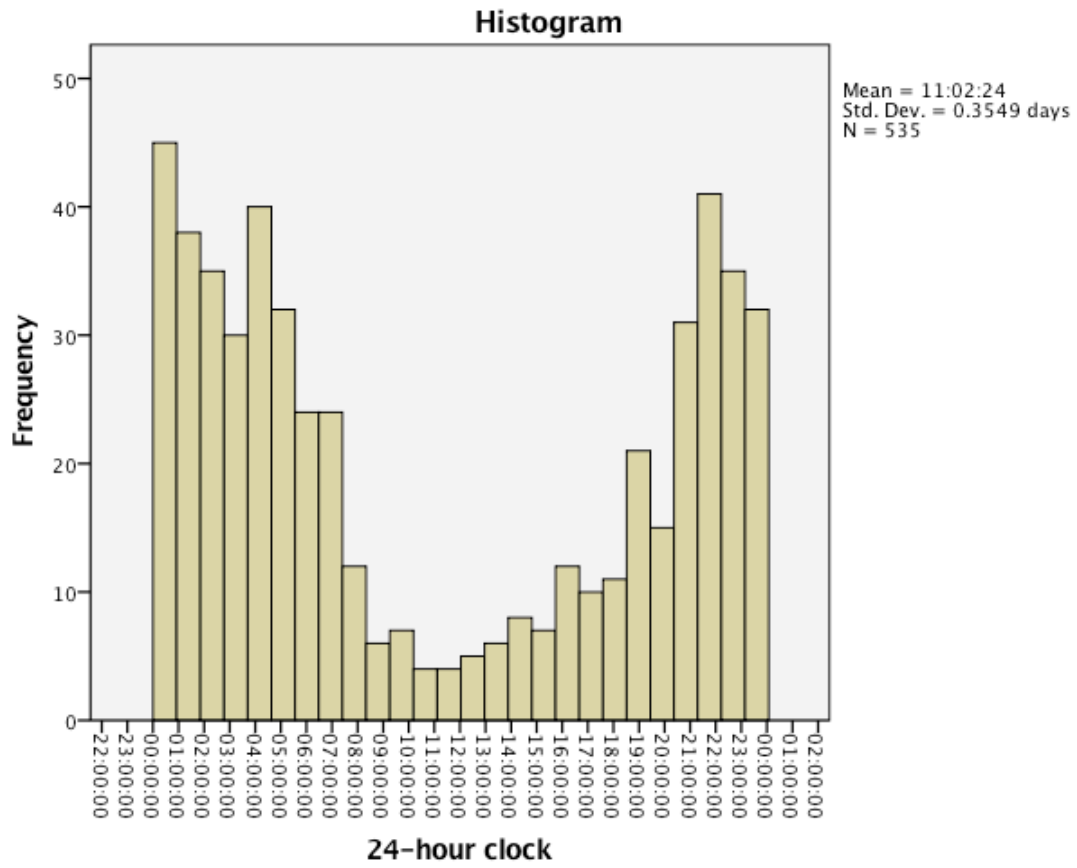


Figure B

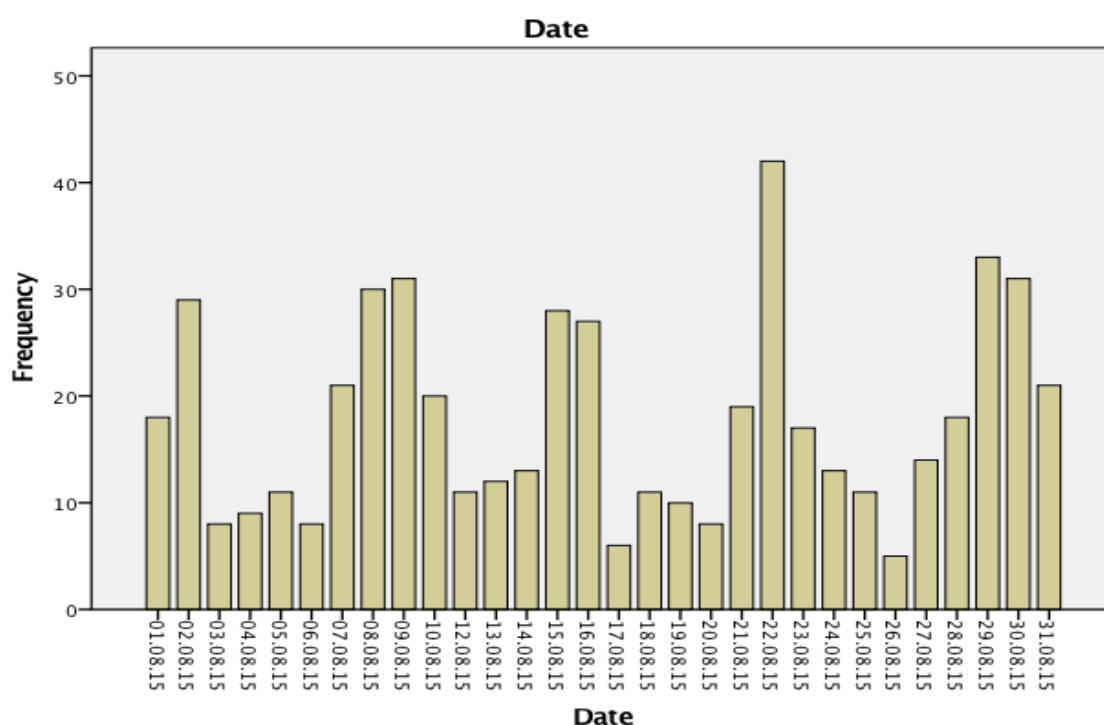


Figure C:

Descriptive Statistics						
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
In Pound Sterling	535	5	150	17372	32.47	19.493
Valid N (listwise)	535					

Figure A displays the average number of nitrous oxide sales per hour over a twenty-four-hour period. Figure B displays the total number of sales per day for the month of August 2015. The highest peaks in sales are during weekends (this trend was observed across all psychoactive drug types in this study). Figure C displays the total number of sales for the month of August 2015, which equates to £17,372. In Figure A, the highest peak in sales is around 00.00 hours, at around 04.00 there is another peak in sales which Max attributes to people coming home from nightclubs: “we get a business pick up when they can’t get their hands on any illegal drugs. We get a pick up around 4/5 in the morning, for them it’s better than nothing”. The majority of clubs in Red City close at 04.00 on weekends; there are a few that close later than that but most people choose to go home around this time. There are not many retail dealers of Class A drugs who will be out at this time as they will have already had a busy night and would have made enough profit to satisfy them. Driving around selling drugs at early hours is risky because there are fewer cars on the road, making it difficult to blend in.

The phone rings suddenly:

Max: Oh, here we go “Hello Nos Man”

Female Customer: “Hello can you deliver to East Way?”.

Max: “Some areas we deliver to some areas we don’t, depending on how far it is you might have to pay a £5 delivery charge. Can you tell me the postcode... Yeah that will be a fiver delivery on that one and it would be about an hour before we get to you”.

Female Customer: “That’s ok can we have four boxes please?”.

Max: “Yes you can, that’ll be four boxes for £35 plus the £5 delivery charge, for an extra fiver you can have another box, we do 5 boxes for forty?”.

Female Customer: “no thanks just four is fine”.

Max: “No problem if you can text me through your name, address and postcode and we’ll be right over to you”.

Max answers the phone with a polite but professional tone. He speaks relatively quickly as to not block the line from other potential customers; however, orders can be made directly through his website. Max gives discounts for larger amounts as an incentive to buy more, and always offers these deals when taking orders over the phone. He purchases the drugs at £5 per box and is making a significant profit. I notice he raises the pitch of his voice ever so slightly when making the offer. He does this in an attempt to make it sound more appealing, “we do five boxes for forty”. Max informed me that he had created sales scripts for his staff to read when they are working the phone lines. Max’s script is designed to get as much money as possible from the customers, whilst also providing a method of questioning that checks their age. Max does not sell nitrous oxide to people below eighteen years of age, a personal choice. The sales techniques that he uses are similar to those that are found in call centres. Research in this field demonstrates that customers will generally form their opinions of a company based on their interactions with agents on the phone. High-level communication skills are essential to making sales (Brown and Maxwell 2002) but can be assisted through the use of scripts, which is a distinctive feature within this sector (Taylor and Bain 1999; Woydack and Rampton 2016).

Max calls his runner Tom, who is about to come off shift and explains that a long-distance order has come through, “it’s a long-distance mate but better than nothing” he remarks. Tom accepts the order, so Max sends over the details via text message. He works with two phones, one for incoming calls and outgoing receipts to and from his customers, whilst the other is a direct line to his staff. Each of his team is provided with a mobile phone for the shift along with a hands-free kit, should they choose to use it.

Max: I might have to sort him out, top him up a bit just to say nice one for being available. I like my staff to feel valued, there's a fine line between telling them they are really valued but at the same time I can replace you. If you make them feel valued, they are more likely to fall in line when you need them to buck their ideas up.

Another call comes in:

Max: "Hello Nos Man"

Male customer: "Hello do you sell nos?"

Max: "Yes we do what are you after?"

Male customer: "Can I have one box?"

Max: "Sorry but the minimum order is £20 is that ok?"

Male customer: "Yeah alright mate can you deliver to Rawling?"

Max: "Yup that's absolutely fine, text through your name, postcode and house number and we'll be with you in 40 minutes".

CALL END

Max: That's another indicator of how old they are if they ask for just one box, kids don't have a lot of money to spend. You could tell he was over 18 though just by listening to his voice.

Mark: So why don't you sell to under 18s? is it a moral thing or is it because you don't want to get into trouble for it?

Max: It's a bit of both, the last thing I need is for newspapers to catch us selling to under 18s but there's also a moral side, and a third side in that I want to run this business as legit as possible. The morality side is a thing is also a thing of not wanting my staff doing something I wouldn't do myself and I don't want staff going all the way out somewhere for nothing. The other thing is as soon as one group of kids gets away with it, they all try. I'm also a parent and I wouldn't be happy if it were my kids doing it. All in all, I'd say it's 70 percent a business concern and 30 percent morality. I won't let greed cloud my judgement.

Mark: Right.

Max: In how people perceive us, most of them are recreational drug users, we get a business pick up when they can't get their hands on any illegal drugs. We get a pick up around

4/5 in the morning, for them it's better than nothing. Most people think we are just drug dealers, there have been plenty of times when people have been surprised or shocked at just how transparent we are, we're not shady and this helps our image and impacts on payment. Some people don't want to make card payments because they think we could rip them off. People are surprised we do card payments; it adds legitimacy makes it seem more socially acceptable. I've become a bit desensitised to what I do, but when people ask, I'm normally cagey.

The legal age for drinking and smoking in the UK is 18 years of age. In America, most states have set the age limit at 21. Critics of these policies assert that age restrictions equate to a deprivation of liberty and an overly paternalistic form of state governance. Yet, there is significant evidence from psychology and neuroscience which demonstrates that people do not reach cognitive maturity until the age of 18 with further brain development until the age of 21 (Morain and Malek 2017). Young people are more likely to engage in risky and harmful activity as is evident in offending rates that peak in the late teens (Farrington 2011). The argument here is that minors do not have the capacity to make entirely rational decisions, and thus must be protected by the state until they are at an age in which they can. Moreover, taking drugs such as cigarettes at a young age may lead to a life of addiction and ill health. The problem with any type of regulation is that the people may seek alternative sources of drugs from the black market. It is doubtful that all dealers would be as conscientious as Max, due to his high level of visibility and personal moral code. Nonetheless, there was one occasion during fieldwork where Max sold to an individual who was 18 years old but had friends in the street who looked younger. It is possible that the customer was also purchasing the drugs for his friends (a tactic that also applies to otherwise legitimate drugs such as alcohol). Max explained that he felt uncomfortable about the sale and had considered refusing it. It is likely that such events had occurred previously; however, Max had not mentioned this in the interview. Indeed, what is not said may be equally important as what is said, when constructing 'moral versions' of the self (Petraki et al. 2007).

Max calls Tom regarding the staff take-over; Jerry is just about to come on shift. It seems that Tom has gone home with the second set of keys for the office. Max has an office located in the city centre, a place that enables his staff to pick up stock during the night, relax and use the bathroom if need be. Tom is just about to go to bed, so he suggests that he leaves the keys under his dustbin for us to pick up later in the night.

Mark: So how does it work then? Do your staff take any of the incoming calls?

Max: I am the gatekeeper for the jobs that come in online or phone, I can be a bottleneck for the whole operation. When I'm not on I need one person in charge to delegate to others to tell them what to do. That can be me or someone else. I have two guys who work in the week, but I do weekends when it's most busy. My social life has suffered because of it. I'm looking at restructuring, so I get some time off, but I need someone with the same skills as me to step in, but they need to have the finger on the pulse. It's tricky and would rather just deal with accounts and stock can't be fucked with delivering anymore. Time is precious and I'm spending too much of my life dedicated to delivering nos.

Mark: So how do you know when a job is completed? They just text it through do they?

Max: The texts come in to confirm the job is done. I have a vigorous system in place to know where everyone is. I can be a bit of a control freak, but it enables me to run the business well, my staff get annoyed with my attention to detail they just don't get it. It's the tiny things that are most important as soon as you let small details slip it can snowball.

As the business is relatively above board, everything is logged both digitally and on paper. This gives Max the opportunity to control his overall operation in ways that other drug dealers cannot. When he is on shift, he is the central point of command for the business. He has complete control over incoming orders, which he sends out to his runners who complete the jobs on his behalf. Max does not supply nos on credit, so does not need to worry about enforcing loans and his staff are paid in cash after completing the shift. Max informed me that if there was a problem with his staff getting robbed, he would have no issue going to the police. The mechanisms of social control are much more formal in his line of work. Max's phone beeps again an email order has come through:

Max: Right we are going to take this one. I'm gonna take a piss before we go as I don't know how long we will be on the road for.

Mark: Yeah, I think I'll do the same.

We make our rounds to the bathroom before heading out to the car. The seat on my side of the vehicle will not go down any further because Max has crammed some boxes of nos beneath it. The boot of the estate is also stacked to the brim, making it a hefty load. Evidently, he is not concerned about trying to hide the drugs from the police. I clamber my way in, pull out my notepad and begin taking notes. Max punches the address into the sat nav and we head out. When I look back up, I realise we have covered a vast distance in a very short time. I check the speedometer to see we are breaching 60 in a 30 mile per hour zone. Max juggles two mobile phones whilst working the gearstick and steering wheel. He takes calls and texts orders to his staff whilst driving.

Mark: You ever worry about your speed?

Max: Excuse the driving mate, driving like a cunt is part of the job (laughs).

Mark: Do your staff answer the phone whilst driving?

Max: Yeah, they have to answer calls whilst driving but I've set them up with hands free kits, it's up to them if they want to use them. I take that risk, but I'll understand it if they don't want to and won't try and push them to do it. If they want to text or talk whilst driving, it's up to them.

Mark: Where we off to?

Max: Mills Road and then there's another come through at Bentley Square.

We arrive at the first destination in short succession. Max gives the customer a call to tell them we are outside.

Max: "Hello mate it's Nos Man I'm outside".

The first customer approaches the car; a spritely looking hipster in his mid-twenties. A well-groomed beard covers his jaw. Max winds down the window and starts making small talk. He puts on a warm smile as he makes the sale. The customer speaks with middle-class accent of estuary English:

Max: Hello mate how are you doing are you having a good night?

Male customer: Yeah just getting ready for a night with my mates, thought I'd get some balloons in.

Max: Well you've made the right choice there. How was your new year and that?

Male customer: Ahh it was really good I spent it with my family. You been busy then?

Max: Nah it's after Christmas so it's a bit quiet, so are you out tonight then?

Male customer: We're staying in, smoke a few joints and a couple of balloons, could be doing worse stuff.

Max: How are you paying cash or card?

Male customer: I've got a card is that alright.

Max: That's fine mate just pop your card in there.

Max pulls out a mobile card reader. The customer gets out his card and types his pin code into the machine.

Max: You want a receipt, I can text it to you or email?

Customer: Text is fine cheers.

Max packs a navy-blue carrier bag with nos and matching blue balloons. He hands it over to the customer through the window of the car.

Max: There you go you've got one, two, three, four, five boxes and some balloons. Have a good night buddy.

He pulls out a clip board and logs the sale.

In the final phase of the sale, Max gets to meet his customers face to face. Taking orders over the phone gives him the opportunity to offer deals and discounts, whilst aiming to present a positive image of the business through his friendly tone of voice. When he meets the customers in person, he has more time to talk, so builds up a rapport with his customers in an attempt to establish a positive relationship with them. Max has a detailed knowledge of the night economy, such as what events are on and who the artists are. He is able to relate to his customers well. In sales literature, this is described as 'psychological similarity' (Duck 1994) which leads to an 'authentic understanding' in which a 'service provider and client engage in self-revelation, expend emotional energy, and connect as individuals' (Price and Arnould 1999, p. 92). These relationships can develop over time as stakeholders interact through repeat transactions. Ultimately, positive rapport increases sales (Gremler and Gwinner 2000).

### Discussion & Conclusion

This chapter examined how drug dealing is conducted in the city streets. It compared two parallel drug markets that sit at the opposite ends of legitimacy. The drugs in question were heroin and crack cocaine, and nitrous oxide. The markets contrast in terms of the classification of the drugs, the harm they cause and also the public opinion of them. The chapter demonstrated that drug policy and policing priorities affect the ability of illicit enterprises to expand in terms of the amounts of product sold, their geographical reach, and also in terms of their numbers of staff. This also relates to their level of visibility: enterprises closest to legality can openly advertise their services without being pursued by the police. The police have limited resources and often target drugs (and their suppliers) that are perceived to cause the most amount of harm to the community and can be effectively controlled.

The first section of the analysis was dedicated to the activities of Teeth who distributes heroin and crack at the retail level. His account demonstrates the harsh reality of those working as drug runners at the lowest end of the distribution chain, as well as those who are purchasing the drugs. Addictions can be crippling, leaving those who have them open to exploitation and violence. As drug addicts live chaotic lives and struggle to control the amount they consume, they generate significant debts which they must work to pay back. To keep his runners in line Teeth employs extreme violence and psychological manipulation, "*you know the thing about pulling teeth. You gotta get right up into the root, and if they aint screaming you know you aint doing it right*". For Teeth, violence was not purely instrumental; there was a level of enjoyment in causing pain and having power over others. Conversely, these traumatic experiences compound addictions and strengthen bonds to the marketplace. The heightened level of concealment due to the risk of arrest and negative public opinion of drug addicts makes



violence more commonplace in this market. Drug addicts are also less likely to go to the police for help; however, they can become enlisted as informants if they get caught for crime.

Max's operations, on the other hand, were highly visible. The deficiency of regulation allowed him to operate openly and advertise his services. Indeed, his business replicated legitimate business almost perfectly and reflects what a legal drug market might look like in the UK. He could have encountered issues if people owed him money as he would not have been able to use violence against them. This would have given the police the ability to prosecute him. Nonetheless, using a legal recourse to resolve his problems would have been difficult as his business was semi-legitimate. Ultimately, he preferred to avoid police attention. This chapter demonstrated that relationships around trust vary depending on the type of product on sale and the extent to which drug markets are policed. Like Teeth, Max found it difficult to place complete trust in his drug runners, but for him, distrust was necessary to protect his operational trade secrets. Trust functions in ways to promote the survival of enterprises from both the police and other predators. Whether this relates to concerns about businesses being shut down or out-competed is dependent on pressures in the field.

To resolve issues around credit, Max did not give drugs out on loan. Providing drugs on credit gave Teeth more control as it kept his clients loyal and indebted. If he did not, it is likely they would have gone elsewhere due to their need to resolve their withdrawal symptoms. I did not find one case of nos being given on credit in all my time in the field. That is not to say that it does not happen, but if customers cannot afford the drug, it is likely that they will be content to go without considering its short-lived effects and its non-addictive nature. Nonetheless, nos attracts an entirely different clientele and is extremely popular with the student crowd who usually have some form of income even if it is limited. Overall, Max's business was considerably humane. His runners were treated with respect and paid fairly. There was an atmosphere of positivity that surrounded his operations in terms of the way he interacted with clients and his staff. This element of pleasantries was not only a personality trait but a selling point and key to the success of his business. By keeping his staff and customers happy, he ensured they would come back to him. This is not to say that Teeth was not concerned about the happiness of his staff and clientele. Like Max, he would give better deals to those who bought more and provided added extras such as zopiclone to help his customers sleep. Teeth's clients, however, had different expectations from their environment, violence being more common to them.

In terms of expansion, Max kept his enterprise relatively small compared to other legitimate enterprises and employed six members of staff. Nonetheless, he counted himself as the "number one supplier of nos" in the city and had enough staff to cover the demand. He could have expanded further and reached out into another city like his competitor, but that would have meant having less control over the operation from the top down. If his staff did not operate by following his guidelines such as not selling to minors, or filling taxes, it could have attracted police attention. Teeth also decided to keep his business small with one or two runners working at one time. He had no plans to move up to wholesale level or spread out geographically to other local areas or out of the city. The only dealer who reported setting up an ongoing illicit

enterprise in a rural area outside Red City was Wolf. In this case, it was growing cannabis at a friend's house, and the relationship was not exploitative.

Criminal groups can struggle when setting up in other areas as they may not have the same network of reliable contacts to draw upon (Varese 2011). It is likely that the phenomenon of moving across county lines to expand the scope of retail distribution is restricted to a small section of the drug market and reflects normal distribution patterns across the country. Many drug dealers do not need to expand in this way to make money, and expansion creates more risks. Exploitation of vulnerable people does happen, but again is mainly restricted to the heroin and crack market and is not a new phenomenon as it is made out to be by the press.

This chapter confirms Smith's argument that criminal organisations work across a spectrum of legitimacy, however, in the case of drug markets, it is not only the task environment and the type of activity that determines the structure of operations. Illicit drugs have varying degrees of addictive properties making staff members more or less exploitable depending on the product sold. It is important to note, however, that although these markets are considerably different, they also share a number of similarities (as they do with many legitimate businesses).

6) Organised Crime in the Night-Time Economy:  
Drugs, Vice & Violence

*The blood starts flowing and he's just standing staring with his hands out to the side, fists clenched, now this crew from London they thinking this guy is mad, you know he smashed himself in the head. And Zia just went for the guy, rushed him to the floor, and the rest of the security they jumped on him tried to beat him from the back, now he just destroyed this guy that was under him. This guy was the biggest guy, the toughest guy, the leader of that gang. So, he just start demolishing this guy, he's on top of him, biting him, ripping his face to pieces so when he actually finished the guy just had bite marks all over his face, his neck, completely knocked out. So Zia got up he had blood all over his mouth, his face and he's screaming "come on who wants it, come on next one", and they thinking this is fucking cannibalism he's eating somebody, he's a different level of the game now. So it's not just punching and knocking people out, he punching and biting peoples face off and he's standing screaming his head off "who's next?", so I think that just sends a message through the whole rave.*

Introduction

The next chapter of this series examines a setting where perhaps the greatest amount of psychoactive substances are consumed. Driven largely by commercial interests, the night-time economy is a place of consumption and hedonism that actively encourages the transgression of its clientele. The private sector largely controls the monopoly of violence in this sector by employing bouncers (door supervisors) to maintain order and keep the venues safe. The door supervisor is a job that requires the use of physical force and an ability to resort to violence when necessary. Because of this, people who are skilled in violence are often attracted to the role (Winlow 2001). Through the 1980s and 1990s, bouncers in Red City were typically local hard men, many of which originated from criminal family firms. Those from a criminal background were well suited to the role, due to their proficiency in violence and level of social status they carried within the local community (Hobbs et al. 2003). Yet with criminal actors populating positions of power, the night economy became a breeding ground for criminal activity to flourish. To resolve this, the government introduced the SIA licensing requirements so that all door supervisors would have to undergo a training program and be free of a criminal record to work legally (Pratten 2007). This was an administrative approach to reducing 'organised crime' that attempted to bar criminals from working in this sector. Nonetheless, there remains little academic research in this field to assess the level of criminal activity today, particularly from door supervisors themselves. The following chapter provides an insight into the workings of the illicit drug trade within this sector, drawing upon fieldwork and interviews with bouncers and drug dealers.

The expansion of the night-time economy has been an unrelenting force in the UK which has filled the gap left by deindustrialisation in major cities (Tutenges et al. 2015, p. 129). In light of this, the UK government has pursued a 'liberal approach to alcohol and entertainment licensing... designed to attract mobile capital' and future investment (Hobbs et al. 2000, p. 704). This change is symptomatic of wider deregulation of businesses in the neo-liberal

capitalist era underpinned by an ideology of free-market competition and the drive for consumer spending. The use of recreational drugs within this environment is inextricably tied to this process (Ayres 2019). Alcohol is the most widely consumed drug in the club scene, which is largely responsible for increases in violent crimes and hospital admissions on the weekend. Excessive drinking culminates itself in a culture of intoxication that has sparked concerns in the media as a threat to the moral order and a drain on public services (Measham and Brain 2005). Indeed, perhaps the biggest difference between illicit drugs and alcohol in the night economy, is their legal status.

On the other side of the coin, the regulation of security services in this sector has increased, aimed at curbing its most criminal and disorderly elements. Established with the legislative framework of the Private Security Industry Act 2001, the Security Industry Authority is responsible for regulating private security in the UK. The SIA is a nationwide body that replaced the 'door supervisor registration schemes' (DSRS) under one centralised system. The DSRS received a number of criticisms due to irregular licensing practices between local authorities and was in need of reform (Hobbs et al. 2003). The SIA has two key roles: 'one is the compulsory licensing of individuals undertaking designated activities within the private security industry; the other is to manage the voluntary Approved Contractor Scheme, which measures private security suppliers against independently assessed criteria' (SIA 2019, p. 1). The SIA thus provides a harmonised vetting system designed to weed out criminals working on the front line (as bouncers) or running security companies themselves. Those with a criminal record can still be granted a licence if a sufficient amount of time has passed since the offence. This system has been criticised, however, because criminal records do not necessarily equate to future offending, they 'are merely presumed indicators of risk' (Lister et al. 2001, p. 372). Having a criminal record or not, licences do not stop people from engaging in criminal activity once they have been granted, nor do they stop offenders setting up companies in other peoples' names. Indeed, a review of the effectiveness of the SIA found 'evidence of an organised crime threat being already evident in the form of shadow company directors, extortion and infiltration of legitimate operations' (Home Office 2017, p. 10). In this respect, the licences may have more of a symbolic use in terms of showing that something is being done rather than enacting a positive transformation of the industry (Hobbs et al. 2003). It is within this liminal environment that bouncers enforce 'their own informal and pragmatic techniques of containment which conform to the demands of commercial and cultural, rather than legally justified imperatives' (Hobbs et al. 2002, p. 352).

There are two primary ways that illicit income can be gained as a security provider in night-time economy: 1) through the provision of security services obtained through illicit means (extortion) and 2) through the distribution of narcotics. In the first instance criminal groups may target specific clubs that are known to have weak security teams. They will send in their crew to cause havoc and assault the security staff with extreme violence. After having demonstrated their capability, they will then offer their services to the club in an attempt to replace the previous security providers (Hobbs et al. 2003). More pervasive criminal groups will provide security staff as well as controlling the drugs making substantial amounts of money overall. 'Control the doors, control the floors' is the expression used to describe this type of activity (Police Research Group 1998, p. 8). These criminal power structures are not always readily knowable to newcomers seeking to establish themselves, however, which can lead to disputes.

*Ade - the Iranian 'Mafia'*

The following accounts are taken from Ade, who has been working in the security industry in Red City since the late 1980s. He has a deep historical knowledge of the sector, providing crucial insights into the changes that have occurred before and after the licences were introduced. Ade is tall and at the age of 50, is very muscular for his age. His English is excellent having spent most of his life in the country, but he still retains a soft Persian accent. Ade was originally born in Iran, but his family fled during the Iranian revolution with his father (Ebrahim), mother and brother (Kamin). Ade's father was well respected in Iran; he was a professional heavyweight fighter, a 'community man' that resolved issues in his area due to the absence of protection from the state, something that is common in developing countries (Gingeras 2014). When the family arrived in the country, they had no money as their father had been conned by a trafficking group who had promised to send his savings. With destitution setting in, Ade's father looked for work using the only resource he had, his physical capital:

Ade: Ebrahim came from a different background so guys in Red City they see him as a father figure, as an older uncle because he didn't like criminal activity. But he was a tough dude, he came from old school background in Iran and to be a heavyweight fighter to get trained in Iran is a different matter. They give you a certain type of background, of both mentally and physically you be tough. So, he's got this mentality to him crime is hurting you and vulnerable kids, drugs, gambling, but fighting if you helping somebody else is not a crime. That's not bad, that's good to help the weak people or beat the bullies up, so some of the bullies must get punished. They believe in fear and control in the middle east they truly believe in punishment to the highest level, so for him security was perfect.

Ebrahim found work in a local nightclub and quickly built a reputation for his fighting abilities. He set up a gym and before long people from all over the city were coming to him to resolve their disputes, even the local police. As in Iran, he commanded significant respect in the community. When Ade and his brother were old enough, they too became bouncers having been taught by their father to fight professionally from a young age. Although they never engaged in the drug market directly, they became mixed up with serious gangsters in the night economy who would draw on them for physical support. For Ade and his family, it was about respect, it was never about money, and if you were a bully or challenged their authority, they would come for you:

Ade: So, we start having experiences with people out of town, people coming to these places, popular places and they don't really know who you are and they're young people so they come in with a lot of attitude and it's a club land, club world, so people drunk and intoxicated and they got drugs in them now. I think we were more looking for these type of people, because it gives you that challenge, you know the winning, you know it's a war so we get a buzz out of it. So, we start dealing with these people, fighting with these people. It got to the point we need to have protection now because they can't beat us physically, they gonna go get weapons. So, now they get some guns and come back.

So OK, that's like quite easy, we get some guns, so people around us they just got them anyway. The life becomes very, very dangerous now.

Reputations must be established and reaffirmed, and they only travel so far. When people from out of town came to the clubs Ade's crew frequented and worked in, they did not show them the level of respect they were used to and at times would challenge their authority in an attempt to construct legitimacy of their own (Lauger 2012). Ade's crew would use this opportunity to establish themselves as leaders through acts of violence. These encounters sent a message to both newcomers and locals, affirming their position in the social hierarchy. The escalation in violence led to an arms race, and their activities became deadly. Their willingness to literally fight to the death, however, earned them significant respect in the night economy and people enlisted them for help earning them contracts to provide security. Their reputation for violence was transformed into commercial value (Marsh 2016). In the early 1990s, a close family friend of Iranian descent was approached by someone running illegal raves out in the countryside. Like them, Zia was an expert in violence, but readily engaged in organised crime as an enforcer:

Ade: These raves are all coming about, so they go up and next thing you've got twenty thousand people turning up buying tickets, it's a lot of money to do that. So, they had to use different security teams from different parts of the country. The guy running the night, he got a couple of people who was sponsoring money into the raves, as you need a lot of money to set it up, so he was friends with them and they had a criminal background. All the money was coming from the top drug dealers they had a lot of money. In the rave days there is always drugs, there's music, its outdoors, it's in a farm, there's a lot of drugs. The drug dealers come in; they selling the drugs from the south east, south west, up north, north west, all coming down to make money, there was a lot of money and cash involved so everybody was getting paid. The drug dealers come in to sell the drugs and it's our job to stop it but they didn't know who these guys were (Ade's crew) just a big group of guys walking around telling people what to do and what not to do, some of the other security from London see there's an opportunity: we can let the drug dealers in, tax them, get the money out of them and allow them to sell it.

The night economy is a place where illicit income can be generated but also laundered. Drug dealers can set up nights or entire festivals using drug money to pay for expenses. Not only is the cash cleaned this way, it is also a way to generate additional revenue. During my fieldwork, I also found accounts of drug money being laundered through bars; owners put money through their tills and write it up to their accountants as legitimate sales. The money goes in dirty and comes out clean. Cash businesses are one of the most common ways to launder money and the technique is relatively unsophisticated (Levi 2015). By placing a 'tax' on drug dealers instead of refusing them entry from the establishment, bouncers working at these events can also accumulate cash without having to directly sell drugs themselves (Police Research Group 1998). If they catch a dealer that is not working with them, they can take their drugs and pass them on to the dealers who are:

Ade: So, Zia went and stopped some of these drugs dealers, they selling drugs and mugging people, and cos there's a gang nobody have the balls to go to them and ask them anything or say anything. So Zia went in there with Ethan (who runs his own security company), so they go in he says "you can't do this"; he takes the drugs, and slapped the guy up not knowing these guys are connected to some of the security from London. So, these guys come over and they wanted to fight with Zia, but that's what he really wants to start a fight just to make sure everybody knows, and he would just tell you straight "yeah my name is Zia and let's get it on". Now these guys from London are rough, you imagine ten big black guys all of them bodybuilders. So, Ethan is thinking "shit, we need to get some backup to deal with this"; they had no weapons. Ethan was only carrying a mag light, you know it was dark, in the field, Zia and leader of this crew are standing there. Zia pulls this mag light from Ethan's hand, brings it up and smashes it down over his own head.

Mark: Fuck.

Ade: The blood starts flowing and he's just standing staring with his hands out to the side, fists clenched, now this crew from London they thinking this guy is mad, you know he smashed himself in the head. And Zia just went for the guy, rushed him to the floor and the rest of the security they jumped on him tried to beat him from the back, now he just destroyed this guy that was under him. This guy was the biggest guy, the toughest guy, the leader of that gang. So, he just start demolishing this guy, he's on top of him, biting him, ripping his face to pieces so when he actually finished the guy just had bite marks all over his face, his neck, completely knocked out. So Zia got up he had blood all over his mouth, his face and he's screaming "come on who wants it, come on next one", and they thinking this is fucking cannibalism he's eating somebody he's a different level of the game now so it's not just punching and knocking people out, he punching and biting peoples face off and he's standing screaming his head off "who's next?" so I think that just sends a message through the whole rave.

Zia's capacity to resort to extreme violence in the face of adversity earned him a significant status in the criminal underworld as well as within the police force, and eventually found his way to an international most wanted list. Success in the underworld is often determined by violence or at least its credible threat (Gambetta 2009, p. 78). I was told that notorious gangsters of the likes of Paul Massey would not even look him in the eye when they were dealing with him. That being said, Ade's perspective of Massey was somewhat different from those presented in academic literature (See: Varese 2017; Campana and Varese 2018). To them, he was just a low-level hooligan, and in Ade's words, "not much to look at". Eventually, Zia was deported from the country and now is responsible for coordinating organised crime in Spain after spending many years in a middle eastern jail. His tastes for violence, however, was not the only thing that made him successful; he was charismatic, intelligent and witty. As Marsh remarks; leaders of the underworld are men of 'supreme confidence who possess a sharp, alert, and insightful mind' (Marsh 2016, p. 190). Zia could settle disputes across the country without having to rely upon others for backup. According to Varese (2011), criminal groups can

struggle when migrating to new areas as they do not have their local resources at their disposal. Zia transcended this barrier by gaining the respect of local criminals and targeting those who were known to have a reputation. Those who defeat the toughest not only removes the competition ‘but advertises himself as an adequate protector’ (Gambetta 1988, p. 140).

In the late 1990s, a well-known gangster from London by the name of Wyatt Douglas started to muscle in on the night economy in Red City with his crew. Wyatt engaged in a number of serious crimes, from kidnapping officials to trafficking drugs, but settled in the night economy extorting local clubs before setting up some strip clubs, brothels and a security company of his own. According to Hobbs et al. (2003), security providers can experience difficulty when trying to establish themselves in other cities where there is a heightened level of criminal activity (especially those that are attempting to provide a legitimate service). As outsiders, criminal groups can be easily pushed out by local criminals who have greater resources at their disposal (Morselli et al. 2011; Varese 2011). To overcome this, Wyatt targeted clubs that were not controlled by any of the major security providers and instead sought to make allegiances with them. He also buffered his crew with local security staff who already had ties within the city. An early Home Office report by the Police Research Group (1998) (conducted around the time that Wyatt moved into Red City) proposed a number of actions to reduce criminal activity in the sector. These ranged from the greater use of undercover officers, increased inspections from local authorities, and a split team of door supervisors from local and non-local sources. As can be seen, however, if the non-local security team is of a criminal background with significant force behind them, this can introduce problems where there may have been none previously. This report was written before the introduction of the SIA, which has a more stringent vetting system. Nonetheless, such criminal activity is still evident (Home Office 2017).

When he arrived in the city, Wyatt became acquainted with Ade and his family and had a great deal of respect for their father. He was careful not to upset them, but an incident in a nightclub between Ade’s brother Kamin and Wyatt’s crew left Ade with a gunshot wound to his shoulder. Kamin had got into a fight with one of Wyatt’s gang not knowing they were his boys; they had never met before. Kamin called Ade who arrived on the scene within minutes, something which earned them the name ‘the Iranian mafia’, a title that Ade no longer takes very seriously:

Ade: The guys on the street, because I had a lot of friends who go round with me, so they call us the Iranian mafia (laughs), you fall out with one the rest of them was gonna get there. And there was at the time honest to god we get nine guys in less than five minutes, be there and they will fight they don't care what the fuck is gonna happen, so it was a little bit tribal they were tribal, deeply rooted. That’s the way we gotta look after each other, nothing to do with the money or drugs or territory, it was just like “you disrespect us, you don't like us, you are bad, we are good, lets fight” it was as simple as that.

Mark: Like a mafia is supposed to be like this big corporation, with loads of foot soldiers, right?

Ade: Yeah, but with us it was all to do with friendship and love I remember me and Jahan, or Izad, or my brother Kamin it was different it was like blood. So, it doesn't matter if you get shot on the street that’s my blood so I could die for you it’s as simple as that no questions asked. Or with Izad it wasn't about getting paid or, he was just as friend, but he stood next me when it was happening. Six people with guns and you know they



letting off shots and one of them shot me in the shoulder, he said “I'm not going anywhere if we gonna die, we die together”, just purely because of loyalty and friendship and love. I love this guy I will die for this guy, simple as that, so that gives us an edge over Wyatt and the rest of the criminals out there because they were doing it for money. So the people who went round with these guys if there was no money there they would go home, they would go with the next crew “fuck it I'm not making anything this is stupid”, but my friend would go to jail because we were fighting because he wants to protect through friendship and loyalty and very old school tribal animal.

The conflict between Wyatt's crew and Ade's family had been a case of mistaken identity. Wyatt was mortified when he found out what had happened and proceeded to pay the family to make up for the damages or risk his own life. Ade's father had been making plans to hire a hitman from Iran to assassinate him but settled for payment. Ade refused to testify in court and informed the police it had been an accident but never revealed any names. The police made their assumptions and believed a turf war had broken out in the city between an Iranian mafia and a London gangster. The mysticism surrounding the event and the family's reputation fed into policing intelligence. Officers from the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) strongly believed that Ade's father was a ‘godfather’ and named him as such, a criminal patriarch in full control of all the criminal groups in the region with significant influence across the country. Indeed, the social construction of organised crime is heavily influenced by American cultural products (Hobbs 2013, p. 11). Iconic Hollywood movies such as *The Godfather* still find their place in the imaginations of the police and policymakers, an institutional dogma based on fiction. Like the Italian mafia, the families' reputation exceeded its ability, but they definitely were no ‘paper tigers’ (Reuter 1983, p. XI). Nonetheless, even academics can make the mistake of likening their participants to fictional characters in this way. In Bacon's (2017) UK ethnography of undercover policing, he used the pseudo names of several characters from the famous American TV show ‘*The Wire*’ (2002).

Ade's crew was bonded by friendship rather than enterprise, and this is what gave them their strength (Von Lampe 2016). Ethnicity did have a part to play, but not all members of their crew were from the middle east. Some were local hard men who trained in their father's gym and ran security companies of their own. They were anti-crime, anti-drugs, but in their eyes, violence was not criminal, and their reputation was worth dying for (Marsh 2016). Perhaps the only person in their crew who has risen to the status of the mafia is Zia. After many decades of involvement in crime, he is one of the top players in Spain. Zia is worth many millions and has a fleet of foot soldiers at his disposal. As can be seen, violence and criminal activity was rife in the night economy during the 1980s and 1990s, but from 2000 onwards things began to change.

Mark: From your experience, do you know is there, this sort of level of people coming into raves or wherever selling drugs or people trying to take money from people, crews coming down taking over, is that still happening or do you think it's changed?

Ade: I think that's all gone now, I think the game has changed, the technology now, so a lot of things that were happening in the 80s and 90s you would not get away with it now, purely because of the technology, so the police can actually it's a lot easier than before. CCTV you know, smartphones, this has just changed the game, and I think the government realised we can't just let this go on because, I think the British government always had a different approach to organised crime, compared to Italy or compared to America. So, I think those days are gone because now they can catch you very easily.

Mark: So now maybe it's just small local dealers who go in and sell a bit of drugs on a lower level rather than these big teams of people?

Ade: Yeah and I think there's not much of it because the music scene has changed, so not because the promoters or the drug dealers changed the game or the police, the music scene has changed. People, they are not into these type of raves anymore; they moved on you know what the music scene is like it keeps evolving it keeps changing, so therefore, the game changes. But even festivals now, is a lot more organised, all the security they have to be, they clean up the security industry. This SIA came in and cleaned it all up, like it or not, it might be an element of making money for the government but they cleaned it up, you gonna get chucked out, you're gonna get a criminal background, so they pushed a lot of muscle out, and the clubs and the bars they don't really want people like that anymore. So, if it's a security company sending someone as you know down Space (night club), you sending someone really tough big and they don't want it, call you there and then, take you off the door, and they would have someone normal small and polite, which is really good a lot better. It was awful what used to happen in the past, if you see this in some poor country then you think, maybe they don't know any better but not over here it's just a bit weird.

Ade linked the reduction of 'organised crime' in the night economy to three factors. Firstly, there is the relationship between surveillance and crime. Surveillance is a key characteristic of modernity. It is integral to the advance of disciplinary power and technologies of governance in developed countries (Ericson and Haggerty 2006). The UK has some of the largest numbers of CCTV cameras in the world, with estimates of around 1.8 million in 2011 (Gerrard and Thompson 2011). CCTV provides the police and the courts with evidence to convict criminals, making violent activity within the night economy significantly risky. CCTV can reduce crime by increasing the possibility that offenders will get caught (Phillips 1999). Studies evaluating the effectiveness of CCTV on crime rates have yielded mixed results, although, there does appear to be a positive relationship overall (Welsh and Farrington 2009). CCTV does not cover all areas, however. The doormen I spoke to were aware of blinds spots in their venue where they could assault people or engage in illicit activity off camera if they wanted to. Managers can also delete footage at the risk of the club losing its licence if the police feel it has been done deliberately. Ade also mentions smartphones which are part of the plethora of technologies that are monitored within the new 'societies of control' (Deleuze 1992). Smartphones have improved the police's ability to track offenders and monitor conversations, although criminals

can resort to older models or use encrypted messaging services (chapter 7 discusses this issue in more detail).

The second factor is the relationship between music culture and crime. Electronic dance music is both celebrated and produced by artists from the urban poor. These are people who have been disaffected by structural inequalities leading to increasing of crime and cultures of violence within particular music scenes (Evans 2006; Ilan 2012). The raves Ade mentioned mainly played Old School Jungle music which later spawned into Drum and Bass, UK Garage also became popular in the late 90s which has now been replaced by Grime and Drill music. Garage, in particular, became associated with high levels of violence and a number of popular artists were arrested for incidents involving guns and drugs. Garage was banned by the police from some clubs and festivals in the UK because of the level of violence at these events (Moore 2002). The police can refuse to grant licences to music venues if they feel they are likely to attract crime. Something which may disproportionately affect the poor who celebrate these urban music genres.

The last factor in his discussion was the introduction of the SIA licence, which he states has removed much of the muscle from the night economy. Bouncers who acquire a criminal record will lose their licence making violence or other criminal activity risky to pursue. 'Licences can be said to increase the accountability of those awarded them... as the possibility of having it revoked may be a significant threat to their livelihood' (Hobbs et al. 2003, p. 107). Indeed, whilst many bouncers break the law on a regular basis, 'legal sanctions are a real possibility that figure within members' 'systems of relevances' (Monaghan 2004, p. 475). Nonetheless, with levels of NTE-related violent crime dropping in the UK, establishments may have less need for hard men who may give their club a bad image. Nonetheless, I found that the majority of clubs still preferred these types of people, especially if they played certain styles of music or were located in areas where violence is prevalent. Furthermore, Space is a venue that has at a substantial amount of staff on at all times. Clubs that have a bigger security team can function with fewer hard men as they have the critical mass to resolve problems effectively (Hobbs et al. 2003). The reputation of one key actor can also be enough to carry the rest of team. From a personal experience of the field, I found that smaller bouncers, or those who cannot fight, are often down the ranks of the 'door hierarchy' (Calvey 2017, p. 130). There are some bars throughout Red City that employ one or two doormen that are not particularly capable when it comes to physical recourse. This may reflect the fact that the door staff are primarily merely a licensing requirement. According to Calvey, security teams are 'biographically discerned in terms of personalities, characteristics and bodily types which are translated into broad categories of 'talkers' and 'fighters'' (Calvey 2017, p. 132). In places where violence is less common, there may be a preference towards the 'talker' type. Yet, looking physically intimidating can often resolve conflict before it escalates.

Some bouncers with active criminal records still operate in Red City but under the guise of stewards. Stewarding is legal as long as there are enough bouncers to cover the number of clients in the venue. An old-school Jamaican bouncer from Drayton with a hefty criminal record for drugs, violent offences and firearms, works as a steward in a venue called The Pit

that has a particular drug problem. I personally witnessed him dealing within the venue. The use of stewards in Red City is fairly uncommon, however. Nonetheless, there are a number of bouncers who distribute drugs themselves, but this is uncommon, and their activities are often restricted to outside of the workplace.

Since the ten years I have worked as bouncer, I did not hear of one instance of violent conflict between security companies other than petty altercations over personal disputes (although gang violence can be a problem). There were no attempts by any actors to take over another security firms' doors. Stories of these acts were relegated to the 'good old days' where people were getting shot and the pay was much better. Most owners of security firms that were involved in crime have long gone straight and are now making a significant amount of money through their legitimate businesses. Nevertheless, when a new manager took over Space and wanted to run the club with a clean slate by replacing all of the staff, including the security, no other company would take on the contract. The Iranians had run the door for over two decades and the risk of going to war with them was not worth the money. Indeed, the 'criminal legacy' that these security firms have accumulated over the years has stayed with them (Calvey 2017, p. 131). The best the manager could do was get the designated 'head' of security to stand down, which at that time was me.

Overall the night economy in Red City has gone through a partial civilising process reducing the violence, and the level of control that criminal groups have on the sector. The drugs are still there but are no longer being supplied, or illegally controlled, by bouncers to the extent that they were in the past. Indeed, 'punters are increasingly cynical of door staff and such is the current availability of recreational drugs that they no longer need to buy them from security teams' (Silverstone 2016, p. 148). It is important to keep in mind that bouncers are not the only members of staff capable of selling drugs. I have known DJs, promoters, bar staff, managers and even chefs to sell drugs in clubs, as well as pilfering money from the tills where there are cash payments for things like cloakrooms and entry fees. Additionally, night clubs are still subject to extortion, although this is less common. A discussion with Ade's brother Kamin revealed that Wyatt Douglas had been receiving protection money from a few venues in the city in recent years. Wyatt took a step back in providing security in the form of bouncers and concentrated on making money through other means. The police finally caught up with him, however, and he is now serving a life sentence for his crimes. The remainder of the chapter takes a more detailed look at how dealers operate in the club scene today, drawing on fieldwork with Ryan (one of the lads) who now operates as an independent dealer.

### Vibes

It was a crisp winter's evening, and the frost had just begun to set. I exhaled a misted breath as I put down the phone to Ryan. There was a big night at Vibes, it was a Liquid Drum and Bass, which is very popular with the student crowd. Liquid had become mainstream as it was a little softer on the ears due to its smooth melodies than the Jump Up variety that is more common in the 'underground' rave scene. Vibes is a large venue that can hold thousands of people, but the

night was a complete sell out. I did not have a ticket, and the security was tight on the door, but I knew I could get in if I was smart about it. I donned my security gear and headed out to the club. It was just after 12 midnight when I arrived (a plausible time to have finished a night shift at an early bar). The bass rumbled up through the pavement in waves. The top end of the sound system had been filtered off by the club's thick walls replaced by the white noise of hundreds of eager punters all gabbling at once. The queue seemed endless and bulged out, stretching the temporary barriers like an angry python trying to digest a live meal. I strolled right past it and approached the main entrance. There were at least 12 security guards managing the area, a sniffer dog was happily doing its job as a one of the team carried out body searches. Ethical dilemmas in the field relate to the amount of deception used to acquire the data (Adler 1990). Considering the legal issues of observing illicit activity, gaining free access to a nightclub was the least of my concerns that evening.

Mark: Alright, uh I've just finished work and I'm am trying to get hold of my mate do you mind if I come in?" (it was a lie).

The doorman was an overweight Hells Angel with a stomach that protruded farther than his jawline. A faded dragon tattoo clawed its way from beneath his biker jacket as if somehow struggling for air. He looked me up and down and considered my request before another member of staff recognised me. I got the all clear but not before a search. The female bouncer crucified me over a loose multivitamin she found in my pocket "what's this?" she barked. I would not have made a very good drug dealer. "I like to keep healthy" I replied jokily "have you seen these abs?". She was not amused but let me go. I popped my SIA licence into my pocket, pulled off my black hoody and wrapped it around my waist, revealing a light blue superhero t-shirt underneath. It would not have been much good hanging around with a drug dealer for the night if I looked like a doorman on shift.

I made my way to the main room to be greeted by a wall of noise and a spectrum of strobes that cut through the darkened hall like razor blades. Two thousand clubbers raised their hands at the crescendo of the tune; there was a moment of silence before it dropped down into a heavy bassline that hit me in the chest like a pneumatic drill. The party was electric, and by the looks of it, half the people there were high on something. I peeled my way through the crowd and found Ryan at the 'nos' bar on the first floor. He was in fits of laughter after just inhaling a large nitrous oxide balloon, but it did not last long. The club had taken advantage of the loopholes in the law that enabled them to sell the drug without penalty. Nos canisters are cheap and can be bought for less than 50 pence each, the club was selling them on for £2 and was making a fortune. There were at least 10 bar staff vending the drug on a continual basis and even they could not keep up with the demand. There were more balloons in that room than I had ever seen at any birthday party.

Nos can be sold legally for catering purposes, but dispensing the drug for human consumption requires a medical licence. The argument that vendors use in this case is that they only sell the nos, they have no control over what people do with it after that. The fact that the club was readily dispensing nos into balloons might make one think differently. This was early 2016

before the Psychoactive Substance Act 2016 was introduced, but as I have witnessed, the club still sells it. A number of cases that have reached court since the act came into force have been dropped on the grounds that medical products are exempt from the bill, although, the UK government still asserts that this practice is illegal (Independent 2017). The selling of nitrous oxide is difficult to prosecute and when drug dealers have immunity, they become more brazen and will sell openly in public spaces. This is the perfect example of an open drug market: the only barrier to access was the entry to the club itself. Illicit enterprises operate across a spectrum of legitimacy; those closest to legality begin to operate much like legitimate businesses (Smith 1980). The single difference between the nos bar and the alcohol bar was the product on sale.

Ryan is now in his 30s and has been selling drugs consistently since we had left Summer Park School. He wore a basketball vest that clung tightly to his muscular physique; it was evident that he had been spending a lot of time in the gym. Ryan was fully pumped from anabolic steroids with a little water retention in the face, a common side effect of the drugs (Evans 1997). With a gold chain that glistened over his light brown skin, he looked as if he belonged in a hip-hop video and he embraced it. Like Max in the previous chapter, Ryan was very popular and pulled people in like gravity. The difference being is Ryan had a lot of respect from some unpleasant characters in the rave scene who would have robbed an easy target like Max if he crossed their path. Ryan was physically impressive and hyper-aggressive, making him a force to be contended with on the street. His chaotic personality that gave him his street capital was a significant barrier in other aspects of his life, however. Street capital does not translate well into the legitimate world of work (Sandberg and Pedersen 2011). “You want a drink mate?” I asked.

We took a stroll to the bar on the ground floor, and it was here that he was first approached for drugs. As we walked down the steps from the balcony, Ryan was spotted by a group of girls in their late teens. A confident brunette of skimpy dress scanned him over and figured he might be the kind of guy who could get them some drugs. As we passed, the two caught eyes and she beckoned him over with a wry smile and a tilt of the head.

Girl: Hey, you know where we can get some Mandy? (MDMA).

Ryan smiled back at her and paused for a moment before answering. I could tell he was flirting.

Ryan: You can get it from me. What do you want?

The girl turns to her friends and they take a moment to decide.

Girl: Can you do us a gram in two halves?

Ryan: Yeah I got that, it's forty on the gram.

Ryan moves his body to the side putting his back towards the balcony to block the view of a bouncer who is overlooking the crowd. He nods his head as if he is enjoying the music and looks up to the main stage taking the attention away from his hands that move to a small pouch in his groin. He pulls out two small bags of crystalline powder and exchanges them for the money in a swift, single handshake. The deal is done.

The main entrance to a club is the primary point of control for security staff, by minimising the number of potential troublemakers from entering, door supervisors can reduce the likelihood that problems will occur inside (Cozens and Grieve 2014). Door supervisors look out for customers displaying potential signs that they may cause trouble, or be in possession of drugs, whilst employing their ‘local knowledge’ of regular clientele that is built up over time (Hobbs et al. 2003, p. 127). It is much easier having to deal with someone on the door than having to evict them from the premises later on. Furthermore, the screening process is an opportunity to control the flow of illicit goods as people try to smuggle them in. If dealers cannot be caught at the entrance, the security will need to look out for signs that people are dealing inside. The sleight of hand and bodily positioning that Ryan employed is a form of risk minimisation known as ‘transactional mediation’: this is designed to camouflage the exchange of drugs from outsiders (Jacobs 1996). Drug dealing is a social performance that involves putting on visible fronts to influence observers (Goffman 1956). Whilst they may wish to hide their activities from some, dealers can intentionally display characteristics to send messages to others. The signal is sent with the hope that the receiver will attribute it correctly, although there is always the risk they may not (Gambetta 2009). The following account is taken from Max. After selling cannabis in his youth, he began to distribute MDMA and cocaine in clubs and on the street:

Max: I always had an image a distinctive image so people would know who I was when I was out in the club, people would be like, “yeah that guy the one who wears the purple tracksuit with a flat peak baseball cap”, but then when too many people started to know about me I would change my style. I always had a definitive feature, a bit like a brand.

To be competitive in the marketplace, distributors must be distinguishable from others. This allows customers to identify them as providing a particular service, which is useful for building a reputation (Aspers 2011). Max learned this early on and was key to his success. I was unsure whether Ryan had dressed with the intention of being seen as someone who had access to drugs, but clearly, people perceived him that way. Signs are different from signals because they are observable features that have no purposeful intention. They may be accidental or an unconscious characteristic of the agent (Densley 2012). The role of context is also important: if Ryan had been wearing the same clothes on a basketball court, there would have been little signs that he was a dealer. People build knowledge of their local environments and begin to trust that those within them will act in certain ways (Von Lampe and Johansen 2003).

### The Stash

To get drugs inside clubs that have a high level of security, distributors need to conceal them effectively. The stashing of drugs is an essential risk management technique, regardless of where drugs are sold. If a dealer is stopped and frisked, they need to ensure that the drugs cannot be found. Street level dealers who sell heroin and crack, for example, have been known to store their drugs in their mouth and will swallow them if approached by the police. The drugs pass through the body and can be recovered at a later time. When making transactions, the dealers will pass the drugs from their mouths to the customer who will follow the same procedure (Jacobs 1996). During my fieldwork, I found that this technique was restricted to crack and heroin retail. Drug addicts may not be as concerned by the fact that they will have to share saliva with their dealer and have little choice but to accept it because the technique is so common. For those who do not want to use this technique, they can stash the drugs on their body or have others conceal them and take the risk. The difference between nightclubs and other settings in this thesis is that searches in clubs can be predetermined. I asked Ryan how he got the drugs past the security on the front door. He said he had stashed the drugs in his pants, knowing the security would not search there. Apparently, the sniffer dog stopped him, but the drugs were too well hidden to be found. He told the door staff he had just come from a friend's house who smoked a lot of weed so the dog must have caught the scent of it. It was a plausible explanation, so they let him in. Max, however, employed more sophisticated techniques:

Max – I would modify my jackets so I could stash weed in the lining of my coat. I'd be stinking going into clubs and the bouncers would pat me down, but they couldn't feel anything because I would put it right around at the back of my coat... It protected me from getting robbed. I had a hole cut in the side of near my inner pocket so it would look like my hand was going into my pocket to get it, but I was actually reaching around the back of the coat. When I was living in foster care, I would have to hide the weed from my parents and put it somewhere where it would mask the smell, so I chucked it in the bin under the bin liner and chuck a load of smelly trash on top of it. I figured the last place they would look for it was in the bin. When I was driving, I had a stash inside the car, I'm a meticulous planner, I like to be prepared for all possible outcomes. It was paramount that if I got stopped by the police and it was searched a copper wouldn't find anything unless they had a search dog obviously. So, I modified a part of the car, I made a cubby hole. I had a secret stash. I modified the gaiter the soft bit around the gearbox. In another car I had, I modified a door panel so you could lift a bit of it up and stash it in the door. I loved doing this stuff and I would only show people who I really trusted, people talk. The more information people have about you the more at risk you become.

Max relayed his methods with a broad smile and a glint in his eye. There is a creative element to selling drugs that is seldom talked about in academic literature. Devising clever strategies to hide drugs by manipulating the bodily and physical environment is an art form that Max clearly enjoyed. The stashing of drugs in vehicles is common at all levels of the supply chain. Nonetheless, by creating a hidden section in his coat, Max was able to stash his drugs whilst



maintaining easy access to them. For retail dealers making regular transactions, easy access is essential. His stash would not have survived a more thorough search, but door supervisors are limited in their powers and may have to search many customers during an evening. Thorough searches would slow down access to the venue, causing a loss of revenue for the club. In many clubs, the consumption and distribution of drugs is normalised (Sanders 2005), and an essential part of a customer's evening (O'Brien et al. 2008). 'Illegal drugs are then a central dynamic of the contemporary night-time economy with cultural products being moulded to complement their use, and the commercial viability of some dance-orientated venues being dependant on upon their chemically induced ambience' (Hobbs et al. 2003, p. 227). This is a conversation taken from a doorman called Lenny who has worked in the industry for around ten years:

Mark: How do you deal with the drug problems here at your club?

Lenny: It depends on the venue. If you're in a small bar where it's an older crowd it's more about ensuring that you're following the regulations and there's no trouble. The main thing is there's no trouble in your bar and appear to be vigilant on drugs. In reality people still do it but as long as they're discrete and not causing problems, then it's not an issue for the individual at the bar as such. Whereas if you have some of the bigger clubs with the younger crowd, there's a lot more strict searching policy because they tend to not know how to handle the drugs (the users) and doing lots of different stuff, and then you get problems with dealers and trouble, so you're a lot more vigilant on that. There's a lot more potential trouble from it.

Mark: Do you think the type of crowd maybe relates to the type of drugs they're taking or is that not necessarily the case?

Lenny: I'd say if you're talking about small cocktail bars, cocaine use would be very high, but they're more discrete. They might be there drinking all night and not cause no trouble but drink away because they've used cocaine to stabilize them. If you go to big raves, you've got young people hitting it hard on all sorts of different types of drugs. Then if you go to the House (music) scene used to be a lot of people be more MDMA and then happier vibe, but then you might get people, certain bars or certain areas like Drayton smoking weed causing no trouble and being quite chilled. Obviously, they're less regulated because you won't be able to get away with that in a bar or club in the centre.

There is a relationship between the use of particular drugs and different forms of music. MDMA is the drug of choice in the rave scene; it enhances the music whilst bringing on feelings of euphoria and promotes wakefulness, enabling clubbers to dance until the early hours of the morning (Ter Bogt and Engels 2005). The psychopharmacological effects of drugs are employed instrumentally to meet certain ends affecting patterns of distribution across the city and the clubs within it. The price of the drugs also has a relationship in this; high-quality cocaine is more expensive and consumed more readily by the middle classes who frequent the cocktail bars that Lenny was referring to. Bouncers differentially control drugs depending on the venue they are working in, the music that they play and the geographical location of the

club within the city. Indeed, knowing the ‘score on the door’ is essential to how bouncers manage drugs in places they are working; this includes ‘recognising and not stopping certain dealers endorsed by a certain gang affiliation’ (Calvey 2017, p. 136). In Red City, the city centre has the highest police presence at night due to the concentration of violence leading door supervisors to be stricter in their role. The consumption of drugs is relatively high in Drayton (inner city), and there are few officers on the street, so bouncers tend to give more discretion in clubs near this area. In one club that has a significant reputation for drug use (The Pit), dealing was actively encouraged. Wolf was a designated nos dealer who was allowed to distribute drugs of his choosing for a fee of £50 per night to the owner of the club. He was making thousands of pounds and was able to purchase his own property at the age of 24. He lost the house after being sent to prison for grievous bodily harm. He had got into an altercation in a nightclub and bit the guy’s ear off:

Wolf: So, I went up and knocked on the door upstairs, on Jermaine’s office, massive, he’s like the black hulk, he looked across the table at my man and he was like, “what do you want”. I said, “uh you see the balloons, do you think I could come in and do the balloons”, he said “nah I got someone else doing it”. I said, “what is it the guy downstairs cos he’s not coming back next week, he’s done with it”, he took his glasses off and looked at me. “I tell you what yeah, get here next Friday at nine o’clock, give me fifty quid and sell what you want”. So, from where I was before to that moment there, that’s kinda like where it.

Mark: Progressed?

Wolf: That’s where it progressed, that where it went turbo. Having the green light to shot in the busiest club in Red City, to shot with security watching your back for fifty quid a night. And that’s balloons (nitrous oxide), Mandy (MDMA), Charley (cocaine), whatever everything and the balloons were the best seller. That’s when I started making thousands of pounds in a day.

### *Discussion & Conclusion*

This chapter examined the extent to which illicit drug dealing and extra-legal governance is present in the night economy, particularly since the sector has become heavily regulated. Secondly, it outlined how criminal actors from both within and outside of the security industry operate and interact. The introduction of SIA licences was aimed primarily at reducing the number of criminal actors working in the security services. Door supervisors have significant control in nightclubs, which can facilitate crimes if they originate from criminal backgrounds. The study found that since the licences were introduced, the hold that criminals have on the security industry has reduced. However, the illicit drug market is still thriving. Nightclubs have particular organisational features that enable and constrain criminal activity. The most obvious fact is that they are confined spaces, controlled by private security, where people come specifically to get intoxicated. It is a setting where drugs are in high demand, which can be

easily capitalised upon by criminal groups, lone suppliers and also security staff. The divide between the criminal and non-criminal is less clear in the night economy as many legitimate actors benefit from the supply of illicit goods including the clubs themselves.

The objective of both legitimate and criminal enterprise is to extract as much money as possible from these nights whilst ensuring they can continue to operate in the long term. For nightclubs, this means sticking to regulations, licensing requirements, ensuring the safety of their clientele, and maintaining a semblance of legality, even if drugs are widely consumed inside. There is a discretionary element in which certain venues will accommodate more drug use than others. This often depends on the type of nights they are hosting. The security in Vibes is extensive but their takings would be significantly curtailed if their customers were not able to consume drugs there. The fact that they have a nos bar indicates their stance on illicit drugs, even if they have sniffer dogs and bouncers conducting body searches on the way in. This informal acceptance of illicit drug use is a common feature of the night-time economy. Many door staff are not concerned if people use drugs, as long as they do not catch them doing it. The same can be said of people who are selling them, although dealing is less tolerated in most clubs in the city. If drug dealers can build close relationships with the door staff or the club owners, they are more likely to turn a blind eye. Bouncers who actively engage in the drug market, benefit directly from this and can gain a share of the profits that are made. Before the introduction of the SIA licences, the security industry was proliferated with criminal groups who orchestrated the supply of drugs. These groups have been replaced, to some extent, by a number of sole suppliers like Ryan, who do their best to distribute undercover. In this respect drug dealing has become more decentralised in this sector. Nonetheless, there are a number of bouncers who sell drugs in the city, but this does not mean they will do it on the job (although there are some that do). Those with active criminal records can still operate in the guise of stewards and there is little to stop security companies being set up in other peoples' names. Others may have simply slipped under the radar and not been caught for their crimes. Drug money is still laundered into clubs on a regular basis by a variety of actors (promoters and club owners).

Violence has generally declined in the night-time economy, falling in line with the western crime drop since the 1990s onwards. Whilst it is not possible to know the exact reasons for this change, it has been argued that security is largely responsible (Clarke and Newman 2006, p. 220). Reductions in crime are a consequence of technological developments that harden crime targets, whilst improving the ability to catch offenders. Target hardening is argued to be the most significant factor of the two (Farrell et al. 2014). Ade's discussion of surveillance validates this claim; however, he states that licencing requirements were also key. Administrative measures work symbiotically with technical developments to reduce crime rates. Nonetheless, these changes did not reduce the supply of drugs, although the market has changed. As extreme violence falls, the market is somewhat more civilised than it used to be; the territorial disputes between security firms are a thing of the past. However, the larger companies in Red City have long established reputations, which may have some explanation as to why no one has challenged their contracts through force. That is not to say that violence does not exist in the night-time economy, far from it. Over the last few years, there have been a number of drug-related stabbings in Red City, mirroring similar outbreaks in London

(Telegraph 2018). One of these resulted in the killing of a drug dealer leaving a club that was hosting a UK Hip Hop event. A genre which is popular with the urban poor. Target hardening has done little to address the structural inequalities that fuel violence within the sector.

Lastly, formal social hierarchies are easily seen in this sector. Uniformed door supervisors are highly visible as well as other staff members who work within their allocated roles. Bouncers have a monopoly on violence and are responsible for controlling who is allowed into the premises, and in some places, who is allowed to sell drugs. Nonetheless, door supervisors are not autonomous and will work within the remit that is assigned to them by the managers and owners of the establishments. The informal structures of the underworld are less easily seen. They reveal themselves when people try to take up positions that are already established by somebody else. Newcomers trying to sell drugs within an establishment may cross paths with other crews leading to violent disputes as demonstrated in Ade's accounts earlier in the chapter. The fact that these offenders are confined in these settings rather than when they operate on the street, makes conflict all the more likely. Ade's crew's power came from their capacity and willingness to fight. There were some incidents in which people could have died at their hands. It was only good fortune that had saved them. The reputation they culminated from this gave them considerable social status, which translated into economic gain. There are still those who seek out characters with this level of respect to run the security within nightclubs, particularly clubs that experience pressure from criminal groups and may be subject to extortion from gangsters like Wyatt Douglas. Even if people do have a criminal record, given time they can apply for a licence again bringing the status they accrued with them.

### 7) Dealing in the 'Virtual': Emergent Technology, Drugs and the Internet

*Well the more branches you got of the tree I guess... The websites, all the IP addresses they are all like covert like the silk road... They have the servers in other countries so they can't be traced... You know the people who run the website the people whose name it's in, is somebody that's nothing to do with us, they get paid they get a percentage, so that person gets a percentage off the sales and because obviously they are taking the risk. You know it's the same as what you'd do if you gave someone a cut off a crop of weed that you grow in their house...*

#### Introduction

Having demonstrated how drug markets function in the physical world, the following chapter moves on to discuss the final setting of the thesis in which drugs are sold, the internet. ICT provides new modes of communication and buying platforms in which drugs can be bought and sold. It enables suppliers of illicit goods to conduct their business in ways that were not previously possible. Nonetheless, digital technologies can constrain human actions as much as they enable them. ICT leaves digital traces that can be monitored by the state. It is within these conditions of heavy digital surveillance that drug markets emerge. Indeed, contemporary drug markets are part of a long history of socio-technological developments that have reconfigured patterns of distribution in the city. It is this continuum that this chapter maps out. Whilst drug dealers may communicate online, they will still be present offline and will have to use the cities infrastructure to distribute their products. To adequately explain the 'virtual' requires equal attention to the physical world as well as the process in which these markets have emerged. It is through this attendance that future developments in the illicit drug trade can be anticipated.

Indeed, the illicit drug trade is evolving quickly, with advances in chemistry creating a barrage of new psychoactive substances, whilst ICT provides means in which buyers and sellers can communicate and coordinate their transactions with relative anonymity over vast geographical distances. This evolution has been driven by the combination of evolving technologies and the need for protection and concealment from the law. Questions remain as to how vendors and actual or potential purchasers conduct their activities and communicate with each other within these circumstances. A central argument of this thesis is that rather than replacing traditional drug markets, ICT extends them (Lawson 2010; Brey 2017) into virtual domains, creating communication channels and buying platforms that alter power relations between stakeholders. Whilst also retaining elements of market territoriality. Studies of online drug markets are growing but largely due to their methodologies, tend to ignore the offline life-worlds of criminal actors who engage in them. By restricting the source of their data and analysis to the internet itself, criminologists provide a limited picture of the impact of emergent technologies in this field. The virtual does not replace the real (Woolgar 2002). This chapter aims to augment but also challenge this treatment of emergent technology, by shifting the analytical focus upon the principal actors and technologies that constitute these markets. It utilises ethnographic

fieldwork of manufacturers and distributors of illicit drugs operating in physical as well as virtual environments.

### *The Digital Extension of Organised Crime*

The following section begins with a brief introduction of the impact of ICT on the illicit drug market over time. It draws upon the experience of criminal actors working with emergent technologies to demonstrate how they manage the associated risks of their activities whilst responding to the demand for their products.

Organised crime is a market-based activity in which buyers and sellers interact to purchase and distribute illicit goods and services. Illicit drug markets have been variously characterised as being open, semi-open, or closed. In open markets, distributors usually operate from a fixed location, such as a street corner, and sell openly to most people wishing to buy their goods. In closed markets, distributors will only sell to trusted individuals who have been previously vetted. Semi-open markets fall somewhere between the two and relate to spaces such as nightclubs, bars or cryptomarkets. Before the emergence of ICT, transactions were made face to face through spoken communication. In this respect, it was important for drug dealers to be in an area where customers knew they would be. This mode of working was significantly risky as being in a fixed location made dealers easy targets for the police. With the advent of the mobile phone, distributors could be more mobile and arrange transactions in advance, leading to a more closed networked economy (May and Hough 2004; Wainwright 2016).

As a conduit for communication, the mobile phone is an obligatory passage point (Callon 1986), which restructured the drug market and shifted it into a less visible and less risky form. As Callon explains, technologies ‘transform the spatial and temporal settings in which collectives exist and act’ (Callon 2004, p. 5). Yet, whilst technologies can enable and enhance human capacities, they can disable and diminish others (McLuhan and Fiore 1967; McLuhan and McLuhan 1992). ICT leaves digital traces which may be accessible to the police, thus frustrating attempts for dealers to remain concealed. As digital technologies take a more central position in the illicit drug trade, then it is these technologies and their ‘trace data’ that become as, if not more, important sources of intelligence than their human counterparts. In this sense, the police have delegated tasks (Latour 1994) that were traditionally assigned to human informants to the technologies within these networks. To counteract these efforts, distributors must protect and stabilise their networks or risk prosecution.

According to Hilgartner, risk is composed of socio-technical networks that link objects within them to harm. It is the relationship between elements within the network that lead to the construction of risk. Through such relationships, risks can be embedded in people, materials, technology or tasks. These ‘risk objects’ must be contained or displaced from the network to avoid harms associated with the linkage (Hilgartner 1992). The following account is taken from an interview with Max, who has an extensive history distributing illicit drugs at the retail level. The discussion relates to issues in using mobile phones to coordinate drug sales:

Max: When I started back up again I was more clued up about surveillance, buying a sim card isn't enough if you're stupid enough to put your sim card from your burner in your contract phone the IMEI number would match up with it, so just being aware of the trail how a phone number can lead back to you. If you carry your contract phone around with you as well as your burner, they can trace it back to the cell sites, and they can show that both phones took exactly the same path, and it's very hard to dispute you aren't the same person. I always had two phones one phone for selling drugs and contacting my mates and another for contacting family and paying bills things like that. I had a clean phone for that stuff. I was always very careful about how I used the burner.

'Burners' are temporary mobile phones which have sim cards registered with false names and addresses, making it difficult for police to link to a particular person (Salinas 2013). Drug dealers frequently swap their burners to evade wiretaps and the geo-location trails that can establish their involvement in crime and support successful criminal prosecutions. The international mobile equipment identity (IMEI) numbers that Max refers to are unique codes that are assigned to all cellular mobile devices to identify them. These codes allow signal towers to recognise devices in the service network and establish their geographical location. This information can help the police track criminals and prove their whereabouts in court (Bennett 2012). If distributors make the mistake of putting a sim card that is registered in their name in a phone they were using to sell drugs, the police can tie the sim to that particular device. Nonetheless, the monitoring of cellular devices can actually benefit criminals if they use them intelligently. Teeth created *digital alibis* by leaving his registered phone turned on at his home address whilst he went out about his business in the city. By using these methods, drug dealers are essentially blocking and subverting the process in which criminogenic information is digitised and monitored.

The burner phones used by the offenders in this study were often first-generation mobile phones as they generate less data than the newer smartphones. Nonetheless, a number of dealers also used smartphones because they can provide an additional layer of anonymity through encryption. Smartphone apps that employ end-to-end encryption cannot be remotely accessed by the police. This will mean the police will have to get hold of the device and unlock it to read its messages. If a smartphone is locked with a password, it will need a specialist computer technician to gain access to it. According to Peter, the senior police officer in this study, it can cost the police around £1000 to unlock a single mobile phone, so they have to be selective about the devices they choose to access. If an offender has multiple mobile phones on them, the police will usually unlock the number of devices necessary to secure a conviction. This leaves a considerable amount of information unavailable. Facebook is also another platform that the police have issues accessing. Even if the police get hold of a mobile phone, offenders can simply log into their Facebook account from another device and delete all their messages. Facebook Messenger does not employ end-to-end encryption for text messages unless it is activated, however (CNet 2016). Charley, the steroid supplier in this study, makes all of his phone calls through Facebook to avoid the potential wiretapping issues of standard phone calls. Facebook does not record phone calls, and they are also encrypted so cannot be accessed from

their servers (Security Today 2018). According to Moyle et al (2019), communication via smartphone apps is now common in the drug trade. They are often less secure than drug dealers presume, however, which can lead them to share more information than they would have previously, inadvertently increasing risks.

The police are not the only threats to distributors of illicit goods. The absence of formal regulation from the state creates a hostile environment which leaves vendors open to attack from other criminals on the street. Competitors may seek to gain control over access to goods and services, making business difficult to establish. Technologies can become targeted by other criminals who wish to dominate territories in which drugs are sold. The following example is taken from a distributor called Rocco describing his experiences retailing heroin and crack cocaine:

Rocco: At the time we had it like, one area, literally lock down me and my mate, and then our other two mates had the other side on sort of like lock down as well, so if anything happened we'd go sort it. Literally there was a group of like ten-twelve of us all done little bit different bits and pieces but if something happened to one of our mates or whatever, you'd all be there and get it sorted so no one would fuck about. But I can remember one time the phone was going quiet and I was like "what the fuck how can it be that quiet" and he was like "oh yeah this kiddy" like's basically saying "fuck you" on about me, "he's gonna be taking over".

Mark: Your patch?

Rocco: Yeah, that sort of side so, I said "oh right we will see about that". I tried stopping him in the car and he sprinted off and carried on doing his thing but we knew where he was doing it to. So I went round with a couple of mates went through the door with a fire extinguisher, I had a door brace, went in with the fire extinguisher, he's come running down the stairs just by the door in case anyone come. As he's come running down, smashed him on the head with the fire extinguisher and knocked him out. With that the two mates who I was with grabbed what he had there and a bit of cash and the most important thing I wanted was his phone.

Mark: Yeah?

Rocco: Cos obviously that's their line so they would have to set up and go round again.

Distributors require significant social and material resources to control a drug market in an area at a given time. As Rocco explains, he was connected to ten-twelve criminal associates who could be mobilised when needed. This critical mass worked together to govern the local market to ensure their positions were upheld. By taking the dealers drugs and money he was able to recoup some of his losses, the physical violence was a further punishment and is one that sends out a message to deter others. By taking his phone, however, Rocco gained control over the network which would enable him to redirect the custom base within that geographical area. By



controlling the network, he was able to control the territory. As Graham (1998) asserts, “every social and economic activity is necessarily geographical” (Graham 1998, p. 175). It was the combination of actions that led to the maximum disruption of his operations.

Rocco’s discussion demonstrates the growing importance of phone lines in the drug trade. Indeed, there are a number of cases in this study of active lines being passed onto other dealers to set them up and put them in business. In some cases, the entire business is passed on as the dealer moves out of the game, in others those higher up the chain may need new runners to take over the deliveries and will provide them with active phone lines to do this. The latter example is said to be common in the phenomenon of county lines: where drug gangs expand their operations into rural areas preying on vulnerable people as they go (National Crime Agency 2019). In a certain sense, it is the lines themselves that are as, if not more, important in holding the market together than the actors who operate them. When lines take precedence, the relationships around trust may begin to change, especially if a number of different people run a single drug line (or collection of lines) between them. In Red City, a group of Albanian cocaine dealers have begun to operate in this way. They will meet new and unverified customers on demand in the city centre within half an hour. To arrange a collection, the customer simply has to acquire the number, text their postcode, and the amount they require. The dealers respond by texting their estimated time of arrival and the type of car their runner will be driving “20 mins blue ford”. Texts are often returned to the customer from different phones lines signalling possible coordination between group members. Many drug dealers do, however, swap their sims and turn off their old lines regularly in an effort to disassociate themselves from the data they procure. They will send out messages to their network of customers on their new line to inform them of the change “new number Teeth”. If multiple lines are active and the crime group has a number of runners passing them between them, this may signal coordination rather than disassociation. It is possible that more sophisticated criminal groups will use both methods. The customer will still want to be sure that the person they are buying from is providing a genuine product, but do not need to know who that person is other than them being a delivery driver for that trusted phone line.

From the buyers’ position, there is a shift away from individualised/interpersonal trust towards ‘trust based on reputations’. Due to the stereotypical depictions of Albanian crime groups, there may also be an element of ‘trust based on generalisations’, which are commonly held perspectives on particular social groups (Von Lampe and Johansen 2004b). The seller, however, has no means by which to identify the intentions of the buyer; there is a complete absence of trust. In these cases, ‘the risks of co-operation are minimised by functional alternatives to trust in the form of precautionary measures such as anonymity and segmentation’ (Von Lampe and Johansen 2004a, p. 110). Overall this example demonstrates that trust between the buyer and seller is changing in contemporary urban environments due to the interrelationships between technological innovation, market opportunities, and policing pressures.

*Surveillance & CCTV*

Coordinating drug sales via ICT is only one half of the process. Drugs need to be delivered to the customer, and this can be risky if done in public. It is also important to consider how drug dealers mitigate the risks of surveillance in the city from police officers and technologies such as CCTV. In the following example, Max discusses the techniques he used to conceal his movements in the city:

Max: When meeting people either they jump in my car or I'd go into their house. I would always sell in a discrete place away from CCTV and somewhere no-one's listening. If someone jumps in a car and they drive off it doesn't look dodgy, but if they get in and get straight out again it looks dodgy as fuck. The same thing if people meet and they suddenly part ways like going into a house.

To remain 'invisible' from surveillance organised criminals can operate under the cover of activity that replicates the activities of something or someone else. Drug dealers carry out their movements in ways that blend into the flows of city life (see chapter 6). In this sense, there is a reflexive relation of 'training' (Goffman 1956; Foucault 1977) between the surveillant and the surveilled, between the human and the algorithm (Berry 2018). This reflexive responsabilisation of risk is an integral characteristic of 'reflexive modernisation' (Beck et al. 1994; Lyng 2016) that has been transposed within the digital frontiers of the cities surveillance systems. As Amoore and Raley argue, "human and non-human beings are constantly attuned to novel events and features in their data environment, becoming perennially creatively alert" (Amoore and Raley 2017, p. 3).

Indeed, the digital city is bound up in fine-grained monitoring and the predictive modelling of the actions and movements of its 'citizens'. It is not the case that it is an 'individual', as in a single person, that is 'targeted' through various techniques and technologies in the Foucauldian sense (Foucault 1977, 2009). Rather, that what a citizen 'is' is the product of algorithmic neural network modelling and aggregation from which new indices of normality, deviance, and risk arise. These are then reapplied or 'folded back' onto, and into, the everyday lives of people. The 'normal' way to talk and walk, for example, is being built through digital modelling (Amoore and Raley 2017). These algorithmic calculations and statistical representations feed into policing techniques on the ground (Sanders and Sheptycki 2017). Following the positivist logic of evidence led policy, data is assumed to have value neutrality. Yet, techniques such as predictive policing target the usual suspects in poverty-stricken areas creating a self-confirming algorithmic bias (Hannah-Moffat 2018). Nonetheless, criminals are not passive to these new forms of digital monitoring and may seek to evade them.

Max's example demonstrates how offenders can subvert surveillance systems by either avoiding them completely or by masking their activities by copying the behaviour of other legitimate actors. Nonetheless, surveillance technologies are not restricted to the state and can be employed by criminal actors themselves. Perhaps the most extreme example of this in recent times is in the Guzman case, or 'El Chapo' as he is known. Joaquín Guzman Loera is a Mexican

'kingpin' who employed a computer technician to hack and monitor a range of digital devices that his associates were using (New York Times 2019). Without these technical skills (or contacts) it is unlikely that offenders would be able to monitor other people to this extent. Nonetheless, criminals can employ low tech strategies that do not require significant training to undertake (Berry 2019). The following example is taken from an interview with Liam: a licenced door supervisor who was providing private security for a small family firm. The family runs a number of brothels in a neighbouring city:

Liam: We were looking after the house as in when people came we opened the gates, locked the gates, watched the CCTV, logged cars coming down the drive, because people had been there and tried to break down the door, like gangs of people and some people had been there with a gun before outside. They had been attacked ten times... Doors had to be locked at all times unless a member of security was there, cameras had to be monitored before doors were opened. If people, sort of, accidentally drove up the wrong cul-de-sac, the bloke would have a melt-down and think that he was about to get attacked.

Mark: So you said they had about five brothels?

Liam: Yeah, they had about five brothels, they had this mansion that had loads of prostitutes who were working there.

Mark: So how come then all these people were pissed off with him?

Liam: Because he is a complete asshole. He would tell everyone everything as well which was mainly his downfall. He told me on the first day that they had made seven million pounds in 3 years in cash... Well the first thing that happened that kicked it all off was a social media dispute between his wife and someone who owns another brothel. Two days later two black guys came around and beat them up, hit them with hammers and cable tied them up, stole their jewellery and the takings from one of the brothels, and said "if you ever say anything to so and so again, you're fucking dead".

The sex trade operates much in the same way as the illicit drug trade, although, the product on sale is different. Prostitution is illegal, as is pimping, leaving the market to regulate itself (Colosi 2010). Actors within the sex trade can come under attack from competitors or other criminal predators wishing to rob them of their assets. It is a highly lucrative profession, and significant amounts of money can be made from it. In the UK, the annual revenue produced by one female sex worker is estimated at £48,000 (HM Government 2013). As the family could not rely on protection from the police, they hired private security staff to protect them. The fact that they lived on a council estate with high crime rates further exasperated the issue. CCTV was a significant tool in protecting the family. It allowed their establishments to be monitored at all times and worked as a screening device for people trying to enter their buildings. CCTV is a form of situational prevention that hardens targets and acts as a deterrent (Hayes and Downs

2011). Nonetheless, surveillance does not only benefit those wishing to protect themselves, it can also be used to provide information on the very targets themselves:

Mark: So did you have any issues when you were there looking after the house, were there any incidents?

Liam: Yeah there was a drone flying above the house, which to me and the other guy, meant was people looking at the house to see if they had money there. They are gonna be parked in a car around the corner, they are going to see if there are security here to break in. I found out that the drone belonged to one of the stepson's 'friends', and it was kinda weird because the stepson had high functioning autism, and it felt like his friends were using him, because he would always have brand new Mercedes and motorbikes you know. Because his parents (brothel owners) gave him everything he wanted because they had so much ready cash.

Mark: Sure.

Liam: The guy who was doing the security beforehand, they hired this guy who was full of shit, he was big fat bloke and he had the local thugs looking after him. He's like an ex-marine but I've spoken to a lot of my friends who are proper close protection guys, ex-forces, and he's a joke to them. But he talks the talk. But he was like, heating up the situation and scaring them, and he said that he had information from his informants that some people were gonna come and rob them.

Mark: Oh right.

Liam: And they were like, "what do you mean? We need to know who the informant is" and the informant ended up being someone who was working for them as security anyway, cos they have security in the brothels and this bloke had been fired because he had gone to collect five grand and apparently his car got nicked so they fired him. Anyway, the police came round and they found a car full of people, balaclavas and baseball bats just around the corner. So they were obviously gonna come in and try and rob them. But it also could've been that this bloke was setting things up like that, because these people in their house were scared, they were such cash cows for him. I honestly believe it was that. He had got the local scallys to come round with baseball bats and balaclavas. Because he was charging about £250 per man, maybe more than that a day. But this guy was paying his guys £120, so if he had two blokes round there he was making £260 per day, 7 days a week. Plus he had people doing cash collections that were paid £80 pounds a collection. So he was probably paying them £50 and taking £30, and other services. He also had people working in the brothels as doormen, they were getting paid.

Mark: Ah, he was getting a lot of money for it.

Liam: Cash money, yeah. So it served him well to have those people shit scared.

Mark: So you think that maybe it was some of the thugs he knew that were flying the drone maybe?

Liam: I know it was the thugs, I know it was some local drug dealer.

Criminal groups provide services that are in high demand and often cannot be found elsewhere. Protection services are needed where state control is absent and where people are at risk of attack. In some cases, however, criminal groups can create the conditions for which their services are required by creating the demand themselves. The Italian Mafia, for example, have been known to extort local businesses through blackmail (Sergi 2017). If their protection fee is not paid, business owners would risk having their premises burned down by the very people said to protect them. This type of extortion is much more overt as the clients know they are being exploited. A more sophisticated way to do this is to create conditions of demand without the targets knowing who is responsible. In this respect, criminals can maintain a positive profile and be seen as helpfully providing a useful service for their clients.

Unmanned vehicles create a layer of anonymity as the people controlling them can hide from view whilst ensuring they stay within an operable range. This has enabled drugs to be smuggled into prison without having to rely on human actors to get them past the perimeters (Ralphs et al. 2017). Drones may also have cameras installed, which criminals can be used to survey properties if they are planning a robbery. The previous security member that the family had employed was well connected with criminal actors in the area. It would not have been difficult for him to create the conditions in which his services were required. By paying someone to fly drones over the property, a high level of fear could be generated, with very little effort or risk of being caught.

### Counter-Surveillance

With the proliferation of digital cameras being installed into many mobile devices, taking photos and recording videos has become a normal part of daily contemporary life. Videos and pictures posted to social media can also go ‘viral’ as they catch the attention of other users who repost them. This can create problems for official actors if they are caught on camera acting nefariously. Indeed, the public can use digital cameras to record the police to make them accountable for their actions (Wilson and Serisier 2010). This is known as ‘counter-surveillance’ and is a form of resistance to state control (Monahan 2006). There were a number of cases of CCTV cameras being employed by the offenders in this study to monitor the police, although, for them, counter-surveillance was primarily about reducing risk. Criminal actors can employ surveillance technologies to monitor their associates, the police, or anyone else for that matter. The following example is taken from my fieldwork with Mat, an ex-doorman who has an extensive history distributing a range of illicit substances:

I first met Mat when I was working on the door in Space (night club) as a bouncer. The firm who employed us would put certain members of staff on rotation and post them at different venues throughout the week. Some doormen are better suited to certain clubs, so this enabled our boss to find suitable venues for his staff. On the weekdays Mat was on rotation but on the weekend, he worked at Sensation: a lap dancing club that paid protection money to Wyatt Douglas who would be seen frequenting with his crew on a regular basis. I had worked there myself and hated it as they only had one member of security on shift at all times. This would mean spending long boring nights on the front door letting in groups of guys who caused a nuisance by touching up the girls. Touching was not formally allowed, although, for the right price, the girls would cater to their requests. Working a 'one-man door' is also considerably risky when it comes to dealing with violence. Mat, however, was infatuated with the girls and started a romantic relationship with a stripper called Eve. The money he made from being a doorman was not enough to meet her lifestyle, so he started dealing M-Cat after the drug had been classified. The two broke up after Mat found out that she was working as a high-class escort on her days off and was having sex with her clients. To get this information, he installed key-logging software on her laptop that recorded everything that she typed. He gained access to her email accounts and social media, where he acquired proof of her activities.

One night I decided to pay Mat a visit after I had finished my shift at Space: he was working at a hotel lobby until early morning. Mat was going through a bad time and needed to talk. Unfortunately, Eve had finished her shift at the same time and was on a warpath. She stormed into the lobby and started screaming about some private pornography he had filmed of her. She was concerned that he would post it onto social media in revenge: a phenomenon known as 'revenge porn' (Kamal and Newman 2016). Eve picked up Mat's brand-new £1000 laptop from the front desk and smashed it hard onto the floor. Her dainty stilettoed shoes stomped it into the ground with pure rage as the keys flew off like shattered teeth. Mat picked up the dying machine and cradled it in his arms, tears streaming from his eyes, "Bitch! You broke my fucking laptop". With that, Eve lunged towards his face with her long sharp ruby red fingernails. Mat lifted the machine in defence and brought it down hard across her skull. Computer-based shrapnel filled the room as the laptop exploded like a hand grenade. I realised I needed to step in as someone was going to get seriously hurt. I pulled the two apart as he dragged her into the bathroom to flush her head down the toilet. Fortunately, the lobby was empty.

After the break-up with Eve, Mat got heavily into drugs and eventually got caught leading to a spell in prison. When he was released, he had few legitimate opportunities available to him. He began selling drugs again but put a number of measures in place to reduce the risks of getting caught. One of which was CCTV. The following example is taken from an interview at his home:

Mat: All the cameras here, basically have them set up. So they're on motion detection. If someone comes to that front door knob I'll see. If the police knock the front door, if there's one or two coppers, they're probably just out to chat to you about something. If the one that you've got stood at the door by himself and the other one he was down in

the car, they just come to ask you a question, “mate have you done this?” or “do you know so and so?”. Like fucking, in the case of like, you might’ve threatened someone, “can you leave them alone”. Just to give me a polite warning. If they show up and there's four of them, and there's a van outside, you know they're pretty much coming to arrest you for something. So when they're coming to arrest you for something, you gotta be careful. You gotta make sure there's nothing around you. Because you don't wanna get pulled in for threatening to punch someone's head in and then fucking got a load of drugs on you. And then you end up on a drugs charge. The same as anything else.

Mat used the cameras in his property to buy time if the police came to knock at his front door. This would enable him to dispose of any drugs he had or escape through the back of the house if he wanted. On one occasion five police officers came to his address looking for one of his associates who had a warrant out for his arrest. Mat turned the police away and posted a video of the incident to his social media account. A whole discussion broke out online from a number of his peers who joined in to mock the police. Virtual environments provide a space in which criminal communities can come together to share information, symbolically resist police control or get vengeance on their peers through posting personal details (or videos). Digital cameras form part of an assemblage of surveillance technologies (Haggerty and Ericson 2000) that can be appropriated in these virtual environments. The downside for criminals is that the police can use social media to gather intelligence for themselves. It is in this digital arms race (Ekblom 2017) between the police, offenders and other offenders that the drug market evolves and takes its form.

In the above example, we saw how Mat was able to hack into his girlfriend’s computer using keylogging software to gain information on her whereabouts. Counter-surveillance is not restricted solely to visual monitoring and can also be employed through ICT. If offenders can tap into the communication networks of the police, they can gain information which can enable them to avoid the law on a more long-term basis. Hacking into policing networks may require significant technical skills to achieve, although, offenders could employ more low-tech strategies to do this. The following example is taken from an interview with Teeth who discusses his techniques whilst operating as a car thief:

Mark: Can you tell me a bit about the technology, I remember seeing you using the police scanner before, how did you get the radio frequency?

Teeth: It was different back then. This was when the police were using analogue radios. Now it’s all digital so you can’t do it. We used CB radios and you could leave them on to scan and they would find the police frequency. The police would change the frequencies all the time, so this was the only way to do it. But the scanners didn’t play a big part in the drugs, we used them mainly when we were stealing cars. So what we would do is when we were doing a job we would leave them scanning and when the police would come into the area we would pick them up. I would have someone on a lookout and if he heard any reports for cars come in at the address we was at we would know about it. The police didn’t know that we had scanners see. So we’d get on the phone and call

them, we tell them we've seen this big black bloke whose beating the shit out of this poor white lady a few blocks up. We make it sound really bad. Soon as they hear that the police get diverted and it gives us enough time to finish the job and get away. I knew this yardie fella, I would put the parts through him to be sold out of the country.

Not only was Teeth gathering information about the whereabouts of the police, but also provided disinformation about bogus crimes to draw them away from the crime scene. Someone who is being seriously physically assaulted would likely make a greater police priority than car theft. Teeth's misinformation also drew upon racial and gendered police prejudices to further increase the priority of the call. The response is structural in that the police follow clear guidelines on how to prioritise their resources, and cultural whereby motives to respond are also guided by institutional norms and values (Bacon 2017). When actors understand how social institutions and their systems work, they can attempt to influence the behaviour of the people within them to secure desired outcomes. In an era of 'fake news' disinformation and propaganda, this process is becoming more fine-grained as citizens leave digital traces of their lives on the internet which become targeted by interest groups aiming to control their decisions (Lazer et al. 2018). Without straying too far from the point, we can see how offenders could influence state actors by providing misinformation and monitoring their networks. The police, however, now use encrypted digital radios to resolve issues of eavesdropping and stop offenders from illegally accessing their networks. Journalists have suffered in this respect and have to rely on insider information or monitor social media to find the whereabouts of police raids and crime scenes (Ellis and McGovern 2016).

### *Virtual Markets*

As drug markets move online, they become reconfigured once more. The most significant change is that suppliers and customers do not meet face to face (in most cases). Transactions are made online using digital currencies, and the drugs are sent in the post (Hillebrand et al. 2010). This means that controlling and building a local custom base becomes less important for suppliers as drugs can be delivered to people across large geographical distances, from a single fixed location. Cryptomarkets anonymise stakeholder activity through the TOR browser which bounces digital communications through various relays across the world. Online drug markets are generally less violent as distributors identities can be concealed (Aldridge and Décary-Héту 2014). It is not always necessary to use the darknet to distribute drugs anonymously online, however. Various techniques can be employed to anonymise the identity of distributors whilst allowing them to operate websites openly on the clear net that can be accessed by anybody. Charley, for example, works for a small illicit company that distributes steroids in this manner. Pharma-Labs distribute their products internationally and take around a million pounds in sales per year:

Mark: Do you think there's more risk going online, does that create more risk or do you think it's less risky for getting nicked?



Charley: Well the more branches you got of the tree I guess... The websites, all the IP addresses they are all like covert like the silk road... They have the servers in other countries so they can't be traced... You know the people who run the website the people whose name it's in is somebody that's nothing to do with us. They get paid they get a percentage, so that person gets a percentage off the sales and because obviously they are taking the risk. You know it's the same as what you'd do if you gave someone a cut off a crop of weed that you grow in their house...

Mark: So with your mates or whatever, you notice any violence or any disputes with any other people?

Charley: Uh no, I mean there's people I know, on social media, you know sort of slagging the products off, because they are selling other products there's a lot of forums, people go on and slate certain things.

Mark: So is it like a rating system or?

Charley: Well there's certain labels, pay people to do social media to go on forums yeah, I know people who get paid a thousand pound a month.

Mark: To like slag people off and stuff?

Charley: Yeah to slag off all the other products and rate theirs, yeah don't take this that's fucking shit, I made some really good gains with this one blah blah, and get a thousand pound a month what they do is they get people who are known in the industry to do it, like good bodybuilders you know, I'll give you a grand a month just go on this website and tell them our product is mint. They do that with you know you put David Beckham on a Pepsi advert it's the same principle.

Steroids carry softer legal penalties for distribution and can be acquired for personal use in the UK making sales difficult to prosecute against. Operating on the clear net widens the potential scope of sales, as more people can access the website. Measures were, however, put in place to protect the identity of the core members of the group by hiring a technical specialist who runs the website on their behalf. Even if it was possible to get through the digital layering process employed by the specialist and identify who was running the site, the core members of the group would remain protected. Unless, of course, their facilitator chose to give up their information (Dorn et al. 1998).

The anonymity of the internet creates new problems for distributors as it allows others to compete in the virtual space without fear of violent reprisals. In this environment, distributors compete for customers by providing a superior service (at least as their customers see it) and building their brand (Aspers 2011; Aldridge and Décary-Hétu 2014). Websites on the clear net are different from cryptomarkets as they do not usually have the same ranking systems in place. Instead, suppliers rely on written feedback on user forums to build positive reputations. Those

with greater resources can employ well known respected actors in their field to promote their goods. In this respect, the illicit market begins to resemble the licit one; the major difference is that these sites are illegal and cannot go to the courts for dispute adjudication. This creates further issues if customers do not pay for their goods or competitors copy and counterfeit their brand.

A common scam which customers can employ to get free products is a credit card chargeback. Once the goods arrive, the customer contacts their credit card company and states that they have not received an item they paid for; it is then down to the company to prove otherwise. Illicit enterprises may encounter additional risks from refuting this claim as they are forced into contact with legitimate actors who may question their line of business. Furthermore, if the customer is not in the local area, tracking them down in person may not be easily achieved. Even if it were, online distributors have other options available to them. Customers give up some form of personal information to buy the drugs and have them sent in the post. Distributors can use this data and post it to online forums to name and shame the transgressor. The following example is taken from a 'scammers list' on Pharma-labs forum:

#### Bryan Renolds Scammer from Brighton

Package was sent 06/03/18 but could not be delivered as no one was at address, royal mail left collection card. This scammer immediately issues a charge back from his credit card and has the cheek to slag us off online saying his products were not sent.

Bryan could have emailed us for the tracking number instead he is BANNED and is indexed online as a steroid scammer. Well done Bryan...

Bryan Renolds  
13 Grenfell Street  
Woodingdean  
Brighton  
BN2 8TL  
bryanrenolds@emailme.com  
<https://www.facebook.com/bryanrenolds84>



Image by Gujjar (2016), (all data has been anonymised following ethical protocol) .

In the example above, it is possible that the collection card went missing leading the customer to assume it had not been sent. If that was the case, he could have avoided being listed if he had contacted Pharma-labs for the tracking details of the parcel. A more likely explanation is that he received the collection card and issued the chargeback with the plan of picking up the goods without having paid for them. With his details listed online, anyone who searched for him would have been able to find where he lived, what he looked like, and that he was a user of steroids. This could be devastating if a vigilante took it upon himself to take action against him; it could also deter prospective employers who undertake background searches on potential employees. In this respect, distributors attempt to erode the reputational trust of actors to dissuade people working with them in the future (in both criminal and non-criminal networks). Here we can see that the anonymity of the internet changes the power relationship between buyers and sellers, largely in favour of the latter group. Having personal details placed online is a powerful deterrent that identifies transgressors in their very homes. Technologies create folds between time and space that redistribute presence and absence (Callon 2004). Whilst Charley's team was not physically present in Bryan's local territory, they had, nonetheless, been able to penetrate these boundaries through this virtual form of panoptic surveillance (Bentham 1798).

### Distribution

Online distributors typically use postal services as this enables them to get goods to customers at a distance without having to meet them in person. In virtual markets, transactions are carried out online, but the drugs and the customers exist in the physical world. Getting products to their destination can create problems for vendors as they are forced to use the physical infrastructure of the city and interact with members of the public. The following example demonstrates some issues relating to using postal services to distribute illegal goods:

Mark: How's business?

Charley: Things are hot at the minute there's a month long internal investigation going on at royal mail, they are looking for drugs so we can't send anything out. It's cost me a fortune.

Mark: How did your mates (bosses) find out about this?

Charley: Another online distributor told them and gave them the heads up they know people in royal mail so passed on the information. Well, they actually bought an entire post office to stop people asking questions.

Mark: Wow.

Charley: Obviously it's a big risk if I post stuff with this is all happening so I don't know what we're gonna to do about it.

Mark: So have you put it up on you website that you are closed for the moment?

Charley: I don't know what's going on with that, the guy in China who runs the website doesn't like to close it because, if he does that, he won't be making any money and he'll lose out. I can't use Royal Mail and using a different courier is too risky, I'll have to wait it out. (Looks distressed).

Distributing drugs by post creates risks, as postal workers may ask questions if people are sending suspicious packages or are using their service on a regular basis. To resolve this, they can be paid off and corrupted. Indeed, there have been a number of cases of drug-related corruption in Royal Mail over the years (Independent 2015). Charley informed me that he used a small local post office and paid them additional money to stop them from notifying the authorities. The example of the online distributor who bought an entire post office branch demonstrates the lengths that suppliers will go to protect themselves and the amount of money that this type of business can generate. Criminal agents mobilise actants into allegiances, extending their relational networks, to achieve their aims (Callon 1986). As the business grows, it becomes more integrated with the legitimate economy as it becomes more reliant on its services (Von Lampe 2015). Most significantly, this example demonstrates that the local dimension of organised crime is as important as ever. Virtual platforms may extend the geographical boundaries of illicit markets but the actors within them still operate in a local manner. Making allegiances with local service providers is no less important than the virtual markets themselves.

### Manufacture

There is a growing trend for domestically produced drugs in the UK. Advances in technology shrink supply chains by making it possible to localise the production process. Domestic production reduces the costs of distribution and the risks of being caught, as drugs are manufactured much closer to their consumers. Indeed, technology provides both the knowledge and tools to produce illicit goods. The internet is a vast repository where people can find information on almost anything. Anyone looking to grow cannabis, for example, can find everything they need online to successfully cultivate the drug (Wax 2002). This also applies to other drugs as is demonstrated in the example below, Sam is a bodybuilder who frequented bodybuilding forums on a regular basis:

Sam: I became a member, an active member, a very active member in fact. After a while, after sort of a few thousand posts, I sort of built up trust with the members there even though I had never met them. I was approached by the owner of the forum and he asked me to do some administrative duties for him, moderating the forum. Uh and I got promoted, when I was promoted I got access to a secret area of the forum. The secret area of the forum was where all the suppliers would discuss business. I got put in touch with a source from China who, had a range of steroid products for sale. It was the raw

testosterone powders which would need to be synthesised into the final product. On the website there was complete guides and tutorials on how to make it yourself, so it's safe, sterile, pure... you need a few precursors, grape seed oil, benzyl alcohol, benzyl benzoate... I used the anabolic steroids on myself that I had made, I injected them and I had good results.

Trust is an essential requirement in the illicit drug market (as it is in most markets for that matter). There is little to stop actors from passing on information to the police, or the police posing as criminals themselves. This is not to mention the difficulties distributors have in protecting themselves from robbery or ensuring debts are repaid. In such a high-risk environment, stakeholders must build levels of trust to ensure that co-offenders are reputable (Von Lampe and Johansen 2004b). Trust facilitates social ordering by 'providing the cognitive and moral expectational maps for actors and systems as they continuously interact' (Barber 1983, p. 19). What is interesting about Sam's case is that he was able to build trust with members of the forum without having met them in person. Sam informed me that he had purchased steroids from other members who sent them to his home; he also invested many hours talking on the forum about his personal life and training protocol. In this respect, he was building a digital representation of his life that influenced the other members. Having invested his time there, the owner approached Sam directly and asked him for his help. This demonstrates that trust on internet forums follows much of the same social conditions as it does offline when people interact face to face. Connected co-presence (Pellegrino 2011) can be enough to establish criminal cooperation in virtual environments.

Having gained the trust of the owner, Sam was invited into a private area of the forum where he gained the contact details of individuals who sold high-quality precursors at a relatively low price. This sensitive information was kept secret from other members of the forum who were not trusted enough to be given clearance. It may also have been used to stop competitors from gaining access to their suppliers in order to maintain a comparative advantage. The secret area can be described as a spatial mechanism for controlling access to certain aspects of the distribution network as market territories are re-established online, "Rather than simply substituting or revolutionizing the city... the evidence suggests that new technologies actually diffuse into the older urban fabric offering potential for doing old things in new ways" (Graham 1998, p. 173). With the correct access, the forum provided all the information that Sam required to manufacture anabolic steroids for himself. He had complete control over the production process, which enabled him to ensure the drugs were not adulterated and were correctly dosed.

If illicit drugs become easier to produce for personal use this could benefit society by reducing the number of criminal actors in the supply chain; it would also mean that drugs would be safer for consumers reducing the risk of adulteration and drug-related deaths from overdose. Such a scenario could become a reality with advances in technology, such as 3D printers (Schubert et al. 2014). Scientists have also found ways to synthesise opium from yeast (Galanie et al. 2015), which could one day replace the international trafficking chains that are common today. Local manufacturers would need to access other precursors, however, which could pose problems if they are tightly regulated. 'Economics does not begin with the allocation of scarce resources,

but rather with their localisation' (Callon 1990, p. 152). If illicit drugs do become readily available at low costs, it may lead to higher levels of problematic drug use.

### Discussion & Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter, as outlined in the introduction, is to examine the relationship between technology and organised crime. It questioned how buyers and sellers of illicit goods coordinate transactions within conditions of heavy digital surveillance. Having examined these accounts, the chapter demonstrated how security problems have evolved with emergent technology rather than being made obsolete. Organised criminals are learning to subvert surveillance systems and use these data sources for their own ends. Moreover, as technologies take a more central position in criminal networks, they too can become targeted by predators who wish to gain control of the networks they occupy. This process has reshaped the structure of the illicit drug trade, amplifying its associated harms in some cases and diminishing them in others.

There exists a continuum between the analogue and the digital in which traditional forms of organised crime are enhanced by emergent technologies but also reconfigured through their application. Rather than replacing the physical territories of the terrestrial city, ICT extends them with the effect of re-orientating the geographical movements of human actors as they interact with and within them. In the UK, Media attention has recently focused on a spate of knife attacks that were carried out in London between rival gangs. It is said that these attacks took place after arguments broke out on social media (Telegraph 2018). The brothel owner in this study who had a dispute with another madam provides a similar example. ICT enables criminal actors to communicate in new ways which can compound disputes as rivals seek to gain dominance over both virtual and physical territories (as well as the technologies within them). Smart-phones provide the most significant development in ICT due to their ability to communicate through a variety of applications and internet platforms.

Relationships around trust are beginning to change as digital networks, and online environments take precedence over the human actors who operate them. At the street level, phone lines are a glue that holds the market together and have the potential to generate considerable amounts of money for whoever owns them at a particular time. Customers aim to ensure that the products they buy are of a certain standard and a reasonable price. This does not mean they need to know the identity of the person distributing them. In this sense, trust is placed in the reputations of the business (phone line or website) rather than the individual. These new relationships around trust relate to a change of practice driven by technological developments, in which distributors attempt to conceal particular elements of the enterprise whilst broadening the custom base. Such 'anonymous' markets have not replaced traditional ones but operate alongside them and may depend on where in the distribution chain they are located. Buyers purchasing small amounts of drugs for personal use may not be concerned if they do not know the personal identity of their supplier. Those purchasing wholesale amounts may want more assurances than a good reputation.

The internet has created a virtual space in which illicit goods can be bought and sold but this development is far from over. Virtual reality (VR) technologies further transform our relationship with time and space and are becoming more affordable. Questions remain as to how buyers and sellers of illicit goods will respond to and interact within these new virtual worlds. It is possible that dedicated marketplaces will emerge like those currently seen on the darknet. Alternatively, suppliers may seek out virtual environments where potential customers are likely to visit, such as in virtual nightclubs. There are already cases of people consuming drugs in VR (Techradar 2016), which may have serious consequences if they overdose in an isolated location. People may be connected in the virtual but absent in the real. Nonetheless, offenders who make use of these virtual environments will still have to use the cities infrastructure and forge links with local actors, which is important to recognise.

Whilst technology has significantly altered the drug market, it is not the only factor in this change. A closer inspection is also required of the institutional effects of policy and policing. Policy differentially affects forms of organised crime, as is evident in the more open nature of the anabolic steroid trade. By legalising or decriminalising certain substances, the arms race may begin to slow as criminal opportunities are removed. The government can regulate illicit drug markets before they spiral further out of control, especially as technologies such as 3D printers which can manufacture drugs and weapons become readily available. Ultimately, efforts to resolve these issues must span across both virtual and physical dimensions to be effective.

The chapter contributes to the growing embryonic of research on emergent technologies, which are present in the broader 'STS turn in criminology'. In doing so, it demonstrated how territorial space can no longer be conceptualised solely in terms of the physical built environment. Criminologists must consider the interdependencies between physical territory and digital ether to understand how it is that illicit markets now function. Technology both shapes and is shaped by human action in ways that cannot always be predetermined. Simple technological fixes are not likely to resolve vulnerabilities in the city considering this fact. Criminal entrepreneurs will continue to innovate in response to technological change. This thesis strongly argues for greater use of traditional ethnographic methodologies to bolster research in this field. Methodological innovations in online social research cannot replace conventional offline methods but can complement them. This chapter is a step in this direction but has only touched upon the crest of these technological developments. It is hoped that such work will be taken up in the next wave of science, crime and technology studies (SCTS), as far more research in this field is required.

### 8) Exit: Kill My Name; The Road to Desistance

*I haven't seen anyone for the past ten years as I completely detached myself, but these guys were older and young and fit and strong. I was a little kid and they were putting it on me. So, when they putting it on me, it wasn't a case "oh I'm going to come past here tomorrow with fear", I'm going to go deal with it. So, I would come back with my dad and my brother, everyone else would come. Every time problems got solved. You are rewarding your brain with success from removing the problems then you building a character. Once your character gets big then you gonna have to continue with that and there is a sense of anxiety "if I don't deal with this they think such and such of me", so you are living with other people's perception. That's why I think for myself personally, to kill my name was one of the most important parts of change.*

#### Introduction

The final analysis chapter returns to the topic of the life-course to discuss the exit stage of the journey: desistance. Desistance from crime has become a particular topic of interest to criminologists, the police and policymakers, due to the significant social and financial gains that can be made from it. For effective programmes to be put into place requires an understanding of the processes and mechanisms in which change occurs. Yet, research on desistance in organised criminals is relatively limited. Furthermore, as offenders become more proficient at crime, they can avoid arrest creating inaccuracies in studies that rely on official data sources. This chapter aims to remedy these issues by examining the desistance accounts of the criminal actors in this study, some of whom do not have criminal records. It demonstrates how offenders strategically select market opportunities, position themselves within their networks, or desist entirely, to reduce the risk of prosecution. It examines the relationship between settings, social networks and group dynamics, providing an important contribution to the knowledge base.

Engaging in criminal activities on a long-term basis can create significant problems in life, whether or not offenders are prosecuted for them. The majority of the participants in this study expressed a wish to leave their criminal careers behind and partake in a 'normal life'. A life in which they can have a well-paid legitimate income, be a responsible citizen and settle down with a family. The dream of the 'good life' is an ever-present object that sadly is not often realised for many within this study. Structural inequalities can bar even the most good-willed citizen from ever achieving their goals, and for those with a criminal record (or a bad reputation), finding a good career can be all the more difficult (Denver et al. 2017). Crime can come at a cost to offenders that at times, may never fully be repaid, but there are some who come out the other side with significant financial gains. The proceeds of crime can be reinvested into legitimate pursuits which, if successful, can provide a clean source of income and a way out if their origins are undetected. In some cases, the life of crime is sustained for many years, as actors find more efficient and less risky ways of working the game (Ouellet and Bouchard 2017; Gundur 2019).



Studies into the criminal career suffer from an actor orientated approach in that they do not consider the life course of criminal organisations themselves (to the extent that such organisations exist). Does organisational breakdown affect the criminal life-course of the people within in it? Do they desist from crime or seek out other criminal associates to continue their work? Developmental and life-course studies, in general, do not consider the effects that close criminal ties have on the life-course when actors within the group decide to desist. It is possible that desistance can have a ripple effect leading to chains of desistance, as pro-social, anti-criminal behaviours are adopted. Research has demonstrated that distancing oneself from pro-criminal peers facilitates desistance (Bersani and Doherty 2018), but what happens when peers decide to desist but do not leave the group? The chapter proceeds by examining the narrative accounts of offenders who have desisted from crime, as well as those who have honed their skills to reduce risks. It outlines the pressures that criminal groups have on offender's ability to desist, as well the structural, social and situational effects, that restrain their choices.

### *The Iranian 'Mafia'*

At the time of writing, Ade and his brother Kamin are fully reformed. They no longer engage in any violent activity, nor do they willingly associate with any active criminals. Some of their old criminal associates are still active, whilst others have moved on and away from crime, or out of the city. A few of their old contacts are no longer living, having been shot dead by rival gangsters due to drug-related disputes. Perhaps the most prolific criminal associate from their past who is still active to this day is Wyatt Douglas, the gangster from London who muscled in on Red City's night economy. Wyatt is responsible for the extortion of local businesses, has ties to illicit drug trafficking, and collects money from over half of the brothels in the city. Ade and Kamin are no longer in contact with Wyatt but are aware of his activities through their social networks.

The brothers' path to desistance from their life of organised, instrumental violence, was not straightforward and evolved slowly over time. Perhaps one of the most significant events that led to the brothers changing their lifestyles was the dissolution of their crew. In an unexpected turn of events, their father travelled home to Iran and did not return. Wyatt Douglas had been paying the family protection money for his part in the event that got Ade shot (see chapter 6). Now that their father had left, he decided to stop making payments:

Ade: The guy was paying the money starts missing the weeks, and from one week to two weeks, then pay a little here little bit there. I just thought I can't let this happen cos now this guy is actually waiting for the opportunity to see if you are acting weaker. So, I knew I want to get paid, but I don't wanna start a war cos now this is very, very dangerous. This is the time now that I was with my wife and my mum, she's not well. Not dealing with my dad's leaving she's really down, she's got depression. So what happened I said to the middle-man "look he promised me and my dad, to pay this money because we couldn't find the other guy" (Wyatt's henchman who fired the shot) "he put his hand up, he said to settle the score "I'm gonna do this", "but now he thinks he can

get away with this, because my dad's not here, but it's nothing to do with dad. When I was there, fighting against him, when I got shot my dad wasn't there. I went there on my own... But, if the last thing I'm gonna do that's him. I'm gonna change the story, and I will go against him because it doesn't matter how many people he's got, he's gonna bleed just like me. He's breathing the same air as me. There's no 'S' on his chest, so therefore he's gonna get it. It doesn't matter". So, he passed it on he said "look, you promised" and he's a nice honest guy he's an old dude (the middle-man) and he just went to him and said "look you said you were gonna pay, I don't know what he's gonna do. That's what he's saying" so the guy he come back one night, two, three weeks after, he come up and said "he wants to come up and to pay, to pay it all".

Mark: Right.

Ade: Pay the whole thing off, shake hands and we move on, and I was like "ok fine". So, he came up and he actually paid me the money and he said "you know, shake hands and this is what I promised so I deliver it", so I was like "yep thank you very much it's all forgotten, this is what happens on the street, it stays on the street. Well thank you".

The loss of a leader can be one of the most significant threats to a criminal organisation. With the leader removed, the level of social control and influence the group has over criminal networks within their area can decline (Tafuya 2014). Competing criminal actors may try to capitalise upon the loss by attacking and dismantling the remainder of the group. When news began to spread that their father would not be returning to the city, Wyatt had assumed that Ade's crew had been weakened to the extent he could stop making payments. Yet, Ade and Kamin embodied the same values as their father and had enough respect and violent capital to ensure their positions were upheld. As Winlow argues:

"the cultural importance of violence, reputation and violent reputation are exceptionally strong among active criminals and 'hard' men alike. In some instances, the maintenance of honour supplants all other concerns" (Winlow 2001, pp. 44-45).

If they had not risen to the occasion, it could have led to further disputes with Wyatt and others later on, as their credibility would have been diminished. Nonetheless, Ade explains that this was an important time in his life as he had recently been married, with his mother also in need of care. Ade began to take family matters more seriously and decided to move away from the life of violent crime. The police had also put significant pressure on him regarding the shooting, and he feared he might end up in prison. They attempted to turn Ade informant but had little success as he abided by the 'code of silence' (Bacon 2017, p. 165), "what happens on the street, it stays on the street...". His brother Kamin, was much slower to change, and pulled Ade back into disputes on a regular basis:

Ade: Kamin's behaviour, because Kamin going out and getting drunk and having a party, fucking around with the girls, continuously on a weekly basis, fall out with people and

if he couldn't handle it and beat them up. He was doing it left right and centre, and then you would get stuck or you would want to push it even further. So, he'd call me and the people that were around me three or four guys they like, totally loyal and you know stand next to me no matter what, they would come with me... It got to the point, overtime you would see my truck would pull up. I had one of these big trucks, American truck, I had one of these all tinted out windows with big wheels pulling out, jumping out with baseball bats and beating people up on the dance floor, whilst other people's watching. This was like it could blow up like a bomb, so you see that truck's anywhere that means there's a fight, someone's gonna get beat up. It got to that point, so I was like "Kamin this is madness, you cannot do this in England".

Ade and Kamin's crew is defined here as a small family firm. They had a number of blood relatives, associates of Iranian and Caribbean decent, and local English hardmen in their group. According to Lester (2003), organisational breakdown is the consequence of the politics of power. Organisations go into decline when actors within them become more interested in pursuing their own goals rather than the goals of the group. The first step in this process for Ade and Kamin was the loss of their leader, their father leaving. Secondly, Ade began to dissociate from the firm's mission - to help the community, beat the 'bullies' and 'squash' people who challenged them through force. Kamin began to take the violence aspect of their mission too far and lost sight of the core values of the group. Ade saw that there was no positive purpose in his brother's actions, so set about getting him to change. Desistance, however, involves both internal subjective change as well as situational, contextual change (Bersani and Doherty 2018). The people in their social networks saw them in a particular light and associated them with their actions. They had developed an identity that was restricting their ability to move on, and it was this that needed to be reconciled:

Mark: Were these disputes always in clubs?

Kamin: Anywhere it could've been anywhere, I mean initially it was tough the areas we were in, but I can remember up by my street these guys they standing, older guys sixteen seventeen. They grown up, I'm like "man"... I haven't seen anyone for the past ten years as I completely detached myself, but these guys were older and young and fit and strong, I was a little kid and they were putting it on me. So, when they putting it on me it wasn't a case "oh I'm going to come past here tomorrow with fear", I'm going to go deal with it. So, I would come back with my dad and my brother, so everyone else would come, so every time problems got solved. You are rewarding your brain with success from removing the problems then you building a character, once your character gets big then you gonna have to continue with that and there is sense of anxiety "if I don't deal with this they think such and such of me", so you are living with other people's perception. That's why I think for myself personally to kill my name was one of the most important parts of change...

Mark: How do you think being like that benefited you, what did it do for you if anything, what were you getting out of it?

Kamin: I think generally life makes and breaks itself, I think you get attachments and detachments, sorry connections and disconnections. Coming from Iran suddenly from a good sort of childhood, although, I was exposed to seeing fights and how to deal with things, I had a big disconnection that was a start of a big problem in a vulnerable age thirteen, so disconnection. Gave me identity that's an answer, power gave me identity and you can see it in a winner's society. Powerful guys they getting certain type of looks.

Mark: Popularity?

Kamin: Popularity. Popularity with girls was there. I mean if you are on top of your food chain with anything you gonna get type of girls. Within the night clubs I think it is not particularly good environment. Nightclubs depth of it, looks glamorous and everyone's happy, but there's an edge to these guys and there's a mystery to these guys, everybody's talking about these guys (their crew)... Girls look for security, it's a form of security, power, isn't it you know. It's a false one, but yeah there was a lot of girls around me. I think genetic looks helps massively, but there was ugly guys, they was getting the same amount of girls. They were part of the crew, we were popular, it's a status. Yeah, I think you nailed it on the point, it is the status and the depth of it, the flip coin, I think it is status anxiety, that's what's driving you to do it more and more, because if it drops you have to top it up...

Indeed, 'perceptions of honour are strongest in those who see themselves through the eyes of others' (Winlow 2001, p. 44). Moreover, Kamin was not the only actor of this type in the club scene, which 'has long held an allure for 'glamorous gangsters' who seek to display their power and notoriety' (Hobbs et al. 2003, p. 89). Because of this, he was continually getting into violent disputes to maintain his honour and social status. In regard to change itself, Kamin explains that in order to move forward, he needed to 'kill his name'. Kamin had appropriated this idea from the Iconic Hollywood movie 'Gladiator', a favourite of his that he watched repeatedly. He had likened himself to the main character, Maximus, a freedom fighter who was hugely popular and a hero to the people. The Roman emperor Commodus had wished Maximus's death but knew he would become a martyr if he did not discredit his reputation first: "You have a great name. He must kill your name before he kills you" (Gladiator 2000). Watching this Movie, Kamin realised that his reputation was a significant barrier to change. People were treating him in a certain way based on his reputation, and he was conforming to their expectation of him. Goffman makes this argument:

"When an individual projects a definition of the situation and thereby makes an implicit or explicit claim to be a person of a particular kind, he automatically exerts a moral demand upon the others, obliging them to value and treat him in the manner that persons of his kind have a right to expect. He also implicitly forgoes all claims to be things he does not appear to be and hence forgoes the treatment that would be appropriate for such individuals" (Goffman 1956, p. 24).

Kamin wanted to transform his reputation but in order to do so he had to change the definition of the situation through the way he acted. This was difficult as he had become addicted to the lifestyle. He was addicted to the hedonism of the party, the attention of the women, and the respect and status he received from being the man he was. By identifying that he needed to change, there was a shift in his sense of self that no longer accepted his ways of being. This resulted in affirmative action and a reputational shift in his social networks, later down the line. However, as Campbell and Hansen (2012) found in their study of drug traffickers, desistance is not always enough in the long term. The community may define the person for their past actions and continue to treat them as such, which can pull them back into crime. Indeed, a number of people who have seen me with Kamin in the field commented on his capacity for violence, reflecting on things they had seen him do many years ago - “yeah that guy you were with, he doesn’t fuck around does he...”. Fortunately, Kamin has now completely reformed, but it took him many years in which he relapsed multiple times as he continued to frequent the club scene. Nightclubs are settings in which different criminal actors from within and outside of the city converge and collide (see chapter 6). Over time he began to change the way he acted when socialising or working in nightclubs, as well as going out drinking in them less frequently. A key factor in reforming his character was the help he received from a clinical psychologist at the behest of his brother. Indeed, it was his brother’s change of character that led to change within Kamin.

### Simon

The following account was provided by Simon, a retail cocaine dealer and classmate of the lads from Summer Park School. Like the lads, Simon was introduced to drugs in his early school days and became a heavy user of cannabis. He eventually went on to retail powdered cocaine for his brother Derrick, who had been introduced to dealing by their father Josh. Intergenerational transmission among organised criminals is common (Spapens and Moors 2019). Josh has recently been released from prison after serving a five-year sentence for conspiracy to supply Class A drugs. Derrick was the first of the two brothers to distribute cocaine, building up a substantial custom base, and was the ‘go to’ supplier for many users across Red City. Derrick took a step up from the retail side after he was hospitalised with severe head injuries following an altercation in a nightclub. He had gained enough money, contacts, and reputational trust, to purchase drugs at the wholesale level, which enabled him to increase his revenue whilst reducing the frequency of his sales. Higher earnings per criminal act are associated with lower rates of arrest (Ouellet and Bouchard 2017). Having built up a substantial custom base, he offered the retail job to his brother. He set Simon up with an active phone line, a consignment of product, and a set wage of around £2000 - £3000 per week for making the sales.

At the time their father was arrested, Simon received a phone call from one of his crew informing him to get rid of the drugs as the police would be due any moment. When conducting raids on criminal groups, the police try to simultaneously coordinate their actions so that

information does not spread before other teams get to their targets (Bacon 2017). However, the deterrent effects of these raids on the drug market is limited (Sherman et al. 1995) and mainly symbolic (Coomber et al. 2017). Simon was lucky that there was a delay in the response. He had managed to stash the drugs but left seven thousand pounds worth of cash at his house that he could not account for. His dad lied to the police and told them it was his money and his son was only storing it for him. Simon got off with a fine and community service and closely avoided electronic monitoring and curfew. It was important for Simon to avoid being put on 'tag' as he could not have continued running the phone line with it on. Simon is an attractive man and confident with women. He seduced his solicitor and began sleeping with her. It was his solicitor that managed to get his sentence lightened by pulling in favours at court. Whilst he was under investigation, the phone line was taken away from Simon as it was deemed too much of a risk. This was his first attempt at getting a job and going straight, although it did not last long:

Mark: What were the main reasons for you leaving your jobs in the past?

Simon: I think, lack of interest and seeing that I can get better money. Leaving for the opportunity of doing the phone again. You know I got arrested, my house got raided, not due to me but due to like the kind of ring where I was living. So, I had to stop doing the phone just in case.

Mark: Yeah.

Simon: I was being watched. I was under investigation. So, I stopped doing the phone and that really hit me, I was like, "I need the fucking money". I was on like three grand a week to earning fuck all you know. Then I tried to get a job, then I was like "this ain't working" so I begged and begged and begged to have the phone back. Then I got the phone back cus I really wanted it and I got the phone back to earning, going back to what I was earning before, earning nothing to then.

Legitimate employment has been closely associated with desistance from crime (Van Roeyen et al. 2016). Events in the life course such as finding a job or getting married encourage desistance through structural routines that order the lives and activities of those who engage in them (Laub and Sampson 2003). It is difficult to be a full-time drug dealer if one is in full-time employment. Distributors will have to work around their jobs in order to do both. Research in this area often assumes that work is the catalyst to change; however, this is not necessarily the case. Employment can be the result of a commitment to change rather than the cause of it (Skardhamar and Savolainen 2014). Simon's transition to the job market was not of his own volition, and it was for this reason that he did not succeed. If it had come about by choice, he may have been more committed to the role. An additional point is the fact that he was making significant amounts of money from selling drugs compared to working legitimately. This is another element that differentiates organised criminals from general offenders. Their activities can bring in substantial sums that are difficult, if not impossible, for them to replicate in the

legitimate workplace. Not to mention the lifestyle that dealing drugs brings with it (Adler and Adler 1983; Campbell and Hansen 2012; Douglas and Smith 2018).

It is interesting to note that in an interview with Simon, which took place four years earlier when he was still dealing, he informed me that he was earning £2000 per week; however, in this later interview, the sum has risen to £3000. He may have exaggerated to give a more persuasive account of why he was involved in the businesses and kept returning to it. According to King (2013), desistance narratives often contain reference to a sense of powerlessness around past events that restrict individual autonomy. Whilst this may be true, this does not mean offenders will always construct narratives of their activities in a negative light. The positive aspects of crime provide further justification for the past. Indeed, offenders may employ a number of neutralisation techniques to come to terms with offending (Sykes and Matza 1957).

Before Simon began selling cocaine, he had only tried the drug a couple of times and was not keen on it. He enjoyed his weed and a few beers from time to time but that was it for the most part. When he started dealing, this began to change due to the presence of the drug in his personal environment. It was not long until he was using cocaine on a regular basis and eventually became heavily addicted. Simon ran up a massive debt, and it was this life event that he believes was the primary reason in him going straight:

Mark: So, tell me about how you got in debt?

Simon: Yeah mate, I mean hanging around with people that did it all the time and I was like a fool for it as well, just had it all around me all the time. I think I just fell into a pattern of doing it all the time, I remember saying to Nick, I used to hang around with him a lot, even when I was hanging around with Ben and Danny and everyone else was happy to do it, but Nick was the main person, it was someone to have out with me. But I remember saying to him sat out in the garden “I can't remember the last time I hadn't done it”.

Mark: Really? Woah.

Simon: Yeah.

Mark: Everyday?

Simon: Yeah it was like that, it was like I could say “yeah a couple of years ago I wasn't doing it” just saying in general “I can't remember the last day that I hadn't done it”. It was getting to a point where I'd be out and I had to be out anyway cos I was selling it every day, there wasn't a day that I could have off, if I did he was breathing down my neck (Derrick), cos he was on my back constantly, our relationship was shit, it was just control...

Mark: Drinking as well were you?

Simon: Yeah drinking all the time drinking, just sniffing flat out it was ridiculous, nights just being sat in my car on my own doing it. Horrible, horrible period of my life really and yeah just built up and built up. And the kiddy we were getting it from he used to just lay nines on (nine ounces) and it was like we'd have a nine and sell that and pay him the money and just do it like that, so it was always in advance and I built up a debt of this going on "can I have another one?".

Mark: Then you can pay it back?

Simon: Yeah because I owed money into it and then it just spiralled and spiralled and got further and further and I owed more and more money then, I was going on with two, and then over a period of time I went to three and then one day it was four and he was like "oh", his runner was like "oh like gotta square up coming up to December" because he squares up every year, so I was like "yeah yeah sound" like thinking "fucking hell", I owed fucking four nines.

Mark: How much is four nines?

Simon: Worked out sixteen grand.

Mark: Fuck.

Simon: Yeah I look back and say yeah I had fun, I didn't get my head kicked in, and like I said we met him that night he said "I get it off these guys up north" and I remember I was in the car park and he looked at me and said, "I've been seeing them for years but it's business and they don't fuck around, they will come down for their money" and he said "I'm not fronting it, I haven't got it, I haven't got sixteen grand. I might look like I've got a bit of money" and we all did we thought yeah he's fucking minted like cos he's the main guy but he said "I ain't got it and they'll come down and when they do they're gonna take my door off, and I've got a daughter at home, so when that happens" and he looked at me and he leant towards me and said "I'm just letting you know, if that happens in my house, I will come and kill you".

Simon had an arrangement with their main supplier's drug runner. The runner had allowed Simon to get into debt without informing his distributor of how much he owed. Neither his brother Derrick nor their supplier knew the extent of the debt until that point. 'The importance of trust and secrecy in criminal networks most clearly emerges when participants in such settings are confronted with the need to act' (Morselli et al. 2007, p. 144). Indeed, mediated trust (Von Lampe and Johansen 2004b) is not only useful when new customers are introduced to suppliers (vouching), but also when assigning tasks to subordinates who work with trusted others (i.e. allowing runners to give credit). If it were not for the debt, it is unlikely that Simon would have needed to meet the main supplier, who then drew upon the reputation of his own suppliers to enforce debt recovery. It is possible that the main supplier wanted to maintain positive relations with Simon and Derrick for future business, which may have soured if he



said he would be the one conducting the violence. Alternatively, they may not have believed he was capable. We can see then, that the structure of criminal groups, and networks, change in the face of specific problems, where individuals in the ‘background’ become mobilised into action. Having assessed the seriousness of the situation, Derrick consoled the supplier and agreed that the debt would be paid within a week. To achieve this feat, the brothers approached their family, informed them of the problem and borrowed money. A significant amount of this was loaned by Derrick himself. To pay back the debt, Simon had to go back to work; he found a day job working for his cousin, which he juggled alongside working the phone line. His cousin was aware of his situation, so allowed him a little flexibility in his working hours. Simon paid off most of the debt within three months, but it took him eight months in total to clear it completely. Having cleared the debt, Simon quit his day job as the demand of working two jobs began to take its toll. It was not long before he slipped back into his old ways and he built up another debt totalling £8000. As before, the money was loaned, and the debt was paid.

Addiction to any drug requires a significant amount of willpower and social support to break. Simon was not able to cut ties to his drug-using peers and had cocaine in his possession at all times. Early research on cocaine addiction demonstrates that users experience an ‘intense arousal and cocaine craving when they encounter ‘reminders’ of their previous cocaine use (Childress et al. 1988, p. 74). These ‘cue-induced cravings’ are the result of learned behaviour that alters neural processes, which assign a motivational value to an environmental stimulus (Bonson et al. 2002). It can take up to six months of abstinence for the brain to be reconditioned before the cravings subside (Goldstein 2018). Derrick was making a great deal of money from Simon running the phone line and did not have anyone else he could trust to take it on. Moreover, it is ‘important for criminal networks to work not only with trustworthy partners but also with capable partners: namely, people who can provide certain skills, contacts, and resources’ (Jaspers 2019, p. 4). Where these attributes cannot be found through strong ties, they may be found through weak ties instead. In these cases, actors may have to rely on trust substitutes, such as economic incentives, mutual dependencies or the threat of violence (ibid). Simon was highly trustworthy and capable; however, these qualities were being undermined by his drug addiction. Derrick pressured Simon to continue despite his issues with addiction. He suggested that he took greater control by rationing Simon with an ounce at a time which could be replaced the following day. An arrangement that was doomed to failure:

Simon: It was just stupid like, yeah and I remember it happened like that, one night and he came round the next morning and he was like “where is it, where’s my stuff?”.

Mark: Right.

Simon: Yeah and he kicked right off, kicked off in my house throwing shit around. Like we've had stupid fights he would just come in my house and start trying to whack me and we're brothers. At that time I couldn't see it and he was just frustrated cos of what has been going on for so long, and yeah my missus phoned him up one day and said to him “look what you don't realise is that he's got a habit and you're not helping him and he needs to be away from it, and you're not helping because you just want to make him do

it yeah, and he's got an addiction and you're not helping". So then he said look "do you want to end it" even until then he was still asking "do you want to do it then?". Cos he had no way and I was like "I can't, I have to stay away from it" so I did that and it just happened from there got a job.

Criminal groups are not always willing to let their members go, especially when they are responsible for key roles and make money for them (Douglas and Smith 2018). In this instance, the group was a small family firm, so the bonds were even stronger. Indeed, strong family ties foster cohesion in criminal groups whilst ensuring impenetrability from law enforcement enquiries and surveillance (Luong 2019). In Italy, it is common for mafia groups to substitute familial trust through elaborate initiation ceremonies and strict codes of conduct. Such practices are rarely seen in the UK drug market, although it does happen (e.g. Varese 2017).

Simon did not wish to completely cut ties with his brother, which made stopping dealing all the more difficult. Fortunately, Derrick saw sense and agreed to relieve him of his role. 'Ultimately, trust is a function of expectations, and has to do with building a reputation of trustworthiness. A shared past provides input for this reputation, and a shared future creates the need for it' (Jaspers 2019, p. 4). Derrick realised that the shared future he envisioned for his family business was not realistic and would be best placed with someone else. Having quit dealing, Simon embarked on a life of legitimate employment. However, it took him many years before he could reduce his drug use to an unproblematic level. Simon had a family and children of his own, but this did not stop him from using and dealing. It was not until the birth of his most recent child that he finally changed his ways:

Mark: How long has it been since you stopped selling it?

Simon: It's got to be nearly four years, three years, yeah been living where I am now two years lived in Saintsville for about a year, moved in with my partner's parents because I was working for TV World, this was after Region Car Hire. I got a job for TV World doing door selling, give me a company car, but where I wasn't earning as much, me and the missus still trying to get on it (cocaine) and do stupid shit. We just couldn't afford to live in the house we were. I had a three bedroom house in Limewood and that is when the kids are still living with me, and it got to a point when my ex got out of the hospital (psychiatric care) she was living got a place of her own, she was recovering she wasn't mentally unstable, and it got to a point where it was like we are gonna have to move in with my (new) girlfriend's mum just to save some money, and the kids gonna have to go back with my ex and that was a hard time.

Mark: I bet.

Simon: I was distraught, felt a failure to the kids like having them for two years and then having them having to go back with their mum because I can't sort myself out. It was shit mate. A lot of people are, live for the weekend as they say, and you end up in someone's kitchen till five in the morning. It got to a point where it was slowing down, we were doing it now and again, yeah then she fell pregnant and it was like, bang. It's come from the extremes to really extreme to where we had to move out and the kids had

to move out, and I think it has taken to see what I have lost and also what I am gaining with the child with the baby, as soon as she fell pregnant it was like “sort everything out”.

Mark: She had to stop drinking and everything?

Simon: Yeah, she totally stopped everything, and we weren't heavy drinkers or smokers, it was just the weekend, I mean I don't smoke now, first drink I've had in like, well the other weekend, yeah it's crazy mate. Soon as she fell pregnant everything stops and then it's our first night out together tomorrow so (laughs) we will see what happens, going to a mate's wedding party. Yeah, I'll end up messing around tomorrow (using cocaine) and it's like we both said, we know, I know that it will never go back to that. One because I am not selling it like that do you know what I mean, but over that period of time I've still got bits and sold bits here and there and I've tried to make some money because I knew how with that and I needed the money.

Mark: And you knew how to do it.

Simon: Yeah, but even then doing that you still end up doing more than you think you will, just be like "oh yeah I'll just buy a half ounce and sell it off and I'll make this much" it's all in your head and you work it all out and you think you'll make this much from it all to the precise fucking twenty pound and it doesn't happen like that.

Cocaine is an expensive drug to consume and its effects are short-lived. The drug has a half-life of around an hour, leaving the user needing regular hits as they chase the high. Cocaine is often consumed with alcohol, which when processed by the liver, is metabolised into cocaethylene. This by-product has a longer half-life, approximately double that of cocaine, but is more harmful to the body than consuming either substance alone (McCance-Katz et al. 1993; Nutt 2012). The longer half-life, however, does not stop the user craving more of the drug throughout the binge. Simon had cut his use down to weekends but was still living beyond his means, especially now that his income had reduced. As he had the knowledge and the experience of dealing, the prospect of making money pulled him back time and time again.

Research on organised crime demonstrates that people turn to crime when negative life events reduce their income or ability to make money legitimately (Kleemans and de Poot 2008). The accumulation of criminal capital (McCarthy 2001) allows offenders to capitalise on opportunity structures that non-offenders may not be able to. Although Simon had a legitimate job, his addiction was leaving him without money to pay his bills. It was not until the birth of his last child that he really began to beat the habit. His girlfriend had stopped using drugs to protect the development of their unborn baby. Pregnancy has been shown to have a positive effect on mothers who abuse drugs, providing a strong motivation to quit (Kendler et al. 2017). Relationships, where both parties are addicted, can make getting clean difficult if either person is not willing (Briggs and Monge Gamero 2017). Fortunately, Simon was supportive and

stopped using as well. Since the baby has been born, he admits they may take the drug on occasion, but is confident he has put the past behind him.

### Rocco

Rocco was introduced to the thesis in chapter 7 in which he discussed his experiences dealing with rival distributors in the local area, “the two mates who I was with grabbed what he had there and a bit of cash and the most important thing I wanted was his phone...”. Rocco sold heroin at the retail level before moving up to wholesale. He also has experience growing cannabis. Rocco is a skilled construction worker and is employed by his stepfather who owns a local business in the trade. The following account details his transition away from dealing heroin and crack cocaine to concentrating on cannabis cultivation.

Rocco: The main thing of working (construction), and crops (cannabis), which was my main income and it was nice and easy. I got dragged away from that because everything else was so easy if that makes sense (dealing heroin), because the money was there like that, and it wasn't until I got back with my ex and she said “look you gotta calm yourself down, you're gonna get nicked in a minute, you're too hectic!” cos I was a bit highly strung and whatever, I'd do anything for anyone, wouldn't have my mates over (rip them off). I just wouldn't take no shit, you had to be like that, you had to be very fronty (aggressive/authoritarian). So I left it all to my mate, “look you crack on”, I had two crops and went back just doing a little bit of work, but it was just like the odd day here and there, and I had a thief so I used to take the thief out in the day and he'd guarantee me £100 for the day. Take him out just for the day have a look round the shops, and I would walk in front of him, so if I say anything like that and I picked it up twice, anything twice, he would take it because that would be what I wanted, I would like come back home I had like £40 candles and then with that.

Mark: You just pay him £100 a day to do that is that what you are saying?

Rocco: No no, he could guarantee me £100 so if at the end of the day we would come back with this this and this he would sell it to whoever or say “do you want to buy it”, so what I would usually do was buy it off him for cheap as you like, so say it was like thirty grand's worth of stuff it would work out about eleven hundred quid, so I would buy that off of him pay him through my mate obviously because he was a druggie. I would pay him in browns and whites (heroin and crack) for it and obviously cream off of that. So, I would get it a lot cheaper and sell it and give a bit to my mum, cos me and my mum fell out, not properly fell out but I wouldn't chat to her a lot, because she was always worried about me but had to let me do my own thing. Cos I was just a bit of a nightmare, so with that gradually I sort of stopped that going out and doing that because I got a bit of money behind myself, I started properly focusing, and then my old man passed away. So, I stopped selling browns and whatever, but I done it before that it just wasn't me I didn't like it.

Mark: Yeah yeah, it's a nasty game.

Rocco: It's not a nice thing to do. I know like I'm, making money makes sense as such, it just wun't me I don't like it, and I don't like...

Mark: The damage it causes?

Rocco: Yeah, I wouldn't say anything bad about people that do, it's just one of those things, but yeah so, I literally was just doing crops and earning money that way.

Rocco and his friend had been selling heroin at the retail level when he decided to give it up. The role was impacting on his relationship with his girlfriend and mother as it required a great deal of time and attention to run the business efficiently. Due to the nature of the trade, drugs were often given out on loan, which would have to be chased up. Those who did not pay would need to be intimidated along with other dealers in the area who were stealing his trade. This meant having to maintain a particular front that was impacting on his relationship as it spilt over into his home life. Like Simon, Rocco was benefitting financially from dealing and the ease in which he was able to sell drugs was a significant motivator "I got dragged away from that because everything else was so easy if that makes sense, because the money was there like that". Moreover, he was also exploiting a drug addict who would steal for him much like the relationship that Teeth has with his runner Hector (see chapter 5). Rocco's moral compass was somewhat different from Teeth, however, as he did not like that harm that heroin and crack causes. It was something that played on his conscience. Nonetheless, the most significant factor that led to this turning point was his relationship with his girlfriend and his mother. They had a level of social control over Rocco that influenced his actions, but it did not last long:

Rocco: What I started doing was working at my mum's house for free, so I just go down there and chill, still spend a lot of money like, Nandos every day, whatever. I split up with my ex, and then because I wun't with her, started selling smack again (heroin) and um, yeah, because, you sort of get so much trouble (people asking for drugs) sort of know so many people, when I deal it was like, I wun't even trying and everyone was like chatting to me saying "yeah yeah I can sort it out for you, not a problem".

Mark: Yeah, it's easy because you have the network there.

Rocco: And it just, I just went from like there, to doing two boxes (kilos) a week sort of thing, from half z's (half ounces) to like bars (nine ounces), to half boxes like that.

Having a reputation for being a certain type of person is a persistent problem for criminals who want to go straight. Being known as a dealer increases the level of opportunity to make money from crime and acts as a constant reminder that money can be made in this way. If we think back to Simon's struggle with addiction and the cue-induced cravings he was experiencing, we can see that this operates much in the same way. Seeking consumers act as cues that remind

and motivates actors to return to crime. Cutting social ties by moving to a new area may not be enough in a population that lives out their lives on social media. A complete break with all criminogenic social ties in both virtual and real-world locations would be necessary, but the prevalence of drug use makes this difficult; the Crime Survey for England and Wales 2017/18 found that 9% of adults had tried illicit drugs in the last year (HM Government 2018b). As Rocco had split up with his girlfriend, the protective element of social control she had on him was also no longer present. It was the combination of these factors that influenced his decision to return to dealing heroin.

Over time, Rocco moved up and away from the retail level, much like Simon's brother Derrick. He was shifting kilos of the drug on a weekly basis and was making a great deal of money. At this level of the trade, there is less interaction with users on the street. This allows distributors to dissociate themselves from the harm that the drug causes, as they do not see its effects to the same extent. Indeed, when wars are conducted in other countries, the devastation may only register on the fringes of consciences in our society (Jones 1991). The same can be said of soldiers who pilot weaponised drones that kill whilst being operated from afar: killing from a distance is normatively easier (Boshuijzen-van Burken and van Bezooijen 2015). Distance affects the way people perceive moral issues. Rocco continued on this path for a couple of years before he met his new girlfriend, Sasha, and fell in love. Like his ex-girlfriend, Sasha did not approve of his actions and the effect it was having on their relationship, so pressured him to resign:

Rocco: I remember we were out and I remember we were sat down in town, in the German market having a beer. Sat down there, I remember with our coats on, our woolly hats, and having a good time and I was like, "oh shit we gotta shoot, I gotta go grab some money".

Mark: Yeah?

Rocco: And she was like "oh can't you grab it tomorrow", I was like "nah". I used to like be on point, if it was there grab it cos it might get spent or took, it just made sense. Always on the ball, and that's how you would earn money, cos people that were lazy, or used to sniff it, cos of course I've got that rule, I've never sniffed it in my life, just for that reason I don't, I don't see anything wrong with it, but that's just me. So, she said to me "oh, like when do you ever stop to enjoy it? Why do you do it? Why don't you ever stop to enjoy it?". So I said "I enjoy it all the time, I'm out with you we're having a nice time", but she was like "yeah but you gotta leave", she said "when are you ever gonna stop and enjoy it?", and wun't to a couple of weeks later when you think about it, I'm always like a hundred miles an hour. I said to you about working?

Mark: Yeah, yeah.

Rocco: I think I've gotta be like that to keep my mind occupied it works too fast, but when she said that I thought "yeah" (agreed). Literally a couple of weeks later, went and saw one

of my mates who was like doing well, and something happened to his mate, but obviously like not put him in debt but took a lot of his savings away. Said to him “look, this is the score blah blah blah, I give you this, like X amount per week and sort yourself out. It's a piece of piss it's all set up for you, you don't have to touch it, just make a few phone calls sorted”. So I did and like now I've literally just got one crop on, making ten to fifteen grand every three months, and I work every day (day job).

An effective dealer is one that is available to make sales and collections at all waking hours of the day. Research conducted on ‘on-call’ workers demonstrates that having to be available for work on a moment’s notice can be highly stressful and negatively impacts upon home life:

“One inherent difference between on-call work and other forms of shift work is the unpredictability of when a call may occur. This unpredictability poses a unique work environment that is not faced by those working set shifts and has been identified as a factor that may inhibit workers’ ability to “switch off” and attain a cognitive distance from work when on-call from home. This has the potential to affect the lives of on-call workers by adversely impacting on their family time, social life, stress levels, and consequently, further disrupting their sleep.” (Hall et al. 2017, p. 4)

For drug dealers, the negative effects of being on call are further compounded by the illegality of their operations. This put actors at constant risk and requires them to maintain particular fronts to be successful in their role. These pressures can make it difficult to sustain romantic relationships in the long term. This is why Rocco decided to specialise in cannabis cultivation whilst also working a legitimate job. With an automated set up that regulates temperature, water, lights and nutrients; cannabis plants do not need much maintenance. Video cameras can also be installed for added security, allowing the grower to monitor the crop from a distance. This reduces the risk of being caught by the police on site (Potter 2006, p. 191). Indeed, growing cannabis enabled Rocco to continue making money illegitimate without negatively impacting his ‘normal’ daily life.

According to Kleemans and de Poot, specialisation in particular illicit activities occurs when they become more profitable than the alternatives (although, profitability is not always sufficient condition for crime). This, they argue, is the result of increases in scale (Kleemans and de Poot 2008). Rocco specialised in heroin distribution as a result of the higher profits and increased output. Yet, due to the negative impact it was having on his life and the risk of selling the drug, he switched over to cultivating cannabis. Specialisation is not always the result of increases in scale. That being said, I witnessed Rocco taking up the odd criminal opportunity by acting as a middleman sourcing Class A drugs for friends (social supply). He may not have mentioned this in the interview because he did not deem this as dealing when compared to his past activities. The construction of desistance narratives is thus dependent upon individual perceptions of what counts as crime, which may impact upon offending in the future. Nonetheless, occasional social supply is in activity that is less risky than ‘real’ dealing (Taylor and Potter 2013) and does not impact on life as much. Having a legitimate income gives

offenders more freedom to choose the criminal opportunities that are available, as they can maintain a basic standard of living (Ouellet and Bouchard 2017). Criminals who are financially desperate may take on more risky opportunities for immediate rewards.

*Andy and Sam Stone*

The final account in this chapter is provided by Andy, one of the lads I met at Summer Park School (see chapter 4). Andy and his brother Sam were long-term cannabis dealers, having sold the drug for around seven years total. The two have completely given up dealing and have been living relatively crime-free lives for the past ten years. Sam had a short spell where he was manufacturing anabolic steroids for personal use (see chapter 7) but has now quit bodybuilding entirely. There were a number of events that Andy believes led him and his brother to quit dealing cannabis. Primarily this was due to a police crackdown in the city that made sourcing the drug very difficult:

Mark: So, can you tell me about the time you were selling cannabis and you were you having difficulties getting hold of it?

Andy: Yeah well as you know I was in the business of selling cannabis with my brother we had been doing it for about seven years and it was quite easy to get hold of for a long time. Sometimes we would have problems but generally speaking we either had middle men we could go through, or we got a good direct contact ourselves a guy who lived a few miles away and we were buying cannabis off of him more, maybe about a year and a half, we got the contact from our cousin. The stuff was good you know we were able to get big quantities, make a decent profit from it. We got a few people complaining, which you always get in any kind of business, but generally it was good, and basically he went out of business. What happened is the police raided his friend's house where it was getting grown, and that was the beginning of police crack downs. It wasn't just him it started happening to almost everybody we were getting it from. So, he basically went out of business because he didn't want to get caught. He had a kid, and it started to happen to a lot of other people, and over a process of probably about six or seven months it became increasingly more difficult to get it and when we did get it, it was expensive to the point where we were making maybe twenty quid off of an ounce. Just wasn't cost effective to do it anymore.

Mark: Sure.

Andy: And then what I learned was the police had been basically using new means of detecting cannabis grows using police helicopters heat detection, using people's bills, if they had unusually high energy bills and stuff like that. And this was part of a larger police operation in the region, operation Trident which I think was an attempt to crack down on the distribution of all kinds of narcotics, but I think cannabis was one of the first things they really focused on, so yeah it made it very hard for us to sell.



Mark: Then when the prices went up did you change it or keep it the same?

Andy: We tried keeping it the same and then we realised we were gonna have to drop it down, so we dropped it down to about one point three (grams), and we'd been selling them originally at one three when we first started selling cannabis but what had happen is everybody got used to one point four or one point five if we give someone a bump, like give them an extra spliff or something like that. And then all of a sudden the fact that these deals were getting smaller, people start complaining and stop buying off us as well, the consumer was out trying to look for different suppliers, so they generally weren't happy about the deals getting more squeezed but there wasn't much more I could do about it otherwise it became pretty pointless in selling it. There's no point in hanging on to an ounce and shottin twenty deals and getting twenty quid out of it. Leaving the house twenty times and having the weed here. It also got reclassified to a Class B, so the penalty for selling weed coincided with this operation, this new approach to tackling cannabis, so when all of this started happening we started to consider not selling it anymore it wasn't really worthwhile.

Operation Trident was a dedicated unit within the Metropolitan police 1998-2012 that was set up in to help tackle gun crime, although the majority of the cases were related to drugs (Guardian 2012). The crackdown on cannabis in Red City occurred in 2009 not long after the drug was reclassified. Cannabis cultivation uses a significant amount of electricity, which is further compounded by the illegality of the process; cultivators do not adhere to environmental standards (Arnold 2013). The atypical consumption of electricity and the additional heat produced can be indicators of a domestic cannabis operation (McKee 2005; Morrison 2008). Since this time, growers in Red City have responded by installing additional heat shielding devices and reducing the size of their crops to reduce energy consumption. Indeed, there are a number of articles on the internet discussing ways in which to do this (Royal Queen Seeds 2018). Nonetheless, the crackdown resulted in an increase in price that lasted for many years. In 2008 Andy was purchasing high-quality skunk (cannabis) for around £130 an ounce and was selling it at £10 per 1.4 grams making £70 profit per ounce. In 2104 participants reported that the cost of the drug had risen to up to £200 per ounce, which was selling at £10 per gram. It was not until around 2018 that the prices started to relax again.

What this demonstrates is that although there was less of the drug available, suppliers compensated by raising prices to allow them to stay in business and retain profits. Andy and his brother were adversely affected by this change to the point that they quit dealing. Although policing cannot eradicate the market, it can lead to a decline in supply. Yet, there is a threshold in which over-policing results in diminishing returns (Caulkins 2014; Pollack and Reuter 2014). The heightened penalty for dealing did indeed have some effect on the brothers, signalling that policy changes can impact dealers on the ground (although many of their peers continued to retail the drug). In this respect, it was the criminal opportunities within the settings they frequented that had changed. The brothers did not have to distance themselves from particular environments or social networks to exit the trade. The ban on new psychoactive

substances in 2016 also led Max to quit his business distributing nitrous oxide and temporarily invested his money in bitcoin. He reports that one of his competitors is still operating and has filled the gap that he had left. The market has become more violent as dealers have less protection from the authorities. Sam and Andy were fortunate in that they were able to get legitimate jobs after quitting; if it was not for this, they may have pursued other avenues:

Mark: What were you doing for money instead?

Andy: We got jobs and that was a more stable income and I was getting more money doing that to be honest with you, so there wasn't actually all that need, we were both in the process of doing that just around that time, so it all kind of coincided all of these different factors at the same time, and it therefore wasn't that big of an issue when we stopped but it was fortunate I guess we had other things that we could go into cos otherwise you kind of end up staying in the same thing...

Mark: Would you ever consider starting it back up again?

Andy: Only if I was especially desperate but I can't imagine I would ever be, I have improved my life tremendously since then. I've got my work not only in my industry, I've got other avenues, studying and stuff like that. I've got a career. I would say getting that is the biggest thing that stopped me or would stop me from going back, just getting yourself out of those financial needs and circumstances is probably the overriding factor as to why I wouldn't, and I think that is generally why people get involved in it in the first place really to be honest with you, it's a lack of capacities or things that they can sell on the marketplace basically. They just go in at a low level, they just may as well sell drugs and I'm not in that position anymore.

### Discussion & Conclusion

The primary aim of this chapter was to examine how and why organised criminals desist from crime. Following the accounts of five ex-offenders, it outlined the paths and mechanisms that lead to desistance within the life-course. This chapter demonstrated that desistance is often a slow process that involves drifts in and out of offending over time. There are some who desist without relapsing into crime, but this depends on the legitimate opportunities that are available them vs their embeddedness in criminal networks and settings. Networks and settings provide opportunities for crime.

As offenders mature with age, they become less willing to engage in risky activities that impact negatively on their lives: whether it be through the threat of imprisonment or other negative consequences of engaging in illicit activity. For some, it is only after the negative consequences have been experienced that change begins to take place, whilst for others, the anticipation of the consequences is enough. If offenders move into less risky and less harmful drug markets such as cannabis, this should be seen as a positive part of the process. It demonstrates a

cognitive shift to reduce the severity of their actions, to both the dealer and the community (even if it allows them to continue their criminal careers in the long term). If cannabis becomes legal, these opportunities may not be available. Nonetheless, participants such as Teeth (see chapter 5) and Simons brother Derrick, are able to continue their operations in high risk markets by positioning themselves within their networks so others take on the risks. This requires a level of social capital that can be built as part of the maturation process. Even with these mechanisms in place, dealing drugs can be demanding creating further pressures to desist as was the case with Rocco. Debts can be a significant hurdle for actors wanting to change, however. If a distributor is sourcing their drugs on credit, they will have to pay back what they owe before they can go straight. If the police confiscate the drugs, the debt may stay with them. This may mean having to borrow more drugs, increasing the level of indebtedness to the supplier.

This chapter builds upon chapter 4 in demonstrating the role that settings have on the criminal career. Desistance can involve exiting criminogenic environments, acting differently within them, or the environments themselves may change. If criminal opportunities are removed from certain settings, this can lead to desistance from crime. If they are not and offenders still frequent them, desistance can be more difficult. Indeed, whilst the policing of drugs can never eradicate the market, it can shape it. Narrative construction plays an important part in desistance, in which justifications for past behaviour contain both disdain and admiration. The reworking of criminal to non-criminal identity requires explanation for previous involvement in crime, whilst also acknowledging its problems. If individuals within the current environment still identify actors by their past, however, this can create problems.

Although none of the participants interviewed in this chapter were sent to prison, the threat of incarceration weighed heavily upon them. Nonetheless, there are a number of actors in this study who have spent time there, including Teeth and Derrick who still operate. For the most part, prison did little to stop the participants from offending and in some cases actively facilitated it. The only participant in this study who went completely clean after being sent to prison was Buster the drugs courier (see chapter 4). The difference in his case was that he had not been involved in this level of the trade for very long (around a year) and narrowly missed a life sentence. Buster did not have the issue of people soliciting him for drugs after he was released as he was never identified as a dealer as such. His role also required infrequent drops that did not affect his normal daily activities in ways that become habitual. He had no intention of becoming a drugs courier again, but these opportunities are also less readily available in the drug trade (international level).

Prison creates additional criminal opportunities through the proliferation of new social ties and access to drug markets both inside and outside of prison. There were some who benefitted from prison by investing themselves in training programs, which led to jobs on the outside. Mat, for example, now works in construction after embarking on a Railtrack internship, whilst he was serving his sentence. He was fortunate in that he had a good family home living with his parents, where he returned to continue his internship when he was released. In prison, however, he became aware of how lucrative the synthetic cannabis market was and forged contacts with

suppliers. After being released, he started smuggling the drug into prison by post. He printed fake solicitors' letters that had been dipped in the substance knowing that the prison staff were not allowed to open them. To compete with other vendors, he "double dipped" the letters to increase the potency and warned his drugs runner. One prisoner did not heed caution when taking the drug and died of an overdose.

For actors working in a team, group dynamics can create significant pressures to offend or desist from it. These can be thought of as push and pull factors that attempt to hold the organisation together, break the organisation apart, and shift the organisation in and out of crime. The pressures exerted may differ, however, depending on what types of crime the organisation is involved in, the size of the organisation, and the value of the members within it. Simon, for example, was a member of a small family firm. This may have increased his value to the group because family ties are stronger than entrepreneurial ones where actors associate primarily to make money. Family members may be easier to trust than outsiders making them ideal business partners in crime. In larger criminal organisations such as 'mafia' groups, individual members may be less important due to their sheer size. Individuals may also be replaced fairly easily due to the number of recruits that are available. This may make them more susceptible to undercover police operatives.

Overall, life events such as beginning a new relationship or having a child can put significant pressure on offenders to desist, but this can be difficult without a means to make a legitimate income that satisfies expectations and provides a reasonable means of subsistence. Many offenders continue to offend by refining their techniques to avoid arrest. Others may switch into less risky markets even if the financial gains are lower in the short term. Nonetheless, it is not always money that attracts offenders to crime; the social status incurred is a significant allure and may be difficult to replace elsewhere.

## 9) *Conclusion*

This thesis aimed to address several gaps in the knowledge of 'organised crime' by investigating its most common manifestation: the illicit drug trade. It examined the criminal careers of serious offenders who operate in one of Britain's large cities, to discover, in the broadest of terms, how and why people sell drugs. The project investigated the nature of the drug market, the crime risk management practices of drug dealers, and possible reasons for their involvement and patterns of activity. Having come to the end of the thesis, this chapter concludes with an overall summary of its main empirical findings. It then goes on to consider its significance for drug policy, policing and future research in the field.

As set out in the introduction, drug policy has largely failed to visibly reduce the availability of drugs in the UK, and in some cases, has actually facilitated it. With demand increasing, the black market has continued to grow, creating financial opportunities for criminal actors. Popular conceptions of drug dealers continue to be plagued with stereotypes that demonise offenders and particular social groups. The organisation of the trade is also overplayed as being tightly managed and hierarchically structured, following age-old stereotypes of 'kingpins' and mafia groups. These stereotypes have been further reframed in the so-called phenomenon of 'county lines' where predatory drug gangs spread from major cities to rural areas in search of market opportunities. The paucity of empirical research in this field has left experts and the public misinformed of recent developments on the ground. Indeed, there are few studies of organised crime in the UK and even fewer on active criminals themselves. Difficulties gaining access to serious offenders in the field, coupled with increasingly stringent ethical requirements by institutional review boards, have created significant barriers to entry for empirical research into drug crime. In search of answers, it is common for researchers to resort to official channels for access, whilst restricting their methods to desk-based techniques or interviews with known offenders. It is well known that data garnered through the criminal justice system is subject to bias. To generate a less biased insight, the thesis employed semi-covert ethnographic research of active criminals in the field, some of whom are unknown to the police. It followed the lives of a group of drug dealers described as 'the lads' and their criminal associates. The participants in this study distribute and manufacture a range of illicit substances, both offline and online. They distribute drugs on local, national and international levels (retail, wholesale, import and export); however, the thesis leans towards the retail end. To complement the fieldwork, interviews were conducted with official actors from the criminal justice system, the private sector and the third sector. Whilst the thesis was primarily orientated around the drug trade; it also considered actors who were involved in crime such as racketeering, professional theft and prostitution.

Overall, the research makes significant contributions to research on illicit dealing, organised crime and the life-course of serious offenders. It demonstrates how actors become involved in crime as well as the techniques and strategies they employ to meet their goals. It contributes to previous research on organised crime which works to decouple popular conceptions of offenders, the structure of criminal groups and the manner in which they operate. In keeping with other studies in the UK, it finds that criminal groups are locally orientated, loosely organised, limited in size and scope, and ephemeral. The thesis builds upon this work by demonstrating how the structure and method of criminal groups differ in the drug market depending on the type of product sold, their place within the supply chain and the settings in which they operate. Illicit drug markets have been demonstrated to exist along a continuum between commercially and non-commercially ordered in which motives for selling drugs are financial or based around cultural norms of sharing. What these studies fail to demonstrate is

not only are drug markets culturally structured but also methodologically so, in terms of the techniques and strategies drug dealers employ to reduce the risk of their activities. Drug dealers operate within an ecology of risk that presents opportunities and contingencies in relation to the activities of state and non-state actors within the settings they operate; this also relates to relationships around trust. Previous ethnographic research on drugs has tended to focus on particular drug types or aspects of the market, which makes comparisons between markets difficult to achieve. This thesis examined the accounts of drugs dealers (and manufacturers) who distributed a range of different products, in a number of different settings (offline and online). In doing so, it demonstrates how drug dealers experience and respond to risks across illicit markets and settings, and how this, in turn, relates to the methods and structure of criminal groups and their reasons for involvement in crime.

In the following section, I will first return to the four research questions of the thesis and outline its subsequent findings. I will then discuss the significance of this project for UK drug policy and contemporary policing practices. Lastly, I will outline the limitations of this project and make suggestions for future research in this field. It must be noted that the research questions and subsequent findings are not mutually exclusive.

### Research questions & findings

- 1) What influences the decision to establish oneself as a dealer, progress in terms of roles and amounts sold, and/or desist from it?

Personal circumstances, life experiences, and the opportunities to sell drugs largely determine whether people will sell them. Motives to sell drugs are often economic but not necessarily or exclusively so. Drug dealing and other forms of organised crime can generate significant respect and social status within the community. Where money and respect are not easily established (or expected) in legitimate fields, people may turn to crime to fulfil those goals. This may make those facing financial hardship more likely to become involved in the trade, although not all offenders in this study come from impoverished backgrounds. Contact with the black market can precipitate involvement in crime. In this respect, it is the opportunity itself that can sometimes be the driving force behind offending. Offenders that are involved in crimes such as professional theft are also turning to selling, as well as consuming drugs, as their traditional activities become more difficult to carry out. Advances in technology have increased risks for traditional offenders whilst making the targets of crime harder to penetrate. The drug trade is now the 'go to' avenue for many serious offenders who have previously specialised elsewhere. The extent to which drug markets are policed does affect decisions to get involved in dealing, alongside public perceptions of particular products. Distributors typically view semi-legitimate drugs such as anabolic steroids and nitrous oxide as less of a risk, as well as those that are down the classification scheme, or are more socially acceptable, such as cannabis. Although the Home Office classification of drugs does have a relationship with police priorities, the local perceived harm and public anxiety that drugs cause generally takes precedence. Media coverage also has a significant influence on this. If you are a known offender this also increases the likelihood you will be arrested again the future. Those with prior convictions for drugs receive significantly more police attention, which may lead offenders to alter their methods.

With drugs being so highly available, popular and normalised in society, many offenders enter the market as users before establishing themselves as dealers later down the line. Others may

enter the trade as non-users through their social networks, which can be established through the family, through work or leisure activities. Social networks relate to entry points and the level in the trade that drug dealers become established. Certain environments within the city may favour particular types of drugs. The family home, the school, the street, the workplace, night clubs, pubs, gyms, prisons, websites, are all places where particular types of drugs may be prevalent. Those who frequent spaces of consumption (or distribution) are more likely to become exposed to the trade. These environments have particular features that may attract people at different stages through the life course. Night clubs, for example, are renowned for drug use but are typically out of bounds to children and early teenagers. This thesis adds to the knowledge base by demonstrating where, how, and at what age criminal contacts become established. Progression in the trade occurs over a number of years as offenders build a greater pool of contacts to buy from and sell to. As people consolidate their criminal identity and become trusted in the field, they may be approached by other actors soliciting their services or offering roles. As progression occurs, risks are reduced as dealers move away from retail distribution and the handling of drugs (more on this later). Progression can result in specialisation with particular markets and levels within the supply chain. Alternatively, offenders may change pathways as more lucrative, or otherwise appealing, opportunities become available to them. Maturation is related to increased criminal capability and resources for crime (social and material).

As offenders mature with age, they become less willing to engage in risky activities that impact negatively on their lives. For some, it is only after the negative consequences have been experienced that change begins to take place, whilst for others, the anticipation of the consequences is enough. Those who have been embedded in the market for many years can find desistance difficult as legitimate opportunities are not forthcoming. People in the community may also identify these actors as criminals and continue to approach them for their services long after they have quit. Having established contacts with a wide network of offenders, it is all too easy for distributors to return to crime. Times of financial hardship and the opportunity to make quick cash can be enough to pull offenders back into the trade. Desistance can involve exiting criminogenic environments, acting differently within them, or the environments themselves may change. If criminal opportunities are removed from certain settings, this can lead to desistance from crime. If they are not and offenders still frequent them, desistance can be more difficult. How life experiences are constructed into narratives has important implications for involvement in and desistance from crime. If dealers are to construct non-criminal identities of the self, past activities need framing in ways that sympathetically explain involvement in crime, whilst also identifying its negative aspects. Neutralisation of past activities can provide offenders with a more positive perception of who they are and who they could be.

Addiction is a common problem for drug dealers and can constrain attempts to desist. Significant debts can also accumulate as drugs are given on credit, forcing suppliers to continue to operate to pay them back. Those who work within a group and are responsible for key tasks can find desistance difficult. Members can place significant pressure on their peers to contribute to the group on a long-term basis. Desistance of some members, however, can lead to a ripple effect, with other actors following suit as they pursue alternative interests. Indeed, developmental and life-course criminology typically focus on individual-level trajectories, but in doing so can miss insights that can be gained from examining the life-course of criminal groups and the dynamics within them. Some offenders do not desist but find positions in the trade that allow them to operate in a way that reduces risks. As criminals mature, they become

smarter, more sophisticated and less brazen in their crimes. This may result in a de-escalation of offending (rather than desistance) from other more prominent roles.

Building upon criminal enterprise theory, the thesis demonstrates that not only do criminal groups operate in a similar manner to legitimate businesses; offenders also experience similar levels of stress and anxiety from working in related roles (coupled with the stress experienced from the illegality of their business). The thesis draws upon research on taxi drivers, delivery drivers and workers on call, to shed additional light upon the careers of offenders and organisation of the trade more generally. It demonstrates that retailing drugs on call is highly stressful and interrupts daily routines and family life. This may lead offenders to desist or prefer other levels of trade that require less work for higher rewards. The frequency of deliveries can pose significant problems for offenders.

The thesis adds to the existing research base on criminal careers, both empirically and theoretically. It examines offender narratives around turning points and trajectories, as people respond to opportunities and contingencies within specific contexts at particular age ranges in their lives. The thesis draws on life-course criminology, social network analysis, organisational theory and market economics. It outlines the importance of grounded ethnography to illuminate how criminals respond to the practical troubles they experience in their everyday lives. The study demonstrates how policing and policy affects the criminal career in ways that can increase risks for drug dealers and in some cases, remove opportunities to offend. It examines how settings influence the manner in which products are sold and their relationship to the careers of offenders operating within them; something that other ethnographic studies have often failed to do. Overall, the study found that significant familial events such as having a child or starting positive romantic relationships are key explanations for desistance.

- 2) How are relationships between suppliers and customers created and maintained within the drug market?

Contacts in the black-market are created in two ways: environments and social networks. Environments are spaces in which offenders can come together and establish relationships. These can be physical or virtual and may require no previous introductions. Through a normal process of socialisation, offenders get to know each other and pass on their knowledge and resources. Different environments attract different types of offenders at different stages in their lives and maybe dominated by particular types of drugs (as alluded to earlier). The second way that contacts are formed is through an introduction from other peers. In this respect, there is a snowballing outward as new contacts are made, which lead to other new contacts and so on. This coincides with increases in resources and leverage, as offenders are better able to position themselves to maximise their profits whilst reducing the risk. Established offenders may be better known and reputable in the field, leading to greater opportunities than early starters.

Distributors looking to employ others to take on specific roles can tap into their custom base for recruits. Drug addicts are particularly exploitable and may be more willing to take on more risky tasks than casual users; however, they are also more likely to become police informants. People in difficult economic circumstances may also be easy to enlist, making those from poor income communities more susceptible to the trade. Social supply is the most common form of exchange and often how ties are established. Once ties are formed, they can be maintained for many years. Sellers maintain ties with buyers by providing superior customer service and building personal relationships that foster trust (friendships). Familial ties are stronger than



those based solely around illicit enterprise; family firms are common in the trade. Distributors compete by providing drugs that are reasonably priced, of higher purity and easily accessible. Distributors gain customers through word of mouth or direct advertising. Advertising can be risky as it will raise the visibility of suppliers. The internet is the prime place to advertise drugs allowing distributors to reach a wide custom base.

‘County lines’ currently dominates the policy and media discourse on drugs around concerns of violence and exploitation of vulnerable adults and children. In this respect drug dealers strategically look for people of specific characteristics to bring into their criminal networks. Contra to this, the thesis found that most supply relationships are formed voluntarily, as actors decide to work together to the benefit of both parties. Exploitation does exist but is restricted to certain aspects of the market, particularly at street level, in markets of highly addictive substances. In terms of geographical expansion, the study found that most drug dealers did not purposefully seek out new and previously unknown markets outside of the city. The only case in which this did happen was at certain events such as music festivals, where it was known that drugs would be in high demand. Dealers instead drew upon opportunities through their social networks, which were often locally based. A number of informants in this study began their dealing careers in rural areas before moving into the city to sell drugs in later life. As the market was so strong, it was more common for dealers to seek opportunities within the city rather than outside of it. Movement across the country was generally observed at higher levels of the trade and represented the normal pattern of distribution as drugs are transported from the manufacturer to the consumer. In this respect, the drug trade is orientated inwards through ‘city lines’ and outwards through ‘county lines’. In light of these findings, the thesis argues that county lines has been largely overplayed by the police, resulting in misrepresentations in the media, policy and also academia. Deceitfully or not (and there is no evidence either way), the drugs trade has been repackaged and reframed to suit policing agendas in ways that demonise particular actors and social groups. The thesis, therefore, builds upon existing research on offender stereotypes which continue to pervade common thinking around drugs and organised crime.

3) How do drug dealers manage the risks of detection and reprimand from the state and other criminal actors in the drug market?

Secrecy is paramount to the success of most criminal organisations. Maintaining control of flows of information can provide protection against the police and other criminal predators in the marketplace. Street-level operators are less able to do this as they will have to interact with a wider custom base than those who distribute at the wholesale level. This makes them relatively easy targets for arrest. Ultimately, suppliers protect themselves by creating layers of anonymity in the supply chain. This can be done by restricting roles to the coordination of supply rather than actual distribution. If the risky aspects of the trade can be passed onto others who are given limited information (such as the handling and distribution of drugs), then the police can have difficulties proving the involvement of key actors. Technology also has a significant role here (see below). Building upon previous research in this field, the thesis demonstrates how offenders manage their networks to mitigate risks; this includes controlling contact and association with actors that are known or wanted by the police. Maintaining a legitimate, law-abiding image is paramount in reducing risks. This can be achieved not only through a commitment to legitimate work, but through managing association with criminal peers in public places. Associating with known or wanted offenders, can raise the profile of drug dealers in police investigations. The stashing of drugs is also important at all levels of the

supply chain; drugs are transferred to the consumer in particular contexts that have the potential to be seized by the authorities or other criminal actors. The techniques that dealers employ for this depend on the type of drug sold, its physical size and the destination of sale. Retail level dealers may need easy access to their stash if they are making regular sales. This has the potential to increase risks for them.

Trust is essential in drug markets. Buyers and sellers at any level in the supply chain need to be confident that their contacts will honour the exchange (ensure that the correct funds are given for the correct product) and maintain discretion and secrecy where required. The study demonstrates that relationships around trust vary depending on the type of product on sale, the mechanisms in place that increase safety and the extent to which drugs are policed. For example, distributors with websites, or those on the dark web, will sell openly to customers with no prior introductions (more on this later). The same can be said of those selling semi-legitimate drugs, which are difficult to prosecute (more on this later). Furthermore, drug markets with cultural features that encourage altruism are deemed to be safer than others that do not, in this respect trust can be placed within the market itself. Violence (or its perceived threat) is useful as a tool to enforce debts and protect against other criminals. Offenders who have a reputation for violence and retribution make less appealing targets for robbery and have greater ability to uphold their positions and territories. Serious violence is relatively uncommon, however, as it increases risks of reprisals and draws unwanted attention from the police. Engaging in a few serious violent acts may be enough to establish a reputation and provide a narrative that can be drawn upon when needed. Violence is more common at the street level and in markets of highly addictive substances. Drug addicts can build significant debts that they cannot easily repay, leading those who supply them to respond aggressively. Where trust begins to break down, distributors can mobilise capable others (or the reputations of others) who may be hidden in the 'background'. It is when issues emerge that these power structures reveal themselves. Drug dealers do not often engage in territorial disputes unless the market in their area becomes saturated or they cross paths with other dealers in particular settings. Nightclubs are settings in which different criminal actors from within and outside of the city converge and collide. The fact that multiple dealers are confined in these settings, rather than when they sell drugs on the street, makes conflict all the more likely.

Expanding upon previous work in the night economy, the thesis demonstrates the role that door-supervisors have in controlling drug markets within their establishment (through the capacities of their role and monopoly on violence). It finds that, although increased regulation and securitisation has reduced the hold that criminal groups have in the sector, drugs remain prevalent and are widely accepted. There are some bouncers who sell drugs themselves, but this does not mean they will do it on the job, although this may relate to what level they are in the supply chain. Drug money is also laundered into clubs on a regular basis by a variety of actors (promoters and club owners). Fighters, hard men and those with violent reputations are still widely valued in the industry, making it particularly susceptible to criminal infiltration. However, there has been a shift towards a preference for less violent security staff who can give the club a better image. Territorial disputes between security companies are rare, so firms can get by with less physically capable door staff in some instances. Past reputations for violence have stayed with long-established companies and the older bouncers they employ. Such reputations provide a narrative of potential violence that can dissuade others from challenging them, although gang violence can still be an issue.

Drug policy differentially constrains drug markets, allowing some vendors to operate more openly with particular nightclubs now distributing semi-legitimate drugs themselves. Markets

that are closest to legitimacy, in terms of their legal status and social acceptability of the product, are less heavily policed. To reduce risks, suppliers can switch into less risky markets to maintain their operations on a long-term basis. Indeed, the legitimacy of the drug affects the visibility of suppliers and their operational strategies. Those operating closest to legitimacy begin to resemble legitimate businesses.

Overall this study adds to existing research in this field by demonstrating how criminal actors reduce the risks of their activities by controlling flows of information, positioning themselves within their networks, distributing certain products or maintaining particular fronts. It demonstrates the methods and strategies that criminal actors use to transport drugs to the consumer within various contexts that pose variable levels of risk. By operating in ways that blend into the normal flows of city life, offenders can maintain a relatively low profile. These actors place significant value in their ability to employ skilful tactics to outmanoeuvre the police; however, their efforts are not always successful.

### Technology

#### 4) What role does emergent technology have in facilitating drug sales?

Previous ethnographic research into drugs has paid little attention to the impact of emergent technology in the trade. Its effects, however, are substantial. Technology works across a number of dimensions; it facilitates communication, production, and distribution. ICT has perhaps transformed the trade the most by allowing distributors to communicate over distance and, in some cases, anonymously. This has resulted from shifts between open, semi-open and closed markets over time. Semi-open and closed drug markets (supply between trusted actors) have remained dominant since the advent of the mobile phone; however, the internet is beginning to change this. Whether it is on the clear net or the darknet, suppliers can advertise openly with relative anonymity. Clear net suppliers follow alternative protocols such as hosting their sites under fictitious names in countries that are not easily accessed by the authorities in their local country of origin. This may require enablers who have the technical knowledge to make this possible. Clear net suppliers will also restrict themselves to selling semi-legitimate drugs to avoid legal action.

Research into the online drug trade tends to miss the offline life worlds of the criminal actors who engage in them, largely due to their methodologies. Accessing active online distributors face to face is something of a rarity in criminology and is difficult to achieve. In doing so, this study is able to examine the relationship between online and offline distribution, as offenders employ a variety of technologies to meet their goals. The study found that smartphones provide the most significant development in ICT due to their ability to communicate through a variety of applications and internet platforms. A number of participants are still choosing to employ older generation mobile phones, however, as they generate less data and are easy to replace on a regular basis. Although, in most cases, street-level dealing is conducted in closed markets, there are a few suppliers who will distribute to anyone who has their mobile phone line number, using multiple runners to take on the risk. In this respect, customers place trust in the business line, rather than the individual, as it moves between runners at the retail level. This, however, is more of a rarity and significantly risky in comparison to dealing with trusted customers. Indeed, lines can become targets of dealers wishing to put their competitors out of business, they may be passed on to other suppliers in the form of trade or assigned to runners to handle that particular level of the supply chain.

Mobile phones generate significant data trails that can be used by the police to gather intelligence. Smartphone applications that use end-to-end encryption provide distributors with a level of safety but are not impervious to the authorities if they are able to gain access to unlocked devices. Encryption does not resolve issues such as cell-site monitoring. As criminals become increasingly aware of the data trails they procure, they can use them to their advantage by creating 'digital alibis', which falsify their movements. Surveillance can also be employed by offenders to monitor the police, their peers, and other criminals in the market. This may occur by accessing communication networks themselves or visually monitoring others through CCTV and emergent technologies such as drones. Drones can be used to make deliveries or monitor others and add an additional layer of anonymity in the supply chain. Visual monitoring can be used to gain information on targets or intimidate them.

This thesis demonstrates how significant levels of trust can be garnered online. Offenders build digital representations of themselves that can lead to collaboration without having met other offenders in the offline world. Connected co-presence can be enough to establish trusting relations online, something that previous research has failed to recognise. The internet also provides alternative techniques for reprisal, such as scammers lists, which erode the reputational trust of actors by naming and shaming them, accurately or otherwise. Indeed, whilst trust may be demonstrated through actions, it is expressed through narratives, which then guides the actions of others (whether or not they are in written or spoken form). Online shaming may have more negative effects on the transgressors' lives than actual physical violence. Indeed, the study demonstrates how internet suppliers respond to threats to their enterprise without having to engage in physical violence, that is more typical in traditional offline markets. The internet presents new ways to breach market territories for both offenders and the police. It also allows actors to establish contact over vast geographical distances in ways that were not previously possible. The thesis found that virtual environments act as a layer that do not replace traditional offline markets but extend them and their territories. Communication between actors online does have real-world implications and can exasperate feuds over physical geographical space. Online actors are grounded locally in the physical world and have to use the city's infrastructure to distribute their products, which is important to recognise. Virtual reality is the next online development creating new environments for criminals to operate in.

Domestic production of drugs is becoming more commonplace across markets, and this process will continue as manufacturing technologies become simplified for users and more sophisticated in their outputs. Manufacturing drugs locally can reduce risks, especially for more bulky products such as cannabis. Domestic production reduces the costs of transportation and enables suppliers to get their products to their consumers more directly. The internet provides the know-how of production (and other forms of crime) allowing production lines to be established more easily. 3D printers pose the next opportunity or threat in terms of production but will require the correct resources (precursors) to become operational. 3D printers may one day enable people to manufacture drugs in their own homes with very little technical competencies. Virtual reality (VR) technologies represent the next evolution in ICT and are becoming more readily available to average consumers. It is likely that offenders will begin to use virtual worlds (if they have not done so already) for illicit gain. Overall, this thesis adds to the existing knowledge base by examining the activities of suppliers employing a variety of digital technologies to meet their goals. Technologies provide opportunities and constraints in ways that reconfigure the method, movements and structures of criminal groups.

### *Policy & Policing*

The consumption of illicit drugs in the UK has been increasing consistently despite policy and policing. Illicit drugs are more available, of higher purity and more popular throughout society. The criminal justice system has contributed to this by creating the conditions for the black market to grow, whilst penalising users and distributors in ways that negatively disrupt their lives and their communities. Policing undoubtedly shapes illicit markets, has some deterrent effect, and can remove opportunities to offend. Indeed, the thesis demonstrated that policing can reduce the supply of drugs; however, the impact is often short-lived and can have negative side-effects. The crackdown in Red City on cannabis cultivation when the drug was reclassified upwards to Class-B was initially effective in many respects. Sourcing the drug at the wholesale level became increasingly difficult for street dealers, pushing some out of the market and into legitimate work. Those that took this path were only able to do so because they had already invested in their futures and had legitimate jobs to turn to (which were well paid relative to the street level cannabis market and more meaningful). Other participants were less fortunate and continued to distribute the drug (alongside other products) at a higher price per gram. Since this time, the potency of cannabis has continued to rise whilst the availability of the drug has rebounded. A more recent policy change was the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016, which similarly pushed dealers out of the trade but again had limited effects on availability. The thesis adds to economic research on drug markets by demonstrating how policing and policy impacts upon the price and availability of drugs and how, in turn, drug dealers respond these to changes on the ground. Economic analysis of drug markets is essential to our understanding of the trade; however, studies employing market data are typically only statistical and far removed from the lived realities of offenders who work within these markets.

The thesis examined the activities of one of Red City's largest retail suppliers of nitrous oxide (a semi-legitimate drug). After the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 was introduced, Max was concerned that he (and his staff) might be sent to prison for distributing the product. Max decided to shut down his business and closed his website. At the time of writing, there are no longer any delivery services in the city with websites that are accessible through the google search engine. 24-hour delivery of the drug is available, but the market has moved 'underground', resulting in reports of increased violence in the trade. Max's business represents what a legal drug market might look like in the UK. The entire operation was conducted in a legal manner; he logged his sales, paid his taxes and did not engage in any violence or exploitation. Due to his heightened level of visibility, it was imperative that he acted in keeping with the law or risk being prosecuted. He competed with other suppliers by providing superior service but did not undercut them by reducing his prices. To ensure profits were not compromised, suppliers-maintained prices across the city – thus they operated as a cartel on prices, but not on service. Sales were highest on evenings and weekends signalling that most people consume drugs outside of working hours in their leisure time and lead relatively productive lives (this trend was observed across all psychoactive drug types).

The findings provide some insight and perhaps support towards the softening of drug policy and the legalisation of illicit drugs. When operating within the law, suppliers act in ways that can reduce the level of harm in the trade. The legalisation of 'hard' drugs remains a contested issue, although some academics have leant towards this. Unless all drugs are legalised, there will still be opportunities for criminals to sell them, and it is unlikely that policing will resolve the harms associated with the trade. With tight regulation that – unlike the oxycontin and opioid

scandals - restricts both sale and marketing, combined with pricing regimes that deter consumption, drugs can be legalised in ways that safely reduce the social and economic costs to society. If drugs can be taxed by the government, these funds can be reinvested into treatment programs that provide support for problematic users. Tackling drugs through policing and punishment is a failed agenda that cannot keep pace with developments in the trade. Illicit drugs can be harmful, so efforts to reform should move carefully so that commercial interests do not derail any positive outcomes. With greater emphasis placed on harm reduction rather than criminalisation, steps can be taken towards this aim. Lastly, drug policy itself is not the only solution; we must consider the political economy in which deepening poverty and income inequality lead people to crime. Removing the opportunity to sell drugs will not resolve these structural issues.

#### *Study Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research.*

There are a number of limitations to this research, some of which stem specifically from the methodology. Being a relatively small local study, there were some aspects of the drug market that were not directly accessible. I was not able to interview any foreign traffickers, although some of the participants had insights into the workings of the trade at this level. Buster, the drugs courier, introduced in chapter one, had knowledge of the processes of the trafficking operation he was involved in (from his time in court) but had remained in the UK and only met one member of the group from the country of origin (another courier). Charley had experience exporting anabolic steroids from the UK, but this was generally in small parcels sent in the post and incurred fewer risks than other drug types. In light of this, the study has less to say about the drug market at this level. Future research could solicit offenders involved in trafficking but could suffer in terms of gaining access. Researchers may need to go through official routes by interviewing offenders who are already known to authorities. This could be bolstered, where possible, with ethnographic research of unknown offenders (such as those in this study). A relaxation from ethics committees would help with this aim. The stringent requirements placed on researchers have had a suffocating effect on the research of this kind.

The study did not consider in great detail how offenders managed the proceeds of crime in terms of the laundering of assets. Illicit drug dealing can be highly profitable and significant sums of money can be made. Funds may be difficult to spend or invest without drawing unwanted attention from the authorities. Questions remain as to how drug dealers launder their assets and how far they think ahead in terms of future investments. Do offenders intend to reinvest the proceeds of crime into illicit avenues to expand or diversify, or is it their goal to set up legitimate businesses in order to go straight and how is it that they do this? Furthermore, is it possible for offenders to launder their proceeds themselves or do they require assistance from professional enablers? There are few empirical studies of professional money laundering, requiring far more research in this area. If the police are to target criminal assets, then knowledge of how criminals channel funds are necessary.

Modern cities are becoming increasingly dependent on digital technology to run their critical infrastructure and drive their economy. These technologies, however, have vulnerabilities in themselves and may be adopted for criminal means. Indeed, this thesis describes drug markets as socio-technical systems in that they are both socially and technically ordered. Technology allows old crimes to be committed in new ways and enables entirely new types of crime altogether; some of which are fully dependant on it. It can replace human actors as tasks are delegated to it, as well as providing new environments in which to offend. Such developments

may be anticipated and mitigated provided there is a research agenda in place that can keep pace with them. When it comes to policing, intelligence officers on the ground now work in tandem with desk-based analysts who develop intelligence products as part of police investigations. In a similar manner, computer scientists should collaborate with ethnographers to provide a more nuanced understanding of how technology is being adopted by criminal actors on the street. Yet, research into technology and crime is typically missing its ethnographic component. Moreover, research outputs can only feed into the policy discourse with greater communication between academics, the police and policymakers. Siloed labour breeds intellectual tunnel vision, which can undermine future interventions.

Questions remain as to how emergent technology will change the operational strategies of criminal groups, and also how it will affect the life-course of offending. In what ways does technology facilitate entry into crime and how might it be used to prevent it or promote desistance? This thesis advocates a renewed focus in the Science and Technology Studies turn in criminology in which these questions may be answered with greater use of traditional ethnography. Criminal actors will continue to make use of technologies as they become available to them in their daily lives. Future research into drugs should consider the interaction between online and offline activity rather than focusing one of the two. Overall, the illicit drug market is composed of many different technological devices that impact upon manufacture, distribution and consumption. It is the interrelationships between these technologies and social life that will shape the organisation of the trade. By examining and exposing the weaknesses within socio-technical systems better efforts can be put in place to disrupt them, with harm reduction as a primary objective. One thing is for certain - drug markets are here to stay; the questions remain as to how we want to manage them and what management methods have which market and personal effects.

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