Dealing Drugs:
Careers of Involvement, Subcultural Life-Worlds, and Marketplace Exchanges

by

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I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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Abstract

This thesis is an ethnography of drug dealers. Working from a Chicago School Symbolic Interactionist approach (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969), nineteen interviews were conducted with current and former drug dealers. I inquired into their careers (initial involvements, continuities, disinvolvements, reinvolvements) of participation in selling drugs. The data analysis is primarily located in three chapters – Chapters Five, Six, and Seven. Chapter Five considers people's involvements in selling drugs as well as dealers' interpersonal exchanges with their customers. In particular three processes are considered in Chapter Five: initial involvements in drug sales, expanding the customer base, and making sales. Chapter Six discusses dealers' relationships with suppliers as well as dealers who become involved in supplying activities. This chapter discusses the matters of: making contacts with suppliers, working with suppliers, and becoming suppliers. Chapter Seven examines some of the identity allures and problematics of being a drug dealer as well as instances of disinvolvement and reinvolvement in drug dealing. This includes considerations of: striving for respectability, encountering regulatory agencies, and the problematics of disentanglement.

Acknowledgments

Although a thesis bears the name of a single author, there are usually many others that have significantly contributed to its development. Such is the case with this study. I would like to recognise several people in particular who contributed to the present thesis.

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This thesis also would not have been possible without the participation of the nineteen people whom I interviewed for this study. Thank you for taking me on a journey into your life-worlds.

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Dedication

For my hummingbird, thank you for inspiring me to do my homework.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

One should not blind oneself to a recognition of the fact that human beings in carrying on their collective life form very different kinds of worlds. To study them intelligently one has to know these worlds, and to know the worlds one has to examine them closely. No theorizing, however ingenious, and no observance of scientific protocol, however meticulous, are substitutes for developing a familiarity with what is actually going on in the sphere of life under study... The task of scientific study is to lift the veils that cover the area of group life that one proposes to study. The veils are not lifted by substituting, in whatever degree, preformed images for firsthand knowledge. The veils are lifted by getting close to the area and by digging deep into it through careful study. Schemes of methodology that do not encourage or allow this betray the cardinal principle of respecting the nature of one's empirical world. (Blumer, 1969:39)

Heeding Blumer's call to employ methodological schemes that allow researchers to develop an "intimate familiarity" with the groups that they study, this is an ethnographic study of drug dealers. While focusing on the activities, perspectives, relationships, identities, and commitments of people who have participated in drug dealing, this is also a study of human group life more generally. It is hoped that from these specific accounts of the drug dealers' life-worlds, more generic theoretical insights will emerge that prove useful not only in understanding drug dealers, but also in understanding people's involvements in other realms of community life. In this more general sense, this is a study of people's relationships and reputations, commitments and dependencies, allures and disaffections, perspectives and strategies, assessments and adjustments, successes and failures, interpersonal exchanges and careers of participation.

In developing this project, I focused on how people (1) become initially involved in drug dealing, (2) establish and manage relationships with suppliers and customers, (3) stabilise and intensify involvements in drug dealing, (4) leave the dealing scene, and (5) may reengage in this realm of activity after periods of disinvolvement. Thus, participant involvements were envisioned and examined in "career" terms (Becker, 1963; Waldorf, 1973; Prus and Irini, 1980;

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Prus and Grills, 2003) – or as having an emergent, processual, or developmental quality. Still, it should be noted that while I intended to focus on people's careers (initial involvements, continuities, disinvolvements, and reinvolvements) of participation in drug dealing, this project also developed into a study of marketing and sales activity, including the interpersonal exchanges that dealers develop with their clients. Thus, whereas people's careers of participation may not be as explicit in some parts of the analysis, an account of the interpersonal exchanges that dealers develop with their clients and their suppliers is fundamental to understanding people's careers of participation as drug dealers – I realised this as I began my analysis of the interview data. I mention this as a caution to readers. I did not intend for this to be a study of marketplace exchanges and, as a result, I did not attend as fully to the interpersonal selling process in the interviews as I might have. Thus, what are represented in my findings are primarily those aspects of marketplace exchanges that people felt most fundamentally contributed to their careers in dealing activity.

The Participants and Setting

This study was possible because of my personal relationships with a number of current and former drug dealers. Many of my grade-school friends and other associates became involved in the broader drug subculture as users in high school. For most of these people the extent of their involvements was limited to using, but some others became involved in dealing drugs on a somewhat more sustained basis. This study is primarily based on interviews with this latter set of people.

Nineteen interviews were conducted with current and former drug dealers. Most of these people were involved in dealing numerous types of drugs on both a lower-level (retail sales) but

a few also were involved in wholesaling, manufacturing, and smuggling activities. Some became more involved in dealing drugs, while for others dealing was primarily a means of offsetting their own expenditures in drug use and associated partying. All of their accounts, however, were useful in assembling a more accurate representation of what it is like to be a "drug dealer."

I should also point out a few characteristics of the sample of participants in this thesis that may differ from other studies of drug dealers. First, the people in this study primarily sold to recreational or experiential (for fun and/or to enhance social interaction and experience) users. Second, the typical dealing career began in early high school (i.e., 15-16 years old) and lasted until people were in their early to mid twenties (i.e., 20-25 years old). Third, the majority of participants came from middle-income backgrounds. There were no cases of impoverishment or anything approaching circumstances of that sort. Fourth, the dealers interviewed for this thesis primarily operated in smaller rural (but tourist) communities for the majority of their respective involvements. As will be discussed in the literature review (in Chapter Four), the present sample appears to be relatively unstudied in drug dealing research.

The Approach

Generally speaking, positivist (also determinist, structuralist, objectivist) approaches to the study social life attempt to identify the correlations between particular forces, factors, or variables and human behaviour or activity. Thus, the emphasis is on what causes people to do things, much like how physical or natural scientists might analyse chemical reactions or other properties of physical objects. Much of the literature on drug dealers also has been largely positivist and quantitative in nature.

This literature tends to focus on three main areas: (1) attempts to measure levels of drug dealing in the community (e.g., Coomer and Warner, 2003; Reuter et al., 1990), (2) attempts to predict and explain drug dealing (e.g., Little and Steinberg, 2006; Mitchell and Mackenzie, 2006), and (3) attempts to prevent or control drug dealing (e.g., Nunn et al., 2006). These types of studies also have remedial qualities ("How can we fix this?"), moralist underpinnings (a focus / judgment on what people should and should not do), and Marxist leanings (how dealing is in some way the result of the oppression of disadvantaged group(s) by those in more powerful positions).[1] However, those working from an interactionist approach would argue that these types of studies are of little value in understanding people's experiences in drug dealing since they often disregard or take for granted the actual lived experiences of drug dealers (Blumer, 1969; Becker, 1963; Prus and Grills, 2003).[2]

The approach taken in this study is that of symbolic interactionism, specifically Chicago school interactionism based on the works of George Herbert Mead (1934) and (especially) Herbert Blumer (1969). In contrast with positivist or determinist approaches which view reality in objective (fixed, unchanging) terms and approaches that view reality as subjective (more totally relativistic and individualistic), an interactionist approach understands reality as intersubjectively achieved (group constructed, defined, negotiated, sustained, and shared) and enacted in the actual instances of everyday life.

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[1] See Bourgois (1995) for an example of a variant of a Marxist approach to the study of drug dealing.

[2] However, it should also be noted that some researchers claiming a symbolic interactionist approach also have attended to somewhat varied emphases in their studies (e.g., postmodernist, feminist, remedial, moralist, and Marxist emphases). As any researcher can make the claim to be working from an interactionist perspective, in no way am I suggesting that all symbolic interactionist research is free from these biases or is of equal caliber and value. The "version" of interactionism employed in this study is best characterised by the theory and methods of Chicago school symbolic interactionism, based on the works of George Herbert Mead (1934) and Herbert Blumer (1969).

Thus, for interactionists, it is only through symbolic (linguistically-enabled) interchange and activity that objects begin to take on meaning for people. Relatedly, objects may be seen to have multiple meanings depending on the contexts in which actors attend to those objects. For instance, a chair only becomes a chair when people begin to act toward it in ways that define it as such (i.e., use it as a seat), whereas in a professional wrestling match, chairs may be used as weapons to pummel opponents. Hence, it is only in activity that things begin to take on particular meanings.

An interactionist approach to the study of human group life also recognises people's abilities for reflectivity – to treat themselves as objects of their own awareness by "taking the role of the other" (Mead, 1934). It is through a process of reflection and deliberation that people attend to the multiple meanings of objects (including themselves) and develop their ensuing lines of activity. Thus, rather than viewing people as non-minded mediums for the expression of forces, factors, or variables, an interactionist approach attends to human agency – the ability to plan, develop, and adjust lines of activity. This is not to claim that people will act wisely or rationally at all times (or even most of the time), but that people have the ability to enter into the causal process as minded agents.

Interactionists also recognise that group life is negotiable. The meanings that people develop in their day-to-day lives are subject to the influence and resistance of other members of the community. Thus, while people may define things in particular ways in some situations, these meanings may be assessed, changed, sustained, challenged, or rejected as people interact with other members of the community.

The methodology employed by interactionists is one that respects human lived experience, that is, the nature of the empirical world under investigation. The goal of

interactionist research is to achieve an "intimate familiarity" (Blumer, 1969) with one's subject matter – to understand people's involvements and activities from their perspectives. Specifically, interactionists use qualitative or ethnographic methods (observation, participant-observation, interviews) to explore the social worlds of the people they study. This involves a careful, close, and extended examination of how people engage in, assess, and adjust their activities and interchanges that take place within these worlds. People's involvements and activities are also studied mindful of their processual, emergent, and developing nature.

In addition to emphasising the need for ethnographic research, interactionists are also concerned with developing concepts and theories that can be applied beyond the substantive settings in which they were developed (Blumer, 1969; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Prus and Grills, 2003). Thus, interactionists focus on developing concepts and theories that have a generic or transcontextual, transhistorical, and cross-cultural applicability. In this way, any ethnographic research that attends to people's actual lived experiences in life-worlds may be utilised in comparative-analytic terms to discover relations that may be applicable to almost any realm of human group life. For instance, while this study is primarily attentive to people's involvements in drug dealing, when framed in generic terms, the findings here can tell us something about people becoming involved in any subculture (deviant or otherwise).

From an interactionist perspective, deviance is not an inherent quality of any thing, but rather deviance is a negative definition (as in disrespectable, evil, or immoral) applied by some audience (individuals or groups) to an act, actor, idea, or other social phenomenon (Prus and Grills, 2003). When researching activities and groups defined in more deviant, disreputable, or disrespectable terms, it is important that researchers and analysts be mindful of the "deviant mystique" associated with these realms of activity. Prus and Grills (2003: ix) define the "deviant

mystique" as referring to "the allures and fascinations, the anxieties and fears, and the disaffections and repulsions that people associate with wrongdoing and morality." Whereas some researchers may colour or distort their analyses by imposing their own or some other group(s) perspectives onto the study of drug dealers, this thesis attempts to move past the deviant mystique by focusing on drug dealing as a realm of involvement and activity (just like any other activity– albeit, perhaps more disrespectable) as understood from the perspectives of its participants (drug dealers).

This study, then, is informed by interactionist theory and methodology. It is an ethnographic study of the social world of drug dealers from their perspectives. This study examines the day-to-day activities, relationships, perspectives, identities, techniques, dilemmas, and career contingencies of drug dealers through in-depth open-ended interviews of nineteen current and former dealers.

The Sociological Significance of the Study

This study contributes to sociology as a field in three main areas. First, this is a study of drug dealers – people involved in a deviant marketplace subculture. When compared with drug users, drug dealers are a relatively unstudied and more inaccessible group. Most of the studies that have addressed drug dealers focus on (a) people's motivations to engage in drug dealing (e.g., Weisheit, 1991; Tunnell, 1993), (b) street-level drug dealers operating in impoverished inner-city neighbourhoods (e.g., Bourgois, 1995; Jacobs, 1999; Hoffer, 2006), and (c) upper-level drug wholesalers, smugglers, and manufacturers (e.g., Adler, 1985; Desroches, 2005; Decker and Chapman, 2008). This study examines the involvements, activities, and interchanges of a relatively unstudied group of drug dealers that (a) are involved in the recreational / experiential

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drug subculture, (b) come from middle-income backgrounds, and (c) operate in smaller rural (but tourist populated) communities. The organisation of this subculture is examined. This includes the roles, perspectives, relationships, and activities of the drug dealers involved in it.

Second, and of more sociological importance, this is a study of people's involvements in subcultures more generally (Becker, 1963, Prus and Grills, 2003). The experiences of people becoming involved in drug dealing are examined to see what they can tell us about people's careers of participation in any subculture. By attending to the generic processes of how people become initially involved in drug dealing, sustain and intensify involvements in drug dealing, disinvolve from drug dealing, and potentially reengage in dealing activities, we can develop a better understanding of how anybody may become involved in any subculture. Relatedly, this study also addresses the ways that people experience subcultural life-worlds through activities, relationships, identities, perspectives, emotionalities, and linguistic fluencies. For example, this study considers how people (a) strive for respectability in the community, (b) become entangled and embedded in particular ways of life, and (c) define and approach subcultural outsiders and other subcultural insiders.

Third, this is most fundamentally a study of how people make sense of, experience, and participate in community life. In this respect, this study attends to deviance as a social process. Rather than attempting to determine forces, factors, or variables that produce or cause deviant behaviour, this study, consistent with an interactionist conception of deviance as a negative definition (evil, immoral, wrong, disturbing) attributed to an act, actor, or other social phenomenon (Prus and Grills, 2003), attends to people's interpretations of and experiences with deviance in community contexts. Thus, this thesis attends to the deviance-making process that occurs in community life. This includes: (1) how people define and designate deviance in the

community, (2) how people experience deviant involvements, and (3) how people attempt to regulate instances of deviance (Prus and Grills, 2003).

Overview of the Study

This thesis is organised into eight chapters. Chapter One is the introduction to the study. In Chapter Two, I discuss symbolic interactionism as a theoretical framework and overview deviance from an interactionist perspective. Chapter Three is a discussion of the methodology that I used in data collection and analysis.

Chapter Four introduces the drug subculture. This includes an overview of the drug subculture – the key players (users, dealers, suppliers, and control agents) and the main theatres of operation (consuming drugs, distributing drugs, and regulating the drug subculture). In Chapter Four, I also review the literature on the drug subculture and discuss its implications for the present study.

Chapter Five "Selling Drugs: Involvements, Activities, and Interchanges" attends to people becoming initially involved in drug dealing, expanding the customer base, and making sales. The people interviewed for this study became involved in selling drugs through three routings: (a) instrumentalism (attending to means-ends considerations), (b) recruitment (being encouraged and facilitated by others), and (c) seekership (pursuing self-attributed intrigues or fascinations). The chapter next considers how dealers expand their customer base. They may do this by: (a) tapping into associational networks, (b) developing reputations, and (c) attending to the price and quality of their products. Finally, this chapter discusses the interpersonal exchanges between dealers and their clients. This includes: (a) arranging and performing transactions and (b) obtaining payments.

Chapter Six "Obtaining Products: Making Contacts, Working with Suppliers, and Becoming Suppliers" examines drug dealers' relationships with suppliers and dealers who become involved in supplying drugs (wholesaling and manufacturing) to other dealers. The chapter begins by considering how dealers make contacts with suppliers. This includes: (a) tapping into associational networks and (b) striving for supplier trust. Following this, working relationships between dealers and their suppliers are discussed. Consideration is given to: (a) product relevancy, (b) reliability, (c) prices of products, and (d) financing concerns. Next, dealers who engage in supplying activities are examined. The following themes are considered relative to supplying: (a) getting involved in wholesaling, (b) recruiting dealers, (c) encountering payment problems, and (d) manufacturing drugs.

Chapter Seven "Respectability, Regulation, and Disentanglement" discusses some of the identity intrigues and problematics of being involved in drug dealing. First, we consider how dealers strive for respectability. This includes the matters of: (a) being somebody and (b) concealing discreditable identities. The chapter next addresses dealers' experiences with regulatory agencies. Two themes are considered: (a) concerns with apprehension and (b) disinvolvement. The last theme addressed in chapter seven is the problematics of disentanglement from drug dealing as a way of life. This includes: (a) embracing the lifestyle, (b) experiencing "closure" (continuance commitments), (c) embeddedness in the social life, and (d) disenchantment and "career shifts."

Chapter Eight is the conclusion. Here I summarise the main themes found in the analysis and consider the implications of these for social theory and future research on the drug community. I also discuss my experiences with the research process and the problematics thereof.

Chapter Two

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The direct examination of the empirical social world is not limited to the construction of comprehensive and intimate accounts of what takes place. It should also embody analysis. The research scholar who engages in direct examination should aim at casting his problem in a theoretical form, at unearthing generic relations, at sharpening the connotative reference of his concepts, and at formulating theoretical propositions. Such analysis is the proper aim of empirical science, as distinguished from the preparation of mere descriptive accounts. (Blumer 1969: 43)[3]

This thesis is focused on a realm of activity that is considered deviant or illegal by many in the community. However, from an interactionist viewpoint, nothing is inherently deviant but reflects the definitions of certain audiences (Becker, 1963; Prus and Grills, 2003). In this chapter, I outline the theoretical framework employed in this study – symbolic interactionism. This chapter begins by considering the development of a symbolic interactionist approach to the study of human group life. This is followed by a discussion of the interactionist approach to the study of deviance.

Symbolic Interactionism

[S]ymbolic interaction may be envisioned as the study of the ways in which people make sense of their life-situations and the ways in which they go about their activities, in conjunction with others, on a day-to-day basis. (Prus, 1996: 10)

The modern beginnings of what is known as "symbolic interactionism" can be traced back to works of the Wilhelm Dilthey, Charles Horton Cooley, George Herbert Mead, and Herbert Blumer. These scholars stressed the importance of language, interaction, interpretation, and human agency in comprehending human group life. As well, Cooley and Blumer both

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[3] It might be noted that the use of the male pronoun "he" was common at the time during which many of the scholars quoted in this study wrote. Thus, unless otherwise qualified, the use of "he" generally refers to all humans (i.e., men, women, and children). In order to maintain the readability of the text, I have left these quotations in their original form.

emphasised the value of ethnographic methods in examining how people define and act toward their worlds.

The interactionist emphasis is on group life. Human life is envisioned as fundamentally group life where people cannot be understood apart from their community contexts. The group is where people derive meanings for themselves, others, their situations, and objects. These meanings are constructed in social interchange through an intersubjective, symbolic, interpretive process that is enabled by language (Mead, 1934). While some meanings may become more entrenched or "objectified" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) in the community, meanings are not fixed in an objectivist sense since they are subject to the ongoing assessments, adjustments, and resistances of people in everyday life. Hence, community life is always in process (emerging and developing). An interactionist approach also recognises people's capacities for purposeful behaviour (human agency), reflective thought (treating the self as an object of one's own awareness), influence and resistance (the negotiable quality of community life), "joint activity" (Blumer, 1969) (assessing, adjusting, and fitting one's line of activity with those of others), and operating within social worlds (Strauss, 1993).

Building upon Cooley's method of sympathetic introspection – a methodology that emphasises the use of interviews, observations, and participant-observation, interactionists employ ethnographic methods in their studies of human lived experience. As Blumer (1969) argued, although ethnographic methods are not perfect, they are the best way to develop an "intimate familiarity" with the groups we examine as social researchers because they allow us to discover how meanings and lines of action develop from the participants' perspectives.

This chapter outlines the interactionist approach to the study of social life. Three works contributing to an interactionist theory of human knowing and acting are overviewed: Herbert

Blumer's (1969) *Symbolic Interactionism*, Anselm Strauss (1993) *Continual Permutations of Action*, and Robert Prus' (1996) *Symbolic Interactionism and Ethnographic Research*. While readers may be well acquainted with these works, they are still so fundamental for establishing a framework from which to contextualise the present thesis. In particular, this literature draws attention to several aspects central to the development of this project: (1) people's capacities for reflective thought, purposeful behaviour, and interchange; (2) the centrality of activity in understanding social life; (3) the conceptualisation society as a "subcultural mosaic" or consisting of a multitude of emergent, intersecting life-worlds or subcultures; (4) the value of ethnographic research in comprehending people's life-worlds; and (5) the need for process-oriented social theory that is grounded in people's actual lived experiences.

Herbert Blumer (1969) *Symbolic Interactionism*

While George Herbert Mead laid the conceptual foundations of an interactionist approach to the study of human group life by focusing on human agency, the self as an object, reflective thought, and the primacy of language and the interpretive process,[4] it was Blumer who would most staunchly advocate for and contribute to a sociological approach based on Mead's social psychology. Blumer termed this approach, "symbolic interactionism." Blumer (1969: 2) begins his work by outlining the three basic premises of symbolic interaction:

Symbolic interactionism rests in the last analysis on three simple premises. The first premise is that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. Such things include everything that the human being may note in his world – physical objects, such as trees or chairs; other human beings, such as a mother or a store clerk; categories of human beings, such as friends or enemies; institutions, such as a school or a government; guiding ideals, such as individual independence or honesty; activities of others, such as their commands or requests; and such situations as an individual encounters in his daily life. The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social

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[4] See, especially, *Mind, Self, and Society* (Mead, 1934).

interaction that one has with one's fellows. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters.

Like Mead, Blumer (1969: 4-5) sees objects as having no inherent meaning. Rather, definitions of objects, selves, others, and situations are shaped in an interpretive process (a linguistic and reflective process) by the members of the community:

Symbolic interactionism views meaning... as arising in the process of interaction between people. The meaning of a thing for a person grows out of the ways in which other persons act toward the person with regard to the thing. Their actions operate to define the thing for the person. Thus, symbolic interactionism sees meanings as social products, as creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact. This point of view gives symbolic interactionism a very distinctive position, with profound implications... (Blumer, 1969: 4-5)

Viewing meanings not only as socially constructed, but also as phenomena that may undergo change as people do things, Blumer (1969: 5) stresses the central importance that the interpretive process (interpreting, assessing, and adjusting meanings) plays in the development, maintenance, resistance, and changing nature of the meaning of objects:

The third premise... further differentiates symbolic interactionism. While the meaning of things is formed in the context of social interaction and is derived by the person from that interaction, it is a mistake to think that the use of meaning by a person is but an application of the meaning so derived. This mistake seriously mars the work of many scholars who otherwise follow the symbolic interactionist approach. They fail to see that the use of meanings by a person in his action involves an interpretative process... This process has two distinct steps. First, the actor indicates to himself the things toward which he is acting; he has to point out to himself the things that have meaning. The making of such indications is an internalized social process in that the actor is interacting with himself. This interaction with himself is something other than an interplay of psychological elements; it is an instance of the person engaging in a process of communication with himself. Second, by virtue of this process of communicating with himself, interpretation becomes a matter of handling meanings. The actor selects, checks, suspends, regroups, and transforms the meanings in the light of the situation in which he is placed and the direction of his action. Accordingly, interpretation should not be regarded as a mere automatic application of established meanings but as a formative process in which meanings are used and revised as instruments for the guidance and formation of action. It is necessary to see that meanings play their part in action through a process of self-interaction.

Elaborating further on interactionism and the study of human group life, Blumer (1969: 6-20) addresses a set of "root images" of symbolic interactionism. These cover the related notions of: (1) the nature of human society or human group life, (2) the nature of social interaction, (3) the nature of objects, (4) the human being as an acting organism, (5) the nature of human action, and (6) the interlinkage of action. Each of these topics has implications for understanding how people involved in the drug subculture (or any other realm) experience social life.

Nature of society or human group life. For Blumer (1969: 6-7), the basis of human group life is in activity. Members of society are seen to engage in numerous lines of action in sequential, simultaneous, and shifting bases, fitting their lines of individual and collective action together with the ongoing actions of others in the community. This ongoing process of activity necessarily entails elements of cooperation, resistance, and influence of the activities of others (Blumer, 1969: 54). Thus, for Blumer (1969: 6), it is in the *doing* of things that human group life takes place; without activity, there is no community life. Thus, activity must be base from which social analysis begins, "This picture of human society as action must be the starting point (and the point of return) for any scheme that purports to treat and analyze human society empirically."

Nature of social interaction. For Blumer (1969: 7-10), the central activity in society is the interaction of its members. Meaningful social interaction, through Mead's "significant symbol,"[5] is the essence of community life. Still, while many scholars do not dispute this proposition, few treat it with primary importance when analysing community life (Blumer, 1969: 7). Blumer (1969: 8) explains how symbolic interactionism is more attentive to the significance of interaction in the formation of human activity and community life:

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[5] The gesture becomes a "significant symbol" (or language) when people are able to arise the same meaning in others as they do in themselves or, in other words, when a common or shared meaning has been achieved by the actors involved in the interaction (Mead, 1934: 46, 75).

Symbolic interactionism does not merely give a ceremonious nod to social interaction. It recognizes social interaction to be of vital importance in its own right. This importance lies in the fact that social interaction is a process that forms human conduct instead of being merely a means or a setting for the expression or release of human conduct. Put simply, human beings in interacting with one another have to take account of what each other is doing or is about to do; they are forced to direct their own conduct or handle their situations in terms of what they take into account. Thus, the activities of others enter as positive factors in the formation of their own conduct; in the face of the actions of others one may abandon an intention or purpose, revise it, check or suspend it, intensify it, or replace it. The actions of others enter to set what one plans to do, may oppose or prevent such plans, may require a revision of such plans, and may demand a very different set of such plans. One has to fit one's own line of activity in some manner to the actions of others. The actions of others have to be taken into account and cannot be regarded as merely an arena for the expression of what one is disposed to do or sets out to do.

It is this ongoing social process, the symbolic interaction between community members, that provides the base for the ongoing development of community life. Thus, scholars must attend to this social process if they are to generate more accurate accounts of the central aspects of community life.

Nature of objects. "Objects" are those things that comprise the realities of the human world.[6] Blumer (1969: 10-11) delineates three types of objects, physical, social, and abstract:

The position of symbolic interactionism is that the "worlds" that exist for human beings and for their groups are composed of "objects" and that these objects are the product of symbolic interaction. An object is anything that can be indicated, anything that is pointed to or referred to – a cloud, a book, a legislature, a banker, a religious doctrine, a ghost, and so forth. For purposes of convenience one can classify objects in three categories: (a) physical objects, such as chairs, trees, or bicycles; (b) social objects, such as students, priests, a president, a mother, or a friend; and (c) abstract objects, such as moral principles, philosophical doctrines, or ideas such as justice, exploitation, or compassion.

As noted earlier, for interactionists, objects have no inherent meaning. Rather, meaning arises through the above-mentioned social process of the symbolic interaction (linguistically-enabled, meaningful interchange) between members of a community. Thus, the meanings of objects are

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[6] See also Mead's (1934) conception of a "universe of discourse" and Strauss' (1993) "social worlds" concept.

socially defined, sustained, resisted, and changed (Blumer, 1969: 11-12).[7] Moreover, because meanings have a developmental and situational quality, a single object can have multiple meanings depending on the social context in which it is defined (Blumer, 1969: 11).

Relating back to the first premise of symbolic interactionism, it is noted that people act toward objects based on the meaning that those objects have for them. Accordingly, it is important to acknowledge the world of objects in which people operate if we are to understand their actions and experiences:

From their standpoint the environment consists only of the objects that the given human beings recognize and know. The nature of this environment is set by the meaning that the objects composing it have for those human beings. Individuals, also groups, occupying or living in the same spatial location may have, accordingly, very different environments; as we say, people may be living side by side yet be living in different worlds. Indeed, the term "world" is more suitable than the word "environment" to designate the setting, the surroundings, and the texture of things that confront them. It is the world of their objects with which people have to deal and toward which they develop their actions. It follows that in order to understand the action of people it is necessary to identify their world of objects. (Blumer 1969: 11)

The human being as an acting organism. In discussing the human being as an acting organism, Blumer (1969: 12-15) relates back to Mead's conception of "self" in that people can reflectively take themselves into account as objects of their own awareness when developing their lines of action.[8] This basic premise has significant implications for social theory, and it is

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[7] Or what Berger and Luckmann (1966) describe as "socially constructed."

[8] For Mead (1934: 135), the self, like the mind, is not inherent or naturally existing in us from birth. Rather, the self develops through the social process of interaction and reflection. As such, the body is not inherently a self. The different parts of a body may be treated by non-minded beings as objects, but only as objects of their environment, not as objects of themselves in any "self-conscious" sense (Mead, 1934: 137, 171). The body may only become a self after achieving a mind and acquiring a language, where one can treat body as both "subject and object" (Mead, 1934: 136) through reflective thought.

The self, then, arises as people are able to treat themselves as objects. For Mead (1934: 138), this ability arises from taking the generalised attitude of the others involved in the social process – or the "generalized other" (Mead, 1934: 154-156, 162) – toward oneself and treating oneself as an object just as one would treat others as objects – or, in other words, the ability to deliberate with oneself about oneself. Once the self becomes an object of people's own

in stark contrast with positivist approaches since it stresses the importance of reflective (meaningful) thought and human agency in the production of social action:

The view of the human being held in symbolic interactionism is fundamentally different [than in the predominant positivist approaches]. The human being is seen as "social" in a much more profound sense – in the sense of an organism that engages in social interaction with itself by making indications to itself and responding to such indications... Instead of being merely an organism that responds to the play of factors on or through it, the human being is seen as an organism that has to deal with what it notes. It meets what it so notes by engaging in a process of self-indication in which it makes an object of what it notes, gives it a meaning, and uses the meaning as the basis for directing its action. Its behavior with regard to what it notes is not a response called forth by the presentation of what it notes but instead is an action that arises out of the interpretation made through the process of self-indication. In this sense, the human being who is engaging in self-interaction is not a mere responding organism but an acting organism – an organism that has to mold a line of action on the basis of what it takes into account instead of merely releasing a response to the play of some factor on its organization. (Blumer, 1969: 14-15)

Nature of human action. For Blumer (1969: 15), human action is socially constructed. Human behaviour is not the simple outcome of stimulus being applied to non-minded individuals, evoking an automatic response – this conception of human action is far too rudimentary for Blumer since it fails to acknowledge how people enter into the causal process as minded, reflective *agents*, and thus how they have the ability to influence and resist this process in very direct manners. Hence, it is only from the context of ongoing interaction among community members and the ongoing interpretive/reflective processes of those members that any meaningful human action is constructed, as Blumer (1969: 16) stresses, "One has to get inside of the defining process of the actor in order to understand his action."

Interlinkage of action. In concluding his discussion of the root images of symbolic interaction, Blumer builds on his conception of human action by considering its interrelated nature. Rather than conceiving of people's lines of action as developing and occurring in

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awareness, then they may be seen to engage in the interplay between self as subject – the "I," and self as object – the "me" (Mead, 1934: 186).

isolation from one another, it is much more accurate to envision community life as consisting of multiple lines of action being fitted with and adjusted to one another as they develop and dissipate. It is this fitting together of multiple lines of action that Blumer (1969: 16-17) terms "joint action." The collective quality of joint action has a unique character in its own right above and beyond its individual components or their simple sum or aggregation. Blumer (1969: 16-17) explains:

As stated earlier, human group life consists of, and exists in, the fitting of lines of action to each other by the members of the group. Such articulation of lines of action gives rise to and constitutes "joint action" – a societal organization of conduct of different acts of diverse participants. A joint action, while made up of diverse component acts that enter into its formation, is different form any one of them and from their mere aggregation. The joint action has a distinctive character in its own right, a character that lies in the articulation or linkage as apart from what may be articulated or linked. Thus, the joint action may be identified as such and may be spoken of and handled without having to break it down into the separate acts that comprise it. This is what we do when we speak of such things as marriage, a trading transaction, a war, a parliamentary discussion, or a church service. Similarly, we can speak of the collectivity that engages in joint action without having to identify the individual members of that collectivity, as we do in speaking of a family, a business corporation, a church, a university, or a nation. It is evident that the domain of the social scientist is constituted precisely by the study of joint action and of the collectivities that engage in joint action.

However, although joint action can take on a distinctive character apart from its individual elements, Blumer (1969: 17) cautions analysts not to disregard the role of those individual lines of action in its development since it is only through the social interactions of actors that any joint action can be developed and sustained. Neglecting the role of social interaction in constructing joint action is commonly found in conceptions of social structure, which place little emphasis on the repetitive and stable set of social interactions that have the semblance of fixed structures but, as Blumer (1969: 19-20) argues:

It is the social process in group life that creates and upholds the rules, not the rules that create and uphold group life…. A network or an institution does not function automatically because of some inner dynamics or system requirements; it functions because people at different points do something, and what they do is a result of how they define the situation in which they are called to act… It is necessary to recognize that the sets of meanings that lead participants to act as they

do at their stationed points in the network have their own setting in a localized process of social interaction – and that these meanings are formed, sustained, weakened, strengthened, or transformed, as the case may be, through a socially defining process. Both the functioning and the fate of institutions are set by this process of interpretation as it takes place among the diverse sets of participants.

In sum Blumer identified six "root images" or basic premises of human group life. These include: (1) social life is activity-based, (2) social interaction is the central activity in social life, (3) people's worlds are comprised of objects, (4) the importance of reflective thought and human agency in comprehending human behaviour, (5) human group life is socially constructed, and (6) human action is interconnected and collective. Given these basic premises of human group life, Blumer next considers the value of ethnographic research in attending to these six basic features.

Ethnographic Research

In Part Two of his introductory essay, Blumer outlines the methodological approach used by interactionists. Like Glaser and Strauss (1967), Blumer (1969: 21-22) contends that any theory of human behaviour must be grounded in a careful examination of social life in the making:

I shall begin with the redundant assertion that an empirical science presupposes the existence of an empirical world. Such an empirical world exists as something available for observation, study, and analysis. It stands over against the scientific observer, with a character that has to be dug out and established through observation, study, and analysis. This empirical world must forever be the central point of concern. It is the point of departure and the point of return in the case of empirical science. It is the testing ground for any assertions made about the empirical world. "Reality" for empirical science exists only in the empirical world, can be sought only there, and can be verified only there.

This assertion, that the empirical world – human lived experience – must be the central focus of scientific analysis, logically leads to the premise that any methods used to examine that world must be judged in relation to their effectiveness in accurately depicting what takes place in that world:

Reality exists in the empirical world and not in the methods used to study that world; it is to be discovered in the examination of that world and not in the analysis or elaboration of the methods used to study that world. Methods are mere instruments designed to identify and analyze the obdurate character of the empirical world, and as such their value exists only in their suitability in enabling this task to be done. In this fundamental sense the procedures employed in each part of the act of scientific inquiry should and must be assessed in terms of whether they respect the nature of the empirical world under study – whether what they signify or imply to be the nature of the empirical world is actually the case. (Blumer, 1969: 28)

It is here that Blumer's insistence on an ethnographic or qualitative (interviews, observation, participant-observation) approach becomes clear since it is the only approach, in his opinion, that respects the nature of the empirical social world:

To begin with, most research inquiry (certainly research inquiry modeled in terms of current methodology) is not designed to develop a close and reasonably full familiarity with the area of life under study. There is no demand on the research scholar to do a lot of free exploration in the area, getting close to the people involved in it, seeing it in a variety of situations they meet, noting their problems and observing how they handle them, being party to their conversations, and watching their life as it flows along... The logical question that arises is, "So what?" Why is it important or necessary to have a firsthand knowledge of the area of social life under study? One would quickly dismiss this as a silly question were it not implied so extensively and profoundly in the social and psychological research of our time. So the question should be faced. The answer to it is simply that the empirical social world consists of ongoing group life and one has to get close to this life to know what is going on in it. If one is going to respect the social world, one's problems, guiding conceptions, data, schemes of relationship, and ideas of interpretation have to be faithful to that empirical world. (Blumer, 1969: 37-38)

The merit of naturalistic study is that it respects and stays close to the empirical domain. This respect and closeness is particularly important in the social sciences because of the formation of different worlds and spheres of life by human beings in their group existence. Such worlds both represent and shape the social life of people, their activities, their relations, and their institutions. Such a world or sphere of life is almost always remote and unknown to the research scholar; this is a major reason why he wants to study it. To come to know it he should get close to it in its actual empirical character. Without doing this he has no assurance that his guiding imagery of the sphere or world, or the problem he sets forth for it, or the leads he lays down, or the data he selects, or the kinds of relations that he prefigures between them, or the theoretical views that guide his interpretations are empirically valid. Naturalistic inquiry, embracing the dual procedures of exploration and inspection, is clearly necessary in the scientific study of human group life. It qualifies as being "scientific" in the best meaning of that term. (Blumer, 1969: 46-47)

The contention that people act on the basis of the meaning of their objects has profound methodological implications. It signifies immediately that if the scholar wishes to understand the action of people it is necessary for him to see their objects as they see them. Failure to see their

objects as they see them, or a substitution of his meanings of the objects for their meanings, is the gravest kind of error that the social scientist can commit. It leads to the setting up of a fictitious world... This neglect is officially fostered by two pernicious tendencies in current methodology: (1) the belief that mere expertise in the use of scientific techniques plus facility in some given theory are sufficient equipment to study an unfamiliar area; and (2) the stress that is placed on being objective, which all too frequently merely means seeing things from the position of the detached outside observer. (Blumer, 1969: 51)

Blumer's (1969: 52-53) insistence on studying society as symbolic interaction through ethnographic methods very much challenged the predominant approaches to social research of his day:

This need of adjusting to the lines of action of others is so evident in the simplest observations that I find it difficult to understand why it is so generally ignored or dismissed by social scientists. The methodological implications of this premise are very telling. First of all, it raises the most serious question about the validity of most of the major approaches to the study and analysis of human group life that are followed today – approaches that treat social interaction as merely the medium through which determining factors produce behavior. Thus, sociologists ascribe behavior to such factors as social role, status, cultural prescription, norms, values, reference group affiliation, and mechanisms of societal equilibrium; and psychologists attribute behavior to such factors as stimuli configurations, organic drives, need-dispositions, emotions, attitudes, ideas, conscious motives, unconscious motives, and mechanisms of personal organization. Social interaction is treated as merely the arena in which these kinds of determining factors work themselves out into human action. These approaches grossly ignore the fact that social interaction is a formative process in its own right – that people in interaction are not merely giving expression to such determining factors in forming their respective lines of action but are directing, checking, bending, and transforming their lines of action in the light of what they encounter in the actions of others.

As Prus (1987: 258) states, Blumer contributed to the study of symbolic interaction in three very important ways: by providing (1) a rationale for the inseparability of theory and research, (2) conceptual guidelines for doing interpretive sociology, and (3) critiques of methods that violate the central features of group life as an emergent, sociological phenomena (e.g., positivist approaches). Most notably perhaps was Blumer's (1969: 39) relentless insistence on respecting the nature of the subject matter being studied – human lived experience – by studying it with an appropriate methodology.

Anselm Strauss (1993) *Continual Permutations of Action*

Envisioning human group life as activity-based, or fundamentally rooted in people interacting with others, Anselm Strauss, a student of Herbert Blumer, attempts to translate the pragmatist philosophical assumptions of Mead and further refine Blumer's analysis of social life into a "theory of action" and a guide for sociological (specifically interactionist) inquiry and analysis.

In the beginning pages of his work, Strauss (1993: 19-46) outlines nineteen assumptions based on the works of Mead and Blumer that provide the conceptual base of his theory of action. Expressed briefly, these include: (1) no action is possible without a body; (2) actions are embedded in interactions; (3) humans develop selves that can be treated as objects; (4) meanings are generated, sustained, and changed in interaction; (5) the external world is a symbolic representation; (6) actions may be preceded, accompanied, and/or succeeded by reflexive interactions; (7) there is no presumption that people will act "rationally" at all times; (8) actions have emotional aspects; (9) actions are characterised by temporality; (10) actions are processual and definable into sequences; (11) means-ends analytic schemes are usually not appropriate to understanding action and interaction for they are too simplistic; (12) situational contingencies are likely to arise and affect courses of action; (13) interactions can be reviewed and reflected upon; (14) different actors can have different perspectives on lines of action; (15) actions can intersect and fit together into "joint actions" (Blumer, 1969); (16) actions take place in numerous, emergent, and intersecting social worlds; (17) actions can be conceived in terms of a "conditional matrix," which affects their development; (18) actions can be classified into routine (or background actions) and problematic (or actions which require "thought" [Mead, 1934]);[9]

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[9] As Mead (1934: 47) observes, the development of a mind (or intelligent thought) is only possible when language is achieved and utilised. Moreover, intelligent (or reflective) thought

and (19) problematic interactions foster identity change. Thus, Strauss envisions human behaviour as relational/interactive, negotiable, symbolic, emotional, conditional, temporal, and emergent. Similarly, for Strauss, people, as minded and purposive beings, are seen to invoke agency in developing, assessing, and adjusting their lines of activity. However, although people are best envisioned as acting purposefully, there is no assumption that their activities need be rational or wise.

Strauss, like Blumer, stresses that reductionist, cause and effect explanatory models for human behaviour are far too simplistic and of little use in comprehending the complexities of human behaviour. Instead, for Strauss (1993: 47-51), a theory of action must be grounded in the instances of everyday experience. Also, an understanding of activity within the community should avoid common dualistic traps, such as a separation of mind and body, subject and object, and value and fact. It is only by taking into account the interconnectedness (and interdependency) of these concepts that one may develop a more comprehensive understanding of human knowing and acting. Some of the areas that Strauss considers more extensively are: (1) "work and the intersection of forms of action"; (2) "body, body processes, and interaction"; (3) "interaction, thought processes, and biography"; (4) "interacting and symbolizing"; (5) "representation and misrepresentation in interaction"; (6) "the interplay of routine and nonroutine action"; (7) "social worlds and society"; (8) "social worlds and interaction in arenas"; and (9) "negotiated order and structural ordering."

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and the related notion of taking the attitude of the other is what distinguishes human intelligence most centrally from the "intelligence" found in animals (Mead, 1934: 74).

Strauss' Conceptual Extensions of Blumer's Theory of Social Life

If George Herbert Mead laid the conceptual foundations of a pragmatist theory of a human knowing and acting, and Herbert Blumer forged these into a sociological cast, then the work of Anselm Strauss (and other contemporaries) may be seen to extend these notions more explicitly and systematically into a guide for research. Strauss also adds to symbolic interactionist thought through the introduction of the concept of *trajectory*, an insistence on developing *local concepts*, and developing a *social worlds perspective*. These concepts and theoretical insights are all central to the present thesis in that (1) this thesis examines the processes and "trajectories" of dealing activities, perspectives, identities, and careers, (2) the analysis is "grounded" in the actual lived experiences of dealers, and (3) the drug subculture is considered a "social world."

Trajectory. The concept of trajectory (Strauss, 1993: 52-54) is central to Strauss' theory of action. Specifically, trajectory refers to (1) the processual emergence of a course of action, and (2) the actions and interactions contributing to its development. It is not assumed that actions will develop in predictable (and automatic) paths. Rather, a course of action is understood as negotiable in progress – influenced by the activities of various actors involved in its development. Similarly, any stability should be understood from the context of multiple actors' efforts in maintaining the ongoing trajectory.[10] Strauss (1993: 54-57) distinguishes five primary subprocesses of trajectory. These include: (1) trajectory phasing, (2) trajectory projection, (3) trajectory scheme, (4) arc of action, and (5) trajectory management.

Developing Local (grounded) Concepts. While the concept of trajectory is useful and applicable to courses of action in general, Strauss (1993: 65-68) also stresses the need to develop local concepts in achieving theoretical "density." "Local concepts" are concepts particular to the

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[10] See also Blumer's (1969: 16-20) conception of "joint action."

group or setting being researched, developed (defined) by the researcher, grounded in the data collected on that group by the researcher, and focused on the processual elements of activity. Strauss' position on the importance of developing grounded, process-oriented, analytic concepts is similar to the positions of other contemporary interactionists as well.[11]

Social Worlds. While Mead's concept of a "universe of discourse" provided the basis for understanding social worlds, Strauss more clearly delineates this important analytic concept. Strauss (1993: 209-221) envisions society as consisting of a multitude of social worlds. These worlds are typically organised by and defined in reference to some central underlying activity or group of activities. Similarly, social worlds may be seen to develop their own unique symbolic systems of meaning. Still, these worlds should not be viewed as static or mutually exclusive entities; but rather they are best understood as intersecting, shifting, emerging, dissipating, and sharing common characteristics with many other worlds or groups in society. Likewise, individual actors may be involved in multiple social worlds at any one time and have varying levels of commitment to each of these worlds. Social worlds also may engage in influence, resistance, negotiation, and debate with each other over matters of disagreement in what Strauss (1993: 225-227) terms "arenas."

Robert Prus (1996) *Symbolic Interactionism and Ethnographic Research*
Continuing in the tradition that Mead, Blumer, and Strauss forged, Robert Prus' (1996) work further refines and delineates symbolic interactionist thought and practice. Extending Blumer's three premises, Prus (1996: 15-18) outlines seven underlining assumptions that provide the base of interactionist thought: human group life is (1) intersubjective, (2) (multi) perspectival, (3)

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[11] See, for example, Prus' (1996) consideration of generic social processes.

reflective, (4) activity-based, (5) negotiable, (6) relational, and (7) processual. These assumptions are fundamental if one is to comprehend human group life in any meaningful way. As noted by Blumer, Strauss, and Prus, there is an interactionist emphasis on the processual nature of human group life. This thesis employs a process approach to conceptualising the activities and careers of drug dealers. In what follows, I consider what this focus on process means for research.

Generic Social Processes

Heeding Blumer's call to unearth the generic relations found in social life, Robert Prus offers the *generic social process* concept, which is built upon Simmel's separation of "form" and "content." Generic social processes are "transhistorical," "transituational," "cross-contextual" grounded concepts used in symbolic interaction to provide a means for the study and comprehension of human group life. Generic social processes can be seen as focusing on the question of "how," or the process involved in the doing of human group life – as in how do people go about defining themselves, others, and their situations. As Prus (1996) explains, the emphasis on process rather than "isolated accounts of community life" makes it possible for the development of a "theory of action" based on generic social processes that is applicable to all group life (hence, "generic"). Viewed in these terms, group life, which is perspectival, reflective, negotiable, and relational should be examined and studied in process terms if any meaningful inquiry is to be generated.

Prus (1996: 141-163) delineates seven generic social processes experienced in social life: (1) being involved in activities and subcultures, (2) acquiring perspectives, (3) achieving identity, (4) doing activity, (5) experiencing relationships, (6) forming and coordinating

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associations, and (7) experiencing emotionality. While this thesis touches on aspects of most of these processes, it is the generic social process of being involved (or careers) in activities and subcultures that is most centrally related.

Prus (1996: 165) lists five reasons why generic social processes are such valuable analytic tools in examining human group life. First, they provide a means of bridging the "micro" and "macro" levels of sociological exploration. Second, because of their generic character, they give rise to "conceptual cross-fertilization," where scholars from very different fields can connect meaningfully with one another while still maintaining their study in a particular setting. Third, they provide researchers with a set of themes that they can follow, examine, and assess. Fourth, they provide the means for the discussion of seemingly different topics in a more focused manner. Fifth, they shift the focus of sociology from a functionalist base to an interpretive one, wherein human group life is examined on "a day-to-day" basis. Finally, because they allow for the intercommunication of scholars from different fields of study, they provide "a particularly viable, conceptually coherent, and empirically grounded means of generating highly meaningful and sustained interdisciplinary linkages in the social sciences."

In Sum

The three works discussed herein provided the theoretical base from which this project was developed. While a concise summary of the rich theoretical insights they have provided seems challenging, I shall attempt to distill their ideas into a basic, summative statement. The study of community life should attend to its fundamental features: (1) symbolic (linguistically-enabled) human interaction; (2) people's capacities for reflective thought and purposive activity; (3) the social construction of meanings of objects; (4) the everyday activities, identities, relationships,

and perspectives of people's life-worlds, and (5) any theory of human knowing and acting should be grounded in and judged in reference to the experiences of the people we study. These are the key theoretical insights that I will be applying to the study of drug dealers. Having completed an overview of some key works contributing to symbolic interactionist thought, I now turn to a brief outline of deviance from an interactionist perspective, with a particular focus on the insights useful to the present study of drug dealers.

Deviance from an Interactionist Perspective

[I]f we look closely at what we observe we will very likely see the matters to which interactionist theory calls attention. We see that people who engage in acts conventionally thought deviant are not motivated by mysterious, unknowable forces. They do what they do for much the same reasons that justify more ordinary activities. We see that social rules, far from being fixed and immutable, are continually constructed anew in every situation, to suit the convenience, will, and power position of various participants. We see that activities thought deviant often require elaborate networks of cooperation such as could hardly be sustained by people suffering from disabling mental difficulties. Interactionist theory may be an almost inevitable consequence of submitting our theories of deviance to the editing of close observation of the things they purport to be about. (Becker, 1963: 192)

From the preceding discussion of interactionist theory, some inferences can be made about how interactionists would approach the study of deviance. Still, a more explicit outline of this approach seems useful in further establishing the theoretical framework on which this project is based. This is important because drug dealing is considered by many in the community to be disreputable and illegal. First, in order to situate the place of an interactionist theory of deviance within sociology, an interactionist approach will be contrasted with the more popular positivist approaches to the study of deviance.

Since its inception in the 19th century, sociology has been dominated by rationalist, positivist emphases.[12] Generally speaking, positivist (also structuralist, determinist, objectivist) approaches to the study of crime and deviance attempt to explain deviant behaviour through notions of cause and effect. That is, the interplay of internal (physiological and/or psychological deficiencies) and/or external (encompassing a variety of community effects) forces, factors, or variables that produce deviant behaviour.

A major attraction of a logical positivist approach in sociology reflected the success that this methodological emphasis had achieved in the physical or natural sciences. It was anticipated that one might be able to predict and shape social life by applying a parallel methodology and associated notions of cause and effect (independent variables and dependent variables) to the human subject matter. Some researchers of crime and deviance hoped we would eventually be able to reduce, if not eliminate, crime through the effective development and implementation of precise social policy (Prus and Grills, 2003). Indeed, positivist approaches to social research are appealing to lawmakers and politicians due to the precise, prompt, simplistic, and allegedly scientific data they provide.

Rather than viewing people as neutral mediums for the expression of forces, factors, or variables, an interactionist approach to the study of deviance contends that people are qualitatively different from the objects of study in the physical sciences and that people need to be studied mindfully of their capacities for interpretation, interaction, reflectivity, knowledge, deliberative agency, and minded activity (Blumer, 1969).

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[12] Building on the works of Auguste Comte (1787-1857), John Stuart Mill (1806-1877), Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920), and Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), most social researchers have stressed the need for logical deduction and quantitative analysis – an approach modeled after the physical sciences.

Instead of attempting to logically deduce and determine internal and external forces that cause deviance, analysts invoking an interactionist approach focus on people's interpretations of and experiences with deviance in the community. In this regard, interactionists would be attentive to the various facets of the deviance-making process. This includes: how people (1) define and designate deviance in the community, (2) experience deviant involvements, and (3) attempt to regulate instances of deviance (Prus and Grills, 2003). The ensuing theories generated from these inquiries would be "grounded" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) in the actual experiences of those who participate in deviance, both as targets, tacticians, and observers.

Having discussed the positivist-interactionist debate in the study of crime and deviance, a more detailed consideration of an interactionist approach to the study of deviance is carried out in what follows. This includes an interactionist understanding of people (1) designating deviance (defining and labeling), (2) experiencing deviance (involvements and subcultures), and (3) studying deviance (permeating the deviant mystique).

Designating Deviance

For our purposes, the term deviance refers to any activity, actor, idea, or humanly produced situation that an audience defines as threatening, disturbing, offensive, immoral, evil, disreputable, or negative in some way. At the very heart of this standpoint is the notion that nothing is inherently good or bad, appropriate or inappropriate. Rather, deviance is social in its very definition, or conversely, deviance is brought into existence only when something is so defined by an audience. (Prus and Grills, 2003: 3)

As noted earlier, from an interactionist perspective, deviance is not an inherent quality of an act or actor. Rather, deviance is a negative social definition (evil, disreputable, immoral, disturbing, offensive) that an audience attributes to some act, actor, idea, or other social phenomenon (Prus and Grills, 2003). Because of this negative quality, there tends to be much "mystique" (i.e.,

fascinations, allures, and intrigues, but also repulsions, condemnations, and fears) associated with deviance in the community (Prus and Grills, 2003).

The theoretical implication of the premise that *nothing is inherently deviant*, simply stated, is that there should not be one theory for the so-called "normals" and one for the "deviants," but that there should be one theory for the entirety of human group life because definitions of deviance are "socially constructed" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) in the same way as any other meanings are in the community. However, although interactionists argue for a single theory of human behaviour, there are some more particular social implications of deviant definitions that should be pointed out because of the negative or disrespectable quality these definitions entail.

Because interactionists recognise the socially constructed nature of definitions of deviance, they have been especially attentive to identifying aspects of the deviance-making process. Interactionists recognise that definitions of deviance depend on the context and audience as well as being subject to negotiation, resistance, and change (have an emerging and temporal character). In this regard, the interactionist literature has called attention to the social process of promoting and perpetuating definitions of propriety and deviance in the community:

From an interactionist perspective, all members of the community may be seen as definers (interpreters) of deviance; promoters of particular notions of reality insofar as they make their definitions known to others or otherwise attempt to shape the viewpoints and behaviors of others; potential supporters of the definitions and other initiatives taken by others; and resistors of the viewpoints and enterprises of others. The extent to which other people are exposed to, and accept, any particular definitions of deviance that someone suggests is problematic, as are the processes by which these interchanges occur. (Prus and Grills, 2003: 58)

Becker's (1963) depiction of *moral entrepreneurs* (rule creators/definers and enforcers), Klapp's (1969) conception of *moral crusades* (group movements pursuing moral change in society), and Blumer's (1971) study of *social problems as collective behaviour* all point to the socially

constructed (promoted and contested) nature of the designation of deviance in human group life.[13]

In addition to examining the process of defining and promoting definitions of deviance (as tacticians), the interactionist literature also attends to the experiences of targets of deviant definitions. Building on the work of Lemert (1951; 1967), Becker (1963), and Goffman (1959; 1963), we can attend to people's anticipations, experiences, and reservations with being labeled or defined as deviant by some audience. People who anticipate or experience deviant attributions may engage in a number of strategies to avoid or neutralise disreputable definitions and any associated implications.[14]

Experiencing Deviance

In what follows, I discuss two themes central to experiencing deviance and the analysis of this thesis: (1) the concepts of subculture and subcultural mosaic and (2) careers of participation in subcultures.

Subcultures and Subcultural Mosaics

The term subcultural mosaic refers to the multiplicity of subcultures, life-worlds, or group affiliations that constitute people's involvements in societies or communities at any point in time.... Rather than envision any society or community... as characterized by a dominant or highly pervasive culture, it is posited that any society or community consists of people acting in a mosaic... of diverse subcultures or life-worlds that exist in temporal, dialectic... relationships to each other.... Accordingly, it is proposed that the study of human group life in any community is most adequately accomplished when social scientists are acutely attentive to people's multiple

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[13] Blumer (1971) identifies five social processes in the development of social problems: (1) emergence, (2) legitimation, (3) mobilization for action, (4) formation of an official plan, and (5) implementation of the official plan. Again, these processes highlight the socially constructed, emergent, and problematic nature of deviance in the community.

[14] These strategies are discussed more fully in Chapter Seven relative to the experiences of drug dealers.

life-world involvements, because it is within these subcultural contexts that human activity takes place. (Prus, 1997: 36-38)

Typically developed around some central activity or set of activities, a subculture is any group that achieves some distinctiveness in the community via insider and outsider definitions (Prus, 1997: 41). In this regard, those involved in the consumption and distribution of drugs may be seen as members of the drug subculture. For interactionists, society consists of a multitude of these subcultures, with each being envisioned as another reality of sorts. This view of society as a subcultural mosaic is in stark contrast with the predominant view in the social sciences of a homogenous, single overarching culture (Prus, 1997: 36-38).

Prus (1997) uses the term "subcultural mosaic" to describe the collection of subcultures encompassed by broader society.[15] Rather than being mutually exclusive entities, subcultures have an overlapping and intersecting quality, with many sharing similar elements. As well, subcultures are viewed to have a shifting and emergent or processual (versus a static or fixed) quality as their existence and development depends on the ongoing activities of their

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[15] Strauss (1993: 209-221) developed a similar notion of society as consisting of a number of "social worlds." Also related are Mead's (1934: 90, 142, 201) multiple "universes of discourse" and multiple selves and involvements. And Shutz's (1971) multiple "life-worlds."

members.[16,17] Similarly, the size of subcultures, their organisation, and group membership also has a variable quality (Prus, 1997).[18]

The implication of society being a subcultural mosaic is that the great many realms of human group life need to receive distinct attention if we, as social scientists, are to develop more accurate representations of community life as these take place. As Prus (1997) contends, attention should be directed to the three main aspects of subcultural life: (1) becoming involved in subcultures, (2) experiencing subcultural life-worlds, and (3) forming and coordinating subcultural associations. It should be noted that these aspects of subcultural life are all interconnected and interdependent rather than mutually exclusive.

Becoming involved in subcultures. People's involvements in subcultures can be envisioned in process or "career" terms. Viewed in this sense, the generic social process "being involved" includes four subprocesses: initial involvements, sustaining and intensifying involvements, disinvolvements, and reinvolvements. Moreover, as society is envisioned as consisting of a multitude of subcultures, people also may have shifting and varying levels of involvement in a number of these life-worlds concurrently.

Experiencing subcultural life-worlds. Prus (1997: 70) identifies six general areas of activity and experience in subcultures: acquiring perspectives, achieving identity, doing activity,

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[16] Strauss (1993: 54-57) uses the concept of "trajectory" to refer to this emergent quality.

[17] As Blumer (1969: 6-20) convincingly argues, in a very real sense, subcultures (and human group life more generally) take place in, and have no existence apart from, these instances of activity. Thus, any notions of subcultural realities only become "objectified" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) in these enacted instances. This quality of subcultures – that they take place in the instances of activity – is part of the challenge in studying these worlds and is a major reason for the use (and need) of ethnographic methods in studying them since this type of methodology is best suited (Blumer, 1969: 46-47) to delving into the definitions and activities of subcultural participants.

[18] As Prus (1997: 31) points out, subcultures may consist of as little as two members to large, complex institutional forms. As well, some members may identify with and participate in the group more than others.

experiencing relationships, experiencing emotionality, and developing communicative fluency. These elements are envisioned as a set of *generic social processes,*[19] which are applicable to any realm of human endeavour. Much like subcultures in general, these processes should not be understood as mutually exclusive or static since people may experience them in overlapping, shifting, and variable manners.

Forming and coordinating subcultural associations refers to the process of constituting, maintaining and intensifying, and dissipating subcultural life-worlds or groups (Prus, 1997: 70-76). Of particular importance here is how people come to (1) define and establish associations with others, (2) objectify associations, or develop some distinctiveness or identity (via insider and outsider definitions), and (3) relate with others in the broader community.

Just like any other realm of community life, deviance also can be conceptualised as a subcultural or group phenomenon:

Many people have suggested that culture arises essentially in response to a problem faced in common by a group of people, insofar as they are able to interact and communicate with one another effectively. People who engage in activities regarded as deviant typically have the problem that their view of what they do is not shared by other members of the society. The homosexual feels his kind of sex life is proper, but others do not. The thief feels it is appropriate for him to steal, but no one else does. Where people who engage in deviant activities have the opportunity to interact with one another they are likely to develop a culture built around the problems rising out of the differences between their definition of what they do and the definition held by other members of the society. They develop perspectives on themselves and their deviant activities and on their relations with other members of the society... Since these cultures operate within, and in distinction to, the culture of larger society, they are often called subcultures. (Becker, 1963: 81-82)

The rich ethnographic tradition at the University of Chicago produced many studies attesting to the existence of deviant subcultures. Consider, for example, studies on hobos (Anderson, 1923), gangs (Thrasher, 1927), juvenile delinquents (Shaw, 1930), divorce (Waller, 1930), taxi-dance

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[19] See Prus (1987; 1996; 1997) and Prus and Grills (2003) for a detailed discussion of the implications of generic social processes for social research.

halls (Cressey, 1932), professional thieves (Sutherland, 1937), and marijuana users (Becker, 1953). The drug dealing community also has achieved some distinctiveness in the community via insider and outsider definitions. As will be shown, drug dealers develop a set of perspectives, identities, activities, relationships, emotional expressions, and linguistic styles that characterise their social world. By attending to these facets, I hope to create an accurate representation of their social world.

Careers of Participation in Subcultures

A useful conception in developing sequential models of various kinds of deviant behavior is that of career. Originally developed in studies of occupations, the concept refers to the sequence of movements from one position to another in an occupational system made by any individual who works in that system…. The model can easily be transformed for use in the study of deviant careers. In so transforming it, we should not confine our interest to those who follow a career that leads them into ever-increasing deviance, to those who ultimately take on an extremely deviant identity and way of life. We should also consider those who have a more fleeting contact with deviance, whose careers lead them away from it into conventional ways of life. Thus, for example, studies of delinquents who fail to become adult criminals might teach us even more than studies of delinquents who progress in crime. (Becker, 1963: 24-25)

People's involvements in subcultures can be conceptualised in career terms (Becker, 1963; Prus and Grills, 2003). Although this concept is most identified with people's legitimate work endeavours, it is also quite useful in understanding how people become involved in any realm of subcultural life, including those defined in deviant or disrespectable terms. The career concept is one of the central themes addressed in this study of drug dealers. Analysts who employ this concept attend to the "ebb and flow" of people's involvements. The emphasis is on the "how" and "what" of the involvement process not the "why." Accordingly, "Each involvement is best envisioned against a backdrop of multiple, shifting, and potentially incompatible involvements in other settings" (Prus, 1987: 275).

In discussing deviant careers, Becker (1963) identifies several career contingencies that may develop in the course of people's involvements in deviance. These include: (1) unintended deviance, (2) avoiding commitments to conventional ways of life, (3) neutralising any reservations people may have, (4) developing intrigues with and learning about deviance, (5) being labeled as deviant, and (6) becoming a member of a deviant group.

First, Becker (1963: 25) acknowledges that some people may engage in *unintended* or accidental instances of deviance which can be accounted for by people's ignorance of particular activities possibly being defined as deviant. However, as nothing is inherently deviant but rather is a negative attribution of some audience, it can be quite difficult, if not impossible, to always know in what circumstances, at what times, and for what audiences something will be considered in deviant terms.

For Becker (1963: 27-28), people who are more committed to conventional (i.e., "normal" or non-deviant) ways of life are less likely to engage in activities deemed deviant by conventional or broader society:

At least in fantasy, people are much more deviant than they appear. Instead of asking why deviants want to do things that are disapproved of, we might better ask why conventional people do not follow through on the deviant impulses they have. Something of an answer to this question may be found in the process of commitment through which the "normal" person becomes progressively involved in conventional institutions and behavior. In speaking of commitment, I refer to the process through which several kinds of interests become bound up with carrying out certain lines of behavior to which they seem formally extraneous. What happens is that the individual, as a consequence of actions he has taken in the past or the operation of various institutional routines, finds he must adhere to certain lines of behavior, because many other activities than the one he is immediately engaged in will be adversely affected if he does not. The middle-class youth must not quit school, because his occupational future depends on receiving a certain amount of schooling. The conventional person must not indulge his interests in narcotics, for example, because much more than the pursuit of immediate pleasure is involved; his job, his family, and his reputation in his neighborhood may seem to him to depend on his continuing to avoid temptation. In fact, the normal development of people in our society (and probably in any society) can be seen as a series of progressively increasing commitments to conventional norms and institutions. The "normal" person, when he discovers a deviant impulse in himself, is able to check that impulse by thinking of the manifold

consequences acting on it would produce for him. He has staked too much on continuing to be normal to allow himself to be swayed by unconventional impulses.

Thus, Becker (1963: 28) posits that if people are less likely to commit deviance as they organise their lives around more conventional routines, perspectives, activities, identities, and manners of emotional expression, then, if we are to understand how people become involved in deviance, we should examine the ways in which people *avoid conventional commitments* or ways of life, "He may, thus, be free to follow his impulses. The person who does not have a reputation to maintain or a conventional job he must keep may follow his impulses. He has nothing staked on continuing to appear conventional." Relatedly, people who participate in deviance also may need to overcome or neutralise any reservations or concerns they may develop with regards to their participation. If people cannot overcome strong doubts with their involvements, then they are less likely to continue in deviant ways of life.

Becker (1963: 30-31) also stresses that interests in deviance are socially acquired phenomena. People are not born being interested in using drugs or robbing banks, they learn about these activities and develop any associated fascinations in their contacts with other members of society – usually with other members of those groups deemed to be "deviant":

Before engaging in the activity on a more or less regular basis, the person has no notion of the pleasures to be derived from it; he learns these in the course of interaction with more experienced deviants. He learns to be aware of new kinds of experiences and to think of them as pleasurable. What may well have been a random impulse to try something new becomes a settled taste for something already known and experienced. The vocabularies in which deviant motivations are phrased reveal that their users acquire them in interaction with other deviants. The individual learns, in short, to participate in a subculture organized around the particular deviant activity.

Becker's (1953) study of marijuana users is a classic example in this regard. People learn to use and enjoy marijuana in their association with other marijuana users.

Being "caught" and labeled a deviant may further stabilise people's commitments to and involvements in deviant ways of life (Becker, 1963: 31). While it is common to think of people as being labeled deviant by others, it is also the case that individuals, as reflective beings, may "take the role of the other" and consider themselves in disrespectable terms. It follows that both groups and the self may impose penalties for deviant behaviour. Either way, whether individuals label themselves in deviant terms or a group designates them as disreputable in some way, developing a deviant identity can foster further commitment to disreputable ways of life:

[B]eing caught and branded as deviant has important consequences for one's further social participation and self-image. The most important consequence is a drastic change in the individual's public identity. Committing the improper act and being publicly caught at it place him in a new status. He has been revealed as a different kind of person from the kind he was supposed to be. He is labeled a "fairy," "dope fiend," "nut" or "lunatic," and treated accordingly. (Becker, 1963: 31-32)

Being labeled as a deviant can thus become somewhat of a self-fulfilling prophecy since it creates a set of expectations and limitations for that person in their future interactions with others:

Treating a person as though he were generally rather than specifically deviant produces a self-fulfilling prophecy. It sets in motion several mechanisms which conspire to shape the person in the image people have of him. In the first place, one tends to be cut off, after being identified as deviant, from participation in more conventional groups, even though the specific consequences of the particular deviant activity might never of themselves have caused the isolation had there not also been the public knowledge and reaction to it... When the deviant is caught, he is treated in accordance with the popular diagnosis of why he is that way, and the treatment itself may likewise produce increasing deviance. (Becker, 1963: 34)

For Becker (1963: 37), one of the final steps to a career in deviance is identification with and commitment to a deviant group. Within the group, "deviants" may feel a sense of cohesion and belonging rather than the exclusion and isolation they may feel as "outsiders" to conventional society. The group provides people with a set of rationalisations and perspectives on how to understand and approach the world in which they live. The group also provides

opportunities to interact with other experienced members and learn "how to carry on his deviant activity with a minimum of trouble. All the problems he faces in evading enforcement of the rule he is breaking have been faced before by others. Solutions have been worked out" (Becker, 1963: 39).

Building on Becker's conception of careers in subcultures, Prus (1996; 1997) and Prus and Grills (2003) identify four main subprocesses of subcultural careers: (1) initial involvements, (2) continuities, (3) disinvolvements, and (4) reinvolvements.

Getting Started (Initial Involvements). People's initial involvements in a subculture are usually a combination of the following elements:

- Being recruited (others try to encourage your interest and involvement)
- Pursuing intrigues (pursuing self-attributed interests)
- Attending to instrumentality (pursuing involvement for particular ends)
- Experiencing "closure" (perceiving pressing obligations, limited choices)
- Managing reservations (overcoming doubts, stigmas, risks)
- Acknowledging inadvertency (unwitting or accidental involvements)

Rather than viewing these subprocesses as mutually exclusive in essence, it is noted that people may experience more than one of these processes on both a simultaneous and sequential basis when becoming initially involved in a subculture (Prus and Grills, 2003).

Sustaining and Intensifying Involvements (Continuities). How do people continue and intensify their involvements that they have already made? Prus and Grills (2003) identify nine elements, or generic social processes, that characterise people's involvements in subcultures. Those people whose participation is more stable and enduring will likely experience the following processes:

- Internalizing perspectives (viewpoints consistent with particular involvements)
- Achieving identity (self and other definitions consistent with particular involvements)
- Accomplishing activities (competence and composure in the focal setting)
- Managing emotionality (exhibiting and experiencing appropriate affective styles)
- Acquiring linguistic fluency (learning and effectively using communication formats)

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- Making commitments (making investments, developing dependencies)
- Developing relationships (experiencing positive bonds with others in the setting)
- Foregoing alternative involvements (neglecting options, "bridge-burning")
- Participating in collective events (such as celebrations, contests, and confrontations)

Becoming Disinvolved. Continuity and discontinuity are closely related concepts. Below is a list of elements that may suggest situations in which disinvolvement is more likely. However, as Prus (1996: 155) notes, "it should not be assumed that dissatisfaction on any one dimension would necessitate disinvolvement… the (perceived) availability of feasible options seems central, as do the other elements defining one's participation in a more complete sense."

- Questioning the viability of perspectives (facing obstacles, dilemmas)
- Reassessing identity (consistent with desired images?)
- Finding activities troublesome (boring, unpleasant, cumbersome)
- Encountering emotional difficulties (e.g., becoming distraught, withdrawn, distrusting)
- Lacking linguistic fluency (encountering difficulties communicating with other participants)
- Being freed-up from existing commitments (free to "relocate")
- Severing relationships (conflict, animosity, exclusion)
- Encountering opportunities for alternative involvements

Becoming Reinvolved. If people have found their present involvements unsatisfactory, then they may consider reengaging in previous situations or groups. Becoming reinvolved becomes more likely when people engage in the following elements or processes:

- Defining opportunities for reinvolvements in previous situations as a more viable option relative to current involvements
- Noting greater changes to self or situation that would justify reinvolvements
- Finding that they have less extensively organized their routines around their present involvements

These involvement processes are some of the more central themes addressed in this project. As noted above, the focus on careers of participation in subcultures can help us generate accurate accounts of how people actually (in practice) become involved in and experience any subculture, group, or activity more generally.

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Studying Deviance

The characters in the sociological drama of deviance, even more than characters in other sociological processes, seem to be either heroes or villains. We expose the depravity of deviants or we expose the depravity of those who enforce rules on them. Both these positions must be guarded against. It is very like the situation with obscene words. Some people think they ought never to be used. Other people like to write them on sidewalks. In either case, the words are viewed as something special, with mana of a special kind. But surely it is better to view them as words, words that shock some people and delight others. So it is with deviant behavior. We ought not to view it as something special, as depraved or in some magical way better than other kinds of behavior. We ought to see it simply as a kind of behavior some disprove of and others value, studying the processes by which either or both perspectives are built up and maintained. Perhaps the best surety against either extreme is close contact with the people we study. (Becker, 1963: 175-176)

As Prus and Grills (2003: ix) define it, the "deviant mystique" refers to "the allures and fascinations, the anxieties and fears, and the disaffections and repulsions that people associate with wrongdoing and morality." As Becker alluded to above, one of the best ways to guard against imposing one's own sense of morality on their subject matter is to examine that subject matter closely, attending to the enacted instances, and to base one's analysis on the participants' perspectives and experiences. It is hoped that this "intimate" contact and a focus on the many enacted facets of the deviance-making process will aid researchers in "permeating" or moving past the deviant mystique:

It is essential that social scientists appreciate the relativism of deviance or that people's notions of 'what is' and 'what is not' considered deviant are apt to vary between and within communities. But to recognise differences in the ways that people label something or someone as deviant, bad, troublesome, evil, and the like, does little to explain how people actually define formulate, and deal with the instances at hand. Consequently, the more productive focus revolves around examinations of the ways that people (a) generate and apply notions of deviance to human life-worlds; (b) engage in the activities that somehow are considered to be deviant; and (c) adjust to instances of deviance as these take place in their midst. (Prus and Grills, 2003: 267)

This thesis attends to the deviant mystique by studying the viewpoints and practices of a group of people who is considered by many to be disreputable or deviant. I am contributing one small part to the understanding of the social production of deviance in the community, which

includes other actors who (1) define and promote drug dealing as deviant, (2) attempt to regulate and reform drug dealers, (3) celebrate or dramatise instances of the drug subculture, and (4) condemn or fear drug dealers.

In studying drug dealers, I have attempted to be free from any moralist underpinnings or biases when conducting my analysis by focusing on how drug dealers interpret, experience, and approach their worlds. However, not all sociologists are mindful of the deviant mystique when conducting their analyses:

Given the fears, indignations, intrigues, and other dramatizations associated with deviance in the community, it is often difficult for social scientists to approach the study of deviance with the same care and dedication that they might use to examine other subject matters. Nevertheless, the study of deviance very much requires the same sort of conscientious and open-minded conceptual and methodological rigor that one would employ in other realms of inquiry. (Prus and Grills, 2003: 9)

In Sum

In connecting with the present thesis, the literature in this section calls attention to the problematic natures of drug dealers' respectability. People may develop various allures with the dealing lifestyle and dealing activities because of their illegal and "disreputable" definitions. At the same time, however, people may develop reservations about participating in drug dealing because of the disrespectable imputations and implications these involvements may entail (this theme is discussed in Chapter Seven). This disrespectable quality of drug dealing is further complicated because of its "objectification" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) through its formal prohibition and regulation in society.

How do people experience deviance? Instances of deviance, like other activities, are generally experienced in subcultural contexts (i.e., in social worlds). Drug dealing is no different in this regard since drug dealers operate primarily within what may be termed the "drug

subculture." The drug subculture (which will be discussed more fully in Chapter Four) involves a number of players (i.e., users, dealers, suppliers, outsiders) operating within several theatres of operation, or interactional arenas. The main arenas include *consuming drugs*, *distributing drugs*, and *regulating the drug subculture*. As well, involvement in the drug subculture can be conceptualised in career terms (initial involvements, continuities, disinvolvements, reinvolvements) just like involvement in any other realm of human group life (deviant or otherwise).

Finally, when studying instances of deviance researchers should be mindful of the mystiques (allures, fascinations, repulsions, fears) that surround these realms. The present study attempts to move past or permeate the "deviant mystique" by attending to the worlds of drug dealers from their own perspectives.

Chapter Three

DATA AND METHODS

One should not blind oneself to a recognition of the fact that human beings in carrying on their collective life form very different kinds of worlds. To study them intelligently one has to know these worlds, and to know the worlds one has to examine them closely. No theorizing, however ingenious, and no observance of scientific protocol, however meticulous, are substitutes for developing a familiarity with what is actually going on in the sphere of life under study... The task of scientific study is to lift the veils that cover the area of group life that one proposes to study. The veils are not lifted by substituting, in whatever degree, preformed images for firsthand knowledge. The veils are lifted by getting close to the area and by digging deep into it through careful study. Schemes of methodology that do not encourage or allow this betray the cardinal principle of respecting the nature of one's empirical world. (Blumer, 1969: 39)

As noted in the preceding chapter, those employing a symbolic interactionist approach to the study of human group life utilise ethnographic methods (interviews, observations, participant-observations) because they allow researchers to examine how people interpret, experience, and approach their worlds from the participants' perspectives. In this chapter, we consider (1) the research setting and the participants in this study, (2) the data collection methods, (3) the grounded analytic-inductive process used in developing the analysis, and (4) the procedures for ensuring participant anonymity and confidentiality. This chapter is intended to help frame the presentation of the data and analysis in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven.

Setting and Participants

This study of drug dealers has been developed from extended open-ended interviews with nineteen current and former drug dealers residing in Ontario and British Columbia. For the purposes of this study, the activity of drug dealing is defined as *participation in the distribution of illegal narcotics to people other than oneself*. There is no assumption or requirement that those engaged in dealing activity do so for profit or define themselves as drug dealers at the time of their participation. Rather, the focus is on involvement in the activity of distributing drugs to

others. This being said, it is acknowledged that the majority of the participants at some points in their careers attended to the profitability of their dealing involvements.

The majority of the participants (sixteen of nineteen) were from two smaller Ontario communities, one of twenty-five thousand people, and the other of three thousand. The smaller of the two communities is a tourist town that grows to a population of forty thousand during the peak tourist season when most of the cottage dwellers are present. These two towns are generally reputed to have a high rate of teenage drinking and drug use.

I was raised near these two towns. It is from my community membership that I was able to access this subculture. Many of my friends and other acquaintances that I associated with became involved in the drug subculture during high school. Many of those who began as users also engaged in dealing activities later on. It is this group of personal contacts from which most of my participants came.

While the majority of the participants began their dealing careers in the two small towns mentioned above, many (eleven of sixteen) moved on to deal in other locales, including larger cities. Also, three participants that were developed through referrals from others began and maintained their careers in larger cities in Ontario and British Columbia.

The participants ranged in age from twenty to thirty-eight years old. There were seventeen male and two female participants.[20] The two females engaged in dealing activity as

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[20] It should be mentioned that while I did interview two female drug dealers for this thesis, I did not give concerted attention to the significance of gender for people's experiences in drug dealing. Thus, although I have cited the two female dealers where their experiences have contributed to the more central concepts developed in this study, some of the data from their interviews (as with that of others) was not included in thesis because of the more idiographic or extraneous nature of this material. Briefly, some of these differences include: (a) they were the only dealers who solely operated as partners or as a team, (b) they became initially involved together, overcoming their reservations together, (c) one of the objectives of their involvement was to support their personal drug use and have less of a reliance on "flirting" with guys for

partners for the majority of their involvements. Participants' level of involvement in dealing activity ranged from (mostly) lower-level dealing (as in acquiring drugs for friends or associates and retail-level sales) to some upper-level dealing (as in wholesale distribution, smuggling activities, and manufacturing). Hence, the majority of the data presented in this thesis is related to the aspects of these more common lower-level dealing involvements. Most of their clients also were "recreational" users rather than "harder" users or addicts.[21] All participants began their "dealing careers" or had their first experiences with drug dealing in high school. The duration of their involvements ranged between two and eighteen years, with the average career being around six years in length.

The most common types of drugs sold were marijuana, marijuana derivatives (hashish, honey oil), cocaine, MDMA (ecstasy), and ketamine (a veterinary tranquilizer in crystallized form). Some participants also had experiences selling other drugs, including: mushrooms, crack cocaine, LSD (acid), GHB (known as a date rape drug by control agencies), methamphetamines, prescription painkillers, and steroids.

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drugs, (d) they only sold ecstasy at "happy hardcore" rave events (catering to a specific genre of electronic music and requiring specific attire [i.e., costumes and bright, neon clothing]) in a larger city, and (e) they became disinvolved from drug dealing after witnessing an associate overdose at a party. The two female participants also were the only group interview conducted for this thesis. Moreover, since this interview was conducted very early on in the research process, many of the concepts that are found in the final draft of the thesis would only be articulated later on. I did not explicitly attend to all of these processes during this relatively early stage of interviewing. The identifiers for these two participants are interviewee numbers 4 and 5.
[21] Although, there was some overlap between these "types" of users. At various points in their careers some dealers did sell to heavy cocaine, crack cocaine, and ketamine users, but this was not typical of the majority of the sample. Generally, customers were friends or "friends of friends" who enjoyed using drugs recreationally (often in combination with alcohol) at "raves," parties, bars, or while just "hanging out."

Sample

One of the more common questions that one encounters from novices contemplating ethnographic research runs along the lines of 'How many people should I talk to?' Another common variant is 'How long should I spend in the field?' Unfortunately, there are no good, simple answers to any questions of these sorts. (Prus, 1997: 238)

I had a group of personal contacts that agreed to participate in this project from the outset. In addition to these participants, three people were referred by my personal contacts in the scene. While there was no set number that was used to judge whether I had enough (or not enough) data to make this project viable, I did expect to conduct around twenty in-depth interviews. The decision as to the exact number of interviews that were conducted (nineteen) was made during the data collection process. The decision was primarily based on (1) the quality of the data obtained on the involvement processes of dealers – assessed as data were collected and analysed concurrently, and (2) the practical limitations (primarily time constraints and travel) associated with conducting additional interviews.

Data Collection Methods

An interactionist approach follows an analytic-inductive model where social theory is derived from, tested by, and assessed in terms of what Blumer (1969) defines as the empirical subject matter of the social sciences – human lived experience. By using a methodology that attends to the features of this subject matter we will be better able to develop viable theories of human group life. For interactionists, this primarily entails an ethnographic approach which allows us to gain access to people's life-worlds, to examine how they are enacted and experienced on a day-to-day basis (Prus, 1996; 1997; Prus and Grills, 2003). It is also through ethnographic methods that we are best able to examine the interpretive (linguistically enabled meaning-making) process that defines humans as particularly unique from other life forms.

Working from an interactionist perspective, the present study primarily employs the ethnographic methods of open-ended interviewing and observation to delve into the life-worlds of drug dealers. It also was supplemented by some casual observations and long-standing acquaintances with many of the people interviewed for this study. Although participant-observation can be especially useful in developing an "intersubjectivity" (a linguistically shared understanding of meaning) with one's participants and gaining insight into a subculture, it was not deemed feasible for this particular study for reasons of both security and legality.

In terms of observational materials, my previous experience in growing up around and knowing many drug dealers was used to develop a preliminary sketch and subsequent questions on the inner workings, roles, activities, and participants within the scene. However, as Prus (1997: 200) notes:

Observational material, on its own, is much too limited (i.e., inadequate) a base on which to build an ethnographic study, because one would have to make extensive inferences regarding both the meanings that other people attribute to objects before, during, and after acting toward those objects in some manner.

To develop a better understanding of the participants' perspectives, relationships, identities, and activities, open-ended, in-depth interviews were conducted. These types of interviews allowed for greater depth and more accurate representations of people's actual lived experiences than structured interviews. Still, many of my questions about drug dealing were based on some themes central to understanding people's involvements in subcultural life-worlds more generally (e.g., see Prus, 1996; 1997; Prus and Grills, 2003). These included questions pertaining to people's (1) initial involvements, (2) continuities, (3) disinvolvements, and (4) reinvolvements in drug dealing. I often started the interviews by asking people if they could tell me about when and how they got started in dealing. From this base, I asked people to tell me about their involvements in dealing up until the present time. These involvement themes served

as general topics to pursue. However, these categories were not used to restrict the topics of discussion since all of people's experiences in drug dealing were considered pertinent to the present study.

Interviews were conducted in settings deemed appropriate by the researcher, the participants, and the ethics committee. After discussions with both the ethics committee and the potential participants, the most common settings in which interviews were conducted were inside my apartment and the participants' places of residence. These settings provided more comfort and privacy.

Interviews ranged in total length between one and seven hours, with several follow-up interviews conducted with a few key participants. Interviews of this length allowed for extensive probing and the pursuit of "intersubjectivity" (mutual understanding of meaning) with the participants (Prus, 1997).

Developing the Analysis

Given the ethnographic nature of the study, the data collection and analysis were done somewhat concurrently. Thus, the initial analysis began as interviews were transcribed shortly after their completion. Because of the focus on people's career contingencies as drug dealers, data was initially coded into preliminary categories of (1) initial involvement, (2) continuities, (3) disinvolvement, and (4) reinvolvment. Transcripts were then gone through again, one by one, and coded more specifically within the four subprocesses of involvement. These coded instances were then compiled into separate files based on the emerging themes and gone through again, looking for similarities and differences between the instances in process terms. Once this was

complete, these files were gone through several more times during the writing of the project, up until the completion of the final paper.

Analytic Focus – Relationship to Theory

This project is focused on the involvement processes of the drug dealing subculture. As such, it may be deemed a "focused entry" (Prus, 1997: 214). Although, it is also a "grounded theory" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) approach since the viability of these involvement processes was not taken for granted but rather assessed and adjusted throughout the research process.

In conducting grounded theory studies, researchers concurrently gather data, analyse data, and write up their findings throughout the entire process of the study, what Glaser and Strauss (1967: 101-115) term the *constant comparative method*. This is in contrast with the traditional logico-deductive approach wherein each of these processes is mutually exclusive, carried out in a distinct and sequential fashion.

In basic terms, the constant comparative method involves concurrent data collection, coding, conceptualising, theorising, and writing. In addition, throughout the entire process, each code, category, and concept is compared with one another for similarities and differences. The insights gained from the constant comparison of data were the guide to the research direction. Thus, I followed the leads that the data indicated. The study's direction was not rigidly preplanned from the outset, it was actively constructed by myself, my supervisor, and the participants throughout the course of the research from data collection to the writing of the final paper (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 47; Charmaz, 2006). Most notably, while I began with the "career contingencies" (Becker, 1963; Prus and Grills, 2003) concept as a general theme to

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pursue, the study also evolved into an examination of the interchanges in the drug marketplace since these were central to understanding people's careers as dealers.

Thus, this thesis is "focused" in that it is an examination of the involvement processes of the drug dealing subculture. However, it is also a "grounded theory" approach in that these concepts are rejected, adjusted, extended, and developed anew based on the instances in the data. Though the research is focused in a general sense, the knowledge on involvement processes gained prior to engaging in the field did not restrict the data collection. As Prus (1997: 214) explains, "an effort is made to 'suspend this outside knowledge' in order that the phenomena to be examined may be given greater opportunity to 'speak for itself,' to be allowed to challenge existing formulations whenever and as much as this seems warranted." I conducted somewhat of a *delayed literature review* (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990) in an attempt to inhibit the development and application of any preconceptions.[22] This is not to suggest, however, that I embarked on this project as a *tabula rasa.* In inducing the career contingencies of drug dealers, Prus' (1996, 1997) and Prus and Grills' (2003) notions of how people become involved in subcultures were used as a reference point for comparison. The concepts were, wherever possible, extended, adjusted, and qualified conceptually as new data emerged. Once I was in the research setting the data took priority over any preconceived themes that I wished to pursue.

Because grounded theory is developed directly from the data of the area of study, it is not easily refuted or disproved, and it is much more likely to stand the test of time (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 4). This is not to say, however, that it will not be assessed and adjusted as new data emerge. The point of grounded theory is to be able to build on and refine existing concepts (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 6). Grounded theory is always in process and is not a static,

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[22] In retrospect, conducting a delayed literature review was not a good strategy. It slowed down the writing process quite a bit. I would not recommend this strategy for future researchers.

"perfected product" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 32, 40, 114). Prus' (1987; 1996; 1997) and Prus and Grills' (2003) conception of *generic social processes* is an example of this premise in practice.

Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirm-ability of Method

In their work *Naturalistic Inquiry*, Lincoln and Guba (1985) outline four criteria in developing qualitative research and judging the quality of qualitative research. These are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirm-ability. In what follows, I attempt to address each of these elements relative to the present study.

Credibility. "Member checks" were conducted, but not in the traditional sense. As data collected and analysed concurrently, I had the opportunity to probe deeper into the different themes that were emerging. I asked participants about their experiences and then asked them to specifically address their experiences with the more common themes that I had been finding. However, I was careful not to lead or guide the participants too much when conducting this probing. Also, the main procedure utilized in developing credibility was providing numerous extended quotations by the participants when illustrating my analytic findings. By using these extended quotations, readers may see the actual data from which my concepts were developed. Thus, they may be able to judge for themselves whether my findings are representative or not.

Transferability. The results of this study are hopefully useful in developing a better understanding of involvement processes in other contexts more generally. As discussed earlier (in Chapter Two), focusing on generic social processes (1) allows for "conceptual cross-fertilization" where scholars from different fields can connect meaningfully with one another while still maintaining their study in a particular setting, (2) provides researchers with a set of

themes that they can follow, examine, and assess, and (3) provides the means for discussion of seemingly different topics in a more focused manner.

Dependability. Extended, in-depth, open-ended interviews hopefully fostered more useful and dependable data. I also kept notes on the setting, participants, my experiences, and the context in which the research occurred. These are shared with the reader throughout the thesis and in the more specific sections on setting and participants.

Confirm-ability. The use of extended quotations by participants throughout the paper will aid other researchers in assessing whether they are finding the same things in their own studies. The use of extended quotations is so valuable in (1) representing the viewpoints of the participants as accurately as possible, (2) allowing for "cross-contextual" comparisons (Prus, 1996; 1997), and (3) the review process of assessing the analysis and seeing how it developed from the data.

Known Limitations of Method

Ethnographic projects are challenging research ventures. Much of the quality of the data collected is contingent on one's skills as an interviewer. Making participants feel comfortable enough to share a part of their world with you is not always easily accomplished. Analysing qualitative data is also a challenging task but is greatly aided through "focusing" one's research, as in concentrating on involvement. While qualitative analysis may be viewed as subjective by some critics, the goal is to achieve an "intersubjectivity" (Prus, 1996; 1997) or a linguistically shared understanding with one's human subject matter. However, developing an "intersubjectivity" with one's participants also takes skill, patience, willing and helpful

participants, and prolonged engagement. I strove for this intersubjective quality throughout the project.

Procedures for Ensuring Anonymity and Confidentiality

As participants were personal contacts they were not anonymous to myself, but they were, are, and will be kept confidential in the strictest sense. Other than being known by the researcher, participants' information will be anonymous and confidential to all other parties. Several procedures were used during data collection, data storage, and data publication to ensure this.

In obtaining informed consent, no names or other identifying information were recorded. In this project's ethics application, the ethics committee approved that only oral consent of the participants be obtained prior to their participation. When giving oral consent, participants stated that they have read the informed consent letter and that they gave consent to their being interviewed without stating their name. As noted earlier, in discussions with both the ethics committee and potential participants, the most viable settings in which to conduct interviews were in the residences of the participants and myself. These settings provided privacy for the participants to discuss their involvements.

Interviews were recorded using a digital audio recording device. The device was kept in a secure location, and audio files were deleted shortly after transcription. Field notes also were stored in this secure location with all identifying information removed since I used pseudonyms (or omitted names) in place of the actual names of people and places. Similarly, when transcribing interviews I omitted the specific names of people, places, and other potentially identifying information. This procedure also was the practice in writing up the analysis and final

draft of this study. No specific names, places, or other identifying information were used, recorded, or published.

Chapter Four

THE DRUG SUBCULTURE:
Consumers, Distributors, and Control Agents

Before I ever bought an ounce [of marijuana to sell], as a smoker I knew the prices. The first time I bought weed was from this guy in the kitchen [of a restaurant where I worked] that I was telling you about. He truly taught me everything I know, him and my brother. My older brother obviously educated me a lot because he was a chronic [an avid marijuana smoker] and there were his friends that were all chronics. I see them because they are always hanging out at my house all the time, my parents' house, because we had the basement with the pool table and all that shit. So they are always around and they would go and sneak out and smoke a joint and come back in and play pool and shit like that... And these guys were all smart advanced students, they all do extremely well in school and they're still smoking weed at night and playing pool and just chilling. I just thought, "Well obviously you can still just live a good life like this" [and still do drugs]. Everyone says that weed's [marijuana] bad and they're like, "Aww, it's nothing man." And they're going on how it's not bad for you. So for me, I was just coming into that. So that's where I learned all that from. And that was my initial introduction to it too. So I never really thought it was bad. So I go to [work in] this kitchen and my brother works there with me and my brother's friend and the chef, and he [the chef] sells to the following two [my brother and I]. So we'd go to his [the chef's] house and he had this room with couches in it and every square inch of the wall and every square inch of the ceiling was covered in posters – every last square inch! It was crazy looking posters and shit. And every last poster was traced with glow-in-the-dark ink. He'd just get stoned and trace posters. And he had black lights in there and you can see the person that's sitting beside you just from the glow of the posters – it was insane! It was a really cool experience for me too in that we'd be up there and we'd be smoking joints and I'd just be super blasted. When I was there I wouldn't be afraid to ask them, I'd just ask them questions and they'd answer me. We were all friends, it wasn't like a hierarchical situation. It was just friends and we were talking. And truly that is where I gained my education [on the drug subculture] from was through my brother and those that I worked with. Quality and prices. I always thought that weed was weed but no there were different kinds of weed and some weed is better than others. And they were trying to show me, "This is good weed." And I'd be like, "Why is it good weed?" Like I would ask the question. And they'd be like, "Well because it's light green and it's covered in crystals." And I didn't really get it at the time but as you're around more and more you start to see the difference every time you buy it. So then you get an understanding of what it is for quality reasons. And then the price that I'm buying it for is the price clearly that I'm assuming it always goes for. So then when I got that first ounce [from the chef] I just did simple math in my head well how much is that ounce and how many grams are in an ounce and how much can I go sell a gram for. So my initial thought was there's twenty-eight grams in an ounce and I got the ounce for two hundred and twenty bucks then there's sixty dollars to be made there. So it was just basic like that and that [to start dealing] was my intention. (17)

Having outlined the interactionist theoretical and methodological approach to the study, attention

is now turned to the specific subject matter of the present study – drug dealers. This chapter

provides readers with an overview of the interactional arenas (consuming drugs, distributing drugs, and regulating the subculture) and key participants (users, dealers, suppliers, and control agents) found in the drug subculture. This chapter also discusses the ethnographic research that has been done on drug dealers and the implications of this literature for the present study.

Given these emphases, this chapter provides (1) an overview of the organisation of the drug subculture, (2) a discussion of drug dealing as a community phenomenon, and (3) a review of the literature on the drug subculture.

The Drug Subculture

Within the interactionist literature on deviance, there has been a longstanding acknowledgement of the plurality of life-worlds embedded in the larger community. Consider, for example, studies on gangs (Thrasher, 1927), taxi-dance halls (Cressey, 1932), skid-row alcoholics (Wiseman, 1970), the hotel community (Prus and Irini, 1980), and outlaw motorcycle groups (Wolf, 1991). Each of these studies, and others in this tradition, acknowledge a number of embedded subcultural variants within the broader community under consideration.

There also are a number of subcultures embedded within the drug subculture. This encompasses the life-worlds of drug users, buyers, retailers, suppliers, and regulators. All of these roles may be envisioned as denoting somewhat distinct theatres of operation within the broader drug subculture. In what follows, I outline the interactional arenas in which the instances of the drug subculture are enacted on a day-to-day basis, including the key players and their practices. This is followed by a consideration of drug dealing as a community phenomenon.

Theatres of Operation[23]

Theatres of operation denote the multiple interactional arenas in which subcultural life takes place or is enacted (Prus and Grills, 2003: 31-53). For analytic purposes, three primary theatres of operation in the drug subculture can be delineated: (1) consuming drugs, (2) distributing drugs, and (3) regulating the drug subculture. While people may participate in these theatres on both simultaneous and sequential bases, they may more selectively limit their participation in some realms.[24] As well, people may participate in these settings with differing levels of commitment and intensity. In what follows, an overview is provided of the key players and practices involved in these realms.

Consuming drugs. The primary form of activity in the drug subculture is the consumption of drugs. While people may acquire drugs in a variety of ways,[25] they also may purchase drugs. As such, they become involved in the marketplace of the drug subculture. This involvement can range from simply acquiring drugs for self and friends to more committed dealing involvements.

The interactionist literature on drug users suggests that involvement is best understood as a social process.[26] People typically become users after interacting with other users. In these interactions, people may have their first using experiences, develop stocks of knowledge on the drug subculture, and develop identities and relationships favourable toward continued use.

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[23] Prus and Grill's (2003: 31-53) concept, "theatres of operation," is partly based on the work of Goffman (1959) who invokes a dramaturgical metaphor to conceptualise instances of impression management in social interactions.

[24] While those who engage in drug consumption commonly become involved in distributing drugs to others, they infrequently participate in formal regulation efforts of the drug subculture. However, as Desroches (2005) found, consumers and distributors may aid police investigations.

[25] People, especially beginners, can acquire drugs from fellow users for no cost. People also may be more innovative in acquiring drugs. As Waldorf (1973) found among heroin addicts, people may target others for theft of their drugs or "take a cut" when acquiring drugs for others.

[26] See Brown (1931), Becker (1953), Ray (1961), Waldorf (1973), and Waldorf et al. (1991).

Those who become heavy users also may find disinvolvement problematic, especially when they have organised their lives around their participation in the subculture (e.g., Ray, 1961).

Distributing drugs. Dealers and suppliers include those who are sources of drug supply for members of the drug subculture. Dealers may be divided into two main categories: retailers and suppliers. However, these distinctions are not mutually exclusive and there is bound to be some intertwining and overlapping of these involvements.

Dealers (as "retailers") typically distribute drugs to consumers, or end-users. In making sales, dealers may attend to (1) expanding their customer base (assessing customers, recruiting customers, developing reputations) and (2) making sales (arranging and performing transactions, and obtaining payments). As noted earlier, consumers also may engage in selling or otherwise distributing drugs to others. Likewise, those who would define themselves primarily as dealers most often are (or are apt to become) involved in the consumption of drugs. Indeed, for many drug dealers, financing their own personal drug use becomes the primary focus of their involvements in selling drugs to others.

"Suppliers" are those individuals from whom retailers procure products for resale. Supplier involvements include wholesaling, manufacturing, and smuggling drugs. While some people tend to operate in or focus on one of these realms of supply, others may engage in these different aspects of supply on simultaneous sequential and/or shifting bases.

Dealer relationships with suppliers tend to be some of the most valued and protected in the drug scene since maintaining consistent sources of supply is essential in continuing in the drug trade. As such, those involved as retailers may put much effort into establishing themselves as trustworthy with suppliers, both initially and on a continuing basis. As well, retailer and supplier success is best viewed as interdependent (i.e., as "partners in trade," see Prus, 1989b).

Regulating the Drug Subculture.[27] As used herein, the term "regulators" refers to those who attempt to deter, apprehend, control, or rehabilitate members of the drug dealing subculture. Primarily, this includes law enforcement agencies and those who attempt to treat, cure, or reform members of the drug subculture. While the efforts of control agents may be a focal concern for some dealers at some times, attentiveness to regulators is often variable (depending on the situation and dealers' levels of involvement) and limited on a day-to-day basis.

Drug Dealing as a Community Phenomenon

As the above-mentioned theatres of operation suggest, rather than viewing drug dealing as a more isolated or singularly pursued activity, it is much more accurate to situate and comprehend involvement in drug dealing as taking place (i.e., experienced and accomplished) in a community context. Thus, while not denying people's abilities to pursue things (deviant or otherwise) in more solitary manners, even these more solitary efforts take place in, or in reference to, some particular realms of community life.[28]

Although I focus on the activities of dealers in this thesis, it is important to acknowledge the interconnectedness between dealing and using involvements since the drug dealing subculture is predicated and dependent upon a drug using subculture. While I attempted to obtain as much material as I could on people's experiences as drug dealers, I realised in retrospect that it would have been beneficial for the study more generally had I also spent more

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[27] Readers interested in ethnographic studies of control agents attempting to regulate the drug subculture will find the work of Manning (1980), Collison (1995), and Desroches (2005) to be instructive. Peter K. Manning's (1980) *The Narcs' Game* is an ethnographic study of the drug control efforts of two police units in the United States. Mike Collison's (1995) *Police, Drugs and Community* is an ethnographic study of police attempts to control the drug trade in a town in England. In *The Crime that Pays*, Desroches (2005) examines Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) investigations of upper level drug traffickers.

[28] Prus and Grills (2003: 159-179) make this argument in their discussion of "solitary deviance."

time talking to these people about their own experiences and observations with drug use apart from dealing contexts. That is, obtaining more information on people's involvements in the "drug using" subculture.

Still, I did obtain some material on dealers' drug using experiences since this was centrally related to their careers (initial involvements, continuities, disinvolvements, and reinvolvements). Not only did dealers' initial forays into the broader drug subculture typically develop out of their involvements as users, but their careers as drug users also provided prospective dealers with stocks of knowledge, identities, relationships, and opportunities that formed the base for their dealing endeavours (see also Waldorf, 1973; Murphy et al., 1990; Waldorf et al., 1991; Mohamed and Fritsvold, 2006):

I would have no idea [about the drug subculture without being a user]. It starts out that you're going to go out and smoke a joint with somebody sometime. It's not even that you're going to buy it and that you're going to go smoke it. It's somebody has the weed and you're going to go smoke it with them. [That] is how I'm going to assume it goes down for most people. I definitely fell into that category. And so here's a joint and then you ask, "How much did that cost?" And he says, "Five bucks." Then eventually you learn what you get for ten and twenty bucks. So as you start using, that is what educates you. You don't just come into that situation knowing unless you start when you're like twenty-five [years old]. If you start when you're twenty-five I can see you knowing, but if you start when you're fourteen or fifteen then you're going to know just by using, how much things cost. You're not going to know ahead of time. You're not privy to that information as a kid. (17)

Notably, people involved in the drug subculture as users may:

- Learn the language of the subculture
- Develop product knowledge (as in prices, quality concerns, dosing, sensation experience)
- Develop relationships with fellow users who may become their first customers
- Develop relationships with dealers who may become their first suppliers
- Establish themselves as trustworthy characters in the drug subculture
- Be "somebody" (achieve senses of self-worth or importance relative to the group)
- Encounter opportunities to become involved in dealing activities

In those rare cases where dealers did not begin as users, they often gained entry into the community by way of their associates who were involved:

Growing up my brother was seven years older than me, and some of my parents' friends had kids four or five years older than me. When I was getting into high school, some of those older people were into the drug scene a bit. So just from knowing them it was a bit easier for me to break into that scene compared to other people that don't have any connections like that. The people that were into it longer were able to get cheaper prices too. So I would go to the older people that I already had a rapport with and getting better deals off them. (6)

Relatedly, people often develop overlapping careers as drug users and drug dealers. Both sets of involvements may have varying levels of intensity and occur on a shifting or more sustained basis. Thus, whereas users may drift into dealing activities on sporadic bases during the early stages of their using careers in order to acquire drugs for themselves and friends, some of these users may become more involved in the dealing aspects of the subculture as they attend to the opportunities they encounter as members of the drug subculture. These elements of the drug subculture are discussed in more detail in the following literature review.

Reviewing the Literature on the Drug Subculture

For analytic purposes a distinction can be made between the "softer" (i.e., recreational, experimental, experiential) and the "harder" (i.e., institutionalised, heavily stigmatised, centered on "dependent" or addicted users) drug subcultures. Although this distinction is problematic in that there is some overlap between these two worlds, it is nonetheless useful in describing the embedded subcultural variants found within the broader drug subculture. The dealers in this thesis all became initially involved in using and dealing in the recreational realm of the drug subculture. Although some of the participants in this study later became involved in heavier use and dealing, most maintained the majority of their involvements in the "softer" activities associated with recreational drug use. Some other distinctions between the dealers in this thesis and those found in studies of street-level dealers (see, e.g., Jacobs, 1999; Bourgois, 1995; Fields, 1984) are also warranted.

The users involved in this setting generally knew one another and the other dealers that service their area. Most operated within smaller rural (but tourist populated) communities where the emphasis was on "having a good time," "hanging out," or "partying." Often used in combination with alcohol, most drug use took place in recreational settings and seems intended to enhance the social interaction and sensation (sight, taste, touch, smell, hearing) experience. As well, the participants in this thesis primarily came from middle-income backgrounds and, thus, may be more committed to conventional ways of life than those coming from impoverished backgrounds or financially desperate situations (Waldorf et al., 1991).

Still, some of the dealers in this study did become more heavily involved in using as well as selling drugs to people with more habitual or problematic patterns of drug use. With these qualifications in mind, the following literature review first examines the ethnographic research on drug users. The literature on drug users is divided into two themes: (1) literature on institutionalised, problematic, or "dependent" drug users, and (2) literature on recreational / experiential drug users. This is followed by a review of (3) the ethnographic research on drug dealers.

Ethnographic Literature on Institutionalised, Problematic, or "Dependent" Drug Users

Although small, there is an important, highly instructive corpus of interactionist literature on drug use and addiction. In what follows, three studies on "dependent" or "addicted" drug users are overviewed, with particular attention paid to the insights they contribute to an understanding of "careers of participation in the drug subculture." Three of the most valuable statements can be found in: L. Guy Brown's (1931) "The sociological implications of drug addiction," Marsh Ray's (1961) "The cycle of abstinence and relapse among heroin addicts," and Dan Waldorf's

(1973) *Careers in Dope*. All three of these studies attend to the problematics of disentanglement from the drug subculture once people have become firmly entrenched or embedded within it.

Despite being the earliest work on the drug subculture referenced in this thesis, L. G. Brown's (1931) "The sociological implications of drug addiction" remains one of the most potent analyses of the subject from an interactionist perspective. Brown organises his paper around four "social facts" of drug addiction: (1) drug addiction is socially acquired, (2) drug use is increased through social interaction, (3) relationships / entanglements with other addicts makes cessation difficult, and (4) "the social definition of drug addiction forces the user to live in a collapsed social world" (Brown, 1931: 364).

For Brown (1931: 358), drug addiction is best understood as a socially acquired phenomenon. He stresses the point that people are not born addicts. They are born with biological capacities of various sorts, but much of people's capacities to do things and sustain involvements of particular kinds are only realised (and given meaning) through ongoing participation in community life. Thus, Brown (1931: 359) takes issue with the claims of those who attribute drug addiction to innate or acquired psychopathic tendencies. In support of this postulate, Brown (1931: 359) provides the example of people who unknowingly receive powerful pain medications at hospitals and do not become addicted. People have to attribute meaningful effects to a drug in order for it to become a part of their social world. This meaning then needs to be connected with some sort of bodily sensations in order for people to become addicted to the drug. As such, addicts typically begin using in group contexts "for the sake of the thrill," but what may develop out of some initial curiosities can develop into more habitual patterns of use as people progress in their using careers.

Social interaction with other users increases the level of use for beginners (Brown, 1931: 361). Beginners find themselves attempting to keep pace with the more experienced users that they are using with.[29] Parties in which drug use is prevalent provide conducive environments for intensified levels of use (Brown, 1931: 362). As people become more accustomed to using and develop higher tolerances to the drug, they may develop fears of encountering periods where they will not be able to acquire the drug. Thus, they ensure they take every opportunity they can to use, and this practice leads to an increasing dependency on the drug (Brown, 1931: 362).

Developing relationships with other addicts makes the process of disinvolvement much more difficult (Brown, 1931: 363). As an addiction develops, it is common for the addict's relationships to become increasingly directed toward the goal of acquiring and using drugs. This process of increasing associations in the drug subculture and decreasing associations in "conventional" society precludes the addict from an easy transition back to the non-using world. In their interactions with others, addicts also acquire the perspective that quitting is nearly impossible – this also inhibits any attempts to quit (Brown, 1931: 364).

For Brown (1931: 364), the addict is precluded from many aspects of "conventional" or non-using society because of the negative social definitions of drug use that non-users typically hold. A drug addiction often fosters negative or deviant definitions of addicts as "outcasts" to friends and family (Brown, 1931: 365-366). Thus, addicts' lives become relegated, almost by default, to the realities (perspectives, identities, activities, relationships, commitments) of the drug subculture. Addicts, then, live in "collapsed" social worlds since the conventional world has shut them out of conventional life.

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[29] Parallels with this phenomenon can also be found with those drinking in bar settings (Prus, 1983).

Brown (1931: 367) is also highly critical of many of the treatment programs purported to cure addicts since they do not address the social aspects of addiction and thus are generally ineffective. Not only are these programs ineffective but in many cases, their promoters also take advantage of addicts' vulnerable situations.

Brown was one of the first sociologists to attend to the social elements involved in the development of habitual patterns of drug use. Rather than focusing on the "defects" of individuals or society that allegedly cause or produce drug addicts, Brown points out how people may become entangled and embedded in subcultures (via relationships, identities, activities, perspectives, manners of emotional expression styles of linguistic interchange) in ways that make it challenging to disinvolve from them.

Writing some thirty years later, Marsh B. Ray (1961) in "The cycle of abstinence and relapse among heroin addicts" examines the cycle of disinvolvement and reinvolvement from habitual drug use in more detail. Building upon the work of Brown, Ray also considers the problematics of disentanglement of people heavily involved in drug use. Particularly, this article addresses how addicts define their situations during periods of abstinence from (disinvolvement) and relapse into (reinvolvement) drug use. While studies show physical dependency on drugs can be ended in relatively short periods of time, most addicts relapse. In accounting for this phenomenon, Ray pays particular attention to the role of people's identities, relationships, activities, and perspectives in fostering their reinvolvement in drug use. Still, Ray organises his materials around five themes: (1) secondary status characteristics of addicts, (2) the inception of cure, (3) the addict self in transition, (4) the process of relapse, and (5) the social psychological meaning of relapse.

Secondary status characteristics of addicts. Drug addicts have their own social world, including styles of linguistic interchange, relationships, identities, marketplace exchanges, and perspectives (Ray, 1961: 133). However, many aspects of the addict's life are given "secondary status" by broader society, defining addicts as deviants. For example, many treatment options for drug addiction impose mentally ill social definitions on addicts. As well, heavy users typically fail to keep up cleanly appearances since they are primarily concerned with acquiring and using drugs, and this results in further deviant social (both self and other) definitions (Ray, 1961: 134).

The inception of cure. The process of cessation sometimes begins as self-deliberation by addicts, following some disturbing personal experiences and/or after coming into contact with people from their previous non-using lives. This contact occasion engenders deliberation about their current identities as addicts in relation to their previous non-using identities (Ray, 1961: 134). However, this deliberative process seems likely to arise out of a forced disinvolvement from use (e.g., incarceration or hospitalization). In either case, addicts may begin to question the viability of continued drug use. Often, this period of self-deliberation is made in reference to the negative experiences of other addicts that serve as indicators of what life may be like should they continue along their present trajectories (Ray, 1961: 135).

The addict self in transition. This period occurs when addicts have passed through the physical withdrawal experienced after ceasing drug use. Ray characterises this period as a "running struggle" for addicts where the likelihood of relapse is very much uncertain (Ray, 1961: 136). In deciding to cease drug use, addicts typically develop some expectations about regaining their previous relationships and statuses in the non-using world (Ray, 1961: 136). Greater success in maintaining abstinence is contingent on people (1) severing ties with the drug world,

(2) being redefined by family and friends in terms of the addict's previous non-using self, and (3) becoming involved in a new non-using social world, including new relationships, identities, perspectives, and activities (Ray, 1961: 136).

The process of relapse. Relapse occurs when the transition to non-addict does not meet users' expectations, typically by not being accepted back into the non-addict community in the way they had anticipated. It is here that addicts begin to consider returning to their previous social worlds of drug use. However, this is not just to use drugs but also to regain the other aspects (relationships, identities, activities, perspectives) of that world that now seem more appealing relative to the non-using world (Ray, 1961: 137). Thus, the addict begins to question the viability of remaining an abstainer. The addict is most vulnerable to relapse shortly after ceasing use since his using habits and perspectives are still resonant in his everyday orientation yet to be fully displaced by those of the non-using world (Ray, 1961: 137). In addition to the addict's expectations about abstaining, the non-addict group also may have some expectations about addicts' attempts at "cure." If the cessation and reintegration process does not unfold as anticipated, then they may become increasingly reluctant to accept the addict back into their world (Ray, 1961: 138-139).

The social psychological meaning of relapse. In a practical sense, reentry into the drug subculture involves reestablishing previous or developing new contacts in the drug scene from which to acquire drugs and learn of any new developments (e.g., new drugs, methods of use) in the using subculture (Ray, 1961: 139). However, and more importantly for our purposes, reentry also reflects previous drug using related tendencies (e.g., failing to keep a tidy appearance, theft as a means to support use), perspectives, orientations, relationships, and identities. In this regard, the addict "readopts" the secondary status characteristics mentioned earlier, "and limits the

degree to which he relates to non-addict groups in terms of [their] values and standards" (Ray, 1961: 139). This serves to "collapse" the social worlds of the addicts' once again, isolating them in the world of fellow users and fostering commitments to this way of life. However, the period of abstinence may be viewed as proof to addicts that they do have the ability to quit if they so choose. Later, this period may be used as a reference point in determining the value and viability of another attempt at abstinence (Ray, 1961: 139-140). This cycle may repeat itself many times over throughout the course of addicts' careers.

Continuing in the tradition of Brown and Ray, Dan Waldorf's (1973) study *Careers in Dope* is an interactionist-inspired (following Becker, Blumer, and Goffman) ethnographic account of heroin users in New York City. Waldorf focuses on the "how," or process involved in being a user, versus the "why," a reductionist attempt to explain behaviours based on forces, factors, or variables.

Central to Waldorf's analysis is the concept of "career" in understanding the experiences of users. Similar to Brown (1931) and Ray (1961), Waldorf (1973: 9-12) finds that people's initial involvements in heroin use typically begin (1) after they have associated with users, (2) try the drug out after some initial curiosities, and recruitment efforts on the part of their associates, (3) learn the proper administration technique, (4) learn to recognise and enjoy the effects, and (5) develop identities and perspectives favourable toward use. The role of social interaction in beginning use cannot be understated. As Waldorf (1973: 31) states, "Our data support the idea that initial heroin use is a social phenomenon; the role of other persons in the initial use of heroin is crucial. Beginning heroin use is not a solitary activity. Persons are initiated in a group situation among friends and acquaintances."

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People stabilise their involvements as users when they become physically addicted to the drug (Waldorf, 1973: 12-13). Many users begin to engage in illegitimate "hustling" activities (prostitution, theft, dealing) to support their growing habits since they are difficult to support through legitimate sources of income. As their habits grow, users develop social identities as "dope fiends," and the acquisition and ingestion of heroin becomes an all-consuming way of life (Waldorf, 1973: 16-18). Addicts can then become socially isolated in their addict-world when they are ostracised from their non-addict attachments as a result of their deviant activities (stealing from family and friends). This results in further commitment to the addict way of life living from fix-to-fix and identifying the straight life as monotonous relative to the excitement of the drug using life (Waldorf, 1973: 19).

Disinvolvement becomes exceedingly difficult as users become more entangled in and committed to the addict world, while at the same time losing ties to the non-addict world (Waldorf, 1973: 22). Also, like Brown (1931) and Ray (1961), Waldorf (1973: 24) finds treatment programs generally ineffective at deterring relapse because they fail to take into account the social aspects of addiction. Still, people do manage to quit heroin. Cessation usually occurs after addicts experience turning points that lead them to question the viability of remaining a user, reassessing their situations in terms of "is it worth it?" (Waldorf, 1973: 147-150). This reassessment of their current trajectories is often performed in conjunction with a redefinition of the straight life as appealing relative to the difficulties of addiction.

In sum, Brown, Ray, and Waldorf clearly point out the social elements involved in sustaining and abstaining from a career in habitual (and deviant) drug use. Once people have organised their lives around particular groups (encompassing sets of relationships, activities, identities, and perspectives) it becomes difficult to disentangle from these involvements. Not

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only is it difficult for individuals to sever ties with the subcultures that they are involved in, but this also typically involves organising their lives around another group (with its own relationships, activities, identities, and perspectives). Thus, successful disentanglement is very much contingent on replacing that life-world involvement with another and being accepted into new relationships. Slipping back into former routines and ways of life becomes more likely when this transition becomes more difficult, frustrating.

While the present study does not explicitly attend to many instances of people struggling with heavy drug use, it does address the problematics people may have in attempting to disentangle themselves from drug dealing. Thus, the work of Brown, Ray, and Waldorf points to the difficulty in becoming disinvolved from an activity when people have more extensively organised their lives around it. In attending to people's disinvolvements from and reinvolvement back into dealing, I will consider their degrees of "subcultural embeddedness" (Prus, 2004), and how this contributes to their involvements. Brown, Ray, and Waldorf also provide insight on how people who have been labeled deviant may become more intensely involved in those "deviant" ways of life. Deviant labels can preclude people from many opportunities to go "straight." Relatedly, the likelihood of success in maintaining disinvolvement seems related to the degree in which people can reorganise their lives around new sets of relationships, perspectives, activities, and identities. If dealers who attempt disinvolvement do not severe ties with the subculture and reorganise themselves around some new (perhaps legitimate) way of life, then they seem to be likely to reengage in dealing activities.

Ethnographic Literature on Recreational and Experiential Drug Users

As noted earlier, the participants interviewed for this study primarily sold marijuana (and derivatives – hashish and honey oil), cocaine, MDMA (ecstasy), and ketamine to recreational users (i.e., using for fun, partying, and other social experiences). Most of the dealers also were primarily recreational users themselves. It seems important, thus, to examine some of the literature related to recreational drug use. First, I will consider some of the literature on marijuana users. This will be followed by the literature on the recreational use of cocaine and ecstasy.[30] Finally, even more commonplace alcohol use also will be considered as part of the broader recreational drug use subculture. It should also be noted that some of this literature on recreational drug users has an overlapping quality. That is, some of it also considers recreational users' involvements in selling drugs. However, a more detailed consideration of ethnographic studies specifically on drug dealers is conducted in a later section.

In his 1953 article "Becoming a Marihuana User," Howard Becker examines the social process through which people become marijuana users. Taking issue with studies that attribute marijuana use solely to predisposing conditions, Becker attends to the role of the social process (social interaction) in becoming a user. That is, how people come to define marijuana as an object to derive pleasure from. People become marijuana users only after coming into contact with experienced users. It is in their interactions with experienced users that newcomers to marijuana use (1) learn the proper technique to evoke physical sensations; (2) learn to recognise the effects and connect them with the drug; and (3) learn to derive pleasure from the effects.[31]

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[30] I did not find any sustained ethnographic accounts of people's experiences with ketamine use.

[31] On their own, these three processes are too mechanistic. Thus, although Becker's (1953) paper does not fully attend to other elements beyond these three processes, it should be noted that becoming a marijuana user is also likely to include the matters of: (a) being somebody

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Learning the proper technique to evoke physical sensations. As Becker (1953: 236) found during his interviews of marijuana users, people typically do not "get high" during their first experiences with marijuana. This lack of effect is often attributed to poor using technique (Becker, 1953: 237). If people do not learn the proper technique in which to evoke effects, then they will not be able to define marijuana as an object of pleasure and therefore are unlikely to continue use. However, proper technique can be learned through the instruction and/or observation of experienced users.

Learning to recognise the effects and connect them with the drug. In addition to proper using technique, people also must learn to discern the effects evoked by and associated with marijuana use (Becker, 1953: 237-239). This association is crucial because it creates the possibility of defining marijuana as an object that can produce these effects in the future. The process of identifying the effects can be aided by more experienced users who describe what sensations to be aware of. With greater experience, users can begin to hone in on these effects more quickly and thus get high more often and easily (Becker, 1953: 239).

Learning to derive pleasure from the effects. Becker (1953: 239-240) states that enjoying the effects is a socially acquired taste rather than being inherently pleasurable. Indeed, many of the effects could easily be defined as unpleasant by most. If the effects bring too much discomfort, then use may cease. In order for people to continue use they must be able to redefine the effects as pleasurable (Becker, 1953: 240). This process of coming to redefine the effects as pleasurable is often in the context of interaction with experienced users who serve to minimise or downplay the discomforting effects while emphasising other aspects as enjoyable.

(developing desired, valued, and prestigious senses of self among groups of marijuana users), (b) "fitting in" with other users, and (c) becoming caught up in the excitement of drug use.

Sometimes, experienced users will have unpleasant using experiences. These may be attributed to an excessive dose or potency and thus disregarded or discounted as chance occurrences. However, some people may redefine marijuana as unpleasant after this experience and cease use. The likelihood of reinvolvement is related to their interaction with other users. If interaction is intensive, then reinvolvement is likely since the users will tend to influence the person to redefine marijuana as pleasurable once again (Becker, 1953: 241).

Since Becker's (1953) study, other research has pointed to marijuana use as a means of enhancing recreational / social activity. As Erickson (1989: 179) states, "for nearly all respondents, cannabis use was predominantly a social activity, engaged in with friends and partners during evenings, weekends, and other leisure time." Similarly, Hathaway and Atkinson (2001: 364-365) found other activities or settings in which marijuana is often used. These include (1) promoting relaxation, stress relief, and sleep (see also Pearson, 2001); (2) enhancing sensory (sight, sound, touch, taste, smell) stimulation; (3) engaging in self-treatment of physical pains; and (4) making work involvements more bearable, enjoyable, and productive (especially for "creative" work).

While marijuana use is still somewhat stigmatised because of its illegality, it is becoming more widespread and tolerated (Hathaway, 2004; Stebbins, 1996; 1988), even "normalized" (Scheerer, 1978). Recreational use is not perceived by users as morally wrong or particularly risky (in terms of the health and legal implications) activity when used in moderation and with due discretion (Williams and Parker, 2001; Hathaway, 2004). Thus, in contrast with research on "heavy" or "dependent" users that characterises drug use in more desperate terms, research on recreational users (especially of marijuana) suggests users consider the potential downsides (health, legal, social) and make more "reasoned choices" (Williams and Parker, 2001) in relation

to their using than those users with more "dependent" or "addictive" patterns of use (see, e.g., Jacobs, 1999). Relatedly, involvement toward more moderate and "reasonable" drug consumption may be fostered as young drug users begin to adopt more serious work roles after they have completed school (Parker et al., 2002).

Research also has shown a growing number of middle-income marijuana users in North America (Goode, 1969; Hilliker, Grupp, and Schmidt, 1981; Erickson, 1989; Hirsch, Conforti, and Graney, 1990; Hathaway and Atkinson, 2001). This suggests that a study of those involved in the middle-income drug subculture is worthwhile. As Hathaway and Atkinson (2001: 356) state:

Most marijuana research to date has relied on the availability of students or institutionalised volunteers of low socioeconomic status... Middle class users have more at stake than the marginalized user and more reason to avoid potentially stigmatizing behavior. They are unlikely to be addicted or merely experimenting with the drug. Nor are they likely conforming to peer pressure or reacting to restrictions on social mobility due to low socioeconomic status.

Recreational marijuana users also may associate less stigma with their activities because of the prevalence of drug use among their social group (mainly friends) and the relative familiarity and comfort they have in interacting with their sources of supply (also typically friends). As Hathaway (2004: 562) explains, "Controls based on the laws that limit drug supply have weakened since the time of Becker's research. Although still only available through illicit outlets, users maintain access casually through friends far removed from professional dealers."[32]

Recreational marijuana users also may begin to see the cost advantages of buying larger quantities at a single time (Hathaway, 2004; Carey, 1968). This practice of buying larger volumes is often accompanied by casually dealing to friends to offset the cost of personal use.

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[32] Carey (1968: 54-55) makes a similar point: "Early use… continues to offer the protective insulation of small friendship groups far from the sources of supply. The fears that exist in these circumstances are not those of the criminal more or less confronting hostile laws as the chances of being apprehended by the police are actually quite remote."

Some users recognise the financial advantages of selling and begin to sell more for profit rather than simply to afford use.

While people with "crack cocaine dependencies" or other heavy using patterns have received more attention by researchers, especially in terms of impoverished inner-city areas with widespread using and dealing (e.g., Jacobs, 1999; Bourgois, 1995), less attention has been directed toward recreational users of cocaine. The most extensive effort to examine recreational cocaine users is by Waldorf et al. (1991). Like marijuana users (Becker, 1953; Hathaway, 2004), Waldorf et al. (1991) found that people typically have their first experiences using cocaine when it is offered to them at social gatherings (e.g., at parties, bars, or just "hanging out") by their associates. Although, many do not "get high" the first time they use – people learn to get high through further interaction with more experienced users. Likewise, people who continue with use generally prefer to use cocaine in social settings to enhance the interactive experience. Waldorf et al. (1991: 41-73) found ten ways that cocaine was used by recreational users: (1) to party, (2) to socialise in small groups, (3) to enhance sex, (4) to open up and talk through problems, (5) to work, (6) to entertain clients or work associates, (7) to diet, (8) to fortify oneself for arduous tasks, (9) to get high, and (10) to be alone. This points to the highly varied recreational uses of cocaine.

As people become more frequent or heavier users, they often begin to "drift" into dealing activities (Waldorf et al., 1991).[33] Initially this involves procuring product for a friend or group of friends planning to spend an evening "partying." Similar to marijuana users (Hathaway,

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[33] Although Waldorf et al. (1991) consider more recreational dealing involvements – moving from using into dealing, they give the topic relatively little attention. The main focus of their research is on users. In an earlier article by the same research team (Murphy et al., 1990), they discussed the same material but only in terms of people's initial involvements in selling cocaine, whereas Waldorf et al. (1991) considered aspects of dealing continuities and disinvolvements.

2004), Waldorf et al. (1991: 75) found that recreational cocaine users who began dealing on limited levels usually had few reservations about selling since they were "buying from and selling to friends, usually in relatively small quantities, and often for little or no profit." While users who began selling for profit generally "expressed few moral qualms about it" (Waldorf et al., 1991: 75), some people did express concerns when their customers developed "problematic" (deemed harmful to the user) patterns of use. Dealers sometimes reported that they ceased selling to these customers, especially if they were friends.

Waldorf et al. (1991; see also Murphy et al., 1990) also note that the practice of procuring product for friends (for no profit) can evolve into "dealing for stash," or dealing to support one's own drug use. Again, like those who begin selling marijuana in this way (Hathaway, 2004), dealing to support one's own cocaine consumption can develop into dealing for profit as people begin to recognise the financial benefits (Waldorf et al., 1991: 77). As people become more intensely involved in dealing, they may begin to acquire larger quantities of drugs and sell these to people outside of their immediate friendship networks. As this happens, they may not only become more committed to dealing as a way of life because of the financial advantages, but they may also begin to use more when they begin selling and have easier access to relatively cheap supplies of drugs (Waldorf et al., 1991: 101-102). Relatedly, and in contrast with most marijuana users (Hathaway, 2004; Hathaway and Atkinson, 2001), cocaine users can develop fairly expensive and "problematic" (i.e., dependent) patterns of use that can be difficult to moderate or control. This can lead people to contemplate and attempt disinvolvement.

Waldorf et al. (1991: 189-217) found cocaine users implemented four strategies when attempting to disinvolve.[34] These include: (1) geographic cures (moving away from the areas in which they tend to use), (2) changing social circles, (3) improving physical health (dieting and exercising), and (4) developing new interests to replace using involvements. Insofar as the participants remained recreational users leading relatively normal lives (vs. street addicts or institutionalised addicts [e.g., Ray, 1961; Waldorf, 1973; Bourgois, 1995]), they more readily maintained "a stake in conventional life" and conventional identities (Waldorf et al., 1991: 221-222). Thus, Waldorf et al. (1991) found that few participants' lives were primarily defined by their user or dealer statuses (i.e., involvement in cocaine was not a "master status" [Becker, 1963: 2]).[35] Where people retained more extensive involvements in the "straight" world, this facilitated disinvolvement.

In another ethnographic project,[36] Hammersley et al. (2002) examined a group of ecstasy users in Scotland. While there was nothing directly on drug dealing in this study, it is still a useful account of another recreational / experiential drug subculture.[37] Hammersley et al. (2002) term their participants as being part of the emerging "chemical generation" – a generation of youth increasingly involved in "designer" drugs manufactured and engineered in chemical laboratories. Like marijuana and cocaine users (Becker, 1953; Hathaway, 2004; Waldorf et al.

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[34] These strategies are not mutually exclusive. Some people may try more than one of these techniques in their efforts to quit cocaine use.

[35] Jacinto et al. (2008) also found that people who drifted into selling ecstasy were less likely to identify themselves as dealers when they (1) sold smaller amounts, (2) made little or no profit, (3) sold just to friends, and/or (4) made sales in private residences.

[36] Hammersley et al. (2002) also utilised structured questionnaires and statistical analysis with part of their data. However, their book *Ecstasy* focused on the in-depth interviews conducted with twenty-two users.

[37] In another study of drug use in the rave and dance subculture (Lenton and Davidson, 1999), researchers found that users engaged in some minor dealing to friends for little to no profit, but beyond this descriptive account, this study was also limited in regards to dealing activities.

1991), people usually had their first experiences with ecstasy at social gatherings, especially at nightclubs or dance events related to the "rave" subculture. People were typically offered their first dose of ecstasy from someone that they knew, most often a friend. The decision to try ecstasy for the first time was usually fostered by personal curiosity coupled with friends' encouragements and recommendations.

Like the aforementioned studies of people using marijuana and cocaine, Hammersley et al. (2002: 59-84; see also Lenton and Davidson, 1999) found people generally used ecstasy as a tool to enhance social experiences. Specifically, they found people took ecstasy to enhance sociability and interchange (ecstasy was rarely taken in solitary contexts). Ecstasy was typically used when going dancing and/or partying – commonly referred to as "clubbing" and "raving."[38] Users felt that when people were "high" on ecstasy, it (1) created a more conducive atmosphere to meet and make friends in party or club settings, (2) enhanced sensory stimulation, especially at dance events which offered loud music, laser light displays, and close contact dancing,[39] (3) altered temporal perception, and (4) gave users great bursts of energy.

It should also be noted that drug use was not the sole emphasis for many partygoers. People expressed that they were interested in many facets of the rave subculture. Moore and Miles (2004) found some people made extensive preparations for these events and attended to many different elements of them. This included locating and talking about raves, purchasing event tickets, booking transportation to and from events, and following particular DJs (disk

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[38] Users often acquired drugs prior to these events. Usually this was done a few days before an event but could even be a few weeks earlier. Generally speaking, people were reluctant to purchase drugs at events because (1) prices tended to be higher at events, (2) quality of drugs was in question, and (3) the legal risks in attaining drugs at events were higher (see also Moore and Miles, 2004).

[39] Relatedly, ecstasy use was cited as enhancing sexual stimulation.

jockeys) to different events. Thus, drug use may just be one part, albeit a large part, of the broader "clubbing" or "raving" experience.

Apart from these dance and party events, ecstasy was rarely used (Hammersley et al., 2002; Moore and Miles, 2004; Lenton and Davidson, 1999). Ecstasy use was often claimed to be just another part of the participants' lifestyle, not the defining feature of it. Virtually no one claimed to be dependent on ecstasy. Many participants considered their use as a "phase" in their lives that they were passing through and would eventually "grow out of" when they stopped participating in the dance scene.

Hammersley et al. (2002) found that "quitting ecstasy" was a difficult concept for most people to grasp because of the periodic and episodic nature of ecstasy use. Thus, people might not use ecstasy for months and then reengage in use when the right dance or party event came up. Moreover, even for those who are regular participants in the dance event / party scene, there are usually periods of a few days to weeks between events so temporary and cyclical abstinence was common.

While marijuana, cocaine, and ecstasy may be thought of when people speak of recreational / experiential drug use, one could also include many other things within this group that are used to enhance or alter social interaction. Most notably, this would seem to include other "drugs" like cigarettes and alcohol because they are used in similar ways. Working from an interactionist perspective, Robert Prus (1983) considers drinking as activity. Based on data obtained from a larger study of the hotel community (see Prus and Irini, 1980), Prus (1983) examines the drinking practices in bar settings. Prus states that bars are much more than just places to drink. Bars are social settings that involve a variety of relationships, activities, identities, and interchanges. Thus, bars may be envisioned as "small communities, with

friendships and animosities, exchanges and barters, politicizing and gaming, recreation and work, intimacy and distancing, gossip and reputations, and deviance and control" (Prus, 1983: 462).

People go to bars for a variety of reasons and intentions (which may change once they are in the setting), which may encompass getting "drunk," having a drink, meeting with friends, hanging out, and "being somebody," to name a few. Thus, "Some will go specifically to drink alcohol, but on many occasions the consumption of alcohol is largely incidental" (Prus, 1983: 463). Going to bars is thus seen as social activity since people tend to go with others, to meet others, or to be around others.

Once people are in the bar setting the amount of alcohol they consume is "problematic" (Prus, 1983: 465). While heavy drinkers, like heavy drug users (e.g., Waldorf, 1973), are more consistent in their use, drinking for others tends to be influenced by some situational contingencies. These contingencies include (1) drinking companions and (2) the efforts of bar management and staff.

Drinking companions may encourage drinking by playing drinking games, having drinking competitions, and urging others to "have another drink" (Prus, 1983: 466). Another way drinking companions can influence levels of consumption is through the practice of buying rounds. "Buying rounds" takes place when one person purchases drinks for their entire group. After someone in the group has "bought a round" it is generally expected that the others in the group will follow suit and do the same.[40] Group members who do not meet this expectation (i.e., reciprocate round buying with more round buying) may be stigmatised and labeled deviant (Prus,

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[40] Pearson (2001) also found similar "round" practices among recreational cocaine users. Cocaine was typically used in social settings. Often a round of "lines" would be divided up for the group from one person's supply, and then this gesture was expected to be reciprocated by other group members that also had some cocaine.

1983: 468).[41] Relatedly, sticking to one's intended "personal limits" is often challenging. Thus, personal drinking limits are often negotiated or abandoned altogether once in the bar. Also, defining and judging when one has "had enough" to drink can be ambiguous and problematic since it is a matter of interpretation and is likely to change from situation to situation.

Prus (1983: 469-471) identifies four areas in which bar management attempt to influence patrons' drinking activities. These include (1) hiring effective sales staff, (2) providing sales instructions and techniques, (3) selectively rating and using employees based on their sales effectiveness, and (4) using billing systems that are conducive to making sales (i.e., systems of short-term credit, or "tabs," that facilitate smoother transactions drink-to-drink). Relatedly, bar staff that receive tips as part of their incomes are more likely to "push drinks" and encourage round buying than those who are not compensated in this fashion.

A review of the ethnographic literature on recreational / experiential use suggests that using activities cannot be adequately understood apart from the social situations in which they take place. Users learn how to use and experience drugs through interactions with experienced users. The use of drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, ecstasy, and alcohol are often used to enhance social interaction and experience (e.g., house parties, bars, nightclubs, concerts, just "hanging out"), and use may be limited to these occasions. Becoming involved in using also entails involvement in other aspects of the drug subculture (relationships, activities, identities, perspectives) such that people may begin to organise and entrench drug use into their existing lifestyles. As users become more experienced in the drug subculture, they may begin to engage in selling activities. Usually this begins with acquiring drugs for friends, but this can evolve into

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[41] Similarly, people who refuse to drink altogether also may receive a deviant label.

"dealing for stash" (dealing to support drug use) and dealing for profit as people begin to recognise the financial advantages of selling.

Since the majority of the participants interviewed for this study became initially involved in the drug subculture through more recreational or experiential social drug use and only later began selling to support this type of use, this literature provides valuable insights on the careers of users that are applicable to the present thesis. In particular, the literature on recreational users draws attention to the process of recreational users becoming initially involved in selling by acquiring drugs for friends for little or no profit. Most of the participants in this thesis also had similar first experiences with selling drugs. However, the literature on recreational users that I was able to locate did not consider people's involvements in dealing in any sustained way. The majority of the literature only mentions drug dealing in passing or only considers one part of the career process (e.g., Murphy et al., 1990 only consider initial involvements in cocaine selling). From the review of the literature thus far, there seems to be a gap in terms of a sustained account of the dealers involved in the recreational drug subculture. The present study helps fill this void by addressing the careers (initial involvements, continuities, disinvolvements, and reinvolvements) of recreational users that become involved in dealing. Still, before turning more directly to my study, it is important to consider some of the more consequential ethnographies that have been conducted on drug dealers.

Ethnographic Literature on Drug Dealers

The twelve ethnographic studies on drug dealers that are reviewed in this section include (1) four studies of drug dealers selling more recreational drugs to more recreational users (Fields, 1984; Tunnell, 1993; Mohamed and Fritsvold, 2006; Murphy, Waldorf, and Reinarman, 1990), (2) two

studies of crack cocaine dealers (VanNostrand and Tewksbury, 1999; Jacobs, 1999); (3) one study of heroin dealers (Hoffer, 2006); and (4) five studies of upper-level distributors (Langer, 1977; Weisheit, 1991; Adler, 1985; Desroches, 2005; Decker and Chapman, 2008). Both VanNostrand and Tewksbury's (1999) and Murphy, Waldorf, and Reinarman's (1990) studies seem to be quite parallel with my own in terms of the dealing perspectives, practices, and participants.

Allen B. Fields' (1984) "'Slinging weed': The social organization of street corner marijuana sales" is a qualitative study of young black males engaged in street-level marijuana sales in North Western California. Fields (1984: 252) outlines four dealing roles (1) employers (middle-level suppliers or wholesalers), (2) marijuana entrepreneurs (street salesmen who acquire supplies from employers), (3) riders (sell small quantities of marijuana on consignment for entrepreneurs), and (4) runners (operate in the same fashion as "riders" only on a more limited and occasional level). Fields also identifies two processes of "slinging weed": *making sales* and *reducing risks*. Sales were related to dealers' visibility on the streets. Dealers needed to be regularly present on particular street corners in order to conduct their operations, which primarily relied on customers approaching them either by car or foot. The process of reducing risks includes (1) concealing transactions, (2) using stash spots to separate drugs from dealer, (3) using "lookouts" to warn of oncoming trouble, and (4) establishing "hard" reputations as people not be messed with. Overall, this study was relevant to the present study of drug dealers in that it addressed (1) some of the roles involved in lower-level recreational drug distribution, (2) the process of wholesaling to lower-level distributors, and (3) methods of risk reduction and performing transactions. All of these elements are considered in the present thesis.

Murphy, Waldorf, and Reinarman's (1990) "Drifting into dealing: Becoming a cocaine seller" is an ethnographic study of how people become initially involved in selling cocaine. Eighty interviews were conducted with "seasoned users that lead relatively normal lives." The participants' experiences as users provided them with a working knowledge of the practices and products of cocaine dealers.

Murphy et al. (1990) cite five main routings into selling cocaine. The first is through becoming a "go between." This includes people who begin selling to friends as "favours" with no intention of profit. However, as people work as "go betweens," they may begin to realise the financial advantages of a profit-oriented enterprise and shift their approach toward financial gain. The second route into selling cocaine is being a "stash dealer." This includes people who sell small quantities to offset their personal cocaine consumption costs. The third routing is that of the "connoisseur." This includes people who buy large or bulk quantities of cocaine to get higher quality drugs for their own personal consumption than would otherwise be available through smaller purchases. These users may then begin selling their excess supplies to their associates. The fourth route is through "apprenticeship" where users are mentored by an existing dealer and gain opportunities to become more extensively involved in their operation. The fifth and final route is "product expansion." Here, established dealers add cocaine to their product lines. Murphy et al. (1990) also found some dealers experienced "motive shifts" or shifting involvement objectives and purposes as they progressed in their careers.

Murphy et al. (1990) found that cocaine sellers also experienced Becker's (1963) four main processes to deviant careers. First, the participants avoided conventional commitments because they were all users prior to engaging in dealing. Second, they developed and learned deviant interests through their experiences as users. Third, they labeled themselves as deviants

when they began dealing in addition to using. Fourth, they became members of deviant groups as they began selling cocaine, defining themselves as dealers, and understanding their life-worlds from dealers' perspectives.

Murphy et al. (1990) also cite Matza's notion of "drift" and Sykes and Matza's (1957) conception of "techniques of neutralization" as pertinent to their analysis. Where they were not fully committed to deviant values, participants were seen to become dealers "gradually and subtly" – slowly adopting dealing identities and perspectives as they became more established cocaine sellers. Participants also justified and rationalised their dealing involvements through "techniques of neutralization." Overall, I found this study to be quite parallel to my own. The participants in the present thesis also (1) became initially involved in the drug subculture as users, (2) gradually became involved in supplying some friends and other associates with drugs primarily to offset their own drug consumption costs, and (3) began to realise the financial advantages of selling drugs during their initial forays into selling to friends.

Kenneth D. Tunnell (1993) "Inside the drug trade: Trafficking from the drug dealer's perspective." This study was based on interviews with ten incarcerated lower-level dealers about their involvements. Tunnell found that people (1) became initially involved in selling drugs at a young age to (primarily) offset personal drug consumption costs. However, people also acknowledged the non-material benefits of the dealing lifestyle (i.e., status, prestige, excitement) as relevant to their decisions to become involved in drug selling. Tunnell also found that these dealers (2) typically developed customer and supplier connections through informal associational networks of primarily friends and family, (3) sold primarily small amounts of drugs to their friends, (4) did not commit to dealing identities, nor did they attempt to intensify their levels of involvement beyond selling to friends, and (5) became entangled in dealing through heavy drug

use (i.e., addiction). Overall, these findings are quite parallel to those of the present thesis. The dealers in this thesis primarily developed contacts with suppliers and customers by tapping into their associational networks. While some participants moved into higher levels of dealing, many sustained lower-level retail sales to networks of friends. As well, a few dealers in the present thesis developed heavy drug habits that fostered senses of "closure" or perceptions of limited options to support their habits beyond drug dealing.

In their study "Damn, it feels good to be a gangsta: The social organization of the illicit drug trade servicing a private college campus," Mohamed and Fritsvold (2006) examine a drug dealing network serving a private college in the United States. The sample consisted of primarily lower- to mid-level marijuana dealers from financially well-off ("upper and middle-upper class") backgrounds – a relatively unstudied population (Mohamed and Fritsvold, 2006). Interviews focused on dealing mechanics, perceptions of threat and punishment, and motives. In terms of dealing mechanics, the dealers in this study primarily sold recreational drugs (mainly marijuana) to their friends in private residences. Supplies also were typically acquired through friends. It was observed that dealers had few concerns about any risks involved with their drug selling activities and implemented few (if any) safeguards when obtaining supplies or making sales.

The main substance of the article was the discussion of motivations for selling drugs. Five motives for becoming involved in drug dealing were identified: (1) to support personal drug consumption, (2) to provide entertainment money, (3) to profit, (4) to gain status, and (5) to experience the thrill of committing deviant acts and "being a gangsta" – to live a life associated with hip-hop music culture. Overall, this study was similar to the present thesis in that dealers (1) primarily sold recreational drugs to recreational users, (2) acquired supplies and made sales

in friendships associational networks, (3) operated in school settings, and (4) associated both financial objectives and identity intrigues with dealing involvements.

Lise-Marie VanNostrand and Richard Tewksbury's (1999) "The motives and mechanics of operating an illegal drug enterprise" focuses on a group of crack cocaine dealers. They assigned three motives for people becoming initially involved in drug dealing. These include (1) limited options for "financial gain," (2) "greed" (for profit or financial gain), and (3) a desire for the lifestyle (personal prestige and involvement in "exciting" activities). While it was typically the case that dealers invoked one of these motives as providing the impetus for becoming initially involved in selling drugs, these motives were not mutually exclusive since participants often experienced "motive shifts" as they progressed in their careers (VanNostrand and Tewksbury, 1999: 66; see also Murphy et al., 1990). As VanNostrand and Tewksbury (1999: 63) observe, "Although most subjects began dealing on the basis of a single motive, these motives frequently evolved and vacillated over time, serving to support a continued involvement in the drug trade."

VanNostrand and Tewksbury (1999) also identified some of the strategies that drug dealers employ when selecting buyers, arranging transactions, and avoiding detection by law enforcement. In terms of selecting buyers, dealers had three primary concerns. First, do the consumers have the money for the drugs? Second, are the consumers known associates? The dealers in this sample preferred to only sell to those that they personally knew. Third, are the consumers drug addicts? The dealers in this sample attempted not to sell to addicts. Instead, they preferred to sell to a "higher class" clientele with non-problematic using patterns because of the greater reliability of these customers and the increased status conferred to dealers who supply them.

The dealers in this sample typically arranged transactions over the telephone. The exchange of money and drugs usually occurred in dealers' or consumers' private residences. When private residences were not used, transactions usually occurred at prearranged meeting locations that were deemed to be inconspicuous. Relatedly, these same strategies were employed in an attempt to avoid encounters with law enforcement. VanNostrand and Tewksbury (1999) also mention that some people were recruited into dealing by suppliers (mainly friends and family). Overall, I found this study quite similar to the present thesis in that dealers (1) noted some financial and identity allures of dealing, (2) experienced "motive shifts" (shifting objectives and purposes) in their careers, (3) sold to known associates, (4) arranged transactions over the telephone, (5) performed transactions in private residences or areas not easily watched by law enforcement, and (6) preferred not to sell to problematic users, or heavy addicts.

Bruce Jacobs (1999) *Dealing Crack: The Social World of Streetcorner Selling* is an ethnography of a street-level crack cocaine dealing community in St. Louis. Jacobs looks at the social scene of this community, motivations for dealing, encounters with deceptive and violent customers, and avoiding law enforcement. It should also be noted that Jacobs conducted this ethnography in a very challenging and threatening environment (at one point being threatened at gunpoint), which makes it even more impressive.

Jacobs provides some instances of drug dealers pertaining to continuities (e.g., avoiding arrest, making exchanges, and managing reservations). Jacobs also identified three motivations for beginning to sell crack cocaine: finances and fast living (financial gain and the associated benefit of respect on the streets, experiencing closure due to blocked opportunities), autonomy (freedom from the low paying jobs found in the inner-city), and user-dealers (to support drug consumption costs). These motives were parallel to some of the (1) objectives that the dealers in

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the present thesis identified. Also, Jacobs (1999) provides discussions of dealers (2) expanding their customer base by attending to the price and quality of their products as well as (3) employing dealer-customer transaction strategies that are relevant to the present thesis.

Lee D. Hoffer's (2006) *Junkie Business* is an ethnographic study of a heroin dealing partnership between two herion users operating in Denver, Colorado. Hoffer traces the development of this partnership from its initial formation to its dissolution. This book provides some good descriptive data on the operations of these two dealers. Of particular relevance to the present thesis, Hoffer outlines the process of making sales to customers. The two dealers in Hoffer's study were found to (1) use buffers or middlemen when making sales, (2) set boundaries or rules of exchange with customers (e.g., arranging transactions through the use of pagers and telephones, setting hours of operation, establishing meeting locations and rules of exchange), (3) evaluate customers on their compliance with their transaction protocols – a way of judging the character of customers and developing trust in them, and (4) overlook and "write off" smaller customer debts of one hundred dollars or less. In terms of the present thesis, many of these sales practices were observed among the dealers interviewed for the present study. Hoffer's study also demonstrated how "addict" dealers may develop relatively organised operations that are typically more characteristic of some upper-level and non-addict dealers (e.g., Adler, 1985; Desroches, 2005).

In "Drug entrepreneurs and dealing culture," John Langer (1977) uses the concept of "dealing culture" to account for marijuana and hashish wholesalers in Melbourne, Australia. "Dealing culture" refers to "a shared set of understandings and codes of behaviour which provide dealers with the basis for evaluating the relevance of their activities, establishing their practical affairs as entrepreneurs and locating their identity in the drug scene" (Langer, 1977: 378).

Basically, dealing culture refers to the set of perspectives people use as a framework for understanding and approaching their involvements in drug dealing. Specifically, Langer (1977: 379-381) identifies three general areas of knowledge, techniques, and resources evidenced by wholesalers. These include: (1) entrepreneurial, (2) interactional, and (3) pharmacological aspects of dealing culture.

Entrepreneurial elements included access to steady sources of supply, regular dealer-clientele to supply, and time to carry on the activities of the business. Another aspect of the entrepreneurial framework was valuing "profits" (i.e., cash, prestige and self-worth, and the practice of building capital). Dealers also were seen to implement interactional techniques or styles in conducting their operations. In particular, these techniques included maintaining contact with other dealers in the community to stay informed of what was going on in the scene, being friendly or sociable with clients to cultivate relationships and make more sales, and adopting a "dealing style." As Langer (1977: 381) explains:

Practicing one's interactional skills includes methods by which dealers manage their 'front stage' performance while making purchases or selling to customers. The sum total of these methods might be described as a dealing 'style' – a series of behavioral and linguistic conventions which are used in interpersonal business situations and shared in common by middle-level dealers. These conventions include specified verbal exchanges, complex forms of etiquette, personal poise and confidence.

The third aspect of dealing culture is developing pharmacological knowledge on the drugs sold. This includes knowledge on drug properties, effects, and risks. Pharmacological knowledge is encompassed within a broader "dealing ideology" – a definitional framework wholesalers employed in approaching their activities (Langer, 1977: 382). Also included within the dealing ideology were justifications for dealing activities (i.e., providing a desired product to the community, drugs not "pushed" but sold, hypocrisy of the "straight" world – marijuana not as harmful as legal drugs such as alcohol) and perspectives on arrest (law enforcement generally

viewed as inept, and people who do their time without informing on others are attributed some prestige for being loyal to the community). Overall, this study was pertinent to the present thesis because it identified a general dealing ideology and culture that drug dealers may acknowledge and employ as they become involved in the drug subculture and progress in their drug selling careers. The three areas of dealing culture that Langer identified (i.e., entrepreneurial, interactional, and pharmacological) also were areas found to be of importance in the present sample of dealers.

While many studies cite the financial motives of drug dealers in accounting for their involvements, in "The intangible rewards from crime: The case of marijuana cultivators," Ralph A. Weisheit (1991) views financial motives as too simplistic to entirely account for people's involvements in dealing and not representative of people's experiences with growing marijuana. Thus, Weisheit (1991: 515) observes: "For many growers in this study, the expected cash return from growing was modest, and the intangible rewards of growing rivaled cash benefits as motivating factors." Relatedly, Weisheit identifies three additional "rewards" of marijuana cultivation. These include (1) spiritual rewards (people pursued growing with somewhat of a "religious passion" and some felt that growing marijuana was of great benefit to the world in general), (2) social rewards (impressing friends, engaging in friendly competition with other growers, and achieving status as one who grows a fine product), and (3) intrinsic rewards (self-satisfaction of a job well done and the adjustability of growing operations can make them more challenging and rewarding endeavours). Although focused on people's motives as "factors" that explain involvement, this study was useful in accounting for some allures of growing marijuana other than the financial advantages.

Patricia Adler's (1985) *Wheeling and Dealing* is an ethnography of an upper-level drug dealing and smuggling community in California. Adler looks at the social scene of this community, careers, problematics, and lifestyles of people involved in upper-level drug dealing.

In many ways Adler's analysis is motive-based, with hedonistic and materialistic rewards allegedly being the two main "pulls" that attract people to dealing, "This is, then, a study of a subculture of hedonism whose members have revolted against conventional society's rationalism and repression in order to indulge the impulses of their brute beings" (Adler, 1985: 2-3). While not denying the relevancy of these allures, this analytic focus tends to be to the detriment of gaining a greater understanding of some of the more everyday (and less exotic) activities of dealers. Still, I found Adler's study to be quite insightful for comprehending the careers of dealers.

Adler (1985: 124-125) found that the process of becoming initially involved in the drug dealing / smuggling community was highly contingent on the opportunities provided by people's relationships, especially kinship and friendship networks. Most obvious in this regard were the instances of recruitment (the encouragement and support of others) into the subculture, but these relationships also influenced and mediated people's experiences with seekership (developing intrigues with dealing), closure (perceiving a lack of options to solve pressing problems), and instrumentalism (means-ends considerations) as initial routings into the dealing and smuggling community. Knowing insiders was often the key to gaining entry and acceptance in the dealing world.

Although people may acknowledge their dealing involvements from the outset of their careers, others may acknowledge their statuses as dealers only after they became more committed to drug dealing (organising their relationships, activities, and identities around the

drug subculture) (Adler, 1985: 127-128). As Adler (1985: 127-128) observes: "Many individuals, then, became drug dealers by their actions well before they consciously admitted this to themselves." Also, much like initial involvements, continuity is highly contingent on the relationships and reputations that people form in the community. Preexisting relationships and contacts with other dealers provided helpful support (making connections) and advice (consulting on dealing strategies or approaches) in obtaining supplies and making sales, while reputations aided in generating the trust needed to further strengthen existing relationships and develop new ones.

Adler also examined the processes of disinvolvement and reinvolvement. Dealers were seen to reassess their identities and question the viability of their continued involvements when they grew tired of the lies and secrecy associated with their "double lives" (Adler, 1985: 132). Some also developed significant concerns about arrest and incarceration. Those attempting disinvolvement often began to believe that "it is only a matter of time" before they are apprehended (Adler, 1985: 131). Still, because people become accustomed to the "benefits" (primarily financial and drug related) that the lifestyle provides, disengagement from dealing is not an easy process (Adler, 1985: 133). As such, disentanglement is often characterised by oscillations out of and back into dealing, with reinvolvement being a very likely possibility for anyone who ceases dealing (Adler, 1985: 137). Not surprisingly, the process of reentry is aided when people maintain "solid" reputations and relationships with insiders.

Whereas Adler's (1985) study provides some useful information and analysis on the careers of upper-level dealers, Frederick J. Desroches' (2005) *The Crime that Pays* also adds to the literature on upper-level dealing careers. The purpose of Desroches' (2005) study was to examine and assess the current literature on organised crime and upper-level drug trafficking.

Desroches examines characteristics of organised crime, motivations, methods of operation, and law enforcement attempts to control and prevent upper-level drug trafficking activity.

Interviews were conducted with seventy convicted upper-level drug traffickers in Canada. The subjects were all male, currently serving sentences, and selected from prison files and/or through referrals from other inmates. Interviews also were conducted with members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to better understand their perspectives and approaches regarding upper-level dealers.

In conducting his analysis, Desroches applied several theories to his data: network analysis, opportunity theory, social learning theories, strain / anomie theory, and rational choice theory. Desroches (2005: 57-58) cites rational choice theory as highly relevant to the study of upper-level dealers because of their high level of business acumen relative to their lower-level counterparts.

Desroches (2005: 54) found three routings by which people entered upper-level drug trafficking: (1) rising through the ranks (upward mobility); (2) recruitment (receiving encouragement and support from others); and (3) "active solicitation" or instrumentalism (pursuing [primarily financial] objectives). Of these three routings, recruitment was the most common. Desroches found that recruits usually began their dealing careers through direct entry into the upper ranks (bypassing lower-level dealing activities). The few people who did begin their dealing careers as street-level retailers pursued opportunities to move into upper-level dealing when they became frustrated with the hassles and risks of street-level sales (Desroches, 2005: 69). Again, like Adler, Desroches found that people's opportunities to become dealers were mediated by their contacts, specifically kinship, friendship, racial, and ethnic ties. Knowing people already involved in the dealing trade was a major advantage in terms of developing trust

to participate in drug dealing because these insiders could vouch for newcomers and/or incorporate them into their own operations based on the trust they already had in them (Desroches, 2005: 63-64, 122).

In discussing disinvolvement from dealing, Desroches (2005: 106-110) found it was difficult for people who had organised their lives around dealing. More specifically, Desroches (2005: 106-110) identified eight "factors" (with somewhat ambiguous titles) that made it difficult for dealers to disinvolve: (1) greed: expanding/elastic desires; (2) ego and self-confidence; (3) identity, power, status, and lifestyle; (4) sense of responsibility: peer pressure; (5) addiction; (6) complacency; (7) lack of deterrence; and (8) pushing one's luck.

Decker and Chapman's (2008) *Drug Smugglers on Drug Smuggling* is based on interviews with incarcerated drug smugglers. The small discussion on recruitment into smuggling was similar to the findings of Adler (1985) and Desroches (2005). People were most often recruited by friends and family that were already involved in smuggling operations. These personal ties to recruiters were important because they (1) provided access to and knowledge of the smuggling operation and (2) fostered trust between crew members (people more readily trusted friends and family members than outsiders). In addition to having personal ties with smuggling crew members, people who (1) had "straight" or trustworthy and reliable reputations and (2) were already involved in smuggling related activities (e.g., boating, flying) also were attractive prospects to smuggling crews. Finally, like Adler (1985) and Desroches (2005), Decker and Chapman also found that disentanglement from drug smuggling was unappealing and problematic for most people the more they became accustomed to the financial rewards that these activities entail.

In sum, the preceding twelve studies have contributed to our understanding of people's careers (initial involvements, continuities, disinvolvements, and reinvolvements) of participation in drug dealing. In terms of initial involvements, they have indicated four routings into drug dealing: (1) instrumentalism (questing for fun and profit), (2) recruitment (encouragement and support by friends and/or kin involved in the subculture), (3) closure (perceiving a lack of legitimate options to solve pressing problems [primarily financial problems]), and (4) seekership (developing intrigues with the dealing lifestyle and any associated benefits). These four routings also tended to be mediated by people's contacts in the subculture. For example, Adler (1985) provides examples of people who were friends with dealers that subsequently developed intrigues with the dealing lifestyle and became initially involved in dealing with their friend's assistance and guidance. Some people also may "drift" into dealing – a gradual process of becoming more involved in dealing activities while becoming less involved in more conventional routines. Still, much of the discussion of initial involvements is motive-based (focusing on why people started dealing rather than how they started dealing).

In terms of continuities, these studies outline some of the methods of operation of drug dealers. They also point to the role of dealers' contacts (with customers and suppliers) in sustaining and intensifying their involvements. While contacts can provide opportunities, encouragements, and support, they also can be the source of many frustrations and problems for dealers (e.g., snitching, stealing, developing large debts). However, contacts, especially customers and suppliers, are essential in maintaining involvement and becoming a "successful" dealer since the subculture is most basically a marketplace subculture predicated on the sale and consumption of goods.

These studies showed that disentanglement from drug dealing can be a highly problematic process. This is especially the case when people have more extensively organised their lives (in terms of relationships, activities, identities, and perspectives) around the drug subculture. For example, some dealers in Adler's (1985) and Desroches' (2005) samples developed heavy patterns of drug use that could not be easily supported by legitimate incomes. Relatedly, some people also become accustomed to the prestige and financial advantages gained through dealing activity. Thus, the more embedded and entangled people become in the drug subculture, the more difficult it is to disinvolve or remain disinvolved.

Still, these twelve studies tend to place too much of an emphasis on people's motives to explain their involvements in dealing. The emphasis on motives tends to disregard the social process by which people develop interests and make commitments to particular lines of activity. Given this limitation, the present thesis, with its focus on dealer relationships, activities, identities, perspectives, and dealer-consumer interpersonal exchanges, accounts for people's involvements in selling drugs beyond the identification of motives.

Other Relevant Ethnographic Literature

Several studies not directly on the drug subculture also were used for comparative-analytic purposes. As mentioned earlier, because nothing is inherently deviant from an interactionist perspective, all studies of human lived experience are relevant to the present study, particularly those that deal with careers in subcultures and marketplace contexts. In this regard, the following studies also are being consulted in this work: Prus' (1989a) ethnography of sales activities – *Making Sales*; Prus' (1989b) ethnography of vendor marketing activities – *Pursuing Customers*; Lofland and Stark's (1965) study of conversion to a deviant perspective –

"Becoming a World Saver"; Prus and Sharper's (1977) ethnography of card and dice hustlers – *Road Hustler*; Prus and Irini's (1980) ethnography of the hotel community – *Hookers, Rounders, and Desk Clerks*; and Sanders' (2008) study of the tattoo subculture – *Customizing the Body: The Art and Culture of Tattooing*.

Looking Ahead

As will be shown, being a drug dealer is much more than "exchanging drugs for financial considerations." Being a drug dealer also denotes involvement in an extended set of activities and a web of relationships. It means one has become part of a social world, and it is only by understanding dealing as a subcultural phenomenon that one may truly begin to appreciate what it is to be a drug dealer.

In subsequent chapters, a number of aspects of being a drug dealer will be examined from the dealers' perspectives. Thus, Chapter Five examines the process of getting involved in sales. The chapter first considers people's *initial involvements in selling drugs* through three major routings: (1) instrumentalism, (2) recruitment, and (3) seekership. Following this, I examine how dealers *expand their customer base* by (1) tapping into associational networks, (2) developing reputations, and (3) attending to the price and quality of products. Finally, interpersonal exchanges between dealers and their clients (or *making sales*) are considered. This includes: (1) arranging and performing transactions and (2) obtaining payment.

Chapter Six considers the process of obtaining supplies and dealer-supplier relationships. I first consider how dealers *make contacts with suppliers* by (1) tapping into associational networks and (2) striving for supplier trust. I then examine the process of *working with suppliers*. This includes: (1) product relevancy, (2) reliability, (3) pricing of products, and (4)

financing concerns. This chapter ends with a discussion of dealers who have become involved in *supplying* (or wholesaling) drugs. This includes: (1) getting involved in wholesaling, (2) recruiting dealers, (3) encountering payment problems, and (4) manufacturing drugs.

Chapter Seven focuses on the significance of respectability and regulation for drug dealers. It also considers the problematics of disentanglement from drug dealing as a way of life. In this chapter, I first consider how dealers *strive for respectability* by (1) being somebody and (2) concealing discreditable identities. Following this is an examination of dealers' *encountering regulatory agencies*, which considers any reservations that dealers develop about encountering law enforcement, and the experiences of participants who have been arrested because of their dealing involvements. Finally, this chapter discusses *the problematics of disentanglement* from drug dealing. This includes: (1) embracing the lifestyle, (2) experiencing "closure," (3) embeddedness in the social life, and (4) disenchantment and "career shifts."

Before considering the analysis of people's involvements in drug dealing, it is important to define the terms of reference used throughout this thesis. The term "dealer" is generally used to refer to the participants in this study who sell drugs on a retail- or lower-level to end-users or drug consumers. Relatedly, the term "customer" is used in this thesis to refer to people who purchase drugs from dealers primarily for their own or their associates' personal use. As used herein, the term "supplier" refers to people who purchase large quantities of drugs and sell them to dealers for resale (i.e., engage in wholesaling).

Chapter Five

SELLING DRUGS:
Involvements, Activities, and Interchanges

I always liked doing it [cocaine]. And I came up to a party once one of the weekends I was home and I had a bit [of cocaine for personal use] and people were asking where I had gotten it. I told them that I had grabbed it while I was down in [_____]. I don't know if it comes from [a big city] that people expect it to be really good or that I had some crazy hook-up [supply connection] or something, but eventually they wanted me to get more. So the next time I went down I talked to my buddy again and he was like, "Yeah, whatever you need, just let me know." The next thing I know I was buying more and more and bringing some up and getting rid of it [selling it] to people at parties… People were curious of where I got it because there was no one else at the party who had any. It was [a friend] who was like, "Man you should pick this stuff up all the time. I can get rid of it for you." So I thought that I'd give it a shot. (15)

Although my initial intention in developing this study was to provide a detailed examination of the careers (initial involvements, continuities, disinvolvements, and reinvolvements) of drug dealers, and most of the interviews were conducted with this in mind, as I began to work more extensively with this material, I began to see how intricately the careers of drug dealers are connected with their activities – that people's careers as drug dealers could only be understood by detailing their activities and their interchanges with their clients.

Thus, whereas my earlier intent was to dialogue with the ethnographic literature on people's involvements in various subcultures, the analysis became more complicated as I tried to sort out the materials I had acquired in my interviews. While it later seemed very obvious that my work was very much a study of marketplace activity and interchange, the existing literature on drug dealers only marginally has that emphasis and I had to come to terms with that realisation to overcome another instance of the deviant mystique.

I mention this as a caution to the readers. Thus, even though I will be building on some work by Robert Prus (1989a; 1989b) on (1) marketing and sales and (2) consumer behaviour, my

data was not as systematically or consistently focused on the aspects of marketplace exchanges that Prus articulates.

Given these somewhat shifting, more complex emphases, I will use materials from Prus' study of the marketplace to frame those aspects of the analysis in more comprehensive terms. Prus' (1989a) *Making Sales*, with its focus on interpersonal selling, is especially relevant to people "dealing drugs." Building upon the basic interactionist premise that human group life is negotiable, Prus (1989a) considers marketing activity and sales work as influence work (persuasion and resistance). This focus attends to the related matters of how people (1) attempt to influence others, (2) handle resistances, and (3) obtain commitments.

Marketplace exchanges are thus seen as negotiable, socially constructed activities:

With a focus on the 'social fabric of marketplace exchanges,' this book details the processes by which salespeople encourage prospective customers to purchase their products on both an immediate (or situated) and a sustained (or ongoing) basis. Considering the ways in which people attempt to shape the interests, pursuits, and commitments of others, it is most fundamentally an examination of the social production of action. (Prus, 1989a: 22)

Prus (1989a: 22) stresses that marketplace exchanges are not constituted of single influencers (sellers) and "passive" targets (customers). Customers play an active role in the social production of sales activity. Indeed, they may engage in much influence work themselves.[42] Thus, marketplace exchanges also are "joint activities" (Blumer, 1969) – the production of sales activity is a collaborative effort involving both buyers and sellers whose interdependent, interconnected, and interwoven activities are built up together to form what we know as "the marketplace." As Prus (1989a: 22) states, "vendors are ultimately dependent on buyer interpretations and cooperation… Prospects can shop around and may 'work' vendors for deals of various sorts as well as pursue warranties and other terms of sale (e.g., return policies,

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[42] Consider, for example, "sales shoppers" and those returning merchandise (Prus, 1989a).

matching prices) with considerable intensity." Relatedly, marketplaces also are (1) arenas of symbolic images (e.g., images of products, actors, brands, prices, and policies) and (2) interactive theatres where actors engage in "impression management" (Goffman, 1959).[43]

Prus (1989a: 25) identifies seven generic features of interpersonal selling. This includes people (1) promoting interest in objects, (2) generating trust, (3) neutralising reservations and resistances, (4) pursuing and obtaining commitments, (5) defining and managing disruptions, (6) developing loyalty and long term relationships, and (7) maintaining enthusiasm. However, readers should realise that the ensuing analysis of these processes will be more partial, reflecting the data I collected in my interviews with people involved in dealing drugs.

Still, even though this analysis benefits from a more explicit consideration of marketplace activity, it should be noted that the marketplace I am considering not only has a much more informal quality than many of the businesses that Prus considered, but people's involvements also are much more tentative, variable, and "undisciplined" in many respects. Moreover, not only are the marketing and sales activities of the drugs dealers I interviewed subject to higher levels of disrespectability in the community, but they also are illegitimate. As a result, drug dealers not only may be concerned about apprehension and any associated penalties, but they also face some noteworthy restraints in the ways they do business more generally. As well, because they offer commodities that others might intensely desire, they also may assume a variety of liberties in the ways they deal with their customers.

Given these similarities and differences, I also will be drawing on some other ethnographic studies of people's careers and sales-related activities in disrespectable and

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[43] "People's existing 'stocks of knowledge' (Shutz, 1971) may be seen to provide them with generalized 'scripts' with which to approach their respective roles as buyers and sellers" (Prus, 1989b: 24).

illegitimate marketplaces. This includes studies of drug dealers (Langer, 1977; Fields, 1984; Adler, 1985; Murphy, Waldorf, and Reinarman, 1990; Tunnell, 1993; VanNostrand and Tewksbury, 1999; Jacobs, 1999; Desroches, 2005; Hoffer, 2006; Mohamed and Fritsvold, 2006; Decker and Chapman, 2008), bookmakers (Prus and Sharper, 1977), sexual service providers (Prus and Irini, 1980), and tattoo artists (Sanders, 2008), to name a few.

Mindful of these qualifications, this chapter considers the processes of people's (1) initial involvements in drug sales, (2) expanding the customer base, and (3) making sales.

Initial Involvements in Drug Sales

I had a connection… because I had a job at the time, a part-time job at a restaurant, where the chef there was a dope dealer. So that was where I was getting my stuff [to use] for a long time. So I just asked him [for drugs the first time I acquired some for resale] because I knew he always had good shit – better than everybody else's. Now it was always a little more pricey, but I knew that if I sacrificed my profit range, then I could sell it for what everybody else was getting it for, but everybody would keep coming to me, and I could make more sales to differ the money from the profit. That was my initial thought. When I wanted to get started, I saw that there was potential for many customers just through my friends. My immediate group of friends at high school all smoked weed. (17)

How do people get started selling drugs? In this study, I found that initial involvements in drug sales reflected three major routes: (1) instrumentalism (attending to means-ends orientations), (2) recruitment (being encouraged and facilitated by others), and (3) seekership (pursuing intrigues and fascinations).[44] Instrumentalism and recruitment were the most common routings into drug

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[44] Prus (1989a: 78-83) found similar initial routings in acquiring businesses: (1) recruitment, (2) seekership, and (3) closure, in addition to (4) overcoming any reservations. While no dealers interviewed for this thesis cited "closure" as an initial routing into selling drugs, VanNostrand and Tewksbury (1999: 63-64; see also Jacobs, 1999) did find this to be a potent routing into drug sales for their sample of crack cocaine dealers who had families to support and found few opportunities in legitimate realms of work to be satisfactory: "These dealers saw drug dealing as the quickest, and often only, method of gaining financial survival and stability…. After seeking conventional means, failures and obstacles pushed many to seek alternative, illicit opportunities. They were married, had children, had sometimes continued their educations, and worked in the

sales. While seekership was less common, it was still a potent routing for three people. As will become apparent, the people interviewed had (4) few initial reservations about becoming involved. It should also be noted that these process are not mutually exclusive. That is, many people experienced more than one of these routings into selling drugs.

Attending to Instrumentalism

While a means to an end orientation may be evident to some degree in many instances of initial involvements,[45] instrumentalist concerns also may be the primary emphasis for some people when becoming involved in an activity or subculture. Eleven of the people interviewed for this study cited two objectives as motivation to begin dealing: (1) supporting drug using and partying activities and (2) realising financial goals.[46] These two objectives may be conceptualised as "questing for fun and profit."

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hope of achieving a measure of personal success. However, they were unable to effectively manage the stressors associated with their familial responsibilities and as a result of either desperation or the attraction of drug dealing, turned to selling drugs." The dealers in the present thesis, however, were for the most part unmarried and not parents. They all were adolescents when they began dealing and had few financial responsibilities beyond their expenses for entertainment (i.e., partying and drugs), cellular phones, and transportation. Perhaps this lack of financial obligation, responsibility, or pressure is the reason for no cases of "closure" in the present thesis.

[45] Although applicable in instances of seekership and closure, instrumentalist routings need not imply any fascination with the subculture or feelings of limited options (Prus and Grills, 2003: 109-111).

[46] Although I have attempted to be as precise as possible with reporting the number of participants who have explicitly mentioned their experiences to me about this and that matter, this does not mean that others in the study did not experience these same processes. Because of the open-ended, emergent quality of this inquiry, no two interviews were "the same." Some of the concepts that I examine in this study emerged later on in the analysis and thus may not have been dealt with explicitly in earlier interviews. In some ways, numerical precision leads to artificial representation in ethnographic studies.

Questing for fun and profit. Like most others in the broader drug subculture, using drugs

was a common interest at the time of people's initial involvements in drug dealing.[47] Thus,

people may be seen to engage in dealing activity to support their own consumption of drugs.

Waldorf et al. (1991: 77; see also Murphy et al., 1990) term this practice "dealing for stash" and

it typically begins by selling to friends (see also Tunnell, 1993; Mohamed and Fritsvold, 2006):[48]

It [engaging in dealing] was more initially to support our growing daily habit, which was smoking weed everyday. I've never been one to pay for weed, but in that initial period it was a back and forth. I would go through periods where I was buying weed, and other times I would have acquired weed, parceled it out [divided it up and sold it], and taken my profit as my own habit [used my drugs that were my profit]. (19)

I started smoking weed in Grade ten and had to start selling to pay for my own habit. So I would just traffic to people at school who just wanted dubes [half gram of marijuana rolled into marijuana cigarettes]. I started just rolling dubes like buying a half-ounce of weed and selling dubes for five dollars... I decided to sell marijuana so I could basically just afford to smoke marijuana. I didn't need any money at the time because I worked like part-time fifteen hours and that covered all my minor bills like car insurance, but it didn't cover my drug costs. It was costing me too much money to keep doing drugs, and if I wanted to continue my habit, then I would have to sell [drugs] or I'd just be stupid. (8)

The first ever involvement would have been... I was probably about fifteen, sixteen and had been smoking weed for a few years at this point and paying for it... I realised that if I had enough to sell, then I could smoke mine for free. And I didn't really need to gain a clientele because all of my friends already smoked. So it was easy enough to say that if I bought an ounce and sold it all but an eighth of it, it is guaranteed that that eighth for me is free. (17)

Relatedly, people also may engage in dealing to support "partying" activities more

generally (see also Mohamed and Fritsvold, 2006). Partying activities (for example, drinking,

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[47] While "lower-level" dealers typically begin their involvement in the drug subculture as users, both Adler (1985: 124) and Desroches (2005: 54) found that upper-level dealers tended to enter "directly" into dealing as nonusers. Although, direct entry in drug dealing was facilitated by associates who were already involved, I believe both Adler (1985) and Desroches (2005) meant many of their respondents were not regular users or motivated by their using involvements at the time of their initial involvements, rather than most were never involved in the drug subculture as users. It seems highly unlikely that most of their participants had never used any type of drug prior to becoming involved in dealing.

[48] Waldorf et al. (1991: 77) and Murphy et al. (1990) point out that "dealing for stash" also can develop into "dealing for profit" when people begin to realise the financial advantages of selling drugs to others.

camping, concerts, and festivals) typically include extra expenses that drug use alone might not entail:

First time I ever dealt was when I was eighteen [years old]. It was a May two-four [May 24] long weekend, and I grabbed a bunch of coke, a quarter ounce of coke. At that time of my life, I just wanted to be able to do a bunch [of drugs] for free and get rid of a bit to compensate what I put out all this money for. It wasn't ever like I'm going to start selling right now [I'm going to become a drug dealer] or anything. It was more I kind of wanted to recoup some of my losses [from using] or whatever and party... And while I was there, I kind of got involved in getting rid of [selling] a few other things with a friend of mine, mushrooms and ecstasy – stuff like that. More so just helping him out and getting things in return, not necessarily money but drugs and alcohol... I had been going out for May two-four's for every year since I had been in high school. It's a weekend to go out and party. I finally had some friends that could help me out [with acquiring drugs to sell], and I was in a position where I had some money. So it was an initial investment kind of thing. I had met people along the way, instead of just being a customer, now I was in the position where I could try and make some money. If I wanted to I could have made a lot more money. I could have picked up more and kept going, but at this point it was just more I wanted something to party with, and I could get rid of a bit at the same time. It was so I could have a fun time, and I could use and do whatever I wanted to really. So if I wanted some, it was always there. And if I wanted to get rid of some, then sure I could do that too... I had a good time [during my initial foray into dealing]. I ended up getting rid of most of what I brought, and I did some of it and a number of other things... It was basically what I had set out to accomplish that weekend. I had a good time. I ended up spending all of the money that I had, but I wasn't going out of my means you could say. (15)

For some of the participants in this study, the party scene may best be described as a form of the "rave" party scene. "Raves" are parties / concerts / festivals / social gatherings where people come together to celebrate and experience an event dedicated to electronic music. When the music is played live, it is performed by a disc jockey (DJ) spinning records on a set of turntables often accompanied by a vocal performer (MC) on a stage. Often, the performers use lighting and artificial smoke effects in their shows. The crowds consist of predominately teenagers and young adults up to their early thirties, some of whom gather around the stage and dance to the music. These events often begin in the evening and last late into the night or early the next day. Typically, and of more direct consequence for the present study, there are a number of

partygoers who use drugs at these events, particularly of the chemical variety (ecstasy, ketamine, GHB, cocaine, and methamphetamine).

The people interviewed for this study that took part in the rave scene typically became initially involved by going with their friends to events held in their area. The initial experience was often quite enjoyable, leaving people with a desire to attend future parties and become more involved in the scene. Moreover, these initial parties are where some people first learn of, use, and sell certain drugs. The following examples are typical experiences of dealers first becoming involved in the rave scene and initially selling drugs:

What happened was a rave came to [my hometown] and pretty much that is what set the tone for [my hometown] and corrupted the town on doing E [ecstasy]. Before then, there wasn't really any E, it was unheard of around there. I went to that first one with my friends and loved it. It was a weekend long event. It was just awesome. It was just the best time. Everyone did E and loved it. So all of a sudden everyone started wanting E all of the time. It was the drug of choice at that point.... After that, started going to other parties in the city that played that type of music, drum and bass. It's just a totally different culture of people and music. That scene is a whole drug scene basically. If you were there, you'd hear loud beaty music and see laser lights and tons and tons of people and everyone in a very happy state of mind. Everyone would be using drugs. It wasn't blatant where you'd see everyone using it, but you would have people coming up to you offering drugs all the time. Me and my friends we loved that first party so much that we just wanted to get involved in it, loved the music, loved the scene, loved the vibe of it, the people that we met at the first party, the whole thing was awesome. We just got wrapped up in it [the rave scene].... After that one we started going to the same party every year except in a different location because they move it around every year. So we'd start going and we'd always bring some drugs with us to those parties. We always wanted it [ecstasy] for us to do ourselves, and we wanted the good shit, and we knew we could get it. So we'd bring it for ourselves, and bring extra to sell a bit too. The whole weekend was free basically.... That's all it was at those parties. Just bringing enough to pay for our [my friends' and my] expenses at the party. Plus all of our friends were going and they'd be kind of relying on us to bring the drugs so they wouldn't have to go to someone that they don't know. I didn't mind doing it at all. I already knew I was going to bring the drugs. (1)

So I started going to raves around here in the summer before Grade nine, and that's when I did my first E [ecstasy]. I really liked that, so I started to go to more raves, and that led to more drug use and different kinds [of drugs]. I was trying things like crystal meth [methamphetamine], which I never really liked, I did it a couple times but I never really liked it. I did things like acid but again mostly ketamine is what I liked to do and E's. So there were these raves being thrown by all these older guys. There was a whole scene of my friends' brothers and all their friends and these older guys used to throw a lot of parties. They also

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introduced us to GHB which again is another drug that I really liked... So that's is how I started selling drugs – at these parties. Me and my friend, through his older brother, we knew some guys who had MDMA [pure ecstasy]. No one else could get it in our group of friends so we would go out on the weekend, we would go to this guy and grab a bunch for ourselves and for everybody else. That would have been in Grade nine... Between ourselves we just kind of decided that we could go get it, and we could charge people a bit more than what we were getting it for. Mainly it wasn't to make money, but it was like we could go buy a bunch, and whatever we were going to do that weekend at the party we would get for free because of charging people a bit more for theirs. (11)

It [the first time I sold drugs] was the first time I went to [an electronic music festival], which is a three day rave. I had just turned sixteen [years old]. At the time a lot of our friends sold drugs, and we were like well I want a piece of the pie too, I want money. My friend and I didn't have jobs, and we just wanted a way to support our partying careers and we didn't have very much money other than like allowance which was ten dollars a week... We had already planned to go to the party, and we had already bought our tickets for that. The tickets were like one hundred dollars, so that in itself was kind of a motivator for wanting to make more money because neither of us had very much. (4)

There also were instances where people more specifically invoked financial objectives as their primary concern in their initial involvements (see also Langer, 1977; Adler, 1985; VanNostrand and Tewksbury, 1999; Jacobs, 1999; Desroches, 2005; Mohamed and Fritsvold, 2006; Decker and Chapman, 2008). It is important to separate cases of financial need/obligation or "closure" and more general instances of people striving for profit. As VanNostrand and Tewksbury (1999: 64) point out: "Previous literature has identified the profit motive as a major motive for drug dealing; however, much of the research has not separated financial need from issues of greed. Instead, a profit motive comprised of several variables is typically used… Yet, there is a distinct difference between dealing motivated by necessity and dealing motivated by greed alone." Thus, for four people, becoming involved in dealing was viewed as a viable means of generating supplemental income and did not imply any feelings of desperation or "closure":

My friend saw an opportunity, as I did, for marijuana sales in the school, distribution, where he'd be the investor and wouldn't really have to do much, just hand it out to soldiers and sell the pot at the school... I was working at the time, but it wasn't that much. I was only working a couple hours in the evening, and for my age, I was making money, but I wanted more. Of course

I always wanted more money, have more money to spend, just more money to have. So getting involved I strived to make more money. (7)

I knew other people that were friends that started doing it and I wanted to make some money too. I knew other people that were smoking weed or selling weed. I never really became much of a user until after high school. During high school, I never smoked that much weed. It wasn't like something I did during school hours…. The first time I can remember selling was Grade eleven. I just bought an ounce of weed off someone and chopped it up and tried to sell it. It was to try and make money. I was driving to school and I would just leave it in my vehicle and sell it out of that. I was working then, but I wanted to make more money… It wasn't like I was going hungry. I just wanted to make some extra money. (14)

[My initial interests in drug dealing] stemmed from seeing other drug dealers. Seeing them always having extra money and stuff. That was probably my initial incentive to start dealing. Friends, people I knew that had all this extra money like [_____] and [_____], those guys. They always had lots of money, clothes. It seemed really easy. (16)

I can remember exactly the first time [I sold drugs]. It was Grade nine and I found some weed [marijuana] in my family home and I grabbed a bag of it and took it to school. I took it to school not realising how much it was or what it was worth or anything so I showed it to a buddy who was a bit older and he explained to me how much it was worth and at that point in time I kind of saw dollar signs flash in my eyes and it started from there… I knew that he [my friend] had smoked weed and been around and would have a better idea than I would about that. After he told me [what it was worth] I was pretty happy because it was worth a lot more money than I realised and when I thought back to the size of the bag that I grabbed it out of I realised the potential [for profit] that was there and I pretty much started selling it from that point in time… Tried [using marijuana] once or twice [previous to my initial involvement] kind of thing but wasn't a pot [marijuana] smoker or anything like that. At first it was just the money thing that intrigued me for sure. (10)

Being Recruited by Fellow Users

The second most common (experienced by four people) routing into drug sales was through the encouragements, influences, and support of fellow users or "being recruited." Although notions of recruitment into drug dealing may bring to mind images of established dealers recruiting innocent or unwitting others into their lifestyle, this was not the case. In this study, people were more apt to encounter suggestions or inquiries from friends with whom they had been using

drugs about beginning to sell drugs to others.[49]   People's decisions to act on associates'

initiatives were sometimes considered relative to the advantages (fun and/or financial) of

engaging in dealing:

They were all close friends. People that I knew for a long time. People knew that we did it [used ecstasy] before, so they would kind of ask us more than us try to push it on anyone or asking people if they wanted it. It was more people asking us if we could get it for them. It wasn't like us thinking "Oh we can get it, maybe make some money off of it." It was more people asking us. So, at that point, we started to get it for people, and because we started getting it for everyone, the guy we were getting it off of started to offer us deals because we were getting more. At that point we thought here we can just charge people the same price, even though we were getting it cheaper, and that way we can get ours for free. Maybe sometimes we would keep some extra money but for the most part it wasn't about making money. It was about being able to not have to spend our own money on it. (11)

It was me and my buddy. We had started smoking weed the summer of Grade nine. We loved it, and we were smoking it all the time. We would always steal out of his dad's freezer, just take a few buds here and there to get high. Then Grade ten came and people were always asking around for it, so we eventually just started to grab a bit bigger handfuls and start selling a little bit around school and stuff like that. We just thought that we had such easy access to it, everyone is always looking for it all the time, why not just sell a bit ourselves just to make a bit of money and always have weed to smoke… He [my friend I began selling marijuana with] was one of my good friends, and we'd always be over at his house, and we knew his dad smoked weed, and he knew that we smoked weed, so we just kind of pinched into it a bit here and there. It was easy access, where we could just grab a handful before we went to school. It was no problem… A little bit of it was the money, but mainly it always just sucked when you couldn't find weed, so we thought why not just have it and then all of our friends and us could always just get high all of the time. (9)

This first time was Grade ten probably. My buddies would all want to go out and party and I knew the person that has the substance that we want, so I would go pick it up for everybody. At the time, it wasn't to make money or anything. It was just so everyone could have as good a time as you were having. And everybody wanted it and knew that I could get it. For example, one weekend everybody wanted some LSD [Acid], and I knew the guy that had it. I would just be hanging out and talking with my group of buddies, and they knew I knew the guy, so I would get the money. I would just get the correct amount for everybody. It wasn't to supply a bunch to other people or make any money really. (3)[50]

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[49] Recruitment into legitimate businesses also was likely to involve family members and friends as the primary tacticians, facilitators, and encouragers (Prus 1989a: 78).

[50] Waldorf et al. (1991: 76) also found some people had become initially involved in dealing by pooling their money together with friends and being selected to acquire the product for the group.

Notably, participants in some of these initial involvements did not define their activities as "drug dealing," but more in terms of "helping out friends" since little or no financial advantage was anticipated:

I wasn't really selling drugs when I was smoking weed. I'd maybe just sell some to a friend. I wasn't really doing it to actually make money off of it. When I started using more weed by the end of Grade nine, I would get some larger amounts and sell it to other people. I wouldn't be selling it to profit. If I had some, I'd sell to my friends, or if my friends had some, they'd sell to me. I'd have larger amounts just for personal use, and if people would ask, I might sell some to them. I never got into being a full-time weed dealer. Being a high school stoner I'd always have it, but it never escalated. I probably bought it one thousand times more than I sold it. (6)

Although people may assume a dealing identity quickly from the outset, others do not appear to define themselves in these terms for some time after their involvement: "Many individuals, then, became drug dealers by their actions well before they consciously admitted this to themselves" (Adler, 1985: 128; see also Moore and Miles, 2004; and Murphy et al., 1990). This feeling of not being a "drug dealer" also may have been maintained, in part, due to the limited and more fleeting nature of these involvements, happening once in a while at school or when there was a party. It may not be until the activity is performed on a more sustained basis that a self identity as a drug dealer emerges, even though one may have been involved in the activity of dealing before this time. Prus and Irini (1980: 250) describe this process as conversion, "While some may seek out (or resist) recognized life-styles, others may find themselves extensively involved in an activity before they acknowledge the more general subculture in which 'persons like them' are involved." Similarly, Waldorf et al. (1991: 75-77) found people, "buying from and selling to friends, usually in relatively small quantities, and often for little or no profit…. most simply seemed to fall casually into distributing a drug that they had long been familiar with."

Engaging in Seekership

Some people may develop intrigues, allures, or fascinations with drug dealing prior to any initial involvements in drug dealing. As Prus and Grills (2003: 108) note, "people's intrigues not only may vary greatly in intensity, but also assume several dimensions…. because any involvement normally implies several things (e.g., physical settings, activities, emotional sensations, risks, outcomes, associates), it is essential that analysts be mindful of the specific things that people find alluring about the situation at hand." Thus, whereas some people may be intrigued with many, if not all, of the aspects of a particular realm of activity and interchange, others may have varying levels of interest and disinterest at the time of their initial involvements.

Desroches (2005: 59-60) posits that people probably developed intrigues with the dealing lifestyle after their initial involvements in drug dealing, not before:

The thrill, danger, excitement, power, and control that drug trafficking affords likely emerge in the process of committing the crime and are not reasons that propel many in the first place. It is thus difficult to tease out the motivation to crime and determine whether power tripping and excitement attract people into dealing or whether these pleasures emerge as one successfully pulls off deals and reaps the financial rewards.

However, I found that three people developed specific intrigues with the drug dealing life-style (e.g., personal prestige, the financial and material benefits, using particular drugs, and thoughts of being involved in organised crime) prior to their initial involvements in drug dealing (see also Tunnell, 1993; VanNostrand and Tewksbury, 1999; and Mohamed and Fritsvold, 2006).[51] Thus, although having experience as a drug user and developing relationships with others in the scene may foster interests in participation (as well as improve chances of success since people already have some knowledge of the market and can improve upon already

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[51] Similarly, VanNostrand and Tewksbury (1999: 66) found the fast pace of the dealing lifestyle as well as feelings of prestige, admiration, and power "not otherwise realized in legitimate work environments" all served to motivate some to become initially involved in dealing drugs.

established routines),[52] people also may develop some intrigues with deviant involvements more

generally before they begin more directly to act out these interests:[53]

The power, money, nice clothes even, women, jewelry, mobster, being a made man – all that stuff sounds so cool, it still does. [I learned about these things] from my uncle and gangster movies but mostly my uncle. He claimed to be in the mob. My uncle said he was in the mob in Vegas. He's pulled off fraud schemes, like big fraud schemes. He's never really worked a day in his life. He's always just conning people, conning women for money, rich women. He used to tell me stories, like mob stories, of him in Vegas and people that he knew and places he's been, just all these things. He'd drive me around in his Corvette and buy me all this ice cream until I puked. He'd let me eat ice cream until I literally puked – he was just so cool... That lifestyle was appealing to me – the high-roller lifestyle. That was always appealing. Like sort of the conman, sort of gangster, mobster type thing. To see these guys [drug dealers in my area] driving the [luxury SUVs] and stuff. For sure I was into it.... I pretty much just had to ask originally and just say, "How much does an ounce go for?" I would just plainly ask. Like [a knowledgeable friend], he was probably one of the big influences with dealing. He liked the dealing, he liked the image. A lot of questions, like I would ask him who was his dealer, who he got it from. A lot of the time it was just like fairytale type stories just because he [his supplier] drove a [luxury SUV], and it was so crazy. So I would ask all these questions, and he would answer and tell me he's [his supplier's] got all this money or whatever and all this, like pounds and pounds [of drugs]. He busted up this huge line [of powdered drugs] and took [did] the whole thing [snorted all of the drugs up his nose]. He [my knowledgeable friend] was just open with it. How it operates, he was open in discussing and teaching. I was interested in it because I was always interested in mafia type stuff. So I would ask questions, and he answered them. And this is when I first sold any drugs. It started with weed in about Grade ten. I first started smoking weed in Grade nine, and by Grade ten I would have started with a little bit of selling weed to kind of get involved in the whole dealing, Mafioso type lifestyle. (16)

It [my initial involvement in drug dealing] was also for social status. Part of it was wanting to be the man – a lot of people define "alpha" as a different thing, a lot of people just think it is a sports star or whatever would be defined as an alpha, but for me, being an alpha is when I walk in the room people know who I am and they respect me automatically regardless of my size, my stature, anything. They are just automatically going to respect me because of who I am and the company that I bring. That to me also was important... It [this perspective] wasn't [developed] necessarily from observing others immediately around me, it was society with like movies and hip-hop [music] and all that, it was always glorified. You have your movies like Scarface and GoodFellas and all that. And then you have all the rap videos where all these guys are just living the life and that's just what everyone wants – is to live the life. So that's what my goal was

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[52] Lofland and Stark (1965) also found that preexisting contact with a religious group might foster interests in and fascinations with it.

[53] People also may develop highly specific interests in the drug dealing subculture. For example, one dealer developed intrigues in manufacturing marijuana. Specifically, he developed a science-based interest in breeding and growing marijuana through some technical and popular growing literature.

to be. I never in my mind envisioned being a kingpin, but I always envisioned being well respected, and if I could just get under the kingpin, then that would be good enough for me…. The area where I'm from... there's one person [drug dealer] that has like everything and from that it gets dispersed into like four people who disperse into another four people, and that pretty much runs the area. Whatever happens after that, happens after that, it's insignificant. Being one of the three or four that disperse it to those below them, they don't have to do multiple sales, they don't have to do anything like that. They are just connected and protected. And being connected and protected to me was the most important part… So that was my initial process at the start…. [But] I didn't want to just be the man, I wanted to be the man that everyone was partying with and having fun with. Like I don't necessarily want to intimidate people – I want them to respect me – but I also want everyone to have a good time at the end of the day. The intimidation thing I don't care for it too much. I just want them to respect me enough for them not to fuck with me. (17)

Managing Reservations

As used herein, the term "reservations" refers to any concerns, doubts or dilemmas people experience in becoming initially involved in drug dealing. Managing reservations is another key process in becoming involved in deviance. As Prus and Irini (1980: 248) note, "Regardless of whether one is discussing 'closure,' 'seekership,' or 'recruitment,' prospective actors have to overcome any reservations they associate with the activities under consideration." However, in contrast with some of the vendors in the legitimate marketplace,[54] the dealers in this study had very few concerns with becoming initially involved (see also Murphy et al., 1990; Mohamed and Fritsvold, 2006).

Having limited concerns. The people interviewed for this study expressed few reservations about becoming initially involved in drug dealing. When asked about their initial reservations, people often framed their answers relative to any concerns they had with

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[54] Prus (1989b: 82) found that financing was a major concern of some people when acquiring businesses for the first time. However, "expectations of success serve to diminish reservations." Financing may have been less of a concern for new dealers because of the minimal capital needed and low overhead entailed in starting their businesses. Also, profit markups tend to be quite high in the drug subculture, and this can mitigate some of the initial mistakes of newcomers.

encountering law enforcement.   However, their apprehensions about getting caught by law enforcement seemed to be mitigated by (1) focusing on the "minor" role they might play in the larger drug scene and (2) envisioning others operating in the scene as minimally concerned about getting caught:[55]

Getting caught [by the authorities] didn't really play a big role at that point because it was not like we were grabbing huge quantities of it [when I first sold drugs], and I noticed that anybody else that we got drugs off of [in my prior experience as a user] didn't really seem to be concerned so it just seemed like it was hard to get caught. It just didn't really seem like a possibility. (9)

I felt like based on the area that it wasn't a big priority for the police. A lot of people didn't think that people in high school were into that sort of thing [using and selling chemical drugs]. So it didn't seem like it was very risky at the time. I was more worried about getting caught for drinking in public and getting a ticket because it was such a small amount [of drugs]. (15)

I wasn't worried when I started dealing, and now that I look back it's kind of foolish – the fact that I was so careless about everything. I was fortunate because I was never caught, although it would have been very easy. But at the time I had no worries whatsoever. (2)

Being apprehended also was perceived by many dealers in this study to be of minimal consequence since they would be considered "young offenders" (Canadian Criminal Code) at the time of their initial involvements:

I was too young, and I didn't really even think about the consequences of it. Especially because I was so young, so I thought nobody was looking at me as someone who was selling drugs, and especially because quite a few years ago things like E [ecstasy] weren't even big at all even in Canada. There wasn't a lot of E. This E particularly was brought from out west because that was the only place that it was being produced at the time, so it wasn't really on anyone's radar – that there was ecstasy around and it was being dealt. So for the most part, I didn't even consider being arrested and what would happen. I knew at the time, even if I had of been arrested, that I was so young and it was such a new drug that chances are I would have got nothing. The consequences would have been minimal. If it did happen the worst part would have been my parents finding out – [that] was my biggest concern not legal action against me. (11)

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[55] It should be noted that although many of the people interviewed for this study perceived the consequences (i.e., sentences) of being apprehended for drug dealing to be minor, few dealers displayed a precise knowledge on the potential maximum penalties for drug trafficking offenses. Potential penalties tended to be much higher than they believed would be implemented.

There was none [no reservations] because then I was a minor, so it was like way less. I was just going to get charged with nothing. It seemed like no risk at the time. Being that young I was just like seeing all this free money that you have [potentially from selling drugs]. I remember being young and naïve thinking why would you work when you can just make this. I definitely felt invincible. If you took precautions you'd never get charged, you'd never get busted. I got a feeling that they [law enforcement] couldn't do enough to catch you because too many people sell drugs, it's way too common, it's like a normal job with a bit of risk unlike an electrician who's going to get shocked and die. That was when I first started. It was like as long as you were careful you'd be fine. And even if you did get caught, it would be nothing. It was also only weed then so it was even less of nothing. It wasn't any hardcore drugs. You're going to get nothing, no charges. (8)

Expanding the Customer Base

Although most of those interviewed for this study began with a few friends and fellow users as clients, dealers may expand their customer base as they progress in their careers. Still, it should not be assumed that the development of a regular clientele resembles some linear progression. Generally, a customer base is much more variable in nature – increasing and decreasing as different situational contingencies arise. For example, there may be seasonal or cyclical fluctuations in consumer demand much like in any other type of business, legitimate or otherwise. Still, if people are to be successful or achieve longevity in the dealing world, then they will need to develop a level of consistency in the demand for their products. Prus (1989a: 211) identifies three benefits of repeat clients: (1) they make multiple purchases, (2) they generally expand their purchases over time, and (3) they make referrals to other potential customers. As Prus (1989a: 211) observes: "With the possible exceptions of high-traffic tourist areas, one-time only products, and scams, repeat customers may be seen as the 'backbone of all businesses.'" These benefits of repeat patronage also were found among the present sample of dealers.

However, unlike more organised, more formalised legitimate business ventures (see Prus, 1989a), drug dealers forego traditional print and electronic media forms of advertising to attract consumers. Still, dealers do make efforts to develop customers in other ways. Three processes emerged relative to dealers expanding their customer base. These include: (1) tapping into associational networks, (2) developing reputations, and (3) attending to price and quality. In what follows, I examine these three processes relative to the present sample of drug dealers.

Tapping into Associational Networks

Most people interviewed for this study began selling their products to their existing associates (see also Tunnell, 1993: 368-369; Murphy et al., 1990, Waldorf et al., 1991). Thus, the most common sources of customers included friends, schoolmates, and coworkers. As noted earlier, people typically began their dealing careers after experiences as users. Accordingly, many instances of social drug use provide interactional arenas that subsequently lend themselves to developing new customers and "generating interest" (Prus, 1989a: 89) in products:

I kind of would just sit back and notice if they were into the whole culture, if they were into drugs, and if I suspected it, then I would imply that I had it and if they ever needed it they could call me, and most of the time it ended up being that they were curious or they already had been involved in it so they began purchasing from me.... [Also,] I started smoking more weed, like it was always around. Started smoking more and plus just gaining more clientele. Just meeting new people and smoking them [using with them] and then therefore they would ask for it and then that's where we'd make the swap of numbers or be introduced to each other. Smoking was a way of gaining new customers, it was a way of breaking the ice. You got to spend money to make money. (7)[56]

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[56] Similarly, legitimate salespeople also may use the strategy of "making conversation" when approaching customers to "initiate action" (Prus, 1989a: 77-79). Also, Langer (1977: 380) found: "The ability to be congenial with customers is seen as important to maintain a successful entrepreneurship. This interaction usually takes the form of smoking with customers, discussing possible future deals, or dispensing largesse to prospective clients. Dealers, however, interpret these aspects of socializing with customers in very business-like terms."

In the market I was in, at that age, it was really easy [to develop customers] because I knew everyone from every school, friends and acquaintances... You would just smoke weed with people and they were like "We need to get some more weed." And I would be like "I got weed." And then they would call me, and their friends would call me. Or they would call me for their friends, and eventually I would meet them [the friends]. (1)

There's never any shortage of customers for anything. I mean it still follows similar economic principles – supply and demand. In the beginning sixty, or seventy percent of the people that I knew used drugs of some sort in high school. That didn't even really seem to fall off over the years. (19)

It was just the demand like I would be at school and all the stoners who were there, which was like forty people, so it's a big market for weed. So if somebody didn't have weed, then all of these people wouldn't have any, and I wouldn't be able to buy it for myself. So I could either wait and not having nothing, or I could just go and pick up two ounces, smoke all the weed I wanted, and make like five hundred dollars in a week. So the customer base was just there... it was like people who you knew through school that would be like legitimate. (8)

It was mostly friends. Also a couple of my coworkers working in the factory. Basically, there is not a person in there [my place of employment] making under forty thousand dollars a year. They [the owners of the factory] pay decent, so people have money. So there's a lot of people there that smoke weed. So there were a few guys there that were buying a half ounce a week... I could just sell it [marijuana to the guys at work] and a few other larger quantity sales, which would always happen through a friend of a friend. (17)

Relatedly, for six participants, their primary involvement in drug dealing may be contingent on their involvements in some type of local party scene. For these dealers, parties are the central location of their dealing activities and provide the majority of their customer base:

Basically when we went to these parties, I would bring my whole stereo. I remember Saturday and Sunday we'd get all ripped, get drunk and maybe pop [use / orally ingest] a couple hits of E [ecstasy]. I remember for like seven months straight we would just throw my stereo into the car and rip to a party – that was like when the party started, we'd come to the party and have the whole stereo. I remember we'd come in the door, and it was just like rats, starving rats. Like I'd come in there and people would just swarm me. I could like barely move with fucking hands everywhere, just insane, going through bags of like forty or fifty caps at a party of like twenty-five people. It was kind of crazy, it was almost like a business somewhat, where we would say that there's a party there and we would tell them that we were coming and boom, once we got there, there was a stereo, everybody gets their shit, and everybody would be happy. We pretty much supplied and brought parties like every weekend. (6)

Some of the dealers became quite heavily involved in the party scene, to a point where they were involved in planning, organising, and performing (as DJs and MCs) their own parties or events.

While some of these parties are not planned with the sole intent of selling drugs, they still prove

to be quite lucrative since this type of environment created (uninhibited atmosphere, loud music,

late nights, the gathering of many people with favourable perspectives toward drug use) is more

conducive to the sale and consumption of drugs:[57]

Things started to die down as the high school parties became less frequent. It just ended up being me and my friends doing the drugs ourselves and end up selling a bit here and there. But then we started getting more into and good at DJing. My brother was renting a farmhouse and the guy he was living with went to university for sound technician and had thousands of dollars of sound equipment. So it was just like bam that was our dream right there. We were chasing it all the time at all these parties thinking man I'd love to be on stage. It's just like anybody that wanted to be a rock star right, it was like I wanted to be this huge DJ and then bam we had this farmhouse where you could have this crazy huge party. So that kind of juiced it up a little bit more again. It just started another scene kind of. It increased selling the K [ketamine] and stuff like that, more use. It's just like having a playground to play in, so people would use it more. (6)

We were renting tables [record turntables] and music equipment just so we could throw these parties to sell drugs. The music, at that point in time, it was new and the E [ecstasy]. The drugs like kind of went hand in hand with the music. It was just that type of scene and that type of trend that was created. It wasn't just our little group that was doing it, it was bigger. I'd been involved in music before like playing in bands, and so were some of the other people that were involved in this, so we had access to the equipment and had put parties and concerts on before. So I think it just kind of naturally progressed from having that type of background and just having the parties and selling the drugs and realising that "Whoa! You just turn the music on and people dance and they buy more drugs!" (laughing). I think it [having parties] wasn't just for the drug dealing because we were partying at the same time too and we were into having parties and having fun. And there was people involved in throwing the parties that weren't involved in the drug dealing so all the right properties were there to make this happen. (10)

Once we got older we started to throw parties too, whether it be just house parties like a rave with DJs and decks [record turntables] and stuff like that but just in houses. Then we started throwing some big outdoor three day parties – [we] threw a few of those. Those influenced the dealing, especially the bigger ones because it was like a spot to sell drugs. It brought a lot of people together in a situation where everyone was doing drugs, a lot of drugs. So it gave us an opportunity with a lot larger clientele base. So that really helped boost our sales. We threw the parties not so much to make money off drugs, but because we enjoyed partying. But it definitely helped and we knew that we would make a lot on those weekends. Say we were throwing a big party on a weekend, we would go out before the party and get as much of everything [as much drugs] that we could because we knew we would get rid of it and make money off of it. (11)

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[57] Also, in addition to dealing at the parties, dealers may be participants more generally since they often partake in consuming drugs and having a "good time."

Still, it should be noted that, like legitimate salespeople (Prus, 1989b: 72-74), dealers also might experience some "stage fright" (Scott and Lyman, 1970) in approaching potential customers when they are unsure of the receptivity to such encounters:

[At] the college I went to, we were always in the same class just like in high school or elementary school you're in the same class... we were always in a class of about forty people, I'd say. So I'd always see the same people all the time. So I eventually got to talking to people and get to know what people are up to and what people are into. It wasn't like I would look at people and think man that guy smokes dope for sure, I should go push some dope on him, it was just from interacting with people that I would find out their likes and dislikes. I would maybe make the suggestion like hey if you're interested in something I can get it, but I was always the kind of person that I wouldn't push it on somebody. I would rather have them make the first move and keep my mouth shut. It is the safe play, it's not going around advertising. The strategy was more to avoid embarrassment like I don't want to go up to a person and be like, "Yo, you want to buy some weed?" or something and have the person go, "What!?" (making a confused expression on his face) I just didn't want to look like an idiot or get some kind of stigma attached to me like I'm some kind of weed dealer when I'm going to see these people everyday for the next several months. I like to find out about stuff before I open my mouth to people and start talking to them, make sure they are cool with what I'm about to say. It wasn't like I was eyeing people up and thinking "Yeah, I'm going to try and take a run at that guy today and see what they have to say about it." So I just kind of held back and let them [potential customers] come to me and express their interest first.... Then eventually you meet people, and you kind of congregate together based on the kinds of things that you talk about. (15)

Developing Reputations

Even as they sell drugs to an initially small base of customers, people may begin to develop reputations in the broader drug subculture as drug dealers (see also Tunnell, 1993). As dealers' reputations build or spread in the community, they are more apt to develop a larger customer base:

So we did it [ecstasy] a few more times. Started getting more comfortable with it and doing it more frequently. Just by having that connection to get pure MDMA straight from almost the closest source [friend of manufacturer] that you could possibly get... So my group of friends were starting to get it and do it more often. Then other people started wanting to do it. So if they came out to our parties, then some people would pop [use] some. So then those people are going to do it and they just love it automatically. So then it just started to go from there. Word was getting around that it [ecstasy] was amazing, and while that was happening, we were starting to go to parties more often and experiment with other drugs. So just realising that

everybody was starting to really want it, and it was really starting to pick up, and I had a connection that nobody else could even touch…. By then we kind of knew the people from the neighbouring cities and started to kind of get a name for ourselves. From these parties you just meet more people and more people want to do it and especially if you're a nice person you get a good rapport with everybody. People start to like you and just want to party with you. So it just broadens the whole field of who we were giving it to and who we were selling it to. In turn I would be selling more to a variety of people. (6)[58]

I was going to school at a place with a couple thousand people under the age of thirty years old, so things were pretty laid back in terms of what people were expecting. And I hung out with a lot of older people to begin with, and a lot of them were already involved before I was. So it was more of just talking to people and finding out what they were looking for, or if they were even looking for anything. Then, eventually, it just kind of spread word of mouth. I would meet new people… and eventually it just gets out if you're looking for this and that [drugs], talk to these guys [my associates and I]. (15)

[I became more involved in dealing] when my friends knew that I could get it. It would just be a gram or a half of a gram at first. But then word spreads through friends that you can get it, so somebody asks you "Can you get me an eight-ball?" Then a couple people start asking "Well can you get us three eight-balls for the night because there are a bunch of us?" So then I decided that instead of buying the three eight-balls and getting rid of it all it's better to buy an ounce. (3)

Dealers often describe the social phenomenon of developing identities in the community as a form of "word of mouth" advertising. This method of generating business recognition seems to be especially useful for more illegitimate / illegal enterprises. Still, it may be difficult for people to control the specific circles in which they acquire reputations as drug dealers:[59]

[My customers were] mainly people from ten years older than me to people five years younger than me. A lot of it [customers] was from people I had known ahead of time in high school and stuff like that and a few people that I knew that were a little older than me. Then, next thing I know, word of mouth spreads, and I'm getting calls from people I don't really know. Getting a call from some forty year old that I don't even know asking if I can get this and that and that he wants me to meet him here. Also, meeting people at parties was another aspect of it [developing customers] but also word of mouth that [_____] has this and people would give my number to other people whether I was cool with it or not. It just happens. It's just a fact of life if you sell drugs I think. If you got something somebody wants then they are going to track you down whether you want them to or not. (15)

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[58] Langer (1977) found some dealers were friendly and sociable with their clients as a strategy in cultivating these relationships and garnering greater sales.

[59] Rounders had similar concerns with controlling their reputations. Many rounders generally assumed that they were well known to the police (Prus and Irini, 1980).

Someone would get my number that I don't even know or that maybe I know but I don't want to deal with. Maybe I knew them from years ago, but I don't want to deal with them because they are big liability fucking crackheads [crack cocaine users], and I don't trust them. They'd just call me up and I'd just be like, "No, no, I don't do that [sell drugs] man. I don't do that anymore." Because I don't know what they are doing if they are working with the cops? I don't know what the fuck is going on. I don't want nothing to do with them. Somehow get my number off somebody else and call me up! That's another horrible thing! (11)

At first [my dealing reputation was not too widespread], but after a couple years man even my little cousins that I didn't even know smoked dope are like, "Hey [_____] can you get us some dope? We know you can get dope."... People that I still don't know come up to me. I'll be at a party or whatever, and they'd know somebody that I know, and maybe I have met them or said "Hi" to them before or grabbed their girlfriend's tit or something, but I don't remember them, and they'll be like, "Oh hey man I know you. Can you get me some dope?" So I avoid those people. (18)

That's where things started to progress a lot more when I moved away from this party house, because I already had the reputation of a drug dealer from all the parties at our house and having fifty to one hundred people every weekend and with them talking it puts out your name like public relations huge. It's a lot of stress because the police could hear about it, anything like that, but the fact is people are calling you for the drugs more and more and more. (7)

In assessing new clients, dealers main concerns include (1) do they have the money, and

(2) are they discreet / do they pose legal risks (see also VanNostrand and Tewksbury, 1999):

Things started to progress a lot like the clientele base started to pick up. Just word of mouth. That's the whole thing about drugs, you can't advertise it unless you are an idiot and want to get busted. You can't advertise it. You have to pick and choose clientele as they come and go. Like, you have to figure out which ones are going to be loyal and which ones are smart enough to know better than to blab about it. A lot of the time it's just random people coming up, and so you just have to make a judgment and take a chance on whether you got good instincts on whether or not they are going to be good clientele... Just seeing how they act when they are around me. Just how sloppy they'd be. If I could see that they were sloppy in passing off money, how'd they approach me, how'd they talk on the phone, just different aspects in that category. (7)

Bad customers are always the fucking hagglers. Nobody likes the fucking haggler. Every time coming in and trying to get a better deal. I was dealing with mostly low-level customers at the time... So I would try and avoid doing business with hagglers. For me, I preferred to deal with people that came consistently and always had money, a regular. (17)

Bad customers will rip you off, whereas good customers won't. That's only if you're using the business model of spotting out drugs too. So there really is no thing as a bad customer, as long as they have the money and are buying drugs from you. (19)

Attending to Price and Quality[60]

While some dealers gave little attention to marketing strategies, others attempted to sustain and expand their clientele base through the pricing and quality of their products (see also Jacobs, 1999). Knowledge on product price and quality primarily develops from people's initial involvements as drug users (see also Mohamed and Fritsvold, 2006). Using this stock of knowledge as a base, dealers may shape their own strategies and perspectives (if any) on setting prices and attending to product quality.

Price. The pricing of products is a highly situational matter in that prices vary depending on (1) current market rates, (2) audiences,[61] and (3) the prices dealers pay for products. More experienced dealers "learned the ropes" of product pricing through their experiences in purchasing drugs and interactions with knowledgeable insiders:

The whole scene like your whole area [you learn the current prices for drugs by being involved in the local drug subculture]. Like what you hear things are going for, or what you think they should go for. Like with the K [ketamine], no one was doing it before, but we would go to parties and hear how much it was going for. (6)

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[60] Although attention to customer experience beyond price and quality is a central concern of some vendors in the legitimate marketplace (Prus, 1989a), the dealers interviewed for this study tended to be less concerned with it.

[61] The pricing of products can be highly situational since different customers may be charged different prices for the same products. Prus (1989a: 182) describes a related phenomenon in the legitimate marketplace known as "opportunistic pricing" where vendors engage in "pricing items according to anticipated buyer tolerances of price and value." Thus, dealers may set prices a little lower for "friends" and experienced insiders who are aware of the relative value of particular products. However, opportunistic pricing in the drug subculture seems to be more variable and situational than in the more formalised, more organised legitimate marketplace. Whereas some legitimate vendors set opportunistic prices for the majority of their customers, drug dealers who used opportunistic pricing tended to adjust them on a customer-to-customer basis. Perhaps this is one of the advantages of not having to display prices as one would in some legitimate retail outlets.

It's pretty much just word of mouth of what other people say what the prices are, and you pretty much just have to go on an educated guess on the source that you heard it from that they are giving you the right price. Other than that it's pretty much strictly word of mouth unless you talk directly to the source and they tell you exactly how much the cost is of the product... When you first get started, you just learn from when you bought it beforehand... Definitely what showed me the ropes was going and buying drugs and just getting involved in it – in the whole drug world. (7)

[I developed price knowledge] from friends, and we'd been going to raves for like a year at that point. So we'd been buying drugs and doing them ourselves, so we knew approximately how much things cost. Our friend who was a dealer, he kind of told us how much things cost. I guess just from being around them and being around people who were selling stuff and their prices. (4)

When you're using, you basically are having somebody else telling you what the price is. And eventually you kind of figure out that it should be between kind of this amount and this amount. (15)

Relatedly, dealers also may attend to their competitors' prices when setting their own. Prus (1989b: 188) refers to this activity as "comparison pricing." Dealers, like some legitimate vendors, may attend to their competitors' activities when attempting to sustain and expand market share:[62]

Just going around, and with the dealers around you start to hear what they're charging and how good their product is, and you try to match that, or you try to beat it. If you can match or beat it, and it's a better product, then of course you are going to have the monopoly over the market because prices are set and if people feel that your prices are lower, and you have a better product, then they're obviously going to come forward to you and try and approach you. (7)

During this time, cocaine is being sold, marijuana is being sold, and ecstasy is being sold as well... Cocaine at this time was still being run through our connection from the Dominican, and we were getting a good price, a better price than ever. You can either compete on price or quality. Quality was usually high, but we usually competed on price because of our extensive connections we were able to offer drugs of any sort for almost guaranteed less than you could find anywhere else – this was the basis of our business throughout the whole time. (19)

At that point, I had just lost my job by making a couple stupid mistakes [at work]. So I lost my legitimate source of income and that really made me feel the pressure that I need to make money to live and survive... So that intensified the amount of dealing I did, and I started to go up north more frequently because I have a larger clientele base up there because I grew up there... When

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[62] These excerpts also contain references to product quality. There is bound to be some overlap between the topics of price and quality because both of these elements are central in people's assessments of value more generally.

I got up there, I was trying to get out there and push more, and talking and contacting people that I had known, and getting in and finding out where people that I knew would be buying stuff and finding out what they were paying and undercutting other people [dealers]. I had higher quality stuff than most people, so it was easy to take people out. And I was giving it at a fair price, so it was easy to start to take out the competition, and that allowed me to get really big and build up to the point where I was moving a lot. Cheap and good that's the way to do it, sixty bucks a gram [of cocaine]. Doesn't matter if you don't make a huge amount off it, you move a lot, so you make a lot. (11)

However, not all dealers are concerned with the activities of their competitors. Three dealers explained that they gave little concern to the matter of maintaining their customer base by directly competing with others. Generally, these dealers felt there was enough business for everyone, and they would maintain customers by being reliable rather than offering inexpensive sources of supply:

I always stayed in the loop of how much everybody was paying and stuff, but I didn't try and compete that much. It pretty much sold itself. If you had it, you'd sell it. So just try to be the guy that has it all the time, and it pretty much sells itself. (16)

I knew that there was always competition. I always just figured that there was enough [business] to go around there at the same time. I never really lowered my prices or had to intimidate anybody to stop selling or anything like that. I was aware of it, but nothing that I was going to do about it. (17)

I was never really fighting with anybody in competition. Like I couldn't have cared less where you got it from, but I definitely maintained customers just by the fact I had it. Like if they had been buying stuff off of me a bunch of times, and I had maybe been ripping them off a bit [charging in excess], then I might cut them a deal after a while, or if I became friends with them. And dealing with people that I saw all the time at work or with my friends, I was always asked if I had it, so I never really had to compete with anybody because they [my customers] were always around me. I was never fighting for any customers or fighting for territory. My whole deal was you either want it or you don't, I don't care. If you don't, then don't call me. I'm not going to go out of my way... I wasn't trying to beat out competition, but if it happened, it happened. That wasn't the goal at the time. I wasn't like, "I'm going to try to outsell this guy this week." Like have a competition or a sell-off. (15)

Quality. Generally referring to a drug's appearance, texture, scent, and potency in invoking bodily sensations, "quality" is a socially constructed process. In judging the quality of drugs, dealers look for physical characteristics that are indicative of potency. Although the

ability to judge quality is something that people often develop as users, dealers' education in

quality is often provided by more experienced participants in the drug scene (see Becker, 1953;

Waldorf, 1973; Murphy et al., 1990; Waldorf et al., 1991; Adler, 1985; Desroches, 2005; and

Hoffer, 2006):

In terms of quality, like I never really asked someone. The first time I did a line of coke I thought I would get all fucked up and hallucinate or something. I was like fifteen or sixteen and didn't know what the hell was supposed to happen. All that did happen was my face got all really numb. And then I read into it and stuff like that – I read on the Internet and some books. And talking to people, "Well, how did you feel?" and basically coming up with the same thing. In terms of quality, it was more of how extreme those factors would get like the smell and stuff like that, and if somebody who was more established [in the drug scene] telling me to smell this and then smelling it and looking at it and thinking I guess this is what good drugs look like. It's not like I was putting the shit in my chemistry set at home and going, "Oh the shit is turning blue!" It wasn't like that. It was all from other people. It could have smelled like dog shit or something, and someone could have said, "This is really good!" and I would have thought "Well, I guess this is what good cocaine smells and looks like!" (15)

The quantity and potency of a drug also is something that can be manipulated.[63] Once

dealers have acquired product of a certain quality they can add filler agents to increase the

volume for little to no cost to themselves:

The smell, the taste, obviously by doing it. That's how you tell [the quality of cocaine]. There's so much shady shit you can do with coke though – there are so many ways that you can cut it. I was never really big into knowing how you can do that, but I know there are so many ways to fuck it up. When I first started selling coke, every ounce that I'd get I'd put an eight-ball [three and a half grams] of glucose in it. So I'd get a free eight-ball out of every ounce, but it did totally fuck it up. But people still bought it… Sometimes I'd try to press it up again. I'd put a bunch of hairspray in it and put it in a small package and put it underneath the wheel of my car for a couple hours and it just kind of compressed it all. It would make it more rock again and you would still get that coke diesel smell/taste to it, is what hairspray does. And it makes it all sticky. So it would make it look like rock and not just all powder from putting all of the glucose in it. (13)

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[63] While Adler (1985: 50) found some upper-level dealers who thought it best not to cut their product, the majority of her respondents cited it as standard practice.

However, two dealers preferred not to dilute the potency of their products because they felt that having higher quality drugs offered them a competitive advantage.[64] Some people attempt to attract and maintain customers in this way:[65]

When you got good cocaine everyone comes to you... It just brings people out in droves. People I would meet at bars or patios and they would be like "Do you know where I can get some dope?" out of nowhere. I would say, "I know a guy. Let me go see if he's got some." And I'd give it to them, and they would be calling me for the next three months. No one had really experienced drugs this good, especially at my level [of dealing]. Normally someone at my level would say that the drugs were too good and chop [dilute with filler agents] them to make more money, but I didn't give a fuck because I was making plenty of money. (1)

There were a lot of large busts in [_____ , _____ , and _____]. A lot of cocaine shipments were getting busted. Big organised crime groups were getting busted. So it all trickles down, and the price goes up and supply goes down. So it becomes harder to get and harder to get good stuff. And I was always wanting the best coke, as pure as I could get and never have shitty coke. I didn't care if I had to pay more because I could just charge more. That was part of strategy and I did always have the best coke in town. No one had better coke than I did, and that always kept my sales up because everyone wants the best stuff. Yeah, sure it's more expensive, but it's the best... It's pure, it's not repressed and stepped on [cut with filler agents] a bunch of times and cut. It's a really stinky, flakey, shiny, crumbly coke that any user would just be like "Oh my God! This is the best stuff I've seen in a long time!" The people who smoke crack say it comes back one hundred percent – when they cook up the crack, if it's cut [filler agents added], you lose the cut, as you cook it up, you cook out the cut of it, so the more it's cut, the less you get back [as an oily film that sits at the surface of the water on the spoon to be pulled off to the side of the spoon into one spot to dry as a "crack rock" to be smoked]. So when they were cooking up my stuff they were getting back almost a hundred percent of what they were putting in. And you can put stuff [filler agents] into it that cooks back but you can tell when you smoke it that it's not as good or it's speed or something, so it gives them a different buzz [sensation]. But the stuff that I was getting them was always good, and it was coming back as almost a hundred percent coke. And it's clean, and it's not all speedy. So people were willing to pay, and it [higher quality product] kept my sales up... The sniff people, you could sell them lower grade stuff and they wouldn't know, but they still all appreciate the fact that I'm willing to get the best, and they go out of there way to come to me instead of someone else because they know I'm going to have better. And everyone else [other dealers], because everything was so expensive, they are not buying [large] quantity, they don't have the cash – most of the people, they are just getting fronted a few ounces or whatever [so they were not able to pull customers away from me through better quality and price]. (11)

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[64] Having the best "stuff" also may be a source of pride for dealers (Desroches, 2005: 114).
[65] Relatedly, some vendors in the legitimate marketplace attend to product quality relative to their marketing purposes (for example, discount vs. high-end retailers) (Prus, 1989b: 154).

Having discussed the processes involved in expanding a customer base, attention now turns to actual sales to customers.

Making Sales

Like most legitimate businesses, repeat patrons also are an important element in successful dealing operations.[66] However, unlike those operating more organised, more formalised legitimate businesses (Prus, 1989a), the dealers interviewed for this thesis spent little time focusing on the matters of (1) getting scripted, (2) generating interest, (3) neutralising resistance (overcoming skepticism, price objections, existing loyalties, comparison shopping), (4) obtaining commitments (closing sales, encountering shoppers in groups, creating two-person encounters), or (5) holding "sales." Many dealers consider themselves to be offering their customers a privileged service and thus tend not to make more extensive efforts to please them beyond attending to the price and quality of products. If anything, dealers typically expect their customers to show them respect (see also Murphy et al., 1990). Thus, when customers call or otherwise approach them, dealers usually assume that they are ready to buy. Dealers generally do not allow "browsing" or "comparison shopping," especially by persons unknown to them. As a result, the process of making sales as a drug dealer entails two primary sub-activities: (1) arranging and performing transactions and (2) obtaining payments.

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[66] Prus (1989a) points out the importance of regulars in adding elements of stability and predictability to businesses in the legitimate marketplace. Similarly, Prus and Irini (1980: 19-22) found that hookers who develop regulars also experienced greater "job" stability. And Prus and Sharper (1977: 36) found professional hustlers valued good "contact men" who are skilled at lining up regular "action."

Arranging and Performing Transactions[67]

Arranging and performing transactions includes the matters of setting up sales and making exchanges. With the exception of some people who sold primarily at school or parties, many of the dealers interviewed for this study often had their customers contact them via telephone to place their product orders (see also VanNostrand and Tewksbury, 1999). Dealers also may explain the expected transaction process to their customers early on in their relationships (see also Hoffer, 2006: 68-70; Murphy et al., 1990: 339).[68] Two themes are prominent in the transaction process: (1) communicating over the telephone and (2) making exchanges.

Communicating over the telephone. "Communicating over the telephone" refers to telephone conversations with customers, especially in relation to receiving product orders. As the dealers in this study progressed in their careers, more and more of their sales were initiated over the telephone.[69] These conversations were usually performed in a coded language specific

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[67] Much of what is considered in this section may be part of what Langer (1977: 381) would term a dealing "style": "Practicing one's interactional skills includes methods by which dealers manage their 'front stage' performance while making purchases or selling to customers. The sum total of these methods might be described as a dealing 'style' – a series of behavioral and linguistic conventions which are used in interpersonal business situations and shared in common by middle-level dealers. These conventions include specified verbal exchanges, complex forms of etiquette, personal poise and confidence."

[68] Hoffer (2006: 68-70) found dealers set transaction boundaries with their customers. This included establishing (1) hours of operation, (2) meeting locations, and (3) rules of exchange. These boundaries served as a reference point in making ongoing assessments of customers' characters and trustworthiness. Relatedly, Fields (1984: 254-255) also found street-level marijuana dealers established hours of operation. However, this was more of a strategy to make sales and garner customers (by being out on the street for set times) rather than an attempt to limit or control customer behaviour.

[69] Some party dealers also used this method of arranging sales in conjunction with attending parties. However, the party scene that these dealers participated in began to fade shortly after they were finished high school. Many of these dealers shifted their business operations to a format of receiving product orders and then meeting with customers to make exchanges. Similarly, many of the dealers who sold primarily at school also shifted to this format when they were finished with their schooling.

to the drug subculture – a form of *exercising discretion* due to the illegal nature of drug

transactions:

You don't say names over the phone. You don't use actual names of drugs over the phone. I used to have codes with people and the people above me [my suppliers] would have codes. We used to talk about things in "pizzas." "What do you want?" "Oh I want a pizza." "What kind of toppings?" "I want pepperoni." (1)

Specifically, we'd use the term "beer." Like a case of beer would be a pound, one beer would be an ounce, "go out drinking" would be a term that they would want to pick up weed, and then when you'd meet up is when they'd exactly verify how much they wanted. (7)

Dealers learn these terms through their interactions with other members of the subculture. They

also may develop terms of their own:

Talking over the phone was just kept to a minimum just slang terms... [I'd learn these terms] just in the circles of people that I was dealing with. I'd have my own and other people would have things that they'd say and you just kind of pick it up and use it with them. The slang would just kind of develop itself. Every area would have there own things that they would call different amounts and different types of drugs and stuff like that. You just pick it up and use the slang. Like someone would call me and be like, "Are you and 'Charlie' free to come play a game of pool?" And that would refer to "Charlie" as being cocaine, and "a game of pool" would be an eight-ball, which is three point five grams. (11)

They [coded drug terms] get passed down. People just pick them up. I'd get them from a lot of music, like rap, there is sayings there, which get thrown around. And you've got your local slang, which gets thrown around. Like "cuff" I remember, which means a "spot," which means a loan. Like I'll lend you this, and you pay me back, it's on "cuff." I just picked them up as I went along... Code names over the phone in case anybody is being tapped or listened to. They were just passed down. The slang gets passed down. There was like, "Cutie Pie" for QP [quarter-pound], or you'd get asked for a "green sweater" [marijuana]. It was usually pretty obvious, but I don't know, if you speak in code, then if there's a cop listening, then at least they don't have any evidence. If you were under investigation that they don't actually hear you saying I want this much grass or something that's clearly obvious. (16)

Relatedly, nothing specific needs to be said when dealers understand that regulars will have "the

usual" (see also Fields, 1984: 260):

Or some people would be constant regular customers that would always get the same thing, so they wouldn't even have to say anything they'd just be like, "Hey what's going on? I want to meet up with yeah." And that's it. They wouldn't have to say anymore. (11)

Talking on the phone basically, you don't want to unless you have code words or just an understanding, because you know why this person is calling you so you don't have to say anything and you're just hoping that they won't say anything. (7)

How do customers know what the appropriate means of communicating over the phone are? Dealers explained that they often informed prospective buyers beforehand of their special terms and ways of communicating over the phone:

The thing was, when I'd first start to talk to them [customers] and see them in person, I'd make it clear that this was how I talked on the phone, that I didn't want the actual drug to be named over the phone, that I wanted it to be kept that way or I wouldn't deal with them. (7)

I just pretty much tell people to ask me "How's it's going?" I told them to try not to say like specific shit. [Instead, I would tell them to say] Like "Are you happening?" or "Can I pop by?" Even with weed, it became known as "green sweaters." (6)

I would tell people before they called me to not ask for weed but to ask for a "green sweater." (8)

Although, customers may not abide by dealers' requests:

Some people understood, but other people you would have to tell them. And some people would just never get it – they would always say stupid things. I mean most people would never say things like, "I need cocaine." But some people would be stupid and say things like weight-wise, "I need a quarter [quarter ounce] of 'chach' [cocaine]." Which is pretty obvious. It's still slang code, but it's pretty obvious. It's not very discreet. So you have to bitch at people like that, and try and keep them from saying things like that. So that's just another thing that adds to your stress – is people just being stupid. Because to them, it doesn't matter. They don't have the risk. There's no risk for them. They just want to buy it. They don't care. They're not the ones who are putting themselves on the line, so it doesn't matter. They don't think about it like that, especially when they're drinking or something like that, they don't even think about it. So that type of shit would piss me off so much. And there were a few times where I would just not deal with people. They would call me up and say stupid shit and I would just be like, "Fuck you. I'm not coming to meet you. You just blew your chance by being a fucking idiot." (11)

Some people aren't aware that they can easily be listened to. Some people just speak freely on the phone when so many people have police scanners and stuff just for fun. Like my parents had one and just listened to people for fun. It would be something like, "Is there going to be E's there?" Something like that. "Do you have E or K?" Where E is ecstasy and K is ketamine. If somebody said that, I might not even react on the phone. A couple times I would be like, "No. I got to go." And later on tell them in person like, "Watch what you say on the phone." But most of the time, I would just answer it and try and end the conversation right away and then tell them, like I wouldn't tell them over the phone, "Watch what you say on the phone." I'd just be like, "Yeah, I don't know man. I'll just talk to you later." (16)

It should also be pointed out that using coded language over the phone was not always the norm for some dealers. One dealer said that he was not particularly worried about potential eavesdropping:

There were a couple times where I'd use codes if I could. I'd say things like "I want five bottles of protein" and they say "What kind?" and I'd say "The two-fifty strength," which would be a type of steroid. Just make abbreviations for different drugs, just so you don't have to use medical terms and stuff over the phone, because I guess you never know if somebody was listening in. This wasn't the norm though. Usually people feel pretty safe about talking on their cell phones about things, and to me it was no different. I was never doing enough where I was worried about being tapped [phone surveillance] or being looked at really. (3)

Making exchanges. The second element in arranging and performing transactions is the process of meeting with customers to distribute the drugs. Generally, dealers want to make exchanges in ways that minimise their chances of being apprehended. Some of the more common strategies employed were (1) minimising the time and amount of possession, (2) changing the location of transactions,[70] and (3) disguising transfers:[71]

I'm so careful. I don't meet anybody out in the open. I don't meet anyone in town anywhere I can be seen by police. I make sure people meet me out on back roads, or I'll come to their house and come inside where I can't be seen and spied on. Because I knew at that point, because I was selling up there for almost a couple years, that my name had gotten around.... The people that I did deal with I made them meet me way out on back roads way out of town. Make them drive because I wouldn't want to be anywhere near town so I could see if there was anyone around. Or if they wanted to meet m,e it would have to be inside a house. I would have to come to where they are. No one ever came to where I was because I didn't want heat [police attention] on my house. So I always made it so that I went out and went to people's houses, so that I couldn't actually be seen doing the deal. I was inside somewhere. Just being as careful as I could... And I always made it a point that I would never take anymore [cocaine] out than I was getting rid of. I would never take the whole bag and scales and drive around and meet these people. I would sit

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[70] Jacobs (1999: 56) also found this with crack dealers. Similarly, Waldorf et al. (1991: 94-95) found that larger dealers preferred to go out and meet customers rather than have them stop at their residences.

[71] Similarly, VanNostrand and Tewksbury (1999: 76) found "other methods used by dealers to avoid suspicion and detection by law enforcement included never carrying money or drugs on one's person, keeping drugs and money away from one's home (for those who did not deal from home), keeping few if any records of drug transactions, and maintaining legitimate employment as a front."

at home and get a bunch of calls and set it all up where I'd meet one this time, one this time, one this time, and then weigh it all up. And that way I could just go out and bang, bang, bang, do it all, and I would only have what was for them. And that way I would never have any extra where if I got pulled over, I would have anymore on me. Just trying to minimise as much risk as I possibly could. (11)

I definitely started to be more careful [when I started dealing ketamine] because it was a chemical drug and considered more dangerous. So by going and picking stuff up and dropping it off it would only be like a two hour process. I would pick it up and drop it right at my friend's house, so the time that I would have the drugs and money would only be like two hours. Therefore, your percentage of being busted by cops is eighty percent lower than if you were out all night. The longer and more you push, the more inevitable something will go wrong. Some coincidence will get you. (8)

You don't want to be in the exact same spot every time. You want to be moving around so that there isn't a spot where they know you're going to be all the time. "They" meaning the police or other officials or other people that might want to rob you. (7)

Never let them come to your place. I never liked to deal outside or anything, go to somebody's house. Fuck, I was seeing three or four chicks in town at the same time, so I'd use their places a lot, one in particular because she really liked dope... Don't shit in your own backyard [don't do deals at home]. (18)

Dealers also may attempt to disguise physical exchanges. This strategy is mainly used by lower-level retail dealers who perform a larger number of transactions in more public places (e.g., parties, bars, work, school) than dealers who preferred to sell in private residences:[72]

If I was selling coke to a guy at work, then I would have a piece of coke wrapped up in some foil and put it in a gum pack and throw it to him and say "Hey do you want a piece of gum?" And he would know what that meant instead of me just doing a big drug deal looking suspicious in front of a hundred people. At a party I'd take somebody aside. One thing I always liked to do was have things weighed up ahead of time so I wouldn't have to fuck around with a scale or something like that. I would have it busted into half-grams and grams and a couple eight-balls and stuff like that and then I would just usually carry it around in this little zip up pouch thing that I had that was small that I could throw somewhere if I had to. If I was with people who

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[72] Dealers who found street-level retailing too risky often used the term "heat" to describe the increased risk of police exposure that these activities entailed:

I would never bring it out to the street to push it on anybody or anything. I would never bring it to school or even just bring it out with me just to have it on me... Just basically keeping low heat because I didn't want to be a big "heaty" drug dealer. I wanted to be actually cautious about it. I didn't want to blaze it everywhere because that just leads to getting in shit. "Heat," as in just being more careless with things, more of a chance to be burnt by the cops. (6)

were going to smoke some weed in a car or something, I was always worried about getting caught that way, so I would get out and hide it behind a tree or something, and then smoke up with them and grab it before we left. So then if a cop did pull up and smelled the weed and searched us, then I wouldn't have it on me, and he would have no reason to go looking behind the tree... And with the half-grams, having them weighed out ahead of time, you can make things look fairly low-key with just a handshake or whatever, or just stop and talk to somebody for a bit. You can do it any number of ways, but as long as you don't have to break out a scale or something like that, and sit there, and pull out a big spoon, and dump some on your scale, and weigh it out right to the point [tenth of a gram]. I'm sure it looks a lot worse if you get caught like that [with things weighed out for sale], but I didn't want to carry a big bag around. (15)

I had this jacket that had secret pockets in the sleeves, and that's how I dealt most of my shit. I would break up the drugs beforehand and put it in whatever packages I wanted to and hide it in my sleeves.... When I was at parties, I always used to keep my drugs in a black bag. That way if the cops show, I could throw it or hide it somewhere and come back and get it later. If it's in some bag they find, then it's not yours, but if it's on your person, then it's yours. The price of a bag of drugs is small compared to the price of getting butt-fucked in jail. (1)

We would plan what the next party would be that we'd sell at. Go a couple days beforehand, and get the stuff, and baggy it out [bag up the drugs]. I think we would usually hide it the same way, like in a maxi pad. We thought that was quite ingenious. We'd go to the bathroom and put it into a pocket or purse or something. (4)
Sometimes we would come up with ways to disguise things. We would hand out candies as well so when we were doing the exchange, we'd have it in our purse and we'd be like "Oh here's your candy". (5)
At this Christmas party we made these little Santa outfits and a white fur purse. In one of the pockets of the purse was all the drugs, in the other pocket was money, and the other pocket was candy. So every time we'd hand them a pill, we would hand them a candy cane at the same time and take the money. (4)

My theory... was the only thing that's going to bring me down... is another idiot that can't look after himself, can't abide by certain rules of the trade... Rules from being detected by the police, just certain things like not doing deals in plain view, making sure that you are totally out of anybody's view and that nothing is seen, even hand-offs like putting stuff in a coffee cup and leaving it on a bench and just walking by the person taking the money and he picks up the cup of coffee. Therefore there's not two connections necessarily if you get caught. (7)

Jacobs (1999) found street-level crack dealers engaged in similar instances of disguising physical

transactions:

Yeah, man, you just make it look like you be sayin', "Wussup?" with a friend. You know – slappin' hands, doin' high fives, handshakes, hugs, and shit. Like you and he be kin or somethin'. But what you be really doin' is exchangin' rocks and money. (Jacobs, 1999: 90)

I be playin' basketball and makin' sales while I playin'. Dope fiend walks by, and I be shootin' or somethin'. 'You up?' he say. That mean do I got some [crack to sell]? He come over. I shake his hand and pass the rocks as he slides the money in my hoodie [the front pocket of his hooded sweatshirt]. (Jacobs, 1999: 91)

Typically, sellers concealed their on-person rocks orally and less frequently held them in their hands or pockets: police at close range could readily see evidence being held and dropped but could not readily detect caches hidden in a mouth. (Jacobs, 1999: 86)

Excess inventory – rocks needed for reupping purposes – were stashed in, on, or immediately around their person. Environmentally hidden stashes generally were placed not more than several feet from their owner. They typically were in line of sight but hidden in such a way as to (1) prevent discovery by police, fellow sellers, or voracious dope fiends and (2) if discovered, particularly by the police, be unlinkable to the seller who placed them there. Typically, a stash would be placed in such a way that only the particular seller who put it there knew how to find it (at least theoretically). (Jacobs, 1999: 87)

In establishing preferred methods of arranging and performing transactions, dealers may make some ongoing assessments of their customers based on their tendencies to carry out transactions in desired ways. Prus (1989a: 185-187) outlines four features of annoying shopping styles in the legitimate marketplace: (1) careless shoppers, (2) time consumers, (3) impatient customers, and (4) "difficult dispositions."   There is some overlap between these general concerns of legitimate vendors and those of dealers, especially careless shoppers and impatient customers. As Murphy et al. (1990: 341-342) observe:

For their part, dealers expect that customers will act in a fashion that will minimize their chances of being arrested by being circumspect about revealing their dealer status. One simply did not, for example, bring to a dealer's house friends whom the dealer had not met. Dealers want customers to appreciate the risks undertaken to provide them with cocaine. And dealers come to feel that such risks deserve profits. After all, the seller is the one who takes the greatest risks; s/he could conceivably receive a stiff jail sentence for a sales conviction. While drifting into dealing and selling mostly to friends and acquaintances mitigated the risks of arrest and reduced their paranoia, such risks remained omnipresent.

If customers do not use the proper drug exchange etiquette, then dealers may decide to severe those relationships – deeming them to be too troublesome. As one dealer remarked, troublesome customers also were often drug "addicts" (see also VanNostrand and Tewksbury, 1999):[73]

I started cutting people off – people that were just too crazy... people that would call at any time, and make risky deals, and stuff like that. People that would like ask you to meet them somewhere, and they'd just come blazing in and rip right up [with their automobile], or you'd see them get pulled over by the cops right near you and shit. Fuck man, some people are insane, so you don't want anything to do with them. So I'd end up cutting people off.... I had other troublesome customers... customers that were really pushy. And these were always the people that smoked crack. They were really pushy, they'd want you to meet them, and they'd want it now, and they'd want it here. And they'd just be really heaty, overly heaty – they just can't be discreet about anything. I don't know why they just have to be as heaty as they possibly can. It's insane. They'd pull up on the beach, and I'd be flying a kite or something, and they'd be looking around and scrambling around their car for shit and just making really obvious moves that if someone would look at you, "What are they doing? That's obviously a drug deal going down because they are all shifty." Like if you just pulled up and casually talked to me, it would be no problem, but you got to act all crazy and make it so much worse. I would just bitch at them or just cut them off. There were a few people that I stopped dealing with because of that type of shit. At that point I had started to get really fed up and I cut off a lot of people. I was only dealing with people that were friends that I had know from high school and shit because I didn't mind dealing with them because they would buy whatever and they were not heaty and I could come to their house and we'd hang out... So I cut myself right back to only dealing with the safest, most legitimate people that I could. (11)

Throughout this section I have illustrated several common strategies that dealers may develop and implement in their day-to-day sales activities. However, it should also be noted that this portrayal of dealers as calculating and disciplined decision-makers is in need of some qualification. Thus, even for those dealers who wished to follow precautionary measures, there may be periods where they less strictly adhere to them:[74]

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[73] VanNostrand and Tewksbury (1999: 70-71) observed a group of crack cocaine dealers who preferred not to sell to "addicts" due to the extra "hassles" and lower dealing statuses that resulted from selling to these types of customers. Instead, dealers attempted to cultivate an affluent (middle to upper income professionals) clientele. Still, many dealers began their careers selling to addicts because they are an easy group of customers to access when one has yet to develop the reputation or contacts needed to sell to less problematic users.

[74] Adler (1985: 117) found that dealers rarely adhered to their own precautionary guidelines.

A lot of the time I wasn't very careful. Like smoking weed in the car while having quantities [of marijuana to sell] on me – I'd often do that. That wasn't a smart move because if you get pulled over, you'll get searched right away. One time I was speeding with a bunch of weed on me, and I almost got into a car accident, I almost got into a head-on [collision] because I was trying to pass a car going like super fast. And that was like, "What am I doing? Slow down. This guy can wait!" Because I was already late with it. I was an hour late and I was speeding. So I tried to take precautions, but I also left myself open in so many ways. (16)

Obtaining Payments

In the legitimate marketplace, vendors attend to various customer financing concerns and strategies. In addition to (1) assessing the purchasing potential of customers, legitimate vendors operating in more organised, more formalised businesses may (2) develop different policies on accepting cheques and credit cards, (3) extend charge accounts to customers, and (4) enlist the help of collection agencies. While there are some financing differences between the legitimate and illegitimate marketplace, there is still considerable overlap between these two life-worlds generally. Thus, dealers were seen to (1) assess the purchasing potential of their customers, (2) extend personal credit to customers, and, sometimes, (3) enlist the help of others in collecting debts. In fact, the issues of extending credit and collecting debts are areas of central concern for many dealers in this study. Since drug dealing is an illegal venture, it negates the use of the formal methods that may be used in the legitimate business marketplace to uphold contracts.[75] Instead, less formal techniques are employed in collecting debts, such as exclusion, intimidation, and physical coercion. In what follows, I examine people's (1) decisions to extend credit to consumers and (2) tactics of pursuing debts.

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[75] Although legitimate retailers also may handle debts in less formal ways. For example, personally contacting customers who paid with "NSF" (non-sufficient funds) cheques rather than using collection agencies from the outset (Prus, 1989a: 202).

Extending credit. Although extending credit may be seen to promote repeat patronage (Prus, 1989a: 220-222), five dealers developed policies of selling product strictly on "cash only" bases after previous difficulties with customer debts (see also Murphy et al., 1990: 339):[76]

Spotting [selling drugs on credit] is just stupid, it fucks everybody over in the end. If someone smokes crack, their first priority isn't to give you their money, it's to go the other dealer and get more crack. Everyone knows that from the time you start dealing, you get burned [owed] a couple times for some weed or people just tell you "Don't fucking spot anybody!" Some people you think they are good for it, and they are not…Even if the people that you are spotting pay you back, eventually they are going to burn you, and that's how it always is. For instance, there was this DJ in [_____], he used to get shit off me all the time, spent quite a bit of money with me and he'd always buy a bit and get spots, buy a bit and get spots, and the night he was leaving town – I didn't know he was leaving town – he asked me to spot him a quarter [quarter ounce of coke]… and he burned me, left the town and never saw him again. (1)

My partner did [sold product on a credit basis] all the time. I never did. I can't rely on anyone. No one does what they say, "Oh cut me a couple g's [grams of cocaine] man. I'll get you back. I'll get you back." And you have to end up calling them and chasing them around. (13)

I just found too that people just end up owing you too much money. That affected the way I trafficked to where I wouldn't spot people because people will just lie and do anything to get their hands on drugs. (8)

However, a "cash only" policy may be difficult to sustain. Two dealers felt they lacked the shrewd ability to act on these policies in the moment:

I would always have to try and control it [the level of customer debts]. I had to learn to refuse people that would want a loan. You have to be cold which I never was – I would always give spots. So that way, I had poor money saving habits. (16)

I tried mainly to do cash only, but then again I would get people pulling the guilt trip sort of thing on me like "Oh we're buddies. I'm going to pay you." (15)

Dealers that offered credit tried to be selective in whom they granted it to. While some legitimate vendors may perform formal credit checks on some customers (see Prus, 1989b: 164),

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[76] Relatedly, Adler (1985: 51) found that debts that were not paid back in a timely manner became increasingly difficult to collect. Some vendors in the legitimate marketplace also prefer to operate on "cash only" bases (Prus, 1989b: 164).

the dealers in this study were more likely to extend credit to people that (1) they knew well and

(2) seemed capable of repayment:

I definitely spotted a few people, and I would spot people that were close to me that I saw regularly – I had no problem doing that. But I just tried not spot people that had a less than savoury reputation... If a buddy of mine wanted a gram [of cocaine] or something like that, then I would have no problem, "Hey, here you go."... I learned my lesson with these other people [that didn't pay me back] that you got to keep it closer to home. I don't want to be tracking people down and stuff like that especially with people like that – people that smoke crack, people that are heavily addicted, people without jobs, people that fake friendship to use you, people with problems in general – they got something wrong with them... I wasn't in it [dealing] to lose money. (15)

I was very selective in who I would do it with [grant credit to]. Basically, I would pretty much give most people, if I knew them well enough, if I've partied with them a couple times, and they seemed like they had money most of the time but this time they don't. Like they work and only party on the weekends kind of thing, then I'd always feel comfortable with that situation. If that was you, then I would always give you at least one opportunity on credit. Now if I knew that you didn't have a job and this and that, there was kids like [_____] and shit where he'd be begging me for spots and I'd be like, "Fuck you. No fucking way. No." And he'd be like, "Oh you're such an ass. You'd spot them but not me." I'm just like, "Yeah, but he's a firefighter. He has money. You don't have a job. You don't have anything. I don't know how you plan on giving me this money." Some people I could easily deny. But in a party with people that I liked with people that I knew that had some type of income, I would give them a chance. (17)

For the most part I could really tell when people were lying, it was something that I developed really easily. Somebody would say "Man spot me, I can pay you tomorrow" and I would be like "You get paid on a Wednesday? Who the fuck gets paid on a Wednesday?" And they would be like "Oh, oh, uh..." and I would say "Man get the fuck out of here". You learn, you can tell really quickly who's going to fuck you over, which is usually seventy percent of people that want to get spotted. (1)

Collecting Debts. After the decision has been made to extend credit to customers, dealers may be faced with the task of collecting from those people who are unable or unwilling to pay them back. For the dealers in this study, the most common tactic employed in pursuing debts was "asking for repayment". However, this task often becomes troublesome since some debtors are difficult to locate as well as unhelpful in settling their debts. In these cases, dealers will

usually cease their collection efforts and "write off" debts, especially when they involve smaller

amounts of money (see also Adler, 1985: 107; Desroches, 2005: 147; Hoffer, 2006: 75):[77]

I spotted guys a couple times. Guys in the city. Just a couple hundred bucks here and there that never got settled up. One time a couple buddies went with me to the guy's house to find him and no one was around, it just got to the point where I wasn't going to chase this dirtball around for whatever. For the most part, it would be people I trusted that I dealt with. (9)

Sometimes I've offered credit, and I've been burned before, not too bad. I probably have five hundred dollars owed to me from all of the drugs that I've sold in ten years. I'd make some phone calls and stuff like that, but I'd never pursue it too much. They weren't that good of friends obviously, but they were friends at the time. I'd never threaten anyone. I'd just write it off basically. (12)

A couple times I went looking for guys and they wouldn't answer their door. I lost a lot of money that I just never collected. I'd see the person and they'd tell me they didn't have it and make up some excuse, and then I wouldn't see them for months. (16)

It [customer debts] was affecting the profit range. Sometimes I would end up a hundred dollars below what I paid for everything or two hundred dollars below what I paid for everything. There's a huge profit range with this shit and the reason I'm behind a hundred dollars is because I'm owed four hundred dollars between two or three different people. I'm trying to get these debts, and I keep getting the run around, and I'm going to see them, "Dude I need that fucking money."…. I would just bug people just by calling them. And if I saw them out spending money like at a party thinking about buying other things, other drugs, and sometimes I would catch them and be like, "Fuck that! Give me that fucking money!" Sometimes you just have to actually be a dick about it. (17)

Generally, the use of physical intimidation and force in collection attempts is usually

reserved for pursuing people with larger debts – typically other dealers to whom people have

given larger amounts of products (as suppliers discussed in Chapter Six). Accordingly, dealers

may be less likely to pursue physical coercion when (1) debts are considered to be relatively

minor, (2) it is unlikely that the debtor will be able to make repayment, and (3) there is a good

chance that the debtor, or those that they know, might go to the authorities:

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[77] "Doing nothing" or "writing off" debts also was the most common response of the dealers in Adler's (1985: 107), Desroches' (2005: 147), and Hoffer's (2006: 75) research. However, as Prus (1989b: 165) points out, the decision of whether to continue to extend credit to certain customers becomes more complicated when it involves people considered to be "good" customers historically and those who show promise for future business.

What do you do? Like the one guy is fucking doped right out... and if he doesn't say something to the cops, then his mom will or his dad will because they are fucking dicks. The other guys, if I see them, I slap them around a little bit or whatever... But what are you going to do? I'm not going to do thirty days for some puke that owes me like three hundred bucks or whatever. (18)

I never got forced into the situation, like I would never lend anybody enough where I would have to consider having to get violent about it. I knew that no matter what frame of mind I was in that it would piss me off and I would have to have to do something violent to get the money out of them and I wouldn't want to put myself in that situation. (17)

I never beat anybody up or anything because usually it wasn't anything severe, like large, large amounts of money. (16)

Relatedly, if making inquiries into possible repayment fails, some dealers would rather sever ties

with those customers than pursue the matter further through physical intimidation and coercion.

In some instances, dealers may collectively exclude certain troublesome customers, engaging in

community degradation (Garfinkel, 1956) and collusion against them in an effort to pressure

their compliance in paying people back:[78]

I wasn't ever into the violence part or anything like that. It was more of cutting people off or doing something to inconvenience them. I'd partner up with other dealers, and people who chronically run up big debts you just don't sell ever to them, so they can't get what they want, so they have to start paying people back. Just letting people know that they're a con-artist and tainting their reputation.... It [using violence] just never seemed effective to me because when I was doing high volume of smaller sales it would seem ridiculous to go and make an example of somebody to try and create fear to collect your money from everybody else because it was a small money amount where you could just cut somebody off and just not deal with them and eat up the loss and your profit margins would still be enough that it wouldn't really kill yeah. It wasn't really worth it because most of the time you wouldn't get the money and you're risking

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[78] Some parallels can be seen in the practice of legitimate vendors keeping and sharing "bad risks lists" (Prus, 1989b: 202). Adler (1985: 102, 106-107) and Hoffer (2006: 76) also found dealers reluctant to use physical force to collect debts. Instead, as Adler (1985) and Hoffer (2006) observed, dealers preferred to impose informal social sanctions by damaging the reputations of the "deviants" and, at times, ostracising them. Prus and Irini (1980: 210) found similar degradation practices among rounders: "It is not uncommon to hear persons expressing threats or intent to injure or kill others who have violated their notions of fair play, however these threats are carried out relatively infrequently. A more likely response is that of 'slandering' the offender and encouraging others to avoid any dealing with him." Also, in terms of prostitutes, "any girl thought to violate the 'business ethics' of the hooker community tends to be shunned" (Prus and Irini, 1980: 42).

going to jail for assault, and then you're right out of business, and you really can't make much money while you're in there. (10)

However, as Fields (1984: 252) observed, dealers may only cooperate with and defend each other when the common interests of the group appear to be threatened. In instances of trouble deemed to be more isolated and individual, Fields found dealers were usually left to fend for themselves:

[C]ollective actions of network members are limited to occasions when the individual interests of a majority are threatened. In most instances, competition and distrust characterize interaction among members of a dealing network. It is up to individual dealers to protect themselves and their goods unless events threaten their common situation.

Summary

The marketplace is thoroughly and fundamentally social in its constitution. It involves preparation and adjustment, planning and uncertainty, persuasion and resistance, trust and skepticism, commitment and reservations, dreams and disappointments, frustration and excitement, as well as friendship and animosity. Marketplace activity reflects people's past experiences and their anticipations of the future, but it takes its shape in the here and now as people work out aspects of their lives in conjunction with other people whose lives intersect with their own. (Prus, 1989a: 23)

This study initially intended to look at career contingencies. While that emphasis may seem more implicit in the chapters such as this one, it becomes more evident in the themes that are addressed in regards to selling drugs – themes that are of direct importance to continuity in dealing. These include: (1) initial involvements in selling drugs, (2) expanding the customer base (i.e., intensifying involvements), and (3) making sales (i.e., sustaining involvements).

This chapter first considered people's initial involvements in selling drugs. Three primary routings into drug dealing were identified: (1) instrumentalism (attending to means-ends orientations), (2) recruitment (being encouraged and facilitated by others), and (3) seekership (pursuing intrigues and fascinations).

The most common way people became involved in selling drugs was through *instrumentalism* or questing for fun and profit.[79] Specifically, people noted that they began selling drugs to support personal drug consumption and for financial gain. Dealing also was envisioned as a means of supporting "partying activities" more generally (e.g., drinking, camping, concerts, and festivals). In particular, several participants became caught up in the "rave" party scene. This involved initially attending concerts or parties, developing intrigues with the rave scene, getting introduced to new types of drugs (e.g., ecstasy, ketamine, and GHB), and beginning to sell at these events.

The second most common routing into selling drugs was via *recruitment* (encouragements, influences, and support) by friends and schoolmates (fellow users). While some people did not define these instances as "dealing" per se because of the unorganised, unprofitable, limited, and informal quality of these transactions, others considered some of the instrumental benefits of selling drugs (i.e., fun and profit) when contemplating involvement.

The third routing into selling drugs observed was *engaging in seekership*. Two participants found various aspects of the dealing lifestyle (e.g., personal prestige, the financial and material benefits, using particular drugs, and thoughts of being involved in organised crime) alluring or intriguing. These interests in dealing typically developed in interactions with friends or family involved in dealing or other related deviant pursuits.

It also was observed that dealers had *few reservations* about becoming initially involved. They cited three reasons for the relative lack of concern they had about their initial involvements in dealing. These included: (1) the minor roles they played in the broader drug subculture, (2)

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[79] As mentioned earlier, these three routing were not mutually exclusive but rather much more interfused than these analytic divisions imply. For example, although questing for fun and profit was a common objective of people when becoming initially involved in drug sales, questing for fun and profit also represents an alluring aspect of drug dealing (i.e., seekership).

the minimal concerns about law enforcement displayed or expressed by associates who were involved in selling drugs, and (3) definitions of the minimal consequences of being arrested as "young offenders" (Canadian Criminal Code).

This chapter next considered how dealers expanded their customer base. Three processes were examined relative to this theme: (1) tapping into associational networks, (2) developing reputations, and (3) attending to price and quality. A dealer's customer base usually begins by *tapping into their existing associational networks* of friends, schoolmates, coworkers, and family who are fellow users. Dealers typically recruited these customers in instances of social drug use by letting them know that they might be willing to supply them with drugs (e.g., discussing the possibility while smoking a "joint" [marijuana cigarette] with others). Relatedly, some dealers primarily operated in what may be termed "the party scene" or a set of parties frequented by local youths and young adults. Some dealers even became involved in the planning, organising, and performing of these parties. While drugs were sold at these events, dealers stressed that they also enjoyed participating in the festivities themselves (i.e., using drugs, "spinning records" and "spitting rhymes" or performing as DJs and MCs, as well as generally enjoying the social atmosphere).

In selling to this initial base of associates, people may begin to *develop reputations* in the broader drug subculture as drug dealers. As people develop reputations as drug dealers, they often expanded their customer base beyond their immediate social groups into other related circles. Still, it is important to note that while dealers may engage in efforts to control their reputations in the community, they may experience some difficulties in managing what particular individuals and/or groups learn of their dealing endeavours since reputations are fundamentally socially achieved processes and not entirely controllable by dealers. Thus, dealers may receive

inquires from people that they define as undesirable persons to do business with. Relatedly, in assessing new clients as "customer-worthy," two criteria were emphasised: (1) do the prospective customers have the money and (2) are they discreet / do they pose legal risks.

Dealers also may implement specific marketing strategies in an effort to attract and maintain clientele. While some dealers may not be overly concerned with maintaining or expanding their customer base and thus do nothing specifically to maintain their market share, other dealers may attempt to attract customers through the attention they give to the *pricing and quality* of their products.[80] Thus, dealers were observed to engage in (1) comparison pricing (attending to competitors' prices) and (2) carrying higher quality products.

I next considered the process of dealers making sales to their customers. This included discussions of: (1) arranging and performing transactions and (2) obtaining payments. *Arranging and performing transactions* included communicating over the telephone and making exchanges. Many of the dealers interviewed for this study eventually operated on a product order basis. That is, dealers often had their customers call them to place their "orders."[81] Many dealers utilised a specialised language when communicating over the telephone (e.g., marijuana became known as "green sweaters"). Dealers usually explained their preferred transaction routines (i.e., ways of communicating and making exchanges) to their customers beforehand. The dealers interviewed for this study also employed several strategies when physically meeting with customers to exchange drugs for money in an attempt to avoid arrest or minimise the consequences thereof. This included: (1) minimising the time and amount of possession, (2)

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[80] A few other dealers also felt that they maintained their market share by being consistent or reliable sources of supply for their customers.

[81] Even those dealers who began their careers selling primarily in school or party settings eventually shifted their businesses to a product order system after the party scene dwindled and/or they finished school.

changing the location of transactions, and (3) disguising transfers. Like communicating over the telephone, many dealers also preferred that their customers adhere to a certain type of interactional etiquette in performing transactions – an etiquette often associated with being inconspicuous. If customers fail to perform transactions as expected and requested, then dealers may become quite frustrated and begin a process of severing relationships with these customers shortly thereafter.

Another central concern in making sales is obtaining payment. This includes the matters of (1) deciding whom to extend credit to and (2) tactics of pursuing debts. After experiencing difficulties in extending credit to customers, a few dealers developed policies of accepting "cash only" for their products. However, two dealers admitted that "cash only" policies were difficult to maintain when (1) customers were persistent and insistent and (2) dealers felt some guilt about not extending credit. Those dealers who did regularly extend credit tried to only do so to customers that (1) they knew well and (2) seemed capable of repayment. Still, dealers who extended credit to customers generally had problems being repaid for their products. In these cases, dealers typically attempted to locate their debtors and ask for repayment. If this failed and the amount of money was considered to be relatively small, then dealers would generally "write off" these debts.

Thus far, this thesis has considered how people become initially involved in selling drugs, expand their customer base, and make sales to customers. The next chapter considers dealer relationships with suppliers and dealers who engage in some supplying activity (primarily wholesaling and manufacturing) themselves.

Chapter Six

OBTAINING PRODUCTS:
Making Contacts, Working with Suppliers, and Becoming Suppliers

So my sister meets this guy. I come home one weekend and I'm over at my older brother's and she comes up and she's like, "I got to talk to you." And I'm like, "Why? What's going on?" She says, "I'm pregnant." I'm like, "Who the fuck is the father?" And she's like so and so. "Well I don't fucking know him." And she wanted me to come and meet him. So we go down to buddy's apartment and I'm waiting in the living room, and she goes into the bedroom, and I hear some whispering, and she comes out, "He doesn't want to come out." I'm like, "What? Buddy come on out. Let me meet you." So he kind of comes fucking slithering out. I'm like, "Buddy, what's done is done. I hope everything works out. Let's be friends and shake hands." So he's like, "Well if you need weed or anything just let me know. Anything, anything, just let me know." So I'm like, "Yeah? What do you want for an ounce of weed?" He says, "A hundred and forty bucks." So, "Yeah, I'll take that." So then that started going and I was buying like a couple ounces or a QP [quarter pound] a week off him. And he was calling ounces "cases," like, "If you want an 'ounce,' tell me you want a 'case.'" This is what my sister told me to say because this is what she was getting off him talking on the phone. So the one time I'm like, "Dude I need twelve cases." He's in [_____], and I just wanted twelve ounces. So I meet him at [a theatre] in [_____]. So I show up and he shows up with this other girl other than my sister, and I kind of knew he was stabbing [having sexual relations] some other shit [female] down in the city, like who wouldn't? I'm just like, "Be careful and just don't give my sister nothing [any sexually transmitted diseases]." Like down there (motioning towards the pelvic region). He shows up driving a [Japanese sports car]. Fuck, was it a nice car man. So anyways, he's like, "I got that beer for you. You wanted twelve cases right?" I'm like, "Yeah." So he opens up the trunk and he's got a big fucking garbage bag. So I'm expecting him to open it up and reach in, he pulls the whole fucking thing out! I'm like, "What's in here." He's like, "Twelve pounds." I'm like "What!" I ended up going to the bank machine and buying two pounds off him. I'm like, "I can't flip that whole fucking thing dude." So anyways, we both laughed about it... So since I had that two pounds, I figured I better get swinging on this. So I moved it as fast as I could. Even selling it for less than I was before, not losing anything but just making less [per ounce] than I was before. So that just kind of started to get the ball rolling. I got rid of it fast enough that he thought "This guy can do some shit." So then he started giving me a better deal and I started getting more and more off him. Then we started hanging out, and he trusted me because he knocked up my sister. And he had heard shit [about me], I had actually punched the shit out of a guy that used to beat him up all the time in high school – so that's why, when I came up to his apartment, he was kind of worried. He always gave me respect for that because that guy used to get the better of him, and I fucking wasted this guy. (18)

As with Chapter Five, I will use some material from Prus' (1989a; 1989b) study of the marketplace to help frame this chapter.[82] Although the overall objectives of dealers in both settings are basically the same – to find steady, reliable suppliers with good quality products, and prices that allow dealers to be competitive and otherwise successful, the drug dealers and their suppliers not only are in danger of apprehension, but their working arrangements also are much more informal, uneven, and potentially volatile.

Thus, although I was not as explicitly attentive to people's involvements in marketplace exchanges when I conducted the interviews, these other elements represent points of differentiation in the two settings. Still, some of the literature on "disrespectable" markets and work does provide some comparative material on these matters (i.e., people involved in illegal and/or disreputable marketplace activities). This includes ethnographic examinations of drug dealers (Langer, 1977; Fields, 1984; Adler, 1985; Murphy, Waldorf, and Reinarman, 1990; Tunnell, 1993; VanNostrand and Tewksbury, 1999; Jacobs, 1999; Desroches, 2005; Hoffer, 2006; Mohamed and Fritsvold, 2006; Decker and Chapman, 2008), bookmakers (Prus and Sharper, 1977), sexual service providers (Prus and Irini, 1980), and tattoo artists (Sanders, 2008).

In what follows, the above-mentioned literature will be used as points of comparison in developing the analysis of drug dealers' involvements in obtaining products. Specifically, I will consider the processes of (1) making contacts with suppliers, (2) working with suppliers, and (3) becoming suppliers.

However, before considering these three matters, the terms of reference used throughout this chapter need to be reestablished. As noted at the end of Chapter Four, the term "dealer" is

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[82] Clearly, "obtaining products" is just one aspect of the broader marketing process. As Prus (1989b) indicates, this also would include: (1) setting up business enterprises, (2) doing management, (3) setting prices, (4) using the media, (5) working the field, and (6) exhibiting products. Also see Prus (1989a) *Making Sales*.

generally used to refer to people who sell drugs on a retail- or lower-level to end-users or drug consumers. The term "customer" is used in this thesis to refer to people who purchase drugs from dealers primarily for their own or their associates' personal use. The term "supplier" is used to refer to people who purchase larger quantities of drugs and sell them to dealers for resale (i.e., engage in wholesaling).

Making Contacts with Suppliers[83]

Everybody is always shuffling around, getting new people to buy from, new people to sell to. Sources dry up, people retire. If you stay in the trade pretty actively it's not hard to make new connections. You're always running into somebody who has a good friend, somebody always has a deal; somebody always has a surplus because one of their buyers isn't around and is looking for somebody else they can trust. (Adler, 1985: 71)

An essential part of dealing activity is developing a supply of drugs to resell. Dealers primarily develop their suppliers through friends who are involved in the drug subculture. In what follows, two activities important to making contact with suppliers are examined: (1) tapping into associational networks and (2) striving for supplier trust.

Tapping into Associational Networks

As members of the dealing community, people often encounter opportunities to develop new supply connections. The ability to find new sources can foster continuity in drug dealing because it allows for the development of a regular and stable clientele.

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[83] Generally, as Prus and Irini (1980: 213) observe, developing contacts also was an important element in rounder continuity: "as it is difficult to sustain involvements on a solitary basis, it is useful to have many contacts, and stronger contacts with established rounders are especially valued." Adler (1985: 70) also found that relationships with suppliers "were the most strongly coveted of all drug world connections because access to drugs was the first and most basic requisite for doing business."

In the present study, dealers tended to develop relationships with suppliers through their friendship networks (see also Tunnell, 1993: 368-369; VanNostrand and Tewksbury, 1999: 69). About half of the dealers interviewed for this study had friends who were suppliers:

My first supplier was a guy who I had met in high school a number of years earlier. We have been friends for years. We used to smoke and stuff together and hang out. He had always been selling weed and drugs. He had dabbled in a number of different things. And he had this opportunity for me where he said, "Hey, if you're ever looking to get rid of something…" I think that's how I got into dealing in general was knowing this guy who had something and thought I could get rid of it and he said, "I'll charge you a good price. We're buddies." It started out with him just giving me little bits here and there and seeing how I did with that and it eventually progressed into me getting bigger amounts. (15)

It was mainly just people that I met. Most of the time it was somebody I knew a few good years before. It wasn't like I went to parties and tried to get to know that guy because he's got coke. It was more just talking to people I knew already and taking it one step further and selling drugs – knowing that they were already into it already. (15)

This guy that I met was a big dealer in [a province], and I became friends with him. He could get K [ketamine], so I started selling K for him. I started selling K but also hooking a few of my friends up with K to sell. So I started distributing not just dealing. I started doing less small stuff myself and distributing to these people to sell and having them work for me. Again this was to make some money but also to support the habit of doing K… I had known this guy and I just approached him. (11)

Dealers also may be introduced to suppliers by their existing sets of friends and associates:

The first time I remember picking up I had to go to a person in [_____] that I knew of. I knew him through other people that smoked, they told me that this guy deals from this town and then I knew his name and got introduced to him in town. (8)

Me and my buddies we knew all the dope dealers in town and they all generally liked us, so they didn't mind us even hanging around them. There were a few guys that were integral in that process of meeting the dope dealers. Like I can think of three guys that we met at parties or through mutual friends that hooked us up with everybody in town that sold dope. And these three guys didn't even know each other, but between the three of them we knew everybody. (18)

The guys that were hooking me up were way older than me [I was seventeen at the time], they were in their thirties… mostly they were friends of friends. Where I'm from everyone knows everybody, and if you hang out with the right people, you can basically get anything. (13)

[We developed our first source] through a friend who was a dealer. He had a connection, a reputable dealer that was known for having a lot and can hook you up any time. So we had my friend go and pick it up first a few times until, you know, ended up meeting the guy myself. (7)

Legitimate work involvements also may provide opportunities to develop new sources (see also Desroches, 2005: 65):

Just from being the owner of a gym, it's just inevitable that you're going to meet people and get talking. The one supplier actually I met him because he also had a legitimate business selling sports supplements, which [the supplements] I bought off of him. The business bought the legitimate supplements off of him, and I bought the illegal substances [steroids] off of him. (3)

[Some of my suppliers were] Guys I'd met through work, just obviously they were in the same scene as I was into, doing the same things like smoking weed, trying drugs out, and partying. It would start off just asking "Hey man do you want to go smoke a joint?" and you start to become friends with them, work with them all the time. They'd say, "If you're ever looking for dope here's my number." I started grabbing [procuring supplies of drugs] like that. (9)

Striving for Supplier Trust

Unlike the legitimate business world where cash can be exchanged for goods without fear of theft or arrest, trust, at some level, had to be extended before a drug deal could occur. Drug traffickers had to rely on the associations they formed and on their community's informal credit rating to generate the sense of trust which was such an essential trading requisite. (Adler, 1985: 79)

Referring to the confidence people have in the ability, reliability, and predictability of others, trust may be valued in more conventional and legitimate supplier-dealer relationships (see Prus, 1989a: 102-130), but it can be a more focal concern for those engaging in illegal enterprises since a violation of trust by one party can have serious implications (e.g., incarceration). Also, because of their illegitimate nature of their marketplace, actors in these realms often do not have formal options in resolving disputes involving others.

Although this study primarily focused on retail-level drug dealers rather than people supplying drugs to dealers (i.e., suppliers), dealers were apt to quickly become aware that suppliers assessed them in terms of their trustworthiness. Thus, dealers may attempt to establish

themselves as trustworthy in certain regards when developing relationships with suppliers (see also Murphy et al., 1990: 339).[84]

In this respect, people that have already established themselves as competent and trustworthy drug dealers are apt to find suppliers more willing to do business with them:[85]

Sure, well the thing is with that is it [developing suppliers] takes a lot of time because you're not just going to automatically meet them unless by chance you end up running into them and you approach them. There might be like a chance that the guy you're getting it from is going to mention you [to the guy he's getting it from] so you get like an attach because it's always going to have to be a connection because every dealer is always paranoid. So each time you meet somebody you don't trust them unless you have that person [a trusted associate] who you know, brought them to you, is like very valuable, like really reliable, and trustworthy. So no dealer trusts another person until they know for sure [of your credibility and trustworthiness]. So therefore you have to gain their [suppliers'] trust, that they start to get to know your name, you get a reputation for yourself, and then when they see what you're bringing to the table, they want you. So either they're going to come get you or they're just going to be like waiting for you to come, and then as soon as you make that aware, or you bring that up, or somehow just get in contact with them, then from there it just moves up. There was a time where I was getting stuff through my friend and he ended up burning the dealer [supplier] and left the money with me, so that I could give it to his dealer because I'd been dealing with my friend for a while and the dealer who was above him knew about this, so my name was beginning to get a bit of a reputation, that I could move [drugs]. So I ended up, by luck, running into him [the supplier] on a side road as he was going fishing. So I just told him I had cash for him, gave it to him, told him that my friend was fucking up, it's fucking me around, I need this. He had no problem. He just hopped out of his truck, pulled his bag out, and gave me a quarter pound [of marijuana], so that's just how it started right there. (7)

It [gaining suppliers' trust] was mainly just hanging out with people and partying with them, and they already know what you're about. And just having a reputation that nothing bad ever has really happened to me, like running into trouble with the law. I guess it goes both ways because I don't have any hardcore street credit from getting caught and not ratting people out, but then again I don't have any of that, which could be good too. I kind of stay under the radar.

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[84] Murphy et al. (1990: 339) observe that successful dealers usually have good interpersonal skills or "people skills." In addition to building trust with suppliers, these interpersonal skills are useful in assessing others as trustworthy and handling troublesome customers.

[85] Dealers' reputations precede them in many respects. Adler (1985: 77-79) uses Shutz's concept of the "umwelt" to explain how people who have not have met each other may still feel like they know each other quite well through their reputations. Relatedly, VanNostrand and Tewksbury (1999: 69) found that connections with suppliers and reliable reputations are facilitated when newcomers to drug dealing are mentored by established dealers who can introduce them to the community and help establish their authenticity: "In this way, the subjects were able to establish reliable reputations, facilitate connections with suppliers, and acquire a regular customer base."

And I'm a smart guy going to school, so I might be more trustworthy knowing that I have a good head on my shoulders. (15)

While having a trustworthy reputation may provide an opportunity for a relationship to develop, a reputation may not be sufficient to sustain a sense of trust between suppliers and dealers in more enduring terms. For this to occur, it seems likely that dealers may need to further display their trustworthiness by developing a reliable track record in their exchanges with particular suppliers:

You know when you trust someone within the first few minutes of meeting them anyways, and that is especially true in the drug game... establishing trust goes back to being solid, and that's what being a strong dealer and strong criminal is all about because you establish trust by getting the job done, and you can only get that job done by being the right thing. So you might make one deal, two deals, but the guy might not still trust you, you have to make sure everything happens without a hitch and when something goes wrong you have to be able fix it right away and how quickly and how severely you fix it is usually how much trust you can establish. You can be acquaintances or friends with a supplier, but he still might not trust you to do the job, which is what happened a few times when we lost different [smuggling] loads. (19)

Thus, trust also may have a precarious quality, subject to reaffirmation or dissolution as its strength is assessed and adjusted by both parties in light of their day-to-day dealings with each other:

My partner vouched for me. The only thing that made it awkward was when I was first getting to know him [the supplier], the first couple times – I had gone and picked up off him three times, and his nickname was [_____], that's what they called him, and I asked him what his name was and he just looked at me weird – super weird. I could tell that he was definitely thrown off by it. (17)

I remember one time I lost the trust of my original weed dealer because I was driving in a buddy's car and we were with a friend of mine and his little brother. We were driving by my supplier's place and I said, "Yeah, that's where I get my weed from is right there." My buddy's little brother, later on a few days later, went and knocked on his door randomly just looking for weed. [My supplier's] girlfriend opened the door and it was just these two little guys, and my supplier is thirty years old at this point, and I'm like fourteen or fifteen, and he's got these other kids that are coming that are even younger. These aren't the kind of people that he would deal to. He would only deal to me because I worked with him. Then when these kids came to the door and I saw him again and he freaked out on me, absolutely freaked out on me. These kids were like, "Yeah, I don't know what his name is, but we were just wondering if we could get some weed?" That's what they said to him, and that's what he told me... He gave me a second

opportunity right away. He didn't hold it against me for that long. We did become friends with each other too even though there was such a huge age difference. We still hung out at the same place everyday at work, so he kind of gave me a second chance. (17)

However, as dealers and suppliers become better acquainted, they may begin to genuinely appreciate each other's company. This provides a base from which a more general form of friendship may emerge. In the following example, a dealer explains how he and his supplier became good friends, partaking in a variety of activities together on a more recreational basis:

Me and my supplier... like I say man, we were like best friends almost at one point for like three or four years, he didn't drink for the first year and a half that I knew him, and then he shows up at my house one day and cracks a beer. After that it was just, "Let's let loose." We partied all the time. We'd go to [_____] and spend three thousand bucks each in two days just partying and prostitutes. He was dating a prostitute, I was dating a stripper, we'd fuck them one night, and then the next night we'd get like two or three prostitutes each and shit like that, all the time. Fuck, it was awesome. Fuck, it was super awesome. (18)

Working with Suppliers

There is a tendency to envision suppliers and buyers as opposing entities, each endeavoring to pursue their own interests at the expense of the other. While this view has some validity, it very much needs to be tempered by the recognition that buyers and suppliers are partners in trade. Their economic well-being and interests are much more closely intertwined than might seem on the surface.... Buyers sometimes intend to deal with vendors on a discrete one-time only basis, but insofar as they wish to establish a stable business, they will be looking ahead to subsequent purchases (consistent with the expectations they are establishing with their customers). Viewed in this manner, buyers are not only purchasing products, they are becoming involved in relationships with the suppliers featuring these products. Regular suppliers add elements of predictability to the buyers' operations. They allow buyers to achieve greater consistency relative to their clientele... Since delays, poor quality merchandise, and inadequate service can play havoc with the buyer's overall marketing operations, these are taken as seriously as any concerns the suppliers may have. (Prus, 1989b: 149)

While drug suppliers and dealers are best envisioned as independent entrepreneurs (Adler, 1985; Desroches, 2005: 49), they are still dependent on each other for their continuing success. Thus, dealers often attempt to cultivate longer-term relationships with their suppliers in order to maintain a level of consistency in their operations and to "hedge their bets" (Prus, 1989b: 147).

Prus (1989b: 150) identifies five concerns of legitimate distributors about relationships with suppliers: (1) product relevancy, (2) quality, service, and price, (3) volume, (4) financing concerns, and (5) private brands. In assessing their current sources of supply, the dealers interviewed for this study had similar concerns. These included: (1) product relevancy, (2) supply reliability, (3) prices, and (4) financing concerns.

Getting connected with a "good" supplier may foster dealers' opportunities to expand their businesses. As will be shown, some of the generally valued qualities in supplier relationships are convenience, a variety of products, good (competitive) prices, and the option to purchase drugs on credit:

I was introduced to my friend's supplier, and I started dealing directly with him, and basically whatever I wanted he had. He had absolutely everything or could get it. Whether it be steroids, cocaine, ecstasy, GHB, ketamine, OxyContin, or whatever, it didn't matter. He was able to get it at a cost much cheaper than anywhere else you would be able to find it and it was much more convenient. And the fact he would spot the drugs also. All I had to do was tell him what I wanted and he would give it to me and I would have to pay him when I sold it. He allowed me to expand my dealing activity. When the supply is right there, it's all just a matter of how hungry you are and how much you want to push it. (2)

Product Relevancy

On different occasions, dealers may encounter opportunities to expand their operations into a wider array of products. Suppliers who offer popular drugs or "hot lines" (Prus, 1989b: 151-152) may be more valued than others who do not offer these products. These opportunities may develop from relationships with current suppliers or through suppliers with whom dealers have yet to do business:

Ecstasy is where I started making real money. Instead of making like six hundred [dollars] a week minus four hundred for cost of drugs, I was making a thousand dollars a week – four grand a month at the age of sixteen! I never really took it seriously from a business standpoint, and then I got sat down, and they [my suppliers] said "Hey look, this is what you're going to do and

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this is how you are going to do it, this is how much money you are going to make. Don't fuck it up." It becomes more serious. (1)

Now this guy that we used to get the E [ecstasy] from, the guy that he got it from was someone we knew even better than him…. So this guy had approached me because he knew that I would always go and get them for people. So he approached me and asked me if I wanted to sell them [MDMA or pure ecstasy] too. So I agreed and this was expensive, especially by today's standards but I mean the price on E has dropped dramatically. He was giving me a hundred caps [capsules] of MDMA for fifteen dollars a cap, which is huge. No one would even pay that anymore, but I could sell them for twenty [dollars] no questions asked by anybody. No one would even question that. That's what they went for – twenty dollars. Now there would be rave parties that would be thrown in people's houses and fields and in one weekend at a party I could easily sell a hundred caps and make five hundred dollars. So five hundred dollars in a weekend is good pay even by standards of today five hundred dollars in a couple days is great. So at that point that was huge money. That was more than I could make in a whole week working full-time. That was more money than I had ever made so that was great. I kept doing that for about two years right until I graduated high school. (11)

However, dealers also may be reluctant to sell new products. Instead, they may prefer to maintain their existing product lines. This is parallel to some of the concerns that retailers may have in the legitimate marketplace where they may "hedge their bets," or mitigate their risks, by "concentrating on the basics" (Prus, 1989b: 144).[86] However, when working more exclusively with a single supplier, dealers may feel they have limited options (or experience "closure") in whether or not they will be selling particular drugs:

I was getting rid of ten pounds a week of weed and a QP [quarter pound] of coke. It wasn't what I wanted, I never wanted to get into that shit [cocaine] – it's a pain in the ass. That's when you start getting fucked around with shit… So I told buddy [my supplier] I need some more weed, and he said, "I won't have any more weed for a while, but can you get rid of this coke? If you want to make money, you got to get rid of this coke." So I reluctantly took the coke. Then I find out that he's still getting weed for this other fucking guy so I call him up and ask him about it, and he says, "That was the last little bit and I promised it to that guy." I knew he could get more weed, but he just wanted me to start moving this coke and then he'd give me back the weed thing. It wasn't anything of my fault, he just wanted me to roll with this shit. (18)

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[86] Prus (1989b: 142-148) also found vendors hedged their bets by: (1) seeking consensus, (2) purchasing established lines, (3) sampling the market with smaller orders, (4) diversifying one's lines, and (5) cultivating relationships with suppliers.

Supply Reliability

As used herein, "supply reliability" refers to dealers' concerns about developing dependable and

consistent sources of drug supply.   Stable sources of supply, much like in the legitimate

marketplace,[87] are valuable elements in successful dealing operations since an uncertain or

unreliable supply can limit the level of sales that dealers can pursue (see also Adler, 1985: 103):

E [ecstasy] became so popular back home that there started to become some big suppliers of
pure MDMA [pure ecstasy] in [my hometown] so we started to pick up off the guys [suppliers]
in my hometown and bring it down and sell it in the city. It was a better ecstasy that you
couldn't get in the city. We'd grab like an ounce of MDMA [in powder form] and pill it up and
sell it to those guys [in the city]. Sometimes we would have guys that would want a quarter
[ounce] of it at one time but we didn't know how steady our source would be so we didn't want
to get rid of it in bulk and not be able to get anymore of it [because] we still liked doing it
ourselves too. (9)

Dealers may attempt to achieve supply stability by working with single or multiple suppliers, but

dealers also may be subject to seasonal and/or cyclical supply shortages that are beyond their

immediate control.

Single supplier loyalty.   Three dealers explained that they preferred to deal with single

suppliers in more exclusive terms because it offered a level of consistency and service that they

otherwise may not be able to achieve through the use of multiple suppliers. Cultivating a strong

relationship with a single supplier may be viewed as an attempt by dealers to "hedge bets," or

mitigate any possible supply problems that may arise in the future (see Prus, 1989b: 147-148):

And all this time I'm dealing with the same guy [supplier]. And that's the way he is man, you
stay true to him and he fucking treats you good, which is a good policy. Like I didn't even look
for anybody else to get shit off of because this guy had it all the time and whatever I asked him
for. And if I didn't have all the money on me, it was never a problem. So why fuck that up? (18)

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[87] Suppliers who were reliable, "well-stocked," and prompt were valued among legitimate
vendors (Prus, 1989b: 155).

Moreover, even if dealers' main suppliers charge more than others, they might still be favoured in terms of the added service and security they provide:[88]

I never really switched suppliers... even if my original connection was more expensive, I would always deal with them because I always knew what I was going to deal with. They know me, I make money for them, and I make money off them. They won't fuck me, they won't fuck with my shit, I know what I'm getting. Whereas if you deal with someone new, you never know what you are going to get. If you deal with the same people all the time, you develop a relationship. They trust you and you trust them. [When] dealing with new people, stupid shit always happens. (1)

In the legitimate marketplace, distributors may value suppliers who offer "exclusive lines," or product lines that are not available to all retailers (Prus, 1989b: 152). Similarly, dealers who develop relationships with single suppliers may encounter opportunities to become the sole distributors of those products in their area:

That summer that I was selling the mushrooms I came into contact with somebody who was a lot older than me, but I knew through family and friends, who I would get E [ecstasy] off of once in a while. Just like an E here or there, and I knew that they had E for sale and were like making a business of it, and there were people doing that sort of thing. So I was kind of around that scene trying to work my way into it I guess…. This same person [supplier] with the E set up a grow-op [marijuana growing operation], and I became the person selling the weed exclusively for them in the area…. I was the sole distributor of the product. It went good. It was really good product and nobody in the town had anything like it, and I started moving up the ladder a bit and started selling bigger quantities to dealers in town that I would have used to have purchased off of…. In regards to that ["moving up the ladder"], that basically happened because I had that one contact that nobody else had, which gave me access to quantity at a decent price and quality that people weren't used to. It wasn't like I really had to work at climbing the ladder; I just had a better product. Better source and a better product, so people had to deal with me basically. (10)

Later, this same person became even more heavily involved in drug dealing when he moved in with his supplier after experiencing some family strife:

I got kicked out of my house because I was missing a lot of school and stuff, so it was just a big battle. I ended up moving in with the supplier of the weed (laughing). Whoops! And the rest is history. Fuck me! Put that in your paper: "Fuck me!"…. So I moved in with my supplier who, eventually I realised, was in a bigger scale operation involving ecstasy. So at that point in time, I started going to lots of parties and stuff because the whole rave thing was getting popular and

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[88] Similarly, in the legitimate marketplace, vendors preferred suppliers that offered buyer protection (in terms of returns, repairs, and replacements). Thus, those offering the lowest price were not always chosen (Prus, 1989b: 155, 157)

we started throwing parties, rave parties specifically so that we could sell E to people. So there was about five or six months there where I was selling a lot of E. (10)

Multiple sources. As noted earlier, the supplier-customer distinction may not always be so clear-cut. Sometimes, dealers' customers can become their suppliers and vice versa. This may be especially true in the lower levels of the drug dealing world where a steady, single source of supply may be harder to develop due to the lack of volume in sales (see also Prus, 1989b: 160-161). In situations like these, lower-level dealers may rely on the collective efforts of the broader local community of dealers in order to remain supplied. Thus, dealers may be seen to "keep tabs" on the situations of their peers (see also Desroches, 2005: 117; and Langer, 1977):

It wasn't like a big-time drug dealing ring or conspiracy or anything like that. It was mostly, the people that turned out to be sources were also the people that were buying weed from me pretty much. It was kind of a community of small-time weed dealers. This person would have weed for a while, and that person would have weed for a while, and everyone went kind of back and forth between one another. These are the type of people that I would see on a regular basis and I'd ask what do you have and what do I have kind of thing because everyone is making money when you're doing that. You're trying to keep your finger on the pulse to know what's going on, what you're options are for money and whatnot. (10)

When dealing primarily with single suppliers, dealers can run into difficulties when their suppliers are suddenly no longer available. When this happens, dealers may scramble to cover the shortage in supply through multiple sources (Desroches, 2005: 115-116). While this stopgap technique may turn out to be more expensive and troublesome than working with previous suppliers, it still satisfies the need of remaining supplied in the short term and therefore usually is considered worth the extra hassle. However, as two participants indicated, dealers may not always be pleased with the arrangement:

Then in the winter, my main supplier, who I owe all this money to, he gets arrested. He gets busted. He goes to jail. So then I'm left with fucking nobody to pick up off anymore. So I'm left with a small amount of money – maybe a thousand dollars, twelve hundred dollars that I owe him obviously because I owe him thousands, but I can't give it to him because I'm broke and I'll be fucked [in trying to pick up more drugs]. So I take his money and go back to some of the people that I used to buy off of and I get an ounce and slowly build back up. So I struggled

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around trying to find where to get it, and I'm bouncing around between a few people getting it off them. But the thing is, because I don't have a lot of money, I can only get an ounce at a time so I'm driving to the city twice a week because I'm selling it so goddamn quickly, and I'm having to turn people down because they want half ounces and shit like that, but I can't afford to sell you half ounces because I only make fifty bucks so I can turn around and drive back to the city? So I'm stressed as fuck this whole time. But I'm making money. I'm making more money. So I had more capital, so I could pick up more. But I'm selling more, so I'm still driving down to the city just as much – I'm still driving down to the city twice a week and picking up four to six ounces a week. Driving there and back and paying cash. And it's starting to get more expensive. There were a few [major] busts. So it's hard to get quality and it's getting expensive. So I'm paying more even though now I'm paying cash and I'm buying quantity – I'm still paying more than when I was getting spotted in little amounts before. (11)

A few times since I started dealing even my source would dry up, but then even from that, other people would be hounding me and asking me and telling me I have to get them whatever and I'd just like know some other people. I remember that sometimes I would be getting it for twenty dollars which was the going rate and I'd be selling it for twenty-five dollars and even sometimes just selling it for twenty [dollars] and not even making anything, just giving it to people basically. (6)

Cyclical supply shortages. Some drug dealers may become disinvolved for short periods of time and then become reinvolved again. This may be common in deviant subcultures more generally. As Prus and Grills (2003: 258) note, "given the relatively common tendency for people to go through multiple instances of disinvolvement from, and reinvolvement in, particular realms of deviance, analysts sometimes refer to people experiencing 'cycles' or 'spirals' of abstinence and reinvolvement." A few of the dealers interviewed for this study, at some points in their careers, primarily sold marijuana that was grown outdoors. Thus, these dealers would lose their source of supply and become disinvolved seasonally with the production and harvesting of marijuana:

From Grade nine to Grade eleven I sold marijuana. I wouldn't say consistently but whenever it was around. This is basically how it works: harvest season [the fall] comes around and you have a lot of dope laying around, and when there was an abundance of it laying I would have it at my disposal. Summertime when it would start to run dry [supply of marijuana running out], it wouldn't be as easily accessible for me, so I wouldn't be selling it. (2)

Things died off for a bit because my supply dried up for a while. It was outdoor [grown] weed, so it was a once a year shot [harvest]. So it lasted almost a full season, but it kind of dried up

before the next season's crop came off.... I actually just kind of quit doing it [dealing] for a while. I slowed down and quit the drug dealing, and I just went to school and just did my thing. Honestly, I think I would have probably kept dealing if it had been an option for me but I just didn't have access to a steady supply at a price that I could make money selling, so I got out of it for a bit.... The following fall in harvest season there was another crop. Not quite as big as the previous one but there was enough there to keep me in business for a while, six or eight months. (10)

Once wintertime came around... the weed selling started to taper off at this point because we weren't able to get the good prices anymore and people were running out of what they had [from the harvest season]. And it was starting to become a bit of a hassle... So I eventually slowed down on that. (15)

Pricing[89]

One of the areas in which dealers assess the value of their suppliers is their pricing. Although some dealers may be quite satisfied with the quality of their suppliers' products, they may be less content with their prices. When dealers consider suppliers' prices to be "too high," they may be reluctant to expand their operations:

I had a good connection, but I didn't have the best price. I remember even sometimes we'd been trying that [setting up larger deals]. We're all like big-headed right because we're connected to somebody that was involved in [producing large amounts of MDMA]. So we're kind of thinking we are on top of the world. We had one of the best connections of the purest forms of ecstasy, which is almost impossible to come by. So going to the other rave parties we'd be meeting other people that are just like us coming from other towns and stuff like that. We'd kind of try to hook up a bigger deal where it would just be a bigger chunk where you could just do it one time and sell it to them, but we could never get a good price. (6)

Similarly, Langer (1977: 380) found a common theme among his sample of marijuana and hashish wholesalers was the constant search for the ideal deal. An ideal or good deal would include a large quantity of high quality drugs at a very competitive price:

One of the recurrent themes in terms of potential monetary gain is the ever present quest for the "good deal." This quest involves obtaining a large quantity of very potent marijuana or hashish at what would be seen as a fair price. The "good deal" is the best way a dealer can ensure profits as well as satisfied, steady customers. Recognizing a good deal presupposes a comprehensive

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[89] I did not directly ask about this topic during the interviews and thus do not have much data on pricing concerns. This would be something I would pursue in future research.

knowledge of the current market value of drugs which fluctuate on a daily basis. Once the arrival of a "shipment" is made public by a contact, the dealer may have to go into direct competition with his colleagues to obtain it - risking more money in the hope of greater return for his initial investment.

Financing Concerns

In the legitimate marketplace, it is common for suppliers to provide product to their retailers on

consignment or credit bases (Prus, 1989b). This arrangement not only facilitates retailers'

abilities to conduct business, it also intensifies and entangles their relationships with suppliers

(Prus, 1989b: 163-164). Similar financing concerns and experiences can be found in

relationships between drug dealers and their suppliers.

Accepting product on credit. The option to purchase products on a consignment basis

may provide dealers with opportunities to operate on higher levels than they otherwise would be

able to if they were required to pay for product "up front" (see also Murphy et al., 1990: 337):[90]

That [meeting my supplier] was through parties like through long time friends. Definitely through the older crowd. Like a friend's older brother. We went to their parties and then he introduced us to the guy that was making it. They in turn, to push the [I] drug started spotting it [providing it on a consignment basis]. Like I would have never of had spots before. I was used to paying like four hundred dollars for two ounces of weed. I wasn't used to getting like four thousand dollars worth of drugs for nothing. It made me feel that I could make all this money with no risk at all. People were willing to spot these drugs, and then I could turn around and double the money. It definitely made me want to sell it. (8)

Summer after high school, somebody brought ecstasy back from out west, and from then on we had a constant connection to ecstasy. I met way more people who were making way more money than these weed dealers I was dealing with. These ecstasy people were selling millions of tabs and bringing over like fifty thousand [pills of ecstasy]. It affected me where I didn't have to pay

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[90] While discussing people's initial involvements in cocaine selling, Murphy et al. (1990: 337) findings are still quite relevant to the experiences of established dealers as well since having access to product on credit may be a concern for both dealer novices and veterans: "Another important aspect of beginning to sell cocaine is whether the connection is willing to 'front' the cocaine (risk a consignment arrangement) rather than requiring the beginner to pay in full. Having to pay 'up front' for one's inventory sometimes slowed sales by tying up capital, or even deterred some potential dealers from entering the business. Fronted cocaine allowed people with limited resources to enter the occupation."

for it anymore because there was so many people who were dealers who were getting it right from the source who would just spot me like two hundred hits of E for just some minimal amount of money where you were just promised to make like two grand [two thousand dollars] in a week…. At the same time I met this guy, I met another guy that was involved in another type of drug [Ketamine and GHB] and in producing it. So it was at the pinnacle of distribution. It allowed me to expand and I didn't even have to have all the drugs on me. People could just call me and tell me I want this, that and this. I would make a phone call and pick up all this stuff and just drop it off and it's all gone. I started to only do bigger sales unless I was actually at the party then I would just turn it over for more money. (8)

I was at a party and I ended up hearing of a dealer that came from [_____] that came to town. He had extremely cheap prices on everything, he was just handing it out to anybody that would ask for a spot, absolutely anybody... So that's when I was introduced to him, and then from there, that's where things started to progress into cocaine, ecstasy, ketamine in larger amounts. Like thousands of pills, half pounds to pounds of ketamine, five to ten pounds of weed at a time. Anything you needed he could acquire, like amounts, didn't matter. So that's where things really started to progress for myself. (7)

Some dealers may be cautious in their sales activities when supplies are acquired on a consignment basis. This may be especially true when the supplier is considered a friend:

It definitely affected my approach. I just didn't want to screw anybody over kind of thing. So I always made sure I made his money first before I went extreme in doing it [using the drugs myself]. I would do a lot, but I would always have his money. I never ran into problems [with accumulating debt]. I would maybe be short a couple hundred bucks or something like that but no big deal – it wasn't like I was a couple thousand short or something like that. And I was always doing math in my head figuring out how much cash I had here, how much I was owed, how much I had to get rid of, what I had left to get his money, what I had left over, and really how much I could make, how much I could do or give away or do whatever I wanted to with it once I made his money. So I definitely changed my strategy once I wasn't paying for it up front I knew I always had to make this guy's money and the fact that we were friends for years before that kind of changed how I went about doing things because I didn't want to screw over a buddy and have him pissed off at me for the rest of my life, or years, or 'til whenever I paid him. (15)

Relatedly, dealers who fail to repay their suppliers risk losing those sources:

I ended up owing my mushroom supplier a bunch of money so that [source] dried up on me. I ended up owing money by being ignorant, spending too much money, doing too much of the drugs myself, being reckless with money is basically how that came about…. He kind of just let it slide at first, and eventually over the next six to ten months I paid him in pieces, but it wasn't in one lump sum. (10)

Declining Credit.[91] Two dealers prefered to pay for supplies up front rather than incur any debts with their suppliers. Debts, it seems, are the source of much difficulty in the drug dealing world and declining credit is an attempt to avoid such problems:

The only time I got stuff on spot [product fronted with an agreement to pay suppliers later] is if I just paid ten thousand dollars for a bunch of coke and they [my suppliers] didn't want to drive back up next week or the week after, so they would lay another like six, seven [ounces] on me. So they [my suppliers] always trusted me more than other people. I always had money from the beginning and good at saving money. Whereas some people would make money, and whatever money they made they would go blow on whatever and then they got to get spotted again and basically they just dig themselves into a big hole because they are not ever going to get ahead. If you are going to spot people because it happens no matter what you say and when those people burn you and you've burned yourself by spending all your money and now you are in debt to drug dealers and that's not a good place to be ever. So I would always pay for whatever I wanted. If they wanted to give me extra, I would accept it, but before I would spend any of my money it would go to that first. (1)

That's why I never took really huge amounts [on credit] either – excessive amounts. Compared to some other people [dealers] that I know I was always lower key just because I never wanted to get in over my head sort of thing to the point where you are owing somebody like five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten grand [thousand dollars]. If something happens and you lose all that, what the fuck are you going to do? I didn't want that kind of exposure, you could say. I was fine working my job everyday making like five hundred, six hundred bucks a week and then supplementing my income with a few extra hundred dollars a week and being able to party for free too. (15)

I don't let somebody front me 'cause if it don't come out the way it supposed to be, you don't get your money, he don't get his money.... It's all just a big commotion between you and your friends. (Jacobs, 1999: 45)

Becoming Suppliers: Wholesaling and Manufacturing Drugs

Things started to progress where having maybe too many clientele where things couldn't be handled, like I couldn't meet up with these people. My strategy was I was looking for someone younger that was starting to get into it where I was a year or two prior. Starting to scout out dealers that would be under me where it would buffer me from my clientele where I could pass off the clientele that I didn't want anymore and give it to them where I wouldn't have to do anything, but I'd still be maintaining profit throughout the whole dealing process... I'd look for what I thought was a good dealer, what I thought would be the smart choice. Someone who isn't

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[91] Desroches (2005: 146) cites the decreased freedom and increased pressure associated with accepting product on credit or "being fronted."

a loudmouth, someone that's modest, someone that's actually smart that can see the profit and the potential that there is for this and that would listen to me as things started to progress and that I knew they can make the right decisions for themselves. I'd just approach them by asking them if they want to go smoke a joint or just go for a walk and shoot the shit. So you just approach them and ask them. And if they're interested, you'd sit down and you give them a little bit to start off with, like you'd give them an ounce and see how it goes from there. Then see how fast they could do things, whether they could take care of everything properly and check up on them and see if things are still up, if things are still going afloat [not losing money]. Then from there, things just start to progress. Keep tabs to minimise the risk factor of losing out on your product. From there, if they're good, you start giving them a little bit more trust, you start giving them a little bit more product. You start seeing it go a little bit faste,r so you start stock piling for them if they show they have the potential. (7)[92]

Thus far, this chapter has primarily attended to dealers' relationships with their suppliers. The focus now shifts to dealers moving into supplier roles and selling to other dealers (i.e., wholesaling).

However, before considering these matters, it seems useful to define the terms of reference used throughout this chapter once again. As used in this section, the term "dealer" is generally used to refer to people who sell drugs on a retail basis to end-users or drug consumers. The term "customer" is used in this section to refer to people who purchase drugs from dealers primarily for their own or their associates' personal use. The term "supplier" is used to refer to people who purchase larger quantities of drugs and sell them to dealers for resale (i.e., engage in wholesaling).

Although much more limited data-wise, this section of Chapter Six primarily considers the experiences of *drug dealers* who *become suppliers* by selling drugs to *dealers* for resale. It was observed in this study that people who supply drugs may divide their clients into two broad categories: end-users and dealers. Higher volume dealers are the most valued type of client for

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[92] In terms of assessing and approaching customers, Prus and Irini (1980: 12) found that prostitutes also might spend some time assessing potential customers as "safe" and viable. This often involved some light discussion over drinks and provided an opportunity for both prostitute and patron to assess one another. As the dealer in the excerpt indicated, he also utilised a drug use interactional forum to assess and proposition others.

suppliers because they have the potential to repeatedly and consistently buy larger quantities of drugs in order to supply their own customers. Moreover, dealers often make fewer transactions with their suppliers than retail customers would. These transactions are usually conducted in less risky and more congenial ways since dealers may share some of the same concerns and perspectives that their suppliers hold.[93] In terms of dealers becoming suppliers, the following themes are considered in what follows: (1) getting involved in wholesaling, (2) recruiting dealers, (3) encountering payment problems, and (4) manufacturing drugs.

Getting Involved in Wholesaling

The dealers interviewed for the present thesis became involved in wholesaling via two main routings. First, some dealers were *recruited* into wholesaling by their suppliers. Second, other dealers became involved in wholesaling with some particular objectives or purposes that they desired to achieve from these involvements , or attending *instrumentalism*.

Being recruited by suppliers into wholesaling. As used herein, "being recruited by suppliers into wholesaling" refers to experiences of dealers who encounter encouragement and/or support from their suppliers to begin supplying other dealers with drugs rather than solely selling to retail customers.

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[93] However, it should not be assumed that the user-dealer distinction is mutually exclusive. Drug dealers, at various times, may be focused on their using involvements rather than sales. Also, Prus (1989b: 85) found that business owners (which can be compared to suppliers) may be reluctant to trust staff (which can be related to dealers) since they may not share the same concerns as ownership. It should also be pointed out that dealers are not directly comparable to staff. While they may be similar in some respects, it is much more accurate to envision dealers as independent entrepreneurs that enter into relationships with suppliers (see Adler, 1985; Desroches, 2005: 49). These relationships are characterised by varying levels of commitment (and exclusivity) by both parties.

In the present study, two dealers explained that their suppliers relinquished various aspects of their operations to them. These aspects included their existing customer base (i.e., dealers), dealing knowledge, and techniques.[94] As dealers explained, suppliers may engage in this activity for various reasons. It may be to (1) relinquish parts of their businesses deemed to be more troublesome or unnecessary, (2) free up their time so they can move into higher levels of supplying activity, or (3) give dealers an opening into an otherwise new market for themselves, to name a few. Thus, dealers may encounter opportunities for intensified involvement when their suppliers leave the community they have been operating in to pursue opportunities in other markets (e.g., suppliers may move to larger communities to gain access to less expensive and higher quality products). This departure can leave a void that may be filled by those dealers who aspire to seize the opportunity and "move up" and become suppliers themselves (Prus, 1989b: 129-130):[95]

So this is where I started making pretty good money, and I was going down to the city to get my drugs. Basically, the people that I dealt with, eventually, they are like three, four, five years older than me, and they aren't going to sit in [small town] forever. They've got people that they have been working with that have moved away, and then they move away to follow their organisation, if that's what you want to call it. So they now need someone to fill the void, and that's when it's your chance. There's probably three or four other people and you get your

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[94] This support also may ease dealers concerns with predicting market demand for new products since suppliers may shift their existing regular distributors to aspiring dealers. As Prus (1989b: 140) observes, "predicting" the success of products is a concern for legitimate business owners more generally: "In ordering goods, buyers are not only predicting that others will wish to continue (or start) consuming the item, but further that they will do so with certain frequencies (not consuming too little) and within certain time frames (i.e., within shelf and fashion product lives, with sufficient stock turns to be profitable to carry). They are also predicting that sufficient numbers of consumers will be able to afford the goods and will elect to buy their products rather than those of their competitors."

[95] Similarly, as Prus (1989b: 129-130) found, opportunities may arise for legitimate sales people to "move up" into managerial roles when others above them "move on" and leave vacancies. Many of the same qualities of good salespeople are valued in good managers, especially organisational skills and dedication to the company. Still, some salespeople do not want the extra responsibilities that managerial roles entail.

chance to be the guy, the guy that gets hooked up, the guy that gets his stuff from the city and you hook-up [supply dealers] everyone else. (1)

When this happens, suppliers may direct some or most of their former clients to begin doing business with particular dealers. This process may be crucial for some dealers in successfully moving into supplier roles since they may not have the necessary contacts to begin supplying dealers:

Buddy [my supplier] gave some contacts [of dealers] to me too... He's like, "Well go talk to this guy and get him to start moving some shit for yeah." Stuff like that. Then me and this other guy [dealer] would trade off to this one guy out on [_____], like he'd do [supply] him one time, I'd do him the next, that kind of thing. And fuck, this guy took large – he sells to the firemen and the fucking cops, sells dope to them. Like this guy pretty much runs [_____] as far as dope went. (18)

People [dealers] that were buying from these older people [my suppliers] before they left town, well they know me, and they start buying off me. They [dealers] were passed on to me [by my suppliers]. (1)

Moreover, and similar to the legitimate marketplace,[96] suppliers also may serve as mentors of sorts when dealers have little experience with, involvement in, or knowledge of the drug being sold:

So when [my suppliers] moved away, and they tried to get me to sell coke and I was like "Fuck I can't sell coke! I don't know anyone that does coke!" and they were like "Here, buy this and well this guy does it and this guy does it and this guy sells for us. So just get some stuff and when he's out you can sell and replenish him or whatever. This is how much it costs, this is what happens." So I knew a small amount of people, I got my first ounce and it was gone in two days. I had paid eleven hundred dollars for it and I was sitting on eighteen hundred or two thousand dollars after and it took me two days, plus [I was still making money from] the other drugs I was selling! (1)

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[96] Prus (1989b: 109, 111-113) found that suppliers may provide some training for their distributors as well as some periods of apprenticeship (both by design and via emergent relationships). Similarly, some drug suppliers also provided this for their distributors in the present study (see also Murphy et al., 1990; Adler, 1985; Desroches, 2005). However, unlike the more formalised, more organised legitimate marketplace, there are not formal training programs in distribution offered by drug suppliers. Although, for example, marijuana literature does exist on the techniques and processes of setting up a growing operation from start to finish. Much of the product knowledge and sales techniques of the drug business were learned "on the job" (also similar to legitimate business owners).

Attending to instrumentalism.   As used herein, the term "instrumentalism" is used to describe instances where dealers become involved in wholesaling with some particular objectives in mind.   Generally speaking, by supplying drugs to dealers, people may achieve a level of involvement that is unattainable through retail sales.   The potential for (1) greater sales and (2) decreased hassles and risks were the main objectives of five dealers who became involved in wholesaling drugs (see also Adler, 1985; Desroches, 2005):[97]

You always have to set goals for yourself in that manner [moving up in the dealing world]. You don't want to be just dealing with the same person, you want to be moving up where there's more potential, more profit. Like thinking about who could you have [as a dealer] that could take more of your product to people that you don't know and moving it towards them because there's a huge market for it. It was known that everybody at that time or a lot of people wanted it [marijuana], so you have to think of different people that can handle these people or make the connection with these people to hook them up with it, therefore it would be more product sold, more profit, and expansion, which is going to put you up higher and higher and higher on the pecking order. (7)

Eventually when I got bigger in drugs, I quit selling grams and I would sell eight-balls [three and a half grams] and half ounces and ounces. Basically you become too big for these small-timers, and this is where I started to get people to work for me. You recruit people the same way you got recruited. Some people hang out with different groups than you. Groups that you would never hang out with. (1)

Word of mouth quickly went around. It built up to where I became the supply line for other people. The only way to profit is to make money from labour in whatever you're doing, so you have to get people under you right away. Dealing, for me, doing dime bags and shit like that was very short lived. Very quickly I was handing out weed to other people to sell in that fashion. So very quickly I was in mid-management I guess you could say. It was a quick progression. So I would lay quarter pounds on people. (19)

I started being more selective of the clientele that came to me [as I became more involved in dealing]. I was passing it off to those other dealers because I was starting to lose trust in people, and I started becoming more paranoid where I wanted a buffer in between me where there was no problems…. Just like the marijuana I used the same tactics, the same strategies [for dealing ketamine and ecstasy]. The people that were underneath me were a year or two younger than me so I saw that every generation is going to be going through the same thing. Especially from the surrounding area that we're from, it does fall into play that the people ahead of you seem to

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[97] It should also be noted that more prestige may be attributed to suppliers than retail-level dealers.

show what's coming forward for you, that there's going to be this big drug scene and a lot of people will jump on it. Small towns, a lot of boredom, parties, people just start using more and more. So they start using the drug more which came into play with more people calling me, so I'd try to pass it off to one of my weed dealers and start giving it to them so that they could take care of these clientele so that I could start to calm down and get the 'heatiness' or the police off me. So the structure I already had in place for weed I kind of used for every other drug also, the same strategy, the same business ethics. (7)

Before the novice suppliers begin recruiting more organised or regular dealers, they may

engage in wholesaling activities on much more limited levels. Thus, two suppliers explained that

they preferred to make exchanges with already trusted associates as buffers or "middlemen"

rather than meeting any new customers.[98] However, using middlemen may be more of a

precautionary strategy than an attempt to dramatically increase sales or become a supplier:

Even if say guy A's and guy B's friends wanted stuff, to my knowledge they didn't even know where it was coming from. They were just buying it from A and B, so they didn't know who I was because there is no need for them to know where it is coming from anyways. It just offered me a bit of protection against people who I don't really know. So they wouldn't know it's coming from me. If they really needed to know who it was coming from, as far as if they had to know if it was good quality or if they were going to get ripped off then I would just say, "Don't worry about it then," because it wasn't about making money. So it didn't matter to me if they got it or not. It was almost a favour, right – I was supplying something that they couldn't buy at a pharmacy. (3)

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[98] Similarly, Adler (1985: 52) and Hoffer (2006: 50) also found that most dealers preferred a middleman arrangement because of the additional layer of security it provided between them and unknown customers. Also, Prus and Sharper (1977) found similar practices among bookmakers. Also of relevance is Goffman's (1959: 218-220) conception of "dramaturgical circumspection" in choosing teammates and limiting team size: "Loyalty and discipline, in the dramaturgical sense of these terms, are attributes required of teammates if the show they put on is to be sustained…. Obviously, one such technique is for the team to choose members who are loyal and disciplined, and a second one is for the team to acquire a clear idea as to how much loyalty and discipline it can rely on from the membership as a whole for the degree to which these attributes are possessed will markedly affect the likelihood of carrying off a performance and hence the safety of investing the performance with seriousness, weight, and dignity. The circumspect performer will also attempt to select the audience that will give a minimum of trouble in terms of the show the performer wants to put on and the show he does not want to have to put on…. It will be apparent that an automatic way of ensuring that no member of the team or no member of the audience acts improperly is to limit the size of both teams as much as possible. Other things being equal, the fewer the members, the less possibility of mistakes, 'difficulties,' and treacheries."

The guy I moved out there with, we ended up living in different towns from each other, and I had stopped dealing for several months until I ran into him again who had a bunch more E [ecstasy] at a way cheaper price because it turns out that the main supply was coming from there, the same supply that we had back home. So all of a sudden I got presented a chance to sell the same shit and make way more money. So I started doing that for a bit and hanging out with my supplier and I eventually met the main supplier, the guy he was getting it from... I was in a really pricey town and wasn't making that much money, and I was young and realised at this new price that I could make a whole bunch of money... It turns out that there were some people from back home that were out there, and they knew other people, so it was a lot of word of mouth, and just through legitimate jobs I had I had met a bunch of people who knew a bunch of people. It just kind of mushroomed. I was definitely more careful, like I didn't sell to as wide of a variety of people. I dealt with the people that I knew and trusted. I just didn't want to get arrested or get set up or something stupid. So I sold a bit larger quantities to people that I did know and they would kind of filter it down to their friends instead of me being the person that sold it to every single one. (10)

I know the summer started and I had a mushroom hook up again. I had started a part-time job, so I started buying mushrooms with the money I made at the job, and the job was conveniently a popular hang out for teenagers, so I was pretty much using the job to sell drugs. I was also selling weed if I could get access to it but mostly mushrooms for that summer... At my workplace, I essentially had a big supply that I would keep in the washroom at work, in the staff washroom. There would be all the local kids that hung out there that knew I sold drugs and they would go out there and meet people in town, visitors and tourists. They would pretty much send business my way. It was a tourist community and those local kids were there everyday, and they would meet people on vacation and everybody was looking for drugs, and they sent them my way (laughing)... I would never sell to the tourists. I would have these guys do it and that would be a kind of middleman I guess that would be out there talking, and they would get a free gram of mushrooms or some weed or something if they brought me a bunch of business. I worked there right, once you have a name like that [drug dealer] out on the street and people know your place of employment, it's not hard to out yourself doing shit like that [selling directly to strangers]. (10)

Recruiting Dealers[99]

As used herein, "recruiting dealers" refers to suppliers identifying and soliciting people to begin distributing their products. The participants interviewed for this study recruited (1) established dealers and (2) newcomers. Suppliers also (3) attended to the trustworthiness of dealers.

In selecting dealers to work with, suppliers may approach already established dealers to make their "pitch" since they already have some dealing experience and an established customer base (see also Murphy et al., 1990: 337; Fields, 1984: 256):[100]

The only criteria there [with recruiting dealers] is that your money arrives in your pocket. So anybody that already had something going [already dealing], I was actively recruiting because I had the line on the cheaper weed coming from the Asians, so when I can beat margins by one hundred or two hundred bucks, a lot of people are interested in doing that. My pitch has always been to already established dealers with money in hand who can profit from the deals that we are going to be offering. (19)

For the most part, you know, there is something you recognise in people. The same as when I dealt drugs and when someone deals [supplies] drugs to me. You recognise someone as a younger person that could do work for you. So when I got older and sold drugs, I would see other dealers and pick them out and be like "Yo, you know people that I don't know, you got this different crowd." It's probably the same way that I got picked out. (1)

I was always trying to meet other people that were dealing to try and get more customers. Even if they weren't friends, like younger people, I'd try and sell to them. You pretty much just go to a party and people would notice it was good weed, and I'd tell them that I had some for sale....

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[99] Again, while some parallels may be drawn between recruiting distributors and "hiring staff" (Prus, 1989b: 93) in the legitimate marketplace, it is much more accurate to envision suppliers and distributors as entities unto themselves which enter into relationships with one another. Still, suppliers may share some concerns with legitimate managers in "hiring staff" or recruiting distributors. Prus identifies four concerns legitimate mangers attend to when making hiring decisions: (1) social skills, (2) reliability and dedication, (3) technical skills, and (4) experience. Generally, drug suppliers were most concerned about the reliability and dedication of distributors because of (1) the risks associated with illegal enterprises and (2) the tendency for suppliers to extend credit to their distributors (see also Fields, 1984). Also (see Prus, 1989b: 105-108), more organised, more formalised legitimate businesses tended to use conventional methods to recruit staff that dealers do not have access to, such as (1) media recruiting and (2) employment agencies. However, dealers and legitimate mangers both used (3) "employee" contacts to assist in recruitment.

[100] Similarly, "staff stealing" in the legitimate marketplace seems to be a parallel process in some ways (Prus, 1989b: 107).

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When I went to college, I went around and bought weed off people. I found out who all of the dealers were by buying weed off them. Like I'd just go and be like, "Do you know where I can go and get some weed?" And they'd tell me to go to number so and so and ask for [_____] or whoever... So I met all these guys... I knew that I could get weed for cheap so I wanted to find out what they were paying. So I'd meet them, "How much do you pay for a QP [quarter pound]?" And they'd be like, "Seven [hundred dollars]." And I'd be like, "I can get it to you for six, six-fifty." And then they'd be like, "Okay." They'd call me up, I'd go get it. (16)

Suppliers also may attempt to recruit newcomers into dealing. These offers are typically proposed to friends and family members that suppliers anticipate will be receptive to the idea:

It was never like I recruited in the sense of putting out an ad or look to do it [expand my operations]. It was just people that I knew that were close friends that knew I had it, and they would be looking for opportunities to make money because they were going to parties or something. (15)

I know everybody in town, younger and older. I was selling to ranges from probably sixteen to fifty-five [years old]. I started hooking up my little brother, he was selling mad dope for me, him and his buddies... So I like to deal with my two brothers and a few really good friends, and that's who I only ever really got to sell for me. (18)

Suppliers also may spend some time assessing the trustworthiness of dealers. As used herein, "trust" refers to the confidence people have in the ability, reliability, and predictability of others. Notions of trust may be taken into account by suppliers in deciding whom to involve in certain aspects of their operations (see also Adler, 1985: 79; Desroches, 2005: 122). As Murphy et al. (1990: 337) observe: "The connection/fronter [supplier] also evaluates the trustworthiness of the potential dealer, as well as their own capability of absorbing the loss should the deal 'go bad' and the frontee be unable to pay. The judgment of the fronter is crucial, for a mistake can be very costly and there is no legal recourse." While trust is not of equal concern to all suppliers or at all times, it may be a key consideration for some:

It [trust] plays a huge role. You always have to keep tabs on who you do trust and what you can trust them with so you can make proper decisions on what kind of move you're going to make. It depends on what you're doing though. You can trust certain people with certain things. If you have something specific that you want to do, you need to figure out the parameters of it and if you have somebody that you need to do it with, then that is based on that. You have that type of trust with them. (10)

Assessing dealers as trustworthy also may be a central concern of some suppliers due to the potential repercussions (e.g., arrest, debt, robbery) of performing transactions with less than reliable people.[101] Specifically, in assessing potential dealers as trustworthy, suppliers may take into account several things. This includes people's demeanour, actions, reputations,[102] and recommendations from trusted associates:[103]

You can tell if you're talking to somebody, if they're bullshitting. If they're looking you in the eye and have like a trustworthy demeanour. Just their actions when you deal with them. The stuff you've heard about them – their reputation. Just track record is something that you build over time – experience. (10)

It's [building trust] definitely important. A lot of it is word of mouth like if you have somebody that you already trust and they vouch for somebody, you kind of give them a lot of leeway or just through slowly doing business with someone you start small and if it works and they pay you on time and you like their personality, and you don't think they're running around running their mouth. It just slowly builds like that. (11)

At first they'll usually have the money to buy an ounce, and after they buy an ounce, they'll come back and get another one, and maybe the third or fourth time they'll ask, "I'll pay for one, but can you give me an extra one because I can get rid of it." So then I'll loan him a bit more, and

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[101] Relatedly, Prus and Irini (1980: 7) found that bar managers often "screen" hookers that work in their bars. This was done in an attempt to avoid legal trouble by not drawing too much police attention to their establishments. Similarly, suppliers also had some concerns with those involved in their enterprises drawing too much "heat" or police attention. Also, Prus and Irini (1980: 12) found that hookers might spend some time assessing their customers as "safe" and viable.

[102] Drug world associational networks serve as a means of checking on people's histories and reputations. These "member checks" facilitated the generation of trust and doing business (Adler, 1985: 75). In contrast with my sample of suppliers, the street-level crack dealers found in Jacobs' (1999) study may only have a few moments to assess potential customers as trustworthy or untrustworthy. As such, they may develop techniques in assessing others as trustworthy that are more suited to the fleeting nature of their transactions. These included: interpreting body language (especially facial expression), driving characteristics, forms of speech, and quizzing customers (asking questions).

[103] Some suppliers may require *trusted* associates to vouch for newcomers until they are deemed trustworthy on their own. This method allows newcomers trusted access while they establish themselves as trustworthy to dealers through their day-to-day dealings with them over time. Thus, establishing trust may be a gradual process. Decker and Chapman (2008: 96) found similar practices among smugglers.

then if he pays me back again right away and it's all good then it can happen again, and it goes from there… You just have to stick to your word. (16)

Encountering Payment Problems[104]

As noted earlier, dealers may be the most valued type of clients because they often buy larger quantities of product than retail customers. However, by trusting dealers with large quantities of product, suppliers expose their businesses to greater risks if those dealers fail to settle their debts. Very quickly these debts can accumulate and threaten the operations of suppliers:

That's just it, that's the whole thing, like the main fucking thing is debt. As far as debt-wise, like I say, you give somebody a half pound of weed, if they smoke a quarter [quarter ounce] in a night, that's fucking pushing it, like you're high as fuck. You give someone an ounce of coke, and him and another guy or two other guys could literally do it all, and in a frenzy, like a fucking piranha going at raw meat. I've fucking been to those places man where those guys sit around and fuck they're like hating the guy that's holding the [crack] pipe [because they want another dose themselves].… It's different types of people man. Like people that just sit around and smoke weed, like how fucking far in debt can you get? You can only smoke so much weed. But coke man you can run through that shit in a hurry. I know from my own experience, three quarters of an ounce in one night. Yeah, that was bad. But I've done twelve or fourteen grams in a night and on separate occasions. Sometimes seven or eight. Like you can go fucking wild on that shit, I know from my own experience and then I know how other people get fucked up on it. That's why I didn't really want to get into [dealing] it in the first place. Recreational yeah, but dealing? You can make mad cash off it, you can make mad cash, but when people fuck up, especially after they get your trust, so after a while your like, "Take a QP [quarter pound]. Call me next week." And they don't call, and then you catch up to them and they don't have the money. That's how people get fucked up.… I got one guy that owes me seven grand and then there's a bunch of Mickey Mouse™ shit like three, four, five hundred bucks. But it all adds up to about twenty thousand bucks, which I could use in my pocket… Just with the one guy [that owed me seven thousand dollars]… he was one of the guys that was awesome [dealing for me] for the longest time, but then he started getting into rockin' [smoking crack cocaine]. (18)

As time started to progress I started to notice the people I trusted or that I gave the shit to were starting to slip up a little or just all together slipped up. One time there'd be one guy that would

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[104] Distributor debts can be the source of much stress and frustration for suppliers:
Money started disappearing, couldn't pick up again, people [that I was supplying] started taking weeks and weeks and weeks [to pay] so my amount that I was picking up started to diminish. Things started to slip up a bit more for me. I started using a bit more drugs for the stress and it just took a huge toll on my life. Seeing that the money was nowhere, there was thousands of dollars up in the air… and it was my responsibility. (7)

slip up for two thousand dollars, and that would be my loss for the week. And so I would have to cover that. Or it would be five thousand dollars and I'd have to cover that and then I wouldn't have the money to pick up again [acquire more product]. With these types of slip-ups, it was kind of difficult because it would be with such good friends. In the drug dealing game, usually with these sorts of instances extreme measures are taken, like violence or harassment or intimidation, to get back the money, but with large amounts of money like that, you would just have to give them more in order for them to pay you back. And that's just another investment that you're pushing towards them that could potentially be the end of you. You have to take that trust into consideration because these are lifetime friends, so you do put the trust in them, but certain times they just end up slipping or it ends up going away. For instance, one good friend asked me for a quarter pound of coke, no problem and I gave it to him. I hear a week later that he smoked it all. That's like forty-four hundred dollars, that's a large amount of money. You either have to cut these losses and try and start from scratch or you pursue these debts and try and get those back to pick up again. (7)

As the participant in the previous example points out, suppliers may extend further credit

to those dealers who owe larger amounts, so they have an opportunity to settle these debts

through future sales (see also Desroches, 2005: 144). However, this exposes suppliers to further

risks of their dealers defaulting on these additional loans. When dealing with larger debtors, the

decision to severe relationships, or "cut someone off" as it is known in the drug trade, may be a

gradual process only finalised after extending further credit to these dealers and incurring greater

debt:

That's what happened with one guy that owes me today. He got busted and owed me eleven thousand bucks [because the police seized the drugs]. Then he got all his [court] shit dealt with, and then he started working it [his debt to me] off. Fuck, it was down to forty-two hundred bucks – I should have just cut him loose right there. But then, like I say, he got my trust back. He went all the way from eleven down to forty-two, so that was pretty decent. I was fucking loving that because I didn't ever know if I would see the eleven again, it was all taken at once when the guy got busted. So the guy gets it down to forty-two, and then he comes back to me and gets a half pound of weed and an ounce of coke. Now I'm out to seventy-two, I should have stuck with the forty-two. But like I say, he got my trust back, he was working it off, staying clean. (18)

Then I started having problems with a couple of people that were moving things for me. They started to fall behind and I tried to help them out so they could make the money back and they would fall behind more. They ended up owing me thousands and I just cut them off because you have to cut your losses somewhere. Once you've given it [drugs] to them so much that they are continually and drastically giving you less [than it's worth] back. And you know that they are just doing [using] it and they don't even remotely have the chance of making the money back for you, then you just decide I'm going to cut my losses right now. (11)

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However, some suppliers may still pursue the debts of former dealers even after the their

business relationships have been severed. While some suppliers "write off" the debts that they

fail to collect through inquiry, others may use physical intimidation and force when asking for

repayment fails:

I owed the money that was owed to me. So I had to do whatever I could to try and collect. Whether that would be to slap them around a little bit or steal their shit just to get some money out of the deal. You do what you have to do. It's either you're going to get your ass kicked or kick some ass, and personally I would rather kick some ass rather than get my ass beat down. (2)

Another guy I beat with a dumbbell – that was a bloody mess. Another guy that was crackin' out [smoking crack]. Just went into his place and the same thing where he was all barricaded in his bedroom. No one answering when I knock on the door, but when I kick in the door all of a sudden, "Oh I was sleeping." Yeah, okay, whatever, and fucking bam. I didn't beat him too bad... I usually just get into a rage. It's usually after I have a few beers and I start thinking, "That fucking cocksucker!" So I just start raging. Especially when I treat the guy good, that's the worst part, when you treat somebody fucking good and they fuck you over like that. (18)

I came back here and had an apartment downtown, my own apartment. And I continued dealing in that apartment downtown for most of that year until the spring. Ecstasy, I moved a couple thousand ecstasy over that period. I just tried to keep things at a reasonable level, at least twenty-five hundred bucks a month…. A few things happened during that period because I was very free in giving it out [extending product on credit] because I expected a certain amount of respect. So during this period there were a few guys, I was living downtown and I had started handing [dealing] some out to different people [to sell] and one guy had ripped me off for seven hundred and fifty bucks and another guy did too. The other guy disappeared and I never got him. This was the first time I used force on someone who owed me money and didn't give me money because usually I was making so much money that I just absorbed it [my losses] – another cost/benefit analysis. This guy, two things happened, I caught him out front of my house and I had bear spray. He was a downtown guy and always running around. I always had my head out the window. I saw him coming up and he had no reason to suspect anything because I'm usually cool. So I saw him and told him to, "Just hang on a second and I'll be right down." I had this big can of bear [mace] spray. He wasn't wearing a shirt either and I went down and as soon as I opened the door, I started hosing him down with this bear spray. He threw his arms up in the air and did this twirl. So I ended up painting his whole body because this stuff was like bright orange, and so I painted his whole body and face. I went back upstairs. He collapsed by the time he got to the end of the block, but I could hear him screaming and banging on all the windows on the way there. I got a kick out of that anyways. I'll only do something like that when it's really warranted, and I felt that it was warranted when that happened. I never saw him again after that. It was worth it. I already had a reputation of being able to fight. I didn't have a reputation as a drug dealer and that's basically what this guy had taken advantage of because I was free in handing it out. He was the first one to take advantage of that, so I had to make the

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example right away with more force than otherwise so that it wouldn't happen again... That was the first time I had to do something like that and I didn't have a problem with it. This was just me saying, "You might not know what you get if you come around and don't have the money." (19)

Relatedly, when suppliers find recruiting and working with other dealers troublesome, they may decide that working on their own is the best route:

I never had a person [dealer] that was good for me ever. I just realised I should do the work myself because this is how debts incurred. I rarely spotted people but this is how all of my debts incurred: trying to put other people into business. I go out and I buy them a cell phone. I give them drugs. Not only would I give them drugs, but I would also dime [package them into standard quantities to sell] them up for them. So they didn't have to do any work. They just had to answer their phone, deliver the drugs, and not get too fucking high. Every time it would always work for about a month, and then they would fuck up. It would always become more work than it was worth. So then you fire those guys. Now you have to do their work and just like with any job, you get overworked. (1)

And they were my friends, and I'm not a violent person, so I wasn't about to go smash skulls even though it was money that was owed to me like thousands of dollars and I owed thousands of dollars! So that kind of kept me always in the state of owing buddy [my supplier] a few thousand dollars, but I just kept going along myself and moving [dealing] myself. I was like no more, I'm not going to hook anybody else up anymore... So sales definitely went down from ten ounces a week to about four or five. It cut me in about half, but I wasn't making money off those people anymore – I was just losing money. So in the end I wasn't really making any less money it was just a lot less bullshit! (11)

Manufacturing Drugs

Basically, the only time that I ever really needed a supplier was when I wasn't growing. That's the whole thing that I got on was that I was my own boss with the whole growing thing is the one that I'm the one in control. I don't have to rely on anybody for anything. It's all within my own residence. I don't need to worry about who I'm getting it from, and I don't need that hassle. (17)

Dealers also may attempt to bypass suppliers or move into a supplier role themselves, by producing their own drugs. Manufacturing drugs is commonly a collective effort,[105] but dealers also may attempt to produce drugs on their own. Becoming involved in manufacturing is a

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[105] It should be noted that I (somewhat unexpectedly) collected some rich material on working with partners but due to time constraints have not included it in this paper.

process often fostered by the perceived promise of greater profitability than retail dealing can offer.

Marijuana growing operations are the most common type of manufacturing model that the dealers interviewed for this study utilised. Compared with manufacturing other drugs (for example, MDMA), manufacturing marijuana can be a fairly simple operation to set up. At its most basic level, outdoor growing operations involve acquiring marijuana seeds (often through contacts with other growers or through retailers found in marijuana horticulture magazines), germinating the seeds, starting the seeds indoors under fluorescent lighting, transplanting the seedlings outdoors and into the ground, and harvesting the marijuana flowering bud in the fall.

Growing marijuana also can become much more technical when done in an indoor environment. Growing indoors gives the grower the ability to exercise greater control over the growing environment and thus allows for greater manipulation of the quality of the marijuana in the manufacturing process. Growing indoors also allows people to produce marijuana year round.

Below, three case examples are presented where dealers became involved in growing marijuana. First, this section considers a participant who grew both outdoors and indoors. Second, the operations of an indoor grower are examined. Third, some of the intrigues that people may develop with manufacturing marijuana are discussed.

Case 1: Growing Marijuana Outdoors and then Indoors

In the following example, a participant explains his involvement in an outdoor and indoor growing operation. This case provides illustrations of the following processes: *anticipating the value of the enterprise*, *making preliminary preparations*, *assessing and adjusting the setup*,

managing reservations, *assessing the harvest*, *making sales*, *reflecting on the benefits of the dealing lifestyle*, and *making future plans to manufacture*.

Anticipating the value of the enterprise. Growing outdoors may be perceived as safer than growing indoors due to the limited presence one has with the marijuana during its growing cycle and the limited likelihood that anyone would find the growing patch:

I felt that I had the equipment to start it and I knew that I had the ability to do it. After the experience of growing indoors and knowing how much it stinks, throwing it outdoors and going every now and then to water it I felt that it would be so hard to try and catch you to do that especially being in such a big county where there are so many other people doing bigger crops that I didn't think they'd have a reason to look at that. I still felt that it was a reasonable size where it was not worth helicopters seeking and finding it. It mainly still boiled down to the money thing, like I just want the money. I want to turn that from green dope to green money…

Making preliminary preparations. Getting the plants into the ground entails a great deal of physical labour when growing outdoors. Outdoor growers must spend time digging holes, transplanting the plants, and backfilling with gardeners' soil:

So I knew a guy that had a piece of property that he was living on, and the property behind him was all empty fields, brush, and some cut, with some beans and shit in it, and the property beside that was an old gravel pit. So I thought it was kind of tucked away in the middle of a concession where nobody could really get to it. I have access to it from the gravel pit side and from my friend's side. He was an old guy who I just knew through construction. So I just went back there and dug up a bunch of holes. I took them [the eighty plants] all back there. It probably took me about two days of four hours each back there digging holes and putting the soil in and getting it all ready and picking out the perfect spots because I'm trying to figure out where the most sun will be hitting these things.

Assessing the harvest. The success of a growing venture is defined, in part, by the weight and quality of the marijuana. For this participant, both of these aspects proved to be satisfactory:

It was probably my most successful thing [dealing related venture] ever… Because I took such good care of them, they were really big. It [the harvest] was in the vicinity of three to four pounds, and it was really really good weed. Like it wasn't average outdoor weed, people were mistaking this for indoor [indoor grown marijuana]. It was extremely potent, extremely crystally. The quality on the streets for it was really good. Everybody else had a bunch of shitty outdoor going around and people were mistaking mine for indoor. So sometimes I would just say it's indoor because they can't tell the fucking difference, so I'd just say it was.

Making sales. Once a crop is harvested, the next step is selling the product. Different dealers will utilise different strategies in distributing their marijuana. Some prefer to make large deals to a few people in order to minimise risk and the amount of work needed to offload the product (or engage in wholesaling). This particular supplier wanted to maximise the profit derived from his harvest and opted to deal his stock in smaller quantities to a greater number of people (i.e., retail sales):

So what happened was right after I ended up pulling [harvesting the marijuana], I moved back to [_____] where then I met up with people that I knew from college and that's how I ended up selling it. I sold it all in small frequent sales and no big purchases. I sold it all in twenty bags, quarters, and half quarters. I don't think I really even sold a half ounce more than once or twice. So because of that I pulled in like six or seven grand from it. So finally I had seen a bit of profit from something that I had done and I felt good for once to finally have something that I had set out for after all these failed attempts and everything going bad and me habitually using. It was really good for me that way….

I was selling my own weed at this point because I knew that if I sold it in big quantities, I would lose much of the profit range. Because there was no price in originally purchasing it [other than the money and time to grow it], I wanted to sell it in the smallest amount of quantity as possible to make the most amount of profit as possible and really stretch it out. I felt that if I was a new person in [_____] selling weed, then I felt there was no way I could be under any type radar [police attention]. So selling mostly to college friends that I knew, so I felt that what I was doing was still extremely safe, even while making more sales – which is what I wanted to avoid [making small sales] originally, but I felt it was extremely safe because these are all people I know, I'm in a new city, nobody knows who I am, there is no way that I'm going to get caught for anything.

Making future plans to manufacture. The success had in these types of ventures can make them viable options for generating income in the future:

I made money. I made the most money that I ever made at one time. It felt good to finally be successful and know that I can do this and make money and know that I could do this and make substantial amounts of money. All I would have to do is increase what I did and do what I did in that one spot in many spots. At that point then I could start making like an extra fifty to one hundred grand in a year.

Making preliminary preparations. This dealer then decided to grow marijuana indoors. In selecting an apartment with his girlfriend, he decided on a property that was viable for establishing an indoor growing environment:

After that, I had a girlfriend and it was getting pretty serious... we thought that we should get a place together. What I was thinking was that we should try to get a house if we can, but she didn't have a car, so we had to get a place downtown. So the only other thing we could do was get an apartment like a level of an old Victorian house. We could get a two bedroom and sleep in one and I can grow weed in the other. So we did go do this.

Reflecting on the benefits of the dealing lifestyle. Moving into an apartment provided an opportunity to appreciate the rewards (financial and otherwise) that drug dealing had enabled him to attain:

So it took much of my investment to get this place, paying first and last [months rent], and paying for materials to build the second room to grow in, and then more clone purchases, and I also spent three thousand dollars for my home entertainment system. And for once I was feeling the effects, I was sitting on my leather couches that I bought with the money [profits from drug dealing], I was watching the TV that I bought with the money, I was living with my girlfriend, we ended up redecorating the entire apartment – it was nice, for once I felt like I had finally upped my standard of living through it [dealing], so it was finally successful.

Assessing and adjusting the setup. Aspects of the manufacturing process may have to be tested prior to fully committing to them. This participant addressed odour issues early on in his operation:

So then I started growing weed in our second room. The first time was minor, I only went with a few plants. I was just testing it out because I wanted to see what it was like growing in there and seeing what the smell was going to be like. Like is this something that I'm only going to be able to do in small quantities now that I'm in an apartment situation? I was in the attic of a house so that I just felt that if I pushed the stinky air outside, then it would evaporate above it. This is what I'm hoping. I learned quickly that that wasn't the answer. I learned about "active carbon" and they have these filters that all you have to do is set up and intake in and out and the filter takes care of the rest, so I invested some of my money into that. That helped treat the smell of the air, and by the end of the first harvest I felt that I had the smell under control. So I felt comfortable.

Managing reservations. Concerns often arise about landlords in a rental situation. This participant, however, felt that his landlord had some sympathy for growing marijuana because he did so himself:

So I bought more clones and I decided that I would go for maybe forty, the first one was ten. I ended up with a little bit more of a problem with the smell, but I also felt comfortable because my landlord was a seventy-five year old man who had a license to grow marijuana, is what I later

found out. So I didn't even think he'd notice or really care if he did figure it out. So it became summertime and it was becoming really hot and moist up in the attic. So I had to buy a wall-unit air conditioner and that helped control the humidity, the smell, everything. Yet again it was another success. I pulled those forty plants and ended up getting another couple pounds and selling that in bigger quantities, like ounces and quarter pounds. (17)

Case 2: Indoor Grower

In the following case, a dealer describes how he became involved in growing marijuana indoors.

This case provides illustrations of the following processes: *anticipating the value of the enterprise*, *developing competence*, *developing relationships with knowledgeable insiders*, and *assessing and adjusting the setup*.

     Anticipating the value of the enterprise. This participant's first foray into manufacturing was as an assistant in an ecstasy lab for an ecstasy manufacturing ring. In the process of working in this lab, he became aware of, and assisted with, marijuana growing operations. These experiences fostered a desire to begin growing marijuana himself:

That [developing an interest in growing] had happened in the process of doing that other lab. I went and saw a whole bunch of grow shows, and I helped out in some of them. I knew what kind of money people were making, and I knew it wasn't as bad [as ecstasy labs] on your health. I knew that it was something that the law didn't frown upon as much as ecstasy, and I knew it was something that I could set up on my own and I wouldn't have to work with anyone else's rules or through an organisation or anything. I could just do my own thing. So that was my plan, I wanted to go home… and set up a big grow-op [growing operation] and start my own company basically.

     Developing competence. In becoming knowledgeable on growing techniques, this participant spent some time as an assistant in some growing operations, researching growing literature, and talking with employees of hydroponics shops:

Reading a lot of books because I didn't really have a lot of help to set it up, so I just read a whole bunch of books, and I researched on the internet, and I went to the hydro [hydroponics] shops, and talked to people, and figured the shit out on how to set it up. I found a spot to do it through a family friend. They gave me a spot to grow weed basically. A house that I knew had a good landlord and I could get away with it in. So I set up a show in this house…

It [developing competence on growing] first started with helping out in other grow-ops and seeing what was happening and knowing that that's what I wanted to do. Then I found specific information like books and how-to info on the internet and I went and I researched and talked with people that I knew had done it before that were also involved in that same E [ecstasy] group. I went to hydro shops and talked with the owners and people that worked there about what I needed and just spent a lot of time reading and doing tally sheets on how much money I needed to do a certain size thing and what the profit margins were. Basically, I did a business plan on the fucking shit.

Developing relationships with knowledgeable insiders. Although these ventures can be solitary pursuits, it is still likely that others will aid in various ways. This participant befriended an owner of a hydroponics shop who was very useful in helping with the difficulties that arose during the growing process:

At first they [hydroponics shops] put on a front like they're a gardening shop for like any sort of gardener and blah, blah, blah... but once you get to know the guy... or in my circumstances the specific owner that I met told me that he grew weed as well and started giving me info books on how to grow weed. In fact, when I had problems a couple times when I was getting started and my plants were getting sick, he let me bring a whole plant into the hydro shop and he diagnosed it for me in the back of the shop (laughing). So I'm pretty sure he knew what I was doing….

Through buying equipment and through me just asking questions [we became comfortable with each other] because I was suspicious of him as well, so I never openly said anything, but just through the type of equipment that I was buying he could tell what I was doing. Eventually, you talk so much you get comfortable with each other and it just became open. This helped out a lot. He was a really good resource for me. He was somebody who if I was having problems, technical problem or something I could call and be like "What do I do?" and he would help me out for sure….

So these were hydro tables that I was doing, and I had on the same table plants from the same mother plant, they were all the identical plant, I had maybe like ten of them all in one spot that were wilted and wouldn't grow properly and everything else was beautiful and healthy and I couldn't find any bugs that I recognised. There was no nutrient deficiencies in any of the other plants, and they were all on the same table getting pumped exactly the same water, so I couldn't figure out what the fuck was wrong with them. So I was calling him going like "What the fuck man? Do you have any ideas?" because I went through all my books and referenced it and went on the internet and looked at pictures of diseases and deficiencies and viruses and I couldn't find anything that was similar so he was finally just like "Bring the fucking thing in. I'll help you out." I showed up at the shop and I left it in the car, and I went in to make sure there was nobody in the store and said "I got it" and he was like "Alright. Bring it in." I had it in a bag and we brought it in and he locked the door to the shop and he went behind the counter and looked at it and told me what he thought was wrong with it. So that solved that problem for me.

Concealing the enterprise from outsiders. In growing marijuana indoors, measures are usually taken to preclude various outsiders from learning of the enterprise. Specialty equipment can be purchased to inhibit scents and sounds, and growing operations can be setup in ways to minimise the suspicion of the electric power authorities:

There's not like real specific rules but when I did it, I did have the intentions to staying in this for a long time and wanting to do it properly, so I went overboard with things for smell protection and stuff like that. I bought certain specific equipment to cover smells or block sounds. The size of my show would be based partly on how much hydro I could take out without being suspicious and partly based on how much equipment I had because it is very expensive. I went as big as I could with the cash that I had but still small enough that it was still feasible to do hydro on the meter and not steal hydro. I picked up on how much hydro I could use from talking at hydro shops or to other growers or just reading about electrical wiring or stuff like that and calling hydro and asking what the average draw is for a certain size house.

Assessing and adjusting the setup. Although this participant spent some time researching the growing process, difficulties arose that were not specified in the literature that he had read. These issues had to be worked out on case-by-case basis:

There was a lot of trial and error. It's the kind of thing where there is so many different ways and styles of growing and equipment you can use and different processes. There's a lot of information out there, but there's not a lot of specific information that says if you grow on flow and drain tables, this is exactly what you need to do. There's a lot of general information about growing weed, and you need to try to figure out what applies to what you're doing. It turned out really successful though was the thing, but there were a lot of instances where like I burnt a ballast because I wired it wrong. I wired it for two-forty [two hundred and forty volts] and plugged it into the one-ten [one hundred and ten volt] outlet and it zapped it, so I fucked up that equipment. Basically, I just slowly figured it out.

Case 3: Developing Intrigues with Growing

In addition to being drawn to manufacturing for its profitability potential, people also may become fascinated with the biological aspects of the growing process (see also Weisheit, 1991). Although the following examples may not be typical of how most people get into growing, they are potent illustrations of some of the other allures that the drug subculture has for some people. Thus, the following participant explains how he became enamoured with growing marijuana:

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Originally, I started with seeds. Somebody had seeds and I had heard that you can just grow it outside. Put them outside in the spring. So I had tried that originally and that didn't work. I think I had tried to germinate them first with a light bulb and a cardboard box. And I put beans in there too, so my mom wouldn't know what I was doing. But I was still interested in the beans. I still liked plants and stuff. Like I still had an interest in botany. I was always interested. I grew up on a farm with a lot of wilderness. So I was already interested in a lot of plants and stuff… So the seeds didn't work out. I think they grew a second set of leaves but that was it. They only made it that far. So then I started to learn about it and every following summer I would try and I've tried every summer since…

No [I was not discouraged by my first growing attempt] I was still enthused by these leaves. It brought joy. It was fun. It was great. Because you could put your own efforts into developing this finished product. So one's skills could produce a great product and that was what I was going for. I was just interested in how… I just liked the whole botany idea. So I tried again and the first couple summers, maybe the first three I didn't get any actual marijuana. The plants were never big enough to mature just because I didn't know about the lighting and stuff like that. So then I just heard from other people and stuff and tried to gather information and eventually got better and better. Lots of people did, friends, older people, lots of older people grew it. I'd hear tips from them. I bought clones from somebody's parents who were growers. They were drugs users themselves with a son who was a friend of our group, so I got them through their son. That's the way I got the clones certain times. There were also clones being distributed through another source. The clones worked out a lot better. I got some yield from them.

One time I had a friend who strung up a light in his mom's basement. It was a high-powered light. And the plants from that were so big that I was fascinated by that and that further increased my desires to grow because these plants were like seven feet tall… I was interested in the outdoor growing because it was easy. I lived on a farm, so I could go back with big jugs of fertiliser. Like it was my… What do you call it?… Forte. (16)

Another participant developed a similar fascination:

My mom let me have them [some marijuana seedlings that I had grown] for two weeks. This was the end of the year of Grade nine. That [growing] has always been the idea, to sort of master growing and then I would always be able to provide the best quality weed to whoever. So that was my initial foray [into growing], which was not fruitful, but my connection was more cemented just by having those plants grow in front of me and having that connection with the plants initially…

I don't remember how I acquired the seeds, but I started from seed. I had a stack of High Times magazines and I was going to grow these plants out. So I was already aware of the process [of growing] at that age. It was actually very clear as a process. So I was just asking my mom if I could have a few more weeks of growth in the window sill because then I was going to move them outside to finish, but she ended up cutting them and getting rid of it…

Watching them grow and each seed was different, each had a different scent, so I was really looking forward to the result. So in that sense it's a common kind of game for me, I want to play the game and then see the results – get the prize… It made me study further and harder even, all aspects of growing. That fed my resolution. During this time, the years through high school, was a gradual progression in the amount and more of the business of drug dealing. (19)

Summary

The store is a great theatre, the customers are the audience, the selling force the actors, the nonselling force and the managers are the stage hands and the scene-shifters. As in the theatre, not many get behind the scenes and yet it is these hidden recesses, these unseen openings, that are the most interesting. (Donovan, 1929: 188)

This chapter considered dealer-supplier relationships and dealers who engage in supplying activities (wholesaling) to other dealers. Three central activities related to obtaining products were discussed: (1) making contacts with suppliers, (2) working with suppliers, and (3) becoming suppliers.

As used in this chapter, "making contacts with suppliers" referred to dealers developing relationships with sources of drug supply. Two processes were found to be central in this regard: (1) tapping into associational networks and (2) striving for supplier trust. The dealers interviewed for this study typically developed relationships with suppliers through networks of friends who were suppliers themselves or had some connections with suppliers. Still, even though dealers primarily developed relationships with suppliers through their friends, they still made efforts to establish themselves as trustworthy to potential suppliers. Dealers who had already developed reputations as competent and reliable businessmen in their local drug subculture cited their reputations as distinct advantages in their efforts to make contacts with suppliers. While "solid" reputations may aid in initiating relationships with suppliers, striving for supplier trust also involves dealers continually reaffirming themselves as trustworthy in their ongoing exchanges with suppliers. Thus, trust is best envisioned as a social process – subject to reaffirmation and dissolution on a day-to-day, exchange-to-exchange basis.

This chapter next considered the process of working with suppliers. While dealers and suppliers are most appropriately envisioned as independent entrepreneurs, they also may be characterised as "partners in trade" (Prus, 1989b: 149) since their individual success generally tends to be interdependent. Given these considerations, dealers identified four areas of concern about relationships with suppliers. These included: (1) product relevancy, (2) supply reliability, (3) prices, and (4) financing concerns. Generally, dealers valued suppliers who carried "hot lines" or desired products, were consistently well-stocked with products, and offered inexpensive prices as well as exclusivity of particular product lines. Thus, dealers attempted to cultivate relationships with "good" suppliers since they could directly affect dealers' success or levels of profitability.

Following the discussion of working with suppliers, this chapter examined dealers who became involved in supplying activities (i.e., wholesaling drugs to dealers rather than retail consumers). This included discussions of (1) getting involved in wholesaling, (2) recruiting dealers, (3) encountering payment problems, and (4) manufacturing drugs. A few dealers explained that they received encouragement and support from their suppliers (e.g., dealer contacts, new products, advice) to become involved in supplying activities. It also was observed that dealers may make distinctions between clients who are dealers and clients who are retail customers when becoming involved in wholesaling. Some participants preferred to sell to dealers because they represented (1) greater sales potential than retail customers as well as (2) decreased hassles and risks. Thus, some participants engaged in direct attempts to recruit dealers (both established dealers and newcomers) whom they deemed to be trustworthy to supply (in terms of their actions, reputations, and recommendations from trusted associates). Still, despite these efforts to screen out potentially troublesome dealers, many suppliers had problems with

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them developing large debts. Dealer debts tended to be larger than those of retail customers and could threaten suppliers' existing operations.[106] Thus, in an attempt to salvage these debts, some suppliers extended further credit to their debt-laden dealers with the hope that they could begin to make up their debts through future sales. However, this strategy was likely to result in further debt and difficulty (and potentially violence). Finally, in concluding this discussion, this chapter considered some case examples of participants who became involved in manufacturing marijuana. Like wholesaling more generally, manufacturing was cited as a more profitable and less problematic enterprise than lower-level retail dealing.

Having considered the processes of selling drugs and obtaining products, the next chapter discusses dealers (1) striving for respectability, (2) encountering regulatory agencies, and (3) experiencing problematics in disentangling from drug dealing as a way of life.

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[106] In many cases, suppliers owed the money (to their own suppliers) that was owed to them (by their distributors) and saw no viable way of paying these debts back on their own.

Chapter Seven

RESPECTABILITY, REGULATION, and DISENTANGLEMENT

There's a negative stigma, but there's also a positive image. If you are a high school male, like with movies, gangster movies, there was a thrilling idea of being a dealer and a Mafioso. I tried to do it here and there. Threw parties at hotels and that was pretty gangster, spend money, smoked tons of weed. (16)

The strategy [in managing my identity as a marijuana grower] was to be not too flashy with money and shit and not to drink too much because you don't want to start running your mouth. And just avoid certain people who know the industry and would be able to pick up on what you're doing just how you're acting, even though you're being covert. The day-to-day grind of that would be looking out the window to make sure before you pull out of the garage to make sure there is no one you know that is going to see your vehicle pulling out, or just making sure you just don't mess up your story when somebody stops by the house they think you live at and you're not there and you have to make up a story about where you've been and not getting caught up in that kind of lie, which is a huge problem after you have been doing that for a while because you weave a huge web, and you forget what your web was saying sometimes. Also just make sure there is no smells coming out of the building that can make you get caught, and making sure dealings with the neighbours are good, and that there is no sounds coming out of the house. And making sure you're not pumping too much hydro out and raising suspicions that way. And making sure you don't leave something with a "hydroponics" label on it out in the backyard or something like that.... I was laying very low and trying not to go out at all and eventually near the end it ended up getting to me and one of my friends actually ended up living up the street from me, and he had a bit of a party house. Just all the lies and the secrecy and the fact that I couldn't have people over and just the bullshit that went along with it. Constantly lying and hiding, it gets to you. Fuck! It's tiring. Just the stress too, because you're always worrying about the cops coming. So that started getting to me, and I started going to this party house up the street where they were doing a lot of drugs, and because I was stressed and I could walk to this house so it was easy to bullshit them where I had been, so it was one of those places that I could hang out. The people there were using drugs that I started using [crack cocaine] and started using way too much, and that's why the show [growing operation] started fucking up and me and my partner, he was also using the same drugs, had a bit of a falling out. It kind of went bad, and we shut the show down. I quit selling drugs at this point in time. (10)

Thus far, we have attended to the matters of interpersonal exchanges between dealers and their customers (Chapter Five) as well as dealers and their suppliers (Chapter Six). In this chapter, I discuss (1) deviance and respectability as conceptual motifs as well as the matters of (2) striving for respectability, (3) encountering regulatory agencies, and (4) the problematics of disentanglement as these pertain to the data in this study.

Deviance and Respectability

Deviance and respectability are necessarily linked together: each necessarily implies the other; each is a necessary condition for the existence of the other. This is by no means simply a matter of abstract and arbitrary definitions given to the terms by sociologists. Deviance and respectability are necessarily linked together in the social meanings of the terms as used by the members of our society in their everyday lives: when we observe and analyze the moral communications in our everyday lives we find that the social meanings of either deviance (immorality) or respectability (morality) can be adequately understood only if reference, whether implicit or explicit, is made to the other, its opposite. (Douglas, 1970: 3-4)

As used herein, the term "respectability" refers to the social definition of people's propriety, or their moral character and value. As Douglas (1970) observes, notions of respectability are closely intertwined with social conceptions of deviance. For interactionists, deviance (and disrespectability) is a negative social definition (evil, disreputable, immoral, disturbing, offensive) that an audience attributes to some act, actor, idea, or other social phenomenon (Prus and Grills, 2003).[107, 108] Definitions of deviance and respectability are situated, variable (depending on the audience), and emergent (or processual).[109] Thus, as Ball (1970: 336-339) states, respectability is very much a social process:

Although in discussion we may speak "as if" respectability (or its allied concepts) were a characteristic... most fundamentally it is actually a relational category. It is an inherent limitation of our language of discourse that we are led to speak of aspects of social relationships... as though they were static, personal traits. However, we should not be confused on this matter: respectability emerges and has meaning only as an element in social

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[107] Goffman (1963) outlines three categories of deviant social definitions (or stigmas): (1) *tribal* (group affiliation or association), (2) *body* (physical attributes), and (3) *character* (dispositions, habits, traits).

[108] Ball (1970: 333) identifies four elements included in the social phenomenon of respectability: (1) some actor(s), (2) an audience, and (3) some moral judgments based on (4) a shared comparative framework, reference point, or stock of knowledge.

[109] Goffman (1959: 75) comments on the processual nature of a social status: "A status, a position, a social place is not a material thing, to be possessed and then displayed; it is a pattern of appropriate conduct, coherent, embellished, and well articulated. Performed with ease or clumsiness, awareness or not, guile or good faith, it is none the less something that must be enacted and portrayed, something that must be realized."

relationships. It always involves a presenter and an audience: one to display, and one to be displayed to; and without each of these, the phenomena of respectability cannot exist.... And as a related consequence, given the multiplicity of potential audiences and their varied definitions and standards of what constitutes normality, moral worth, and respectability, it is impossible to appear respectable at all times to all men. Like deviance, respectability is always situated and therefore always subject to the varied and changing properties and demands of differentiated social encounters.... Thus, appearances which will generate the accordance of respectability in one situation may be precisely those which lead to the assignments of a lack of respectability in another.

Building on *labeling theory* (Lemert, 1951; 1967; Becker, 1963) and especially Goffman's (1959; 1963) *impression management*, deviant identities can be divided into two general categories: the *discreditable* or those that have yet to be defined as deviant but may become so if some negative or discrediting quality is made apparent; and the *discredited* or those already identified as deviant.

Discreditable persons are those who may anticipate people (audiences) to attribute negative social definitions (disreputable, evil, immoral) to them if their audiences attend to some disreputable quality or qualities. Discreditable persons who anticipate these types of negative responses may engage in a number of strategies to keep their disreputable qualities unknown to others.[110] Thus, discreditables "pass" (Goffman, 1963) as "normals." Passing may be achieved inadvertently at first (without any distinct attempt to conceal their problematic senses of self), but as people begin to perceive some advantages to "passing" then they may make more strategic efforts to continue passing in social situations.[111]

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[110] Anticipating disrespect or condemnation is central because respectability is often an implicit background expectancy in social interaction, and it is only when some audience (including the self) draws attention to disrespectable qualities that respectability becomes an explicit object of people's awareness (see Ball, 1970: 359).

[111] Goffman (1963) refers to this phenomenon as the "natural cycle of passing" where people (1) pass inadvertently, (2) see advantages of discretion, and (3) develop and implement discretion strategies. As Ball (1970: 347) states, these strategies may include: (1) presenting virtues, (2) concealing vices, and (3) the creation of virtuous appearances.

It should be noted that the ability to pass as "normal" depends on "audience astuteness" (Prus and Grills, 2003: 82). Some audiences may be able to discern or discover particular stigmas more easily because of the "insider" knowledge that they possess due to their own involvement in related activities or life-worlds. Goffman (1963) terms these audiences "the wise." Discreditable people also may become discredited due to (1) inopportune discoveries, (2) audience suspicions and deductions, and (3) self-disclosures (Prus and Grills, 2003: 82).

Discredited persons are those who already have had a deviant definition of self attributed to them by an audience.[112] Ball (1970: 359-360) distinguishes three social implications of being discredited: (1) symbolic degradation of self, identity, and, character, (2) limits on social participation in particular groups or activities, and (3) community exclusion or ostracism.[113] Because being discredited can be embarrassing as well as costly in other ways, discredited people may develop and implement strategies to "nullify" and "neutralize" (Prus and Grills, 2003: 84) deviant attributions to self and their social implications. In this regard, the discredited may (1) attempt to "cover" (Goffman, 1963) or reduce the visibility of their stigmas, (2) engage in social distancing, (3) discount the relevance of the definitions and/or stigmas, or (4) disrupt and divert attention away from their stigmas in social interactions, (5) justify and/or account for them (Scott and Lyman, 1968), (6) enlist the help of others to pass, gain, or otherwise regain respectability,[114] or (7) intentionally display, celebrate, or flaunt the problematic qualities of

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[112] Lemert's (1951; 1967) conception of "secondary deviation" is related.

[113] Similarly, Brown (1931: 364), in his study on the sociological implications of drug addiction, found that "the social definition of drug addiction forces the user to live in a collapsed social world." And, Ray (1961: 134), in his study of abstinence and relapse among heroin addicts, found that many aspects of the addict's life (e.g., personal appearance, tendency to steal) are defined as disreputable by the broader society. When the addicts are defined as social deviants, it precludes them from participation in more conventional aspects of social life.

[114] As Ball (1970: 333) states, "It is important to note that the open, overt expression of indignation in such situations is one of the major management strategies by which

self.[115] Also, because not all audiences may be aware of or able to discern people's problematic senses of self, people may experience some "ambivalence of identity" (Goffman, 1963) where they are unsure of how receptive or attentive audiences will be to these features.[116] Relatedly, Goffman (1963) uses the term "moral career" to conceptualise people's sets of self valuations over time.[117]

As will be shown, people involved in drug dealing experience many of the above-mentioned themes. An identity as a drug dealer may be valued and respected in some contexts but clearly disreputable and stigmatised in others. As such, people dealing drugs may develop senses of self-worth, prestige, and admiration from some associates, but they also may be stigmatised in other sectors of the community. Insofar as dealers encounter rejection, they will attempt to conceal aspects of their dealing involvements from outsiders. This identity "balancing act" may become difficult as well as frustrating for dealers. Indeed, dealers themselves may come to question and reassess their own identities, sometimes contemplating disinvolvement as a

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disrespectables, whether individuals or collectivities, may attempt to counter their morally unworthy designations." Goffman's (1959: 77-105) notion of "teamwork" is also relevant in enlisting the help of others to manage discredited identities.

[115] Goffman (1963) refers to this process as "minstrelization." Consider, for example, outlaw motorcyclists (Wolf, 1991) and tattooed persons (Sanders, 2008). Prus and Grills (2003: 86) state that "while people may display disrespectability with the intention of (a) indicating personal disaffection with self or others, (b) claiming independence from others, and (c) pursuing stylistic individuality or particularistic genres, people also may express disrespectability as a means of (d) proving themselves to others, (e) questing for prestige among others, (f) pursuing cooperation from others, or (g) seeking entertainment derived from other people's reactions to these displays. As well, some expression of disrespectability also may be the natural consequence of (h) knowingly pursing particular in-group agendas that are at variance from out-group standpoints."

[116] Ray (1961) found heroin users attempting disinvolvement were apt to experience some "ambivalence of identity" when reconnecting with the non-addict world.

[117] It should be noted, as Mead (1934) pointed out, that any self-valuations or definitions necessarily are contingent on some other or community. Similarly, Ball (1970: 333) states, "respectability can obviously be made concerning self as well as vis-à-vis others; that is what we mean when we speak of *self-respect*. [original emphasis]"

consequence. However, the allures of popularity, respect, and esteem commonly serve to preclude their departure.

Like others involved in criminal activities, dealers are also in the position of having their disrespectability "institutionalized" and "objectified" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). This may take the form of formal laws, accusations, "community degradation ceremonies" (Garfinkel, 1956), and associated consequences. This adds another element to dealers' attempts to manage their respectability. Having outlined some of the literature on deviance and respectability, our attention now turns to striving for respectability in the drug dealing world.

Striving for Respectability

Depending on the audiences defining their involvements, people's identities as drug dealers may be simultaneously heroic and villainous. As Howard Becker (1963: 175) states: "The characters in the sociological drama of deviance, even more than characters in other sociological processes, seem to be either heroes or villains. We expose the depravity of deviants or we expose the depravity of those who enforce rules on them."[118] This is seen in contemporary representations of popular culture.[119] However, while some may be tempted to categorise people of deviant repute into categories of heroes and villains, these distinctions are far too simplistic. There is much ambiguity and variability in between. But what comprises this process? How is it enacted on an everyday basis?

Like other people, those involved in drug dealing may seek identities that they perceive as desirable. Often this involves developing multiple identities, one associated with their drug

[118] Klapp (1962) also points out how people may be typed into the categories of "heroes, villains, and fools" in multiple life-worlds simultaneously.
[119] Currently celebrated motion pictures, such as *Scarface* and *Blow*, depict the drug dealer as a tragic hero, while at the same time a ruthless thug.

dealing involvements and another identity associated with their involvements with people and activities outside the drug subculture (Goffman 1959). This frequently involves developing a reputation as a drug dealer in certain life-worlds, while at the same time attempting to conceal this identity from others. The matter of cultivating, sustaining, separating, and concealing identities is often precarious. In terms of striving for respectability, the following processes will be considered: (1) being somebody and (2) concealing discreditable identities.

Being Somebody

As used herein, "being somebody" refers to developing a valued (respected, admired, important, prestigious, esteemed) sense of self in a subcultural life-world.[120] While some people may be considered disrespectable in the broader community, each group or subculture may have its own notions of morality. Thus, within their own life-worlds, people deemed to have relatively unconventional (or "special," "different," "exotic") qualities might emphasise these points of differentiation as sources of pride, prestige, and exclusivity.[121] Consider the case of tattooed persons:[122]

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[120] As Prus and Irini (1980: 217-218) note in regards to the rounder community, in addition to being personally satisfying expressions or experiences, "'being somebody' can also have important consequences for one's life in the community. Attempting to be respected within their own circle of acquaintances, rounders seem particularly concerned about giving off the impression that they are solid, competent, and successful. Thus, while some rounders perceive clear advantages to remaining in the background, others envision their image and their hustles as contingent on the ways in which they present themselves to others."

[121] Ball (1970: 339) also makes a related point, "appearances which will generate the accordance of respectability in one situation may be precisely those which lead to the assignments of a lack of respectability in another."

[122] As Sanders (2008: 51) points out, tattooed people also may experience elevated senses of self from their membership in a somewhat exclusive group: "[T]attooees consistently conceive of the tattoo as having impact on their definition of self and demonstrating to others information about their unique interests and social connections. Interviewees commonly expressed liking their tattoos because they made him or her 'different' or 'special.'" Similarly, Waldorf (1973: 12)

Definitions of tattoos and tattooees, held by both the general culture and the "scientific community," are predominantly negative. Tattoos are defined as being symptomatic of the psychological or social deviance of the bearer. Conventional repulsion imbues tattooing with significant power and appeal. For some tattooees the act of acquiring a tattoo marks them as being involved in an exotic social world centered around the pleasurable flaunting of authority and convention.... The tattoo acts as more than simply a "mark of disaffiliation" (Goffman, 1963a: 143-147). It may also demonstrate connection to unconventional social groups. In some cases, it symbolizes membership in subcultures (for example, outlaw motorcyclists, youth gangs) centered around socially disvalued or law-violating interests and activities. (Sanders, 2008: 58)

Those involved in drug dealing often define "the conservatism of the straight world as lowly and mundane" (Adler, 1985: 85) while focusing on the matter of becoming respected members of their drug communities. Moreover, as dealers' reputations build, so too may their senses of prestige and importance in the group. Ball (1970: 340) observes: "respectability, as well as being an expressively rewarding aspect of definition of self, is also an instrumental means toward other ends and interactional goals." Thus, not only are people seen to achieve (1) greater senses of self-esteem through their dealing involvements but also (2) the instrumental objectives of popularity or social clout.

Amongst other things, those involved in drug dealing may develop feelings of esteem and importance by controlling access to a desired product (see also VanNostrand and Tewksbury, 1999: 67; Desroches, 2005: 89). In this way, they may acquire some prestige based on the relative exclusivity of their resources or possessions:

It was kind of like a popularity thing, liking people have to come to us and being the only people that could get it. It kind of gives you sort of this feeling of being needed or having some sort of appreciation from everyone. So in that sense it does make you feel like you are the one that was connected, so people had to come to you to get it. So it does give you a sort of feeling of being needed or popular. Especially because it's all of your close friends and stuff, so it kind of elevates you to another level in your social group. It increases your reputation. (11)

At first it was the money but also I was in Grade nine, so it becomes the popularity and stuff like that. In high school, drug dealers often get looked up to. Just networking through older people

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found some people that use heroin develop desired self-designations as members of a somewhat exclusive group.

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that would come that would probably never talk to you in the first place except for the fact that they wanted the product that you were offering. You're just given more respect and opportunity to talk with these people and make a name for yourself. So that turns into getting invited to parties with older people and that sort of thing.... Everyone wants to be the big drug dealer sometimes and have the party drugs. (10)

Dealers and smugglers had a highly elevated sense of self-esteem. This was, in part, based on their degree of success in completing challenging business transactions, where they had to constantly maneuver to overcome such obstacles as the law, untrustworthy dealers, human error, mechanical failure, climatic disaster, and a host of other unforeseeable difficulties... Another feature contributing to the dealers' egos was the power of their position. They controlled the flow of drugs to lower-level dealers, which affected others' ability to do business, to earn money, and to obtain a personal supply of drugs. They could thus make or break their associates through the extension or withholding of favors. (Adler, 1985: 95)

The broader community need not be aware of these activities for dealers to develop feelings of

importance. It may be enough for people to reflect on their activities within their own social

worlds to develop senses of superiority:

When you're the guy selling big quantities that people might not know what you're doing but you get this feeling of power almost because you feel like you have like one up on the system or that you got something going on. (10)

Dealers also may receive greater social admiration or become more popular by

demonstrating generosity. This often took the form of contributing to associates' quests for fun

by supplying the objects of enjoyment (drugs).[123] Although they may have other objectives in

mind, three dealers also reported some satisfaction in knowing that they had contributed to their

associates' enjoyable experiences:

I just liked being that guy that people could come to and buy some [drugs] if they wanted. And I would be hanging out with my friends, and we'd just do some. It was more of a social thing. It was fun to just be able to go out and do stuff and people would want to hang out with the coke dealer. For me it was just going out and seeing people and doing stuff. It gets boring here in the wintertime. It was all just more for fun sort of... I would just run into people and chances are they would ask me if I had some or just tell me to give them some, and sure let's do some, I don't care. The amount of people that I hung out with that did it – it was hard to get away from. (15)

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[123] Prus and Irini (1980: 199-200) found that bar patrons also could "be somebody" or develop elevated self-definitions by being generous through (1) tips and (2) buying rounds.

I was never concerned about making money at that time [early on in my involvement]. It was just to get high and hang out and to get chicks because we were long hair and leather jackets, and everybody thought we were fucking scumbags and shit and all of a sudden that became trendy – for chicks to hang out with the long-haired hippy freaks. So it was a bonus. So we'd get them high and take them out on the weekends and the football team is standing over on the field glaring us down, hanging out with their girlfriends or ex-girlfriends. (18)

That's when I saw the opportunity for me to be able to do all that [get into dealing ecstasy and cocaine]. Make more money with the money that I was making at [my place of employment] and really try and have a good time along the way. It was also about having a good time along the way too. I was making this new group of friends that I all thought were good people so I was giving deals to people and stuff like that because I also wanted people to have a good time – that was also important to me at the time. Everybody was partying and everybody was enjoying themselves, and I could maybe profit, and I could be the guy that people wanted to be there like, "Call [_____], get him here, it's Tuesday and it's a party!" (17)

In the preceding extracts, dealers stressed the appealing social aspects of their involvements in the drug subculture. However, from the viewpoints of many outsiders, being identified as a drug dealer carries with it disrepute, disrespect, and condemnation. Consequently, people involved in drug dealing often attempt to conceal their discreditable identities from outsiders.

Concealing Discreditable Identities

Since many outside the subculture consider drug dealing to be disreputable or deviant, dealers may attempt to manage their identities as they come into contact with various people or groups. Clearly, dealers are not able to exert complete or precise control over their identities. Indeed, as identities are fundamentally socially-achieved processes, it is apparent that others in the community may play consequential roles in the development, designation, assessment, and resistance of dealers' identities in the community.[124] In what follows, I delve into this identity process from the dealers' perspectives.

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[124] See Goffman (1959; 1963), Lemert (1951; 1967), Becker (1963), and Prus and Grills (2003).

People's initial information about and encounters with others can set some interactional expectations for future interactions. Goffman (1959) points out the importance of the initial information people attain in shaping the definition of others and establishing a reference point or expectancy for the rest of the relationship:

In noting the tendency for a participant to accept the definitional claims made by the others present, we can appreciate the crucial importance of the information that the individual initially possesses or acquires concerning his fellow participants, for it is on the basis of this initial information that the individual starts to define the situation and starts to build up lines of responsive action. The individual's initial projection commits him to what he is proposing to be and requires him to drop all pretenses of being other things. As the interaction among the participants progresses, additions and modifications in this initial informational state will of course occur, but it is essential that these later developments be related without contradiction to, and even built up from, the initial positions taken by the several participants. It would seem that an individual can more easily make a choice as to what line of treatment to demand from and extend to the others present at the beginning of an encounter than he can alter the line of treatment that is being pursued once the interaction is underway. (Goffman, 1959: 10-11)

Thus, in meeting outsiders, dealers typically choose to conceal their involvements in the drug dealing subculture:[125, 126]

I always played like I never did that shit [deal drugs], especially with girls. I try and just pretend, [She'd say,] "Oh where do you work?" [I'd say,] "Oh me and my buddy we renovate houses." Shit like that. And [I kept it from] parents of course, girls' parents. (18)

These initial expectations also have a *moral character* (Goffman, 1959: 13) whereby it is expected that people will treat one with the respect that these initial definitions warrant. If an audience discovers that people have intentionally misrepresented themselves, then they can become quite hostile towards the "offender" (Goffman, 1959: 12-13). In this regard, people may be especially concerned about concealing disreputable involvements from those with whom they

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[125] Ball (1970: 348) delineates three levels of concealment: (1) hiding, (2) denial, and (3) lying.
[126] Weinberg (1970: 395) found that the nudist's anticipation of social sanctions leads to an initial strategy of concealment. Notably, the nudists based their disclosures on anticipated audience receptivity.

have already established favourable moral characters, like friends, family, and significant

others:[127]

I did try and keep it kind of quiet. I didn't want everyone to know and I would get mad if sometimes people that I didn't know came up and asked me for drugs. I just didn't want to be known as a drug dealer I guess... I tried to keep it from family, friends, my girlfriend, people who weren't involved in that sort of scene, people who weren't drug users. (14)

I started getting rid of [selling] a lot [of drugs]. And it was fun to have because I was doing a lot. I started hanging out with a bunch of girls and they were always down to get high and stuff. It was fun. I would usually have a good time while I was doing it [dealing and using]. And it was kind of cool that I was the guy at the party with the bag of coke and that people came to me and wanted to buy it off me. I definitely had an identity as a coke dealer with people coming up to me and saying this stuff. But I would say that I never let it get to my head or anything. It wasn't like this is how I wanted to be known for the rest of my life – as the guy who sold coke in [_____]. But it definitely did happen where people knew I had it and I was seen as that [a coke dealer] by a lot of people... I was selective in who I let know [that I sold cocaine]. All this time I was worried what if it turns out that one of my brother's or sister's friends calls me and then go and tell them "Yeah, I bought coke off your brother last weekend." Because they wouldn't have been cool with that, especially as I was still living at my mom's house, that wouldn't have been a cool thing. Even some people that I went to high school with and we never really knew each other or stuff like that, and say they wanted a half-g [half gram] and I would be like (in a reluctant/sarcastic tone) "Hey, here you go. Right on. Get high." So there was definitely some people that I kept it from... I like to think that I did [keep my reputation under control], but then again, I can't control what people say about me if I'm not around like I saw so and so doing this or apparently this guy does this. I tried to stay kind of low key but...(15)

One time somebody approached me, this girl who was seeing one of my friends, this [_____] chick comes up to me and she like, "Yeah, I just wanted to tell you that [your friend's] mom told me that your mom told her that she's really worried about you because you're doing drugs." And that bothered me. It just bothered me, it hurt... I still felt bad about that... it just kind of bugged me that my mom knew I was doing drugs.... To my family I would keep it concealed, but with other people I would be open with it, trying to be the high-roller, like the big dealer. So it was two separate people I guess. The one [identity] was family, no drugs, good example for my nieces and nephews, and for my parents, no drugs whatsoever. But to my friends and stuff, it's totally different. (16)

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[127] In the case of tattooed persons, Sanders (2008: 54) found that people selectively reveal their tattoos due to anticipated negative responses, especially in cases "when the 'other' is in a position to exercise control over the tattooee." Also, Prus and Irini (1980:40, 126-127) found that prostitutes and exotic dancers often attempted to conceal their involvements from their families due to the stigmatisation they might experience.

When dealers wish to conceal their activities from certain others, they may be seen to engage in a process of "juggling multiple identities." In general terms, two identities can be delineated in these cases: one as a "dealer" in interactions with customers, suppliers and other insiders and another "non-dealing" identity to be maintained in other circles. In attempting to manage multiple identities, dealers may engage in various tactics of concealment, including (1) social distancing or "audience segregation" (avoiding suspicious activity when around particular others)[128] and (2) "passing" as normals by concealing or hiding their dealing involvements from particular others. Still, people also may (3) attend to concealment with variable levels of emphases whereby some activities and some outsider audiences may be of greater concern than others.

Goffman (1959: 49) refers to *audience segregation* as the process by which "the individual ensures that those before whom he plays one of his parts will not be the same individuals before he plays a different part in another setting." *Audience segregation* allows people to maintain more normal appearances with some groups, while simultaneously being involved in activities that those audiences might deem disreputable. Thus, some dealers concealed their dealing or using involvements when in the presence of family or some friends:

The main thing was just not doing [using] it around them or selling it around them. There were friends that I had in high school that probably would have been shocked if they had known I had a half-ounce of coke or something in my pocket while I was at their house and they would have freaked out or something like that so it was more out-of-sight out-of-mind kind of thing. They might have found out some other way, but it was never because of something that I did, like making deals out in front of their house or something like that. I also just wouldn't talk about it. I would talk about something else when we were out drinking, not bring up drugs. (15)

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[128] While "social distancing" may be understood as avoiding particular others altogether, it can also be applied to situations in which people avoid engaging in particular activities around certain audiences or groups. Thus, while dealers may still be in the presence of outsiders at times, outsiders are avoided when problematic qualities are more visible. Goffman's (1959: 49) term "audience segregation" conceptualises this process.

It was just me and my mom living at home at this point. My brother and sister were in university so they were never around. My mom knew that I was young and I go out all the time, so it wasn't like I had a curfew or be home at a certain time. Half the time I would be coming home early the next morning, and I would try and time it so that I'd either come home before six [a.m.] because my mom would get up to get ready for work at six-thirty or so or I'd get home after eight [a.m.] because she'd leave around eight. So I was definitely trying to avoid her. I would just hide it [drugs] in my room because my mom, I'm pretty sure, always had a fairly good trust with me – she's not going to just going looking through my stuff and snoop around. So as long as I hid it somewhere in my room, I was fine. (16)

In addition to concealing disreputable involvements from particular groups, another aspect of audience segregation is simultaneously maintaining and increasing a presence in particular activities among another audience. Thus, people may engage in strategic attempts to foster their identities in "disrespectable arenas," while at the same time "passing" as people involved in more legitimate pursuits:

We worked on developing the best image we could get, something that would be known within the circle but not the within the community. We dealt high quality, the lowest prices, and only to certain people, no one else... Reputation is very important, because you're dealing with people who have so much money all the time that you need to keep their respect. (Adler, 1985: 100)

[My friends and I] started our own production company in high school. It was called the K. E. n G. [as in ketamine, ecstasy, and GHB] party. People that don't know about [this drug scene] would just see KEG [as in beer keg] party... Ketamine, ecstasy, and GHB were all the new drugs that were coming into the scene and kind of like more of the raver drugs. (6)

People also may "pass" as "normals" by concealing or hiding some of the signs of their disreputable involvements.[129] One dealer explained how he concealed his dealing profits from others by hiding how much money he had (through limited purchases) and accounting for his income by maintaining legitimate employment (see also VanNostrand and Tewksbury, 1999: 76):

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[129] Although, as Sanders (2008: 55) points outs, it is usually more difficult to conceal stigmas from those we have intimate associations with (e.g., friends, family, significant others) compared to more casual acquaintances. Thus, the concealment process may need to be more extensive to keep things hidden from these more intimate groups. Also, Prus and Irini (1980: 40) found that prostitutes often attempted to conceal their involvements from their family, but this became more difficult when they worked in the very communities in which their family members resided.

You can't invest the money. You can't spend the money on anything [that's in your name] because it's not yours, it's not real and as soon as you start spending it or doing anything with it people know.... So I'm doing coke and selling coke, no big deal. With the amount of coke I sold the amount I did was nothing. Then my mom, on my ass all the time... I was probably working three days a week just to kind of keep it from my mom. (1)

People also may attend to their problematic senses of self with variable emphases. Thus,

while some people may attempt to conceal all problematic aspects of their activities from

particular persons, others may focus on the elements anticipated to be the most stigmatising.

When dealers are not able (or do not attempt) to keep some of their involvements in the drug

subculture entirely from others, the emphasis may shift to concealing things perceived as more

negative "back region" involvements (Goffman 1959). This may include (1) involvements in

"harder" or less socially acceptable drugs and (2) the "dirty work" (Hughes, 1971) involved in

some dealing activities:

I could go home high on weed and even if they [my parents] did know, it wasn't a big deal because I still had my shit together and half of their friends probably smoke weed or at least have at some point. It's [marijuana] been around everywhere. But I wouldn't want to go home ripped on E [ecstasy] with a white ringer [powder visible around the edges of the nostril] around my nose. Fuck, they wouldn't like that. Some drugs are just more socially acceptable. Weed is what it is, it's around everywhere, everyone has smoked it or been around someone who has smoked it. As long as I kept my shit together, they didn't care if I smoked weed with my friends... I wouldn't want them to find a bag of pills, where if they found a bag of weed, it wouldn't be so bad. I definitely made sure the coke and the pills weren't hanging out of my pocket or backpack. Anybody outside of the scene, I didn't want them to know more than they needed to, I guess. I just didn't want them to know. I didn't know how they would react to it but I just didn't want them to find out. I knew with the weed it was more socially acceptable, but with the other stuff they might react badly to it. (9)

So I had this girlfriend and she didn't do any drugs. I had been friends with her for a long time... So this chick I liked her. After going through skank [promiscuous girl] after skank I finally found a chick that was clean [respectable] and had clean friends. I didn't want to answer my phone and talk to these people [customers] or go meet them. I didn't want my girlfriend to see the people I dealt with on a daily basis. She knew I was dealing but she didn't know everything. She didn't know I'm selling [cocaine] to guys with two kids in the back seat [of their car] sometimes. (1)

Encountering Regulatory Agencies

Although we often think of people's encounters with regulatory agencies as taking place in actual contact situations, it is instructive to consider the ways that people define and act toward things mindful of any regulatory agencies that they might in some ways acknowledge. Thus in this situation, I have given attention to dealers' viewpoints, situated definitions, and expressions of concern, as well as other modes of experience with control agencies.

As noted earlier, people who participate in illegal activities are also in the position of having their disrespectability "institutionalized" and "objectified" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) through the use of formal rules and sanctions:

All human activity is subject to habitualization. Any action that is repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern, which can then be reproduced with an economy of effort and which... is apprehended by its performer as that pattern.... Institutionalization occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors. Put differently, any such typification is an institution.... An institutional world, then, is experienced as an objective reality.... It is important to keep in mind that the objectivity of the institutional world, however massive it may appear to the individual, is a humanly produced, constructed objectivity. The process by which the externalized products of activity attain the character of objectivity is objectivation. The institutional world is objectivated human activity, and so is every single institution. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 53-60)

Ball (1970: 359-360) distinguishes three possible social implications of being discredited: (1) symbolic degradation of self, identity, and, character, (2) limits on social participation, and (3) community exclusion or ostracism. The "objectification" of disrespectability through the invocation of formal rules and consequences can make these implications appear more severe, sure, and *real* to people (Prus and Grills, 2003: 58).[130] That is, formal regulation may remove some of the ambiguity in the social implications of being identified as a criminal deviant.

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[130] As Prus and Grills (2003: 58) state, "it is when those promoting specific notions of deviance are successful in having their definitions accepted by others that these definitions become objectified (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). When definitions of deviance are thought to achieve 'intersubjective consensus' within some community (i.e., made explicit, visibly accepted, shared,

Using Garfinkel's (1956) work on degradation ceremonies (i.e., the public discrediting of people's identities), several features of the "objectification" of disrespectability can be identified. Garfinkel posits that degradation ceremonies are most likely to be successful when (1) the target's activity is believed to be immoral, strange, or unusual, (2) the activity is believed to be intentional, (3) the condemner has the authority to speak on behalf of the audience, acts in the group's interests, and is well respected by the group, (4) the witnesses to the activity are viewed to be objective and free from bias, and (5) the target is regarded as deviant in other ways beyond the activity in question. Informed by this outline of the public degradation process, one can see how formal regulation agencies are likely to experience success in their efforts since many in society consider criminal law to be beneficial for society and law enforcement agencies as being responsible enforcers of this good.

Although the people interviewed for this study had few actual contacts with law enforcement agencies or even counselors or other "softer" agents of control, I will discuss dealers' experiences with law enforcement. More specifically, I consider people's (1) concerns with apprehension and (2) the related implications for disinvolvement.

Concerns with Apprehension

As used herein, the term "concerns" would include any worries, doubts, or reservations that dealers may have about contact with law enforcement agents. Because of the illegal nature of dealing activities, the law enforcement community is a particularly consequential set of outsiders for those involved in dealing drugs. While some dealers give law enforcement little thought,[131]

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promoted, sanctioned), these notions attain a sense of realism that individuals and subgroups within those settings may find difficult to resist even were they so inclined."
[131] Some dealers view law enforcement as generally inept (Adler, 1985: 109).

regulation may become a central concern in other instances and may contribute to people's

disinvolvement. For most dealers, however, the efforts of law enforcement agencies are apt to

become of some, even if uneven, concern, especially as they progress in their careers.[132]

As noted in the accounts of initial involvements in drug sales (see Murphy et al., 1990;

Mohamed and Fritsvold, 2006), people in this study had few reservations regarding the law at the

beginning of their involvements. For a few people, this general lack of concern with the

implications of encountering legal authorities persisted. These dealers typically *discounted the*

risk of being apprehended by emphasising the minimal roles they assumed in the broader

(illegal) drug subculture and regulation effort – a "we're just the small fish" perspective:

I wasn't into it big enough where they would have been after me. That was my thought. I would assume that they were after the bigger fish. They would want to go after the guy I was getting it from or something. For them to waste their time on me would be pointless. (9)

I didn't see any wrong, there was more pros than cons in doing it. The pros being money and the cons there was none really. I didn't think at the time I was big enough for anything bad to happen because I'm just supplying to a couple friends. Bad in legal terms as in any heat being on me or anything like that. (3)

I didn't really feel the need to use the codes. I didn't think my phone was being tapped or anything. I wasn't paranoid about the situation. I just wasn't a major player. I didn't think the drug task force was interested in me. (14)

However, some people developed more significant concerns about encountering law

enforcement. Thus, people were more likely to express reservations when they envisioned the

implications (i.e., arrest, degradation of self, limits on freedom, and/or community rejection) of

being apprehended as likely to be much more severe (1) once they legally became adults and (2)

when they intensified their dealing activities.

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[132] While most dealers have few initial reservations, some become increasingly worried as they became more heavily involved. For them, arrest becomes more of a possibility and they may start to think that "it's only a matter of time" before they are caught. Also see Adler (1985: 131) and Desroches (2005: 103).

While those who are apprehended as youths (under eighteen years old) in Canada may experience some degradation of self and some limits on social participation for brief periods of time – especially in the form of sentence conditions, the dealers in this study considered it unlikely that anyone who was under eighteen years old would serve time in prison or have a "record" as a criminal (young offenders' records do not follow them into adulthood). Thus, people may have fewer concerns with their dealing involvements as youths than as adults:

In Canada... you aren't going to get nothing except a slap on your wrist. I remember in high school somebody got busted and raided and charged with three counts of trafficking ecstasy and got nine months of house arrest! No jail time! No nothing! That's like three counts of trafficking heroin practically, so you see that and you don't even care about the risk anymore. It's like what? I'm going to get six months of living at home for making thirty thousand dollars? Living at home smoking weed and selling drugs (laughing).... There was none [no reservations in the beginning] because then I was a minor, so it was like way less. I was just going to get charged with nothing. It seemed like no risk at the time... It wouldn't have been until I went to college after turning eighteen [years old] being considered an adult and getting into chemical drugs that I began weighing the risks of going to jail or ruining your future record. (8)

In addition to developing more concern about arrest as they legally achieve adult status, people also may develop concerns about encountering law enforcement when they *intensify* their dealing involvements. Two participants observed that the consequences for being apprehended for some levels of selling (e.g., larger amounts of drugs and/or drugs perceived as more "harmful") implied more severe consequences than others. The two main concerns expressed were (1) the possibility of prison sentences and (2) the potentially debilitating effects of a criminal record:

I started getting into coke. That all came with the E [ecstasy] scene. It was there and wanted to experiment with it, so started getting into that. It was just recreational at first. I'd be grabbing some E's and just ask for some coke too. I never got too crazy with it. I started off grabbing grams for us to do and maybe three or four of us would throw in and get a ball [three and a half grams]. From there I started grabbing maybe quarters and half-ounces. Didn't go much from there – just for me and my friends again. There was demand for it. I often thought about taking it like to another level but coke was something that sat in the back of my mind that it wasn't something that I wanted to get caught with. I don't know really why I didn't [feel that way] with the E and that, just with the coke you kind of hear the horror stories. You know they [legal

authorities] don't take it lightly, and I was just starting to really get into my job pretty good, I didn't want to fuck things up bad. You just know from hearing about people that got caught with it. I just didn't want to get caught with an ounce of coke when I was twenty-one years old. I had just got my shit together, bought a car, getting established as a person and didn't want to throw it out the window. I was just kind of nervous about getting into it then. (9)

At first you don't really think about it [being apprehended]. You get involved with it and you think that nobody knows. Nobody knows about anything because you are just starting off. At the beginning the risk factor isn't much to make you very paranoid, but after time goes by you start having it all the time on you and you start seeing that you potentially could be jailed for any amount of time because of what you are carrying with you all the time. That was something I didn't start to think about until after, and that was when I did start picking up larger amounts that I did become a little more worrisome and did expect risks coming my way. It did build a lot on my conscience like sleep comes into play after a while where you can't sleep because you are worried about having it and other factors of being robbed or jumped or any sort of situation like that. (7)

Disinvolvement

For close to half of the dealers interviewed for this study, concerns with the implications of being formally discredited and sanctioned fostered their decision to disinvolve from dealing. In more general terms, they emphasised three implications of being apprehended that they wished to avoid: (1) degradation of self (especially in relation to their family's expectations), (2) limits on social participation (and future plans), and (3) community exclusion (or jail time). Relatedly, people may be more apt to disinvolve if they feel that their continued participation will likely lead to the imminent imposition of these social sanctions.[133] Five people explained how they decided to cease dealing after "close calls" (and close calls of their associates) with law enforcement made the likelihood of apprehension become more real:

It was pretty rough. When we were growing the last time indoors it got to the point where I thought for sure we were going to get raided. If had to tell my parents that, then it's just not worth it for me to have to tell them that and for them to be that disappointed and for them to have to tell everybody that their son got busted growing. Like I probably wouldn't go to jail, but

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[133] Similarly, Prus and Irini (1980: 43) found that some prostitutes developed concerns with being apprehended only after they felt that their arrest was imminent.

like my sisters, my brother, everybody would know, my nieces, my nephews. And I don't want to be seen like that – that's just not me. I've always been interested in criminal things I guess, but I think my nieces and nephews are a huge factor. My parents could handle it if I got busted. They would be very disappointed, but they would get over it. But my nieces and nephews, they just look up to me, and if they found out I was doing drugs and stuff... I just wouldn't want to wreck that. That's where I am now. Do I want to be that kind of person? Why not be just a good person? It's a whole lot better. Sure you got to work, but you can't go trying to be a criminal and make like easy money. It's not a good idea, even though you think you can. Earlier it was a good idea. But just almost getting caught scared the shit out of me. The verge of going to jail, getting arrested, not cool. There's no way I was going to allow that to happen. (16)

Then I moved back home and got out of dealing again. I just didn't have any desire to be selling at home again... I had heard of some other people getting arrested so there were some issues with cops wanting to know what was going on, so I just said fuck it, let the people do it who were doing it now. And at this point I was starting change my perspective in what I wanted to do in life. I was thinking about going to law school, and I didn't think it would be a good idea to have a bunch of previous drug charges and apply to law school or grad school or try and get a job with the government. I didn't think that would go over too well – being a convicted drug dealer (laughing). So I definitely had changed what I was about and started thinking a lot more about the consequences. (15)

I already had cops following me around in [_____]. Me and [my brother] we'd go into [a local bar] and fucking cops come up and they're standing right beside me and after about ten minutes, I look over and say, "Hey how's it going? You guys want a beer or anything?" And they're like, "No, no, we're good." So I get up to take a piss and they follow me up to the bathroom. So I go inside and I'm like, "Are you guys coming in? There's only room for one, but we can all squeeze in here." And they're just looking at me. I shut the door and take a piss and come out and they're still standing there. I walk past them, got to squeeze in between them. Go back and sit down and they come stand right beside me while I'm drinking beers. So I get sick of this, I don't know what their plans are. So I get up and leave to go to [another bar] and the fucking cunts are right behind me... And then they went to every bar in [_____] and told them not to let me in because I was selling dope. I should have fucking charged them with slander or something, like they've got no proof, I've never been busted for dope in my life... Like what do you do after that? Like you know they are looking at you? So I just put all this shit together... it just ain't worth it anymore. (18)[134]

Things went on for about a year and it just got to a point where it got too big. Too many people knew me and I sold too much, and that's a bad thing because where I'm from it's a small town, so people talk and it doesn't take long for the police to find out who you are and what you're doing. I felt the heat, I felt like I was going to be arrested. So I had to stop or else I would go to jail... "Feeling the heat" is sitting in your apartment watching police cruisers pull over people leaving your house, circling the block. Having friends and family telling you they've talked to police officers that have mentioned to them that they know what's going on. I heard from many

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[134] Prus and Irini (1980: 45) found that police would use similar informal sanctions to dissuade bar managers from allowing hookers to operate from their establishments.

different people that cops were asking about me, talking about me. I saw the cruisers all the time. It was either go to jail or quit selling drugs. (2)

That summer went by and into the fall my one friend that I had been selling with ended up getting arrested. He was apparently selling to some undercover cop so he got arrested. That really scared me. I didn't know what to think. I didn't know whether I had been selling to an undercover police officer. I didn't know what was going on. So at that point I decided that I was moving out west. I was going to get the hell out of this area. Now I had nothing to do with the guy he had been selling to, but it was enough to make me be l like "I don't want to be here anymore. I don't want to do this or take the chances. I just want to get out of here." So that's what I did. I quit dealing, I got all my shit and moved out west. (11)

Six of the people interviewed for this study were apprehended in relation to their dealing activities. While about half of the people noted that their arrest had little impact on their subsequent dealing involvements,[135] the others decided to disinvolve after apprehension.[136]

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[135] For one dealer, being apprehended was looked upon as fairly inconsequential and had a limited impact on his subsequent dealing involvements. If anything, arrest only made him more resolute in his dealing pursuits:

I got busted. Oh yeah. At a bar someone ratted us out and ten cops rolled in there and busted me and my buddy... It didn't affect my dealing at all. I just kept going. I was making money and it's [getting arrested is] part of the job. It's just expected.... It just made me more brazen. I didn't give a fuck. I thought I was an original O.G. [original gangster]. I was getting used to jail. I was just like fuck it, whatever, go ahead lock me up. I was in and out of jail and dealing in between. (13)

"Surviving" the arrest also may make one appear more "solid" from the viewpoints of others in the drug community and some dealers may use arrests as opportunities to assess and adjust their operating strategies (see Langer, 1977: 382). Prus and Irini (1980: 44) found similar experiences among the hooker community. Similarly, in the rounder community (Prus and Irini, 1980: 257), arrest was most likely to lead to disinvolvement for newcomers who still viewed the legitimate world as a viable and valuable alternative. However, for those more embedded in hustling as a way of life, arrest may just be a badge of honour. Relatedly, Becker (1963: 37) states: "Apprehension may not lead to increasing deviance if the situation in which the individual is apprehended for the first time occurs at a point where he can still choose between alternate lines of action. Faced, for the first time, with the possible ultimate and drastic consequences of what he is doing, he may decide that he does not want to take the deviant road, and turn back. If he makes the right choice, he will be welcomed back into the conventional community; but if he makes the wrong move, he will be rejected and start a cycle of increasing deviance."

[136] Relatedly, Ray (1961: 135) found that heroin addicts often began to contemplate abstinence after being apprehended. Often, their decision to disinvolve was made in reference to the experiences of other (more experienced, older) addicts as indicators of what life may be like should they continue on the same trajectory. Also, Lofland and Stark's (1965) conception of reaching a "turning point" is applicable here where new orientations are sought after

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Specifically, they emphasised the (1) displeasure of being excluded from the community (or jailed) and (2) the degradation of self as experiences that fostered their disinvolvement:

I stopped [dealing] cold turkey. I went to jail for five days and got out on bail. I was on curfew on bail for like six months. Just being in jail those five days were the biggest waste of time ever. You're just a rat in a cage, you can't do anything. Especially since I loved music and I'd have to listen to music everyday. I couldn't listen to anything or even wear my own clothes and it was only like five days and I'm like "FUCK!" Just being in there was the biggest waste of time ever, so I'm just like I don't want to do anything to be back in here ever like no matter what because it was just the biggest waste of your life. (6)

They ended up charging me with possession with the purpose of trafficking marijuana, possession of ketamine, and possession of cocaine. That affected me one hundred percent. That took me out mentally, physically, it ended me. At the time I was trying to catch up with my debts, trying to pay them off, it just killed me. At that point in time I was just sitting there thinking this is it, like my name's ruined, my reputation is ruined, I've been caught, they're going to be watching me, there's no sense in even trying again or I'll be in jail, I got to cool off for awhile and just let things chill. At that point too I had a very high dependency on the pain killers, it had been about two or three years I was taking them and I finally decided that I had to stop sometime because the money stops. The money stopped, I was in debt, things were hell, it was shit, going through a morphine withdrawal. It just affected me mentally and physically where I just lost myself in my apartment and sat there for weeks and weeks and weeks trying to just get off the drugs and avoid contact with everybody. I made the decision that I was going to go to school to get my ass out of jail [time]. I had stopped dealing then and pretty much just sat in my apartment and watched TV everyday. It was a point in my life where I had to grow up, I was twenty-one [years old] at the time, so it was like I need to go to school and maintain a real life job that was going to get me through life, because I realised that drug dealing was over, my drug dealing career was done. (7)

The Problematics of Disentanglement

A second but related matter [to the discussion of gambling as persistent activity] may be termed subcultural embeddedness. Consistent with Prus (1997) and Prus and Grills (2003), the term subculture is used to refer to the life-worlds that develop around specific realms of activity. Although often associated with deviance, it should be appreciated that people may develop subcultures around any realm of activity. More importantly for our immediate purposes, however, is the recognition that each subculture represents a way of life for those involved within — as in perspectives, identities, relationships, activities, linguistic fluencies and emotionalities. Relatedly, the more fully people become immersed in particular subcultures (be these religious, political, work, or recreational), the more likely they will use the viewpoints and

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experiencing failure with current pursuits (for example, failing out of school, losing a job, a break up) and being freed up from existing commitments.

practices of those subcultures as central reference points. These are consequential not only for the ways that the participants define themselves, but also for the manners in which they define the activities, associations, and situations in which they find themselves. Participants may switch frames of reference as they move from one subculture to the next — as from gambling to work to one's family, for instance — but the people in each subculture have their own emphases and their own notions of reality. (Prus, 2004: 15)

To be successful in dealing typically requires that people organise their lives around this activity. This includes developing activities, perspectives, identities, relationships, manners of emotional expression, and styles of linguistic interchange that are consistent with their dealing involvements. As people become more involved in dealing, they are more apt to define themselves and approach situations as "dealers." Thus, for about half (ten) of those interviewed for this study, drug dealing became a way of life – a way to understand and approach the everyday world, as one dealer remarked:

I always had dope. I could always get a good deal. I was always a consummate businessman I guess. I always knew when I could make money off something. So if it was easy to make money off, then I might as well. If I'm going to buy two ecstasy pills [for myself] for forty dollars or I could buy ten for one hundred [dollars]. Obviously I'm going to buy ten for one hundred [dollars] and go cover what I got to do. (1)

In discussing card and dice hustlers, Prus and Sharper (1977: 29) observe that people can become entangled in subcultural life-worlds both deliberately and by more gradually drifting into particular fields of activity:

As persons spend more time cultivating skills and make expenditures on equipment or travel, they are more likely to feel that hustling owes them something, a debt that can be realized only through greater participation... Similarly, were one's preliminary hustling involvements to result in a loss or termination of other activities (for example, a job) or associations (wife, friends), one is likely to become more reliant on hustling activities and contacts. Hence, through deliberate investments and/or unintended expenditures, persons may find that they have drifted into a situation promoting more extensive involvements. They may not only feel that hustling owes them something but, in the process of getting involved in hustling, may effectively limit their options.

When people organise their lives around subcultures, disinvolvement becomes both more unlikely and more difficult. First, those more heavily involved in and committed to subcultures

are less likely to consider or attempt disinvolvement in any serious way. Not only may people be quite satisfied with their ongoing involvements, but they also may perceive few or no viable alternatives to replace these involvements and support existing lifestyles – experiencing "closure" (Lemert, 1953). Relatedly, Stebbins (1971) uses the term "continuance commitments" to refer to aspects of activities that make disinvolvement or alternative involvements seem unfeasible and/or unattainable. Even those people who do cease dealing are still quite likely to reengage in these pursuits since they are apt to remain embedded in some aspects of these former involvements (e.g., relationships with former suppliers and customers).

Given these considerations, four themes emerged in regards to commitment to and entanglement in dealing as a way of life: (1) embracing the lifestyle, (2) experiencing "closure" (continuance commitments), (3) embeddedness in the social life, and (4) disenchantment and "career shifts."

Embracing the Lifestyle

People involved in drug dealing may become accustomed to some of the benefits of this activity as a way of life. Those who enjoy the lifestyle are more apt to maintain and intensify their involvements in it. The people interviewed for this study cited three main allures with the lifestyle (see also Adler, 1985: 83-85; VanNostrand and Tewksbury, 1999: 66; Desroches, 2005: 106-110; and Waldorf, 1973: 19): (1) money and associated benefits (e.g., impressing others, partying, perceived freedom), (2) drugs and associated benefits (e.g., impressing others, personal use, entertainment), and (3) "being somebody" and associated benefits (e.g., elevated senses of importance and esteem, impressing others):

I was making probably twenty thousand dollars a month for four months in a row. I had cell phone bills that were two thousand [dollars] a month... I realised that I was extremely addicted

to money and still am. Love money, love what it does for me, love where it takes me, it let's me do things that I could never do by myself or as a regular person. Used to eat out every night, used to buy things for all my friends – food, alcohol, whatever. It gives you power, it was the power over other people, it was the power over everyone, it was the power over the system. I didn't have to go to school, I didn't have a job, I just had to do this [deal] and I could do whatever I wanted…. You can do whatever you want. You can't spend the money fast enough. All you have to do is answer your phone Thursday, Friday, Saturday and you're set…. From a young age I didn't really need my mother for money anymore which is something I liked. I never had to rely on anyone to get by and buy what I wanted. (1)

When shit was going good with those two guys I was getting rid of a half pound [of cocaine] a week. Maybe three quarters [of a pound] sometimes. And I partied hard. I partied like everyday drinking, snorting, smoking. I spent a lot of fucking money dude. When I get money I spend it like drinking water. Plus like man I had some fucking mad bills. I had my house, like my mortgage; the other house; my apartment; insurance on a motorcycle, car, and truck; and just getting retarded [partying] everyday too… I just went wild with the coke for a while. That kind of went on for a year. We just went out and partied for like three days straight and then crash out. And I went on a lot of trips dude. Went down to Florida a bunch of times, Dominican a bunch of times, shit like that. (18)

I would say that at parties it was great [being a drug dealer] because all these people would get drugs off you and then want to do them with you. So you get to do the drugs, chat shit up, meet new people, talk to girls and still be making like hundreds of dollars while you're having a great time. You'd meet all these people because you were selling drugs. It made it more addictive at parties because you're like making bucks and having fun. You would watch these people who were buying drugs off you spend their whole paycheck for a week on drugs and you're like doing more drugs than they are for free and making like a thousand dollars. So you'd just be wondering why aren't these idiots selling drugs themselves or why don't they buy quantity [larger amounts at a discounted price]? It would just boggle my mind because I would never personally spend that much money on drugs ever. It's just not worth it to spend all this hard-earned money. So it was an exciting job. You didn't have to work or do anything except pick up the drugs and people would like come and get it from you. (8)

I didn't really use any drugs… I smoked a bit of weed and stuff like that, but I wasn't a big drug user at all. I was more interested in the money and the power or whatever you want to call it that went with it, the lifestyle and stuff like that. (10)

From there it just started growing more and more. I started to indulge and buy myself nice things. I was really involved in snowboarding, so I'd just go out and buy whatever I wanted. The lifestyle is something that you want to maintain especially when you're gaining profits. It's a great thing because you are not doing too much, just supplying somebody with a product. (7)

Once people had become sufficiently exposed to the enchantment of the fast life enamored with the feelings of importance, and used to wantonly consuming money and drugs, they were willing to continue drug dealing to support themselves in this style. The myriad of pleasures reinforced one another, overwhelming even the once soberly directed individuals. Thus, the dealing

lifestyle, through its unmitigated hedonism, both attracted pleasure seeking individuals into the drug business and transformed others, through its concentrated decadence, into pleasure seekers, combining its thrust with materialism in ensuring their continuance in this line of work. (Adler, 1985: 98)

Relatedly, for people who have ceased dealing, opportunities to get back into dealing may present themselves. In contemplating reinvolvement, former dealers may be quite intrigued with possibility, reminiscing about the advantages and allures of their former lifestyles relative to their current pursuits:[137]

I was missing money and it's [selling drugs] almost like a lifestyle really. It's something to do. It's people calling all the time. It's almost like a bit of a power trip because you know you have something that people want. And I was broke and wanted money again (laughing). I lived in a small area and had no vehicle to even go to a regular job or whatever. I was definitely pursuing it, because at that point in time that is what I wanted to do, was sell drugs... You definitely do get used to the easy money, the feeling of power and when you're not doing that, you do feel that you're missing out on something after you've been doing it for a long time. (10)

[After I stopped dealing] I was pretty good once I got to college with not using [chemical] drugs anymore. I would just smoke a bit of weed. But then somehow the instinct came for more money. I thought the party life was good, but I could see that I didn't have the money to party like I used to [when I was dealing]... I was used to having a bunch of money and now all the money I had saved up had gone towards to rent and I couldn't get [a government student loan] because of how much my parents made. At this point instead of being concerned with just my [drug] habit and partying, I wanted money to party with booze and get girls. It takes money to kind of "ball" [conduct yourself in a manner that appears financially well to do], to get out there and be buying girls drinks and be looking like the guy to be with, like this guy is obviously financially secure, just to have that appeal to women, basically... So I had to come up with another [dealing] hustle, is what I was thinking. (17)

Experiencing "Closure"

As used herein, experiencing "closure" (Lemert, 1953) refers to situations in which people perceive a lack of options in solving problems or pursuing objectives. People who become more heavily involved in dealing drugs and accustomed to the associated benefits are likely to define

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[137] Similarly, those that have become disinvolved from prostitution also "tend to miss aspects of 'the life.'" (Prus and Irini, 1980: 49)

dealing as the only viable means of sustaining and attaining desired ways of life. As drugs

dealers, people can attain large incomes in short periods of time and with relatively little effort

when compared with working as unskilled or semi-skilled labourers in the legitimate workforce.

As well, involvement in dealing also may be considered to be more exciting and rewarding than

conventional forms of employment in other ways (e.g., people may develop elevated senses of

esteem through dealing). Thus, the dealing lifestyle may be perceived as unattainable through

more "legitimate" pursuits:[138]

So I became more addicted to having an easy job [dealing drugs] making more money than people who have good jobs. I just realised that you could not make as much money legitimately as you could illegitimately. So I couldn't stop selling drugs and didn't want to because I didn't want to get a job and make like eight dollars an hour when I was making like two hundred dollars a day doing nothing. The risk was worth the reward. With my educational training and jobs, I couldn't make practically enough money to rent a house on my own. (8)

The recognition, respect, and notoriety achieved within their communities was a reward not found when pursuing other means of employment. Like a rush, drug dealing provided many with an opportunity to achieve status unlike any they had ever known. The luxuries and power associated with dealing gave many the freedom to pursue a measure of social status that other career choices would not have provided. (VanNostrand and Tewksbury, 1999: 66)

In a related sense, people who are disinvolved from dealing are more likely to become

reinvolved during periods of transition in which they find the legitimate work world challenging

and unappealing:[139]

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[138] Similarly, in their study of the hotel community, Prus and Irini (1980: 134) observed exotic dancers who felt as though they could not generate an equitable income in more legitimate occupations. While "stripping" can be highly profitable, few dancers have substantial savings due to drug/drinking habits, sporadic work schedules, and lack of budgeting. Still, the money (and the perceived potential for greater financial freedom) represents a prominent allure. As well, expensive lifestyles serve to negate the viability of more legitimate lines of work.

[139] Relatedly, as Prus and Irini (1980: 256) state: "While disenchantment with bar life prompts interest in 'straight' work – most hustlers, for instance, have looked for legitimate work at some point in their careers – such things as an unsteady work record, a lack of references, limited education, and a prison record, disadvantage persons for many jobs. And, at the same time, their own disinclinations to do 'routine, square' work mitigates against obtaining employment. So long as persons envision hustling as a viable comparison point, the prospects of finding

I moved back into my dad's and that would have been the first time that I took a break from dealing... I had spent about six or seven months at my dad's and nothing was going on the whole time – I wasn't doing any dealing... I was feeling the hit of having zero finances and staying at my dad's because at this point I had never worked a day in my life so in terms of reintegrating into conventional society, that was completely an uphill battle on a number of accounts. One being that I had no skills on paper. Obviously people are wary of hiring someone with no work history so that was a big issue. The other issue was financially, even though I had spent long periods in the past without making an incredible income, in one fell swoop you can make almost any amount of money, so the thought of entering the conventional job market at the time was less than attractive mostly considering the entry level wages in anything that I could imagine in getting hired. See, I'm fine if I have zero money. And if I have lots of money, I'm usually giving most of it away, [but] I have no idea how to live on a wage, so I just didn't know how I could possibly live on sixteen hundred dollars a month when previously I had never paid less than fifteen hundred dollars a month in rent. So at this time my friend from [another province] was coming into [_____] and he was bringing me a bunch of stuff to get rid of, weed... And the conventional work situation wasn't appealing to me at all... So I started selling weed again and immediately it reached a sufficient level to handle all of the issues that I was worried about. It was about five pounds a week. (19)

Whereas some people become dissatisfied with legitimate work involvements (or the prospects thereof) after they have exited drug dealing, other dealers may have "unfinished business" (past debts or other obligations) in their former involvements.[140] Sometimes these entanglements are in the form of large debts to former suppliers. Under these conditions, suppliers are apt to insist that ex-dealers get back into selling drugs so they can begin to pay off their debts. Still, supplier suggestions may be welcomed as a chance to resume former lifestyles:

And I just started living and working for a few months. I wasn't selling any drugs. I wasn't doing anything [related to drug dealing]. I wasn't doing K [ketamine] or anything like that, so I didn't have a habit that I had to support. I did owe money to a previous supplier, but he wasn't breathing down my neck and at the time I wasn't paying him back, so that wasn't a concern of

acceptable, conventional work are limited. Legitimate work may be obtained, but typically this is only after the occurrence of an event or circumstance generating an extensive questioning of one's activity as viable."

[140] This ongoing or fluid quality of activities – with no distinct beginning or end – is also found in the hustling community more generally, "as persons become involved in a greater assortment of hustles they are likely to find that not only 'is there always something going on,' but that any thoughts of leaving are more complicated. One does not have the clearer starts and endings a single activity entails, rather one is more continuously faced with the problem of completing activities and 'tying up loose ends'" (Prus and Irini, 1980: 252).

mine per se. Obviously I was worried about it [paying the debt], but it wasn't something that I had to take care of at the time. So just by working at [_____] I was able to support myself – not well – struggling to get by kind of living and not doing drugs and that was fine. Then that winter, the guy that I owed money to called me to try and find somebody he was looking for [that also owed him money] and that reintroduced me to working with him because I hadn't talked with him for a while and he was like, "You owe me three thousand dollars. How are you going to pay me back? I can give you some coke if you want to sell it?" And I was like, "Okay. Well I'm sitting here in [_____] and I know a few people here and there that I can sell it to. And there's not much risk to it and it's just small-time and he's going to front [extend product on credit] it to me." So I decided sure I'll start taking these half ounces of coke and try to sell it... At that point I had just lost my job by making a couple stupid mistakes [at work]. So I lost my legitimate source of income, and that really made me feel the pressure that I need to make money to live and survive and pay back this guy [my supplier]. So that intensified the amount of dealing I did and I started to go up north more frequently because I have a larger clientele base up there because I grew up there. Then at a point I made a decision to move back up there because it was coming up to the summer, and the summer is always a boom time. So I just thought there was no point living in [_____] anymore because I don't have a job there anymore, so financially there was no reason for me to be there anymore. So I moved back up north, and that's when I got into moving a key [kilogram of cocaine] a month. (11)

I finally got my first real job in years cooking and maintained that for a while. Just got through my house arrest, didn't associate with any dealers or stuff like that, stayed clean. Then I received a phone call from my old source that I owed big and he thought that I had suffered enough and he thought it was a good time to start selling again. He reminded me that I owed him a few thousand dollars from when I was busted and that I could sell to start making that back. And at the time I was only a cook, so I was making about eight dollars an hour and being ripped off by my boss and maybe taking in two hundred dollars a week. So that kind of was, at the time I thought, like winning the lottery because I just saw flash backs of making lots of money, just seeing piles of drugs for dirt cheap that's going to potentially make me rich. So from there I got back in touch with the dealers that I used to hook up who had progressed to selling keys [kilograms] of cocaine, five to ten pounds of weed, but it wasn't a secure base. It was very sloppy, very unorganised, but there was just so much friggin' money. So I started sending things [drugs] back home to them [dealers] actually maintaining about ten to twenty thousand a week in sales. (7)

In addition to large debts, some of the drug dealers interviewed for this study also developed expensive drug habits. Once dealers experience more acute financial difficulties with debts and drug use, they may define dealing as their only viable option in alleviating these problems (see also Waldorf, 1973: 12-13, 47-54; Tunnell, 1993: 374-375). Thus, three people invoked notions of being trapped in a cycle of debt and drug use in which dealing was simultaneously defined as both remedy and disease:

As I went along I started owing more and more because I was doing more and more. I also spotted a lot of drugs out and I was burned [ripped off] large a couple times spotting different people thousands of dollars worth of drugs and I lost money, so the only way to make that money back was to try and sell more, but that's a difficult thing to do. It's a harsh circle. (2)

I was also high all the time, which was kind of stupid. But it fuelled the fire a little bit.... I'd deal more. I'd be more brazen but at one point I was dealing just to keep partying and do more drugs and live. It was my job. It was how I lived, but I wasn't getting anywhere. It was like a vicious circle. I wasn't making much money because I was always spending it and doing more drugs. I'd have to pick up an ounce [of cocaine] every day or two and go through it and I wouldn't have anything to show for it... I'm going to get out of that cycle. (13)

And all this time, because I had been hooking my other buddy up with pounds of K [ketamine], I had started doing K again. And so I had gotten into doing K, and I'm getting all stressed out. And just selling coke was extremely stressful, and so I had fallen back into doing K all the time to deal with the stress... Then I started to get sick again from doing K. And I'm doing more and I'm doing more and I'm getting stressed out. Then I got really sick and my prostate got swollen and I got chronic pelvic pain syndrome. So that fall I was really sick and lost a lot of weight. I was still selling coke because I had to – I can't afford not to when I got to pay back all this money that I lost, and it's my livelihood, and I got to support my K addiction. Then I started taking OxyContin™ [a strong prescription painkiller] to deal with the pain because with the pain I couldn't sleep. I'd maybe sleep fifteen minutes at a time and I'd maybe get two hours of sleep a day for weeks. And I would just be in constant pain. I'd just sit in the shower with hot water because that would relieve the gallbladder inflammation so I'd sit there for hours. It was horrible. Now, I'm not a suicidal person, but half the time I was just like, "I just want this to end!" Like I never actually thought about killing myself, but being in that constant pain made me think, "Wow, not being in pain would be great." So it was just a low, low point in my life – the lowest point. My parents at that point had caught on to me being extremely sick from doing K, and they knew I had done it before and had problems with it. So I went and saw doctors and specialists and had gotten prescription medicine to help my prostate and all this. And again I started to realise, "Why am I'm doing K? This is bad. I don't want to do it anymore. The only reason I'm doing it is to deal with the pain that is being caused by the K." But it was so bad at that point. Before [during a previous period of habitual use] I was just able to stop, but at that point I didn't want to stop because it was the only thing that relieves it.

     And that's where I started to intensify the amount of OxyContin™ I was using. I started taking painkillers all the time because it allows me to sleep and deal with my life. I could go to work. Because I was working for my parents at the time and that summer I really couldn't go to work because I was so sick most of the time. So by doing Oxy's, it allowed me to not do K and not be in pain so much. So it gave my body a break from the K so it could start to heal. And so it took about six months into the winter that year before I was starting to feel better and not be in pain all the time. Slowly the body was healing. Still selling coke this whole time. Still making money. And like I said, I'm getting better but now I'm doing Oxy's and now I'm addicted to painkillers (laughing). But I never regretted. I never regretted that [switching from ketamine use to painkillers] because without the painkillers, I would have never got off the K. I was so sick that I could not live. At least the painkillers allowed me to get out of doing K, which was just ruining my life, ruining my life. So I was addicted to painkillers. It sucked. It's another

drug and I'm spending money, lots of money, which is another reason that I have to sell coke because now I have to pay for this opiate addiction, which is expensive. And the tolerance goes up on it just like K, so I'm buying more and more. So that's costing me a lot of money, so I got to continue selling coke....

At one point that summer I was starting to move [sell] a lot again under my own steam – I wasn't working for anyone [any exclusive relationships with suppliers], which was kind of nice. I'm doing everything on my own. I've got a large amount of money – thousands of dollars that is mine. Like I owe money to people but this was my money. It's not like when I was getting spotted and it's someone else's money. This was all my capital that I'm going and doing it with. But my guy [former supplier] that I had always worked for had contacted me and he's in jail and needs money and so I'm like, "Alright. Well I owe you money. I'm making money. I'm going to give you money." So I put money in his girlfriend's account to give to him. So I'm paying him eight hundred dollars, a thousand dollars a month giving him that. So that's that much more money I have to make. Plus at this point my opiate addiction has gotten out of control. Like I never started intravenously using or anything like that, but I was still doing a lot. I was doing upwards of four hundred milligrams of OxyContin™ a day, which is quite a lot. Which is roughly street prices then a hundred bucks a day, street prices now two or three hundred bucks a day. So I'm paying for that, which is costing me five hundred to a thousand dollars a week, plus paying him [my old supplier] back, plus paying bills like car insurance, gas, food, credit card bills, and loan payments. Phone! Phone which costs three or four hundred dollars a month. So I got to sell. I have to sell coke because how else am I going to pay for all this? I have no other choice! I don't feel like I have any other choice. I can't think of any other way to get by...

And during this time I had just found out that I had gotten accepted to university, which I had been trying to go to for years and just got accepted that spring so I thought, "I can't fuck this up. I've got to go." But I felt still because I owed all that money and had all those bills and my addiction to support and everything that I still felt that no choice but to sell coke. Even though I didn't want to, I felt that I had to at that point. (11)

Before concluding this section, it should be noted that some dealers are able to make the transition from drug dealing to legitimate employment, even though they acknowledge that this process can be worrisome and difficult:

Just to walk away man and say goodbye to the money and shit. It's hard to fucking get back into the real world, especially when you do that [deal] for six or seven years. Your resume has a bit of a hole there, right. I was lucky too because as soon as I needed a job I found out that the company that I quit from years and years ago [before I got into heavy dealing] was looking for welders, so I went out there and got hired on the spot. So it wasn't too hard for me, but I was scared at first, worried, like what the fuck am I going to do, I got my eighteen year old girlfriend and no fucking place to live, like what the fuck am I going to do? So I was lucky that way. (18)

I found it difficult because I did have to start at the bottom of the barrel in a legitimate business, but once I built myself up to where I felt successful again and I actually had some stuff happening and shit, then it was a lot easier then. (10)

Embeddedness in the Social Life

As persons establish a series of working relationships with others, not only are they likely to find that these associations further promote this way of life. They become more knowledgeable about whom to approach regarding certain hustles and they are more likely to find that others are approaching them, in this way more fully absorbing them into the thief subculture. While expenditures promote commitment, working contacts tend to consolidate persons in the community. Where these contacts are more extensive and more productive they create the sort of "closure in options" one finds characterizing high levels of continuance commitments. (Prus and Irini, 1980: 252)

People who have developed extensive contacts and friendships in the drug subculture are apt to remain involved or become reinvolved in it. As Adler (1985: 146) states, "Drug trafficking was by its nature social, requiring individuals' cooperation and contact with at least two parties: a supplier and a customer." Through their contacts, former dealers may encounter both opportunities and encouragements to become reinvolved in dealing (see also Waldorf, 1973: 22):[141]

It always seems like somebody is showing up with some offer. Somebody always has a deal for you. And if you're hurting for cash, then it is easy to think well this could work. It's more having opportunities at your door. I'm not really out there looking for it, people just come calling. (15)

Probably about three or four months down the road [after becoming disinvolved] I started selling cocaine here and there on a lot smaller scale than what I was doing before... I still had people asking me all the time. Still to this day I will go to the bar or a party and be asked for drugs by three or four different people. So I decided I would grab a little bit just to have to supply these people. (2)

Getting back into dealing may be defined as an opportunity to indulge in former lifestyles and any associated benefits (e.g., quick profits, inexpensive drugs, partying). Also, having reliable connections or sources from a previous dealing career seemed to ease reentry:

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[141] Similarly, Waldorf (1973: 22) found disinvolvement became exceedingly difficult for heroin users the more they became entangled in relationships with other heroin users.

Since I moved to [_____] and quit dealing, people from back home would call down and see if I could get some K [ketamine] or something for the next time that I came up. So if I was going back home for the weekend and like other people wanted some, then it was a reason for me to get like a half ounce and bring it back with me. I didn't even want any, but as soon as they mentioned it, then I thought now I can get free or discounted drugs. So I'd just sell three quarters of what I bought and keep a quarter for free. (8)

At the end of summer I ran into the same guy I previously dealt with the first time I ever dealt drugs. He [my former supplier] was living in [_____] now and was looking for somebody up here to get rid of some stuff for him. I'm not really sure what he had going on down there, what he was up to or who he was working for, but he had a lot of quantity of drugs and was looking for people up here to help him out [in dealing them]. I thought about it for a bit and I thought I could make some good money off it. So this is when I started picking up more and more... He had said, "I'm looking for guys to take this coke from me and get rid of it. I kind of got my own little thing going on down here."... So I thought about it and thought I'd give it a shot and see what happens. So I started selling coke again. (15)

I still had all my connections with all these people [sources] because I was like friends with them. By being in the gym, and by being big, people are always asking you, "Where's the sauce [steroids]?" and then the market just came back in my mind because people are hounding me just like they did for weed in school. If people are asking you for a product and you can get it, it's easy money. It's like an hour out of your day or like four hours for hundreds and hundreds of dollars... So this just sort of started to landslide because these people would want some and then their friends would and more and more people. The connections that I had were solid. A lot of people could get drugs from somewhere here and there, but sometimes they don't have it. But the bigger [more involved] people will always be able to get drugs. (8)

There also were instances where people became reinvolved in dealing activity, but instead of viewing this as a chance to profit, it was performed as a "favour for friends":

I never did anything [sold any drugs since my disinvolvement] except give my roommate money to buy an ounce of cocaine to sell because he desperately needed money to pay his bills. He knew where to get the drugs, so I just loaned him the money to get the drugs. (8)

These guys from my neighbourhood started going to parties and doing drugs and stuff. It was at the time where I was stopping and not really into it. They would ask me to get stuff and I would get it for them. That would happen every now and then. I just did it as a favour like somebody wants something and I know where to get it. (4)

I get bugged all the time when I go out and I still take people to dealers to buy drugs. I don't do it myself anymore, like I don't carry cocaine around with me, but frequently I get cocaine for people. Basically middleman because I know the people that have cocaine, ketamine or whatever, so it's fucking a phone call away, and I know them a lot better than other people do and get a little better prices. (2)

We were still always doing E [ecstasy], K [ketamine], G [GHB], and coke. Pretty much anything we could get our hands on, we would do. I would still go out and get it from my friends. They would ask if I could bring up a quarter of coke or something. It would always just be a couple buddies looking for it. Just favours for friends. (9)

However, even garnering a modest profit in performing "favours" may be part of the motivation

to help out friends "in need":

So I was working again and through the time I was working people would get a hold of me and would want some and I always knew somebody who had it so I would tell them one price and I could get it for cheaper so I would make a few bucks here and there just for the sake of me wasting my time to go do it for them. I was the middleman making a quick twenty, thirty, fifty bucks here and there. Just through high school friends that I knew for years that were selling, so it would be a different [lower] price for me than the person that wanted it, so it was a quick chance to make a few bucks and low risk involved. It's [middling] is definitely worthwhile. Especially when you don't even touch the stuff yourself, which is nice. At that time I was working, but I didn't mind making a few extra bucks here and there. It's not like if I found twenty bucks on the street I would go try and find the person who lost it or something. So I was always up for a little extra cash. And the fact that's it's nice to help people out. I know what it's like to look for drugs and you can't find them, but if you know someone who does, then it can make or break somebody's night. So that was one aspect of it – I didn't want to be a prick and say I didn't know where to get it. If I honestly didn't know where to get it, then I would tell them no deal, but otherwise I would try and help people out. (15)

It should be noted that favours might only be performed when they are expected to be fairly

trouble free or safe transactions:

There's been a couple times [since my disinvolvement] where a friend's been like, "Can you get me this? I just want a gram." And I'll be like "Okay, sure." And I'll go to someone that I know I can get it for them or something like that the odd time, but only if it's like minimal risk for me. I'm not going to put myself in any kind of risk for anyone else because I'll be fucked [if I'm caught due to my criminal record] and it's not worth it. (11)

From the preceding extracts we can see how people can become entangled in the social

life of the drug subculture. While many people did not express desires to cease dealing or leave

behind the alluring aspects (i.e., money, drugs, respect and any associated benefits) of the

lifestyle, even those who expressed interests to leave dealing often felt they had limited choices

in the matter (i.e., experienced "closure"). One of the strategies that people may employ in

attempting to disentangle themselves from particular communities is extracting themselves from those communities by relocating to others (see also Waldorf et. al, 1991 and Ray, 1961).[142]

Thus, when six of the participants in this study were attempting to avoid the temptation to get back into dealing, they made the decision to move to a different community. This served to distance people from the immediate relationships they had in the dealing scene, thereby reducing the likelihood and temptation of reinvolvement:

When I went to university it was like the final cut to get that separation from him [my boyfriend who was a drug dealer] because we had been together like three years. Once I moved my dealing activity completely stopped. (5)

I had to move to do that [to stop dealing]. I had to move away because the town I was in was completely infested with like every drug imaginable and there is nothing to do there except do drugs or sit at home and do nothing. So I moved to a different city and wasn't selling any drugs at all. (8)

It [moving away] definitely changed everything for me. It changed the scenery and the people that I was around, the availability of it. So if I really wanted to get back into it [dealing], it would have to be more of a conscious decision to go out and try to get into it, [rather] than just stumble upon it and have an idea [to become reinvolved] where it was readily available. (14)

Then I decided that I had done too much drugs that summer and me and my supplier ended up moving to the other side of the country. I ended up giving everything up for a bit. My intention when I left, I can't remember exactly what my frame of mind was... I was moving because I needed to stop partying and I wanted to get away from the small town for the winter and do something productive. I was right around the age of finishing high school and it was like time to get out and do something.... Not a dependency, but I realised that I was in a situation where it was too easy to do it all the time and I knew I was doing it all the time and that I wouldn't stop if I didn't put myself in a different position. That's when I decided to move out west. Plus it had been a wild summer and we were pretty in the spotlight because we were having these big parties with these new drugs that nobody in town had really heard of and there was probably a lot of heat [community and authority awareness]. A lot of things needed to cool down. I needed to cool down, the dealing needed to cool down. So I moved and I completely stopped doing drugs and barely drank for a while. I just worked and snowboarded and got really active and shit. (10)

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[142] It should be noted that although people may physically leave communities, they still carry with them a set of perspectives, activities, identities, manners of emotional expression, and styles of linguistic interchange that are likely to remain even with a "change of scenery" and change of relationships.

I also wanted my drug use to be under control. It was always under semi-control anyways, but I just didn't want to be getting high on chemical drugs like every weekend. I just thought I need to just smoke weed and drink beer – that's all I need to do to alter my mind state. So when I got to college after partying for the summer, I went from one hundred and eighty-five pounds [prior to the summer of dealing and partying] to a hundred and sixty-five pounds. All I did was go to school. I didn't really do much of any drugs the first semester... I was trying to focus on school and music. And that was my most productive time with the music, especially coming off the abuse, it wasn't a full-fledged addiction but it was definitely pushing it. I was almost doing chemical drugs everyday. I came out of it [my time dealing] with a bit of money, and I actually decided with two weeks left in August, because I had paid for my apartment ahead of time, so I decided to just move just to get away from everything to kind of just separate myself from the situation. At the same time I knew that, I was having a good time while I was doing it [dealing and using] and everything, but I knew that it was wrong, I knew what I was doing was wrong and it couldn't last. By "wrong" I mean I had already realised that it's too hard to sell drugs and not do any of them. So it's too hard for me to live a healthy life and sell the drugs unless it was going to be some huge mass quantity where you couldn't do it all anyways. It was just something that I didn't want to have a part in at that point. So I got to the point where I thought this [dealing lifestyle] for me just wasn't going to work, if I needed a grind, I needed a better grind than that... So I moved two weeks early to school just to separate myself from the situation. Not necessarily to wean myself off [drugs] like a true addict would have to, but really separate myself and kind of get into my own head and my own thoughts and really be my own kind of person. (17)

I started to realise I was getting into debt with this coke because of all the painkillers. And I called my dealer and told him I had to stop selling cocaine and he said no problem. So I moved to another city and went through the withdrawal and tried to maintain living a clean life. (7)

Disenchantment and "Career Shifts"

Goffman (1963) uses the term "moral career" to refer to people's senses of self-worth over time. Thus, while people may define their involvements and related senses of self as relatively unproblematic in some situations, in more problematic (e.g., difficult, unpleasant, troublesome, worrisome) contexts they may begin to experience some disenchantment and discontent with their involvements and engage in some self-reflection and degradation. Thus, one participant's involvements in dealing became a troubling aspect of self over time. This eventually fostered

disinvolvement as he became "converted" (Lofland and Stark, 1965) to another way of approaching and defining his world:[143, 144]

As far as when I started to deal cocaine, you start "being the man."… At that point it was all about the money… But, that's what it's like from the start and then you become a slave to it; then you have to sell drugs, you have to do this on Friday night, you have to do this on Saturday night, you can't leave town. It gets to the point where the people that are older, this is one of the worst things, you are waking up at eight-thirty in the morning to sell to this guy who's driving his kids to school and then you got to be up all day selling to people who are skipping school and skipping jobs. Fucking their life over. And you are a direct reason. You are the exact reason why these people's lives are the way they are. In the beginning it's freedom, and as you go on you realise it's slavery. You're enslaving these people and you're enslaving yourself. And you get really down about it. It's nothing to be proud of. You're a fucking monster and these kids have less because of what you're doing. It's just an evil thing and no one makes out… This was the beginning of the end for me. I had already realised what was going on and I didn't like it. I realised what was happening to people, what was happening to friends, what was happening to my family and the way they looked at me. They looked at me like I'm a drug dealer. I'm a high school dropout drug dealer. What's worse than that? (1)[145]

Seven former dealers also expressed some disenchantment with their previous involvements in drug dealing. Still, disenchantment with drug dealing need not imply any self-degradation. Rather, people were much more apt to become dissatisfied with the everyday "hassles" of particular ways of life. While some people emphasised the more attractive aspects of their former dealing lifestyles when contemplating reinvolvement, others expressed discontent with the everyday activities of dealing (e.g., constant drug use, debts, threats), finding these

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[143] "When a person gives up one such perspective or ordered view of the world for another we refer to this process as conversion" (Lofland and Stark, 1965: 862). Also related is their concept of reaching a "turning point" where people defined their current directions as likely to result in failure and thus new options were actively sought or considered to replace old ways of doing things.

[144] The dealer in the example points out that his definition of self was based, in part, on his friends' and family's evaluations of him. It should be noted, as Mead (1934) pointed out, that any self-evaluations or definitions necessarily are contingent on some other or community. Similarly, Ball (1970: 333) states, "respectability can obviously be made concerning self as well as vis-à-vis others; that is what we mean when we speak of *self-respect* [original emphasis]."

[145] Relatedly, Ray (1961: 134) and Waldorf (1973: 147-150) found that heroin addicts often began to question their sense of self after coming into contact with associates (friends and family) from their non-addict lives.

increasingly troublesome.[146] Thus, for these reasons, reinvolvement in lower-level dealing was

not something that they wished to pursue:

Dealing is going to eventually lead to somewhere you don't want to be... I've thought about everything that has happened the last few years [the duration of my dealing career] and decided that there is honest ways to make money without getting threatened by people with guns or developing drug addictions, being broke, owing people money, people owing you money. (14)

I move around a lot too. I'm always bouncing around from city to city, so I don't want to set up things again [get back into dealing]. Something always goes bad. I don't make enough money or I get addicted again. It's depressing. You're up five or six or seven in the morning. Sometimes you're up for days. You start to lose your mind after a while. So it's just not worth it in the end. (13)

As much money as I made on selling drugs, I spent on doing drugs. I'd say besides maybe growing marijuana, because it's really, really hard to smoke all your dope all in one night, it's [dealing's] not a really worthwhile thing for me to get involved in. Now that I look back at things I probably wouldn't have started dealing with hard drugs. Marijuana I don't necessarily regret at all, but at the same time though it opened doors for me to get involved with other things. (2)

I was loving not using anymore [when I stopped dealing]. I really had kind of got into the groove of just smoking some weed and working on my place, getting my apartment together, getting my bed and everything set up and going to buy a computer and all this stuff. So it was really nice to be doing things constructive for once, actually furthering myself. It just felt nice to be able to relax and to be away from what was in the beginning fun but became mayhem after a while. Just the using and always being out doing stuff, like I never had relax time anymore. It was always just wake up and go to work and then go straight to partying. There was no more sitting and relaxing and thinking. Everything just revolved around that [dealing and using]. So it was just good to be away from everything and think about the future and what I wanted to do. (17)

However, even for those former dealers who have become disenchanted with the

everyday activities of lower-level retail dealing, reinvolvement was still be an option. Thus, five

former dealers planned "career shifts" (Luckenbill and Best, 1981; see also Prus and Irini, 1980:

252; Adler, 1985: 139; and Desroches, 2005: 60-70) to become involved in the manufacturing

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[146] Prostitutes also may become disenchanted with aspects of their work: "Although the life of the hooker seems an exciting one to many people, it can also 'wear away' on persons. In addition to the problematics of respectability, and the legal and medical complications entailed in their work, the girls may also find themselves disenchanted with the 'material' with which their job requires them to work" (Prus and Irini, 1980: 47)

side of the subculture, especially in terms of marijuana.[147, 148, 149, 150] Growing marijuana seemed to be a viable option for these people since it may pose greater benefits versus risks when compared to lower-level retail dealing:

Even still, to grow indoor marijuana in a house is something I always wanted to do. Not to have some gigantic thing but just to have a few lights and to grow some plants to subsidise my income. That's always something that I've thought about it. It's the least risky and the consequences are the least for it relative to profit compared to street dealing or distributing. Growing marijuana I'm able to make it the safest. It's getting to the point where I want to get away from all the street dealing, and selling E [ecstasy], and coke [cocaine], and K [ketamine], and chemicals, and all that crap. I just want to grow weed and sell it in large quantities and only dealing with a couple people that would buy it all in large quantities from me and not worry about all the bullshit – chasing people down and people calling you all hours of the night and shit – everything that comes with selling drugs. People owing you money, friends. I just don't want to do that kind of street dealing anymore. I've been thinking about it for a while but never had an opportunity to grow marijuana in the sense of indoor. (11)

I'm probably just going to start growing pot [marijuana] again. I like growing weed, it's fun. I like growing plants and making stuff grow. I name them all. Sometimes I name the big ones girls I've screwed or something like that. I'll still have a regular job. There's lots of things I want to do and the most legit, less tedious, best way of doing it would be growing weed. Now I just want the simple things: a good old lady, two wheels underneath me, a good dog, and a steady bankroll. Before it was just balls to the wall. I didn't give a fuck if I was in jail, what kind of drugs I was doing, who I was hurting, who I was robbing. I didn't give a fuck about anything... [Now,] I hate selling drugs. I don't even like drugs anymore really.... Now I'll grow pot [marijuana]. I'll always grow pot. There's nothing wrong with growing pot. No one ever

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[147] As Prus and Irini (1980: 252) state, career shifts also were evident in the hotel community: "The tendency towards continuity in a rounder life-style is also promoted by the awareness that problems or bad experiences in one hustle do not preclude other hustles. For example, while a person may find himself somewhat disenchanted working as a waiter or a booster, any contacts he has established during his exposure to the hotel setting may provide him with alternatives which might seem more appealing. He may find that he has opportunities to become involved in bootlegging, drug dealing, pimping, or loansharking. The very flexibility afforded persons in a hustling subculture promotes continuity."

[148] Adler (1985: 139) also found dealers who made "career shifts" into areas or levels of the drug subculture not occupied previously.

[149] Desroches (2005: 69-70) interviewed some upper-level drug dealers who began their careers as street-level retailers. These dealers cited the hassles of their street-level dealing activities as part of their motivation for striving for supplier roles.

[150] Relatedly, both Murphy et al. (1990) and VanNostrand and Tewksbury (1999) observed dealers to experience "motive shifts" (shifting objectives and purposes) in their careers. For example, those who began selling solely to support their drug consumption costs may shift their objectives to maximising profits from drug sales.

killed anyone because they smoked a joint. It's not as bad as alcohol. I'll probably end up growing pot again just to get ahead... I won't sell coke though because I hate selling to those clientele, that kind of people. I really hate it. I'm rude to them. Some people are really good at it because they can sit there and talk, they are better salesmen, but I'm not into that. I just prefer to grow weed. (13)

Then I got a real job again. It sucks dude. I'd like to get back into just growing – indoor or outdoor. As far as other dealing, I'm getting too fucking old man, fuck. One of these days I'm going to party too hard and flop over – that's what I feel like the next day sometimes. I'd like to just do a big outdoor show and just do that once a year. Like I know a guy right now and that's what he does. He grew five hundred plants last year. Probably made close to a hundred thousand dollars, maybe eighty thousand bucks. Who the fuck needs more than that? All you got to do is get bitten by some mosquitoes and black flies for a few months and live in Florida or Mexico for the winter. (18)

Yeah [I plan on getting reinvolved]. Dealing is not so much the thing, but it's the manufacture. Like growing weed, I'll never stop growing of one sort or another. I'm still actively working towards my original goals of breeding new strains and stuff like that. So growing isn't something that's ever going to quit, but dealing is something that I can easily quit given the right circumstances. Dealing has always been, although a constant background, a touch and go enterprise for me personally. (19)

So me and [a couple friends] started thinking that we should grow some weed. We thought to grow weed, all we had to do was grow it and do that one sale of the pound or the large quantity. This is what I originally wanted from back in the day [when I first got into dealing] was a safe and easy sell except for this time instead of making a couple hundred dollars [from middling deals], this time I'm making a couple thousand, so it's way better. So I'm thinking that this is maybe a more appropriate hustle for me to accomplish. It takes a bit of know-how and it takes a bit of patience and skillfulness and the ability to really hide something well. So I felt that I could step up to the challenge... So this was something that was finally like this might be a good idea because it's not illicit [harder, more notorious] drugs and it's something that has a big profit range. (17)

Summary

While concerns with respectability and impression management may be especially evident in endeavours defined in deviant terms, they also may be more common concerns of people in general. As Ball (1970: 360) observes:

[I]f actors are under normative pressure to put their best foot forward, they are also constrained to hide or conceal their worst foot. And it is here that the sociology of deviance is most likely to become interested in respectability, when strategies of avoiding the disclosure of damaging

information come into play; yet it would be a mistake to assume that only actors typically defined or definable as deviant need become practitioners of such tactics, for, indeed, it is a much more general phenomenon; and the more pluralistic the society, the more heterogeneous the audiences and the greater the frequency that such arts will be utilized by the performers in everyday / any-day life. (Ball, 1970: 360)

This chapter first examined the conceptual interactionist literature on deviance and respectability. Deviance (and disrespectability) was considered to be any negative social definition (e.g., evil, immoral, disturbing) attributed by some audience to an act, actor, object, or other community phenomenon. Following Goffman (1959; 1963), two disrespectable identities that people may have were delineated: *discreditable* identities and *discredited* identities. Discreditable persons are those who may anticipate others to attribute negative social definitions to them if they become aware of some disreputable quality or qualities. Discredited persons are those who already have had deviant definitions of self attributed to them by an audience. Following this, several tactics that discreditable and discredited persons employ in managing their respectability were discussed. What is important to note from this discussion is that, generally, human beings may attempt to conceal, discount, minimise, and sometimes flaunt problematic senses of self.

Following this, this chapter next considered how dealers may strive for respectability. Notably, two processes were considered: *being somebody* and *concealing discreditable identities*. "Being somebody" refers to the development of desired, elevated, prestigious senses of self in particular social contexts. Drug dealers described the prestige and senses of importance and superiority they developed through the control of a desired and relatively exclusive product – drugs. The people in this study also expressed self-satisfaction in being admired for demonstrating generosity and contributing to their associates' "good times."

However, in addition to some of the alluring aspects of dealing, the dealers interviewed for this study also were attentive to the discreditable quality of their involvements. Thus, several dealers discussed their attempts to conceal their dealing involvements from particular outsiders, especially from family and friends from whom they anticipated disapproval. The tactics employed by dealers in concealing discreditable qualities of self included: (1) social distancing or "audience segregation" (Goffman, 1959) and (2) "passing" by concealing or hiding their involvements in dealing activity. Although, dealers acknowledged that they clearly could not exercise complete and precise control over their identities since identities are fundamentally socially-achieved processes and thus dependant not only on the self but also on how others define and act towards the self. Finally, dealers attended to concealment practices with variable emphases – being most concerned with hiding from outsiders the more troublesome aspects of the "dirty work" (Hughes, 1971) taking place in the "back regions" (Goffman, 1959).

This chapter also considered dealers' concerns about and encounters with regulatory agencies. Three people discounted the risk of being apprehended, citing they would be of little interest to law enforcement because of the relatively small role they played in the local drug subculture. Still, the development of concerns was an emergent phenomenon. Thus, a few of the dealers that expressed few reservations during the initial stages of their careers (as young offenders) later became concerned with the possibility of arrest as they progressed into levels of dealing in which the penalties for arrest become more severe. That is, as they moved into (1) adulthood and (2) higher levels of involvement. Still, concerns with apprehension were most apt to be intensified after experiencing "close calls." Thoughts of disinvolvement were more likely when dealers felt that their arrest was imminent. As well, actual contact occasions with law enforcement (e.g., arrests) fostered some participants' decisions to cease dealing activities. In

these cases, dealers cited the value of conventional life and their possible future in it as well as the unpleasant experience of arrest and jail as reasons for their disinvolvement. However, other dealers who were arrested were undeterred by the experience.

The last part of this chapter considered the problematics of disentanglement from drug dealing. For about half of the participants in this study, drug dealing became a way of life. This meant organising their lives around a set of perspectives, relationships, activities, identities, manners of emotional expression, and styles of linguistic interchange that were more consistent with their dealing involvements. The term "subcultural embeddedness" (Prus, 2004) was used to conceptualise the involvements of those who had become more intensely committed to dealing as a way of life. Four sources of entanglement were identified in this study: (1) embracing the lifestyle (money, drugs, "being somebody" and any associated benefits), (2) experiencing "closure" (no other viable options to meet obligations or pursue objectives [i.e., support expensive lifestyles, pay off debts]), (3) embeddedness in the social life (maintaining extensive contacts in the drug subculture [being encouraged to become reinvolved, performing "favours," and attempting disinvolvement by moving away]), and (d) disenchantment and "career shifts." Whereas it was unlikely for dealers to want to leave the scene once heavily involved in it, reinvolvement also was likely for those who managed to cease dealing.

Chapter Eight

CONCLUSION

Working from an interactionist perspective, this thesis represents an ethnographic venture into the social world of a group of drug dealers. In an attempt to develop an accurate account of the activities and experiences of drug dealers from their perspectives, extended open-ended, in-depth interviews were conducted with nineteen current and former drug dealers inquiring into their *careers of participation* (initial involvements, continuities, disinvolvements, and reinvolvements) in selling drugs. During these interviews, several themes also emerged regarding the interpersonal exchanges between dealers, their clients, and their suppliers.

While it was not the intention of this project to delve into the marketplace activities of dealers in any sustained detail, invariably these emphases became apparent as the study progressed since an understanding of people's careers in a marketplace subculture is inextricably linked to their activities in that arena.[151] As Blumer (1969: 6) insists: "human groups or society *exists in action* and must be seen in terms of action. This picture of human society as action must be the starting point (and the point of return) for any scheme that purports to treat and analyze human society empirically." Given these qualifications, this is still a study of the careers of drug dealers, albeit with some additional insights on their interpersonal exchanges with clients and suppliers. People's careers as drug dealers are extensively dependent on these other people – in reference to both *selling drugs* and *obtaining products for resale*.

In concluding this thesis, this chapter provides (1) a summary of the main findings of the thesis, (2) some suggestions for future research on drug dealers, (3) some notes on my experiences in assembling this project, and (4) a discussion of my future plans as a scholar.

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[151] I most explicitly realised this as I was analysing the interview data.

Summary of Main Findings

While at the end of each chapter I provided a detailed summary of the main conceptual themes addressed therein, it is also useful to review the more central findings again. The analysis was primarily conducted in three chapters: Chapters Five, Six, and Seven.

Chapter Five "Selling Drugs: Involvements, Activities, and Interchanges," considered how people become initially involved in selling drugs, and dealers' relationships and exchanges with their customers. Three main processes were central to this analysis: (1) initial involvements in selling drugs, (2) expanding the customer base, and (3) making sales.

Initial involvements in selling drugs. Three routings into drug dealing were observed in this study: (1) instrumentalism (means-ends considerations), (2) recruitment (being encouraged and facilitated by others), and (3) seekership (pursuing intrigues and engaging fascinations). These findings are consistent with those of other ethnographic studies on drug dealers which cite some or all of these routings (e.g., Langer, 1977; Adler, 1985; VanNostrand and Tewksbury, 1999; Jacobs, 1999; Desroches, 2005; Mohamed and Fritsvold, 2006; Decker and Chapman, 2008). However, in contrast with VanNostrand and Tewksbury's (1999) and Jacobs' (1999) findings, no instances of "closure" were found in this study. That is, no participants cited desperate circumstances as affecting their decisions to become involved in dealing. The absence of "closure" as an initial routing into drug sales may be due to the fact that all of the dealers interviewed for this thesis began their careers in high school and most lived with their parents or other relatives who provided them with the basic necessities of life (i.e., food and shelter). Relatedly, no participants had families of their own to financially support (like those in

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VanNostrand and Tewksbury's [1999] study), nor did any express any pressing financial responsibilities or obligations.

Approaching the concept of *initial involvements* generically, I found that people typically become involved in drug dealing with some specific objectives in mind. These objectives often were related to people's participation in the broader subculture. Thus, people often became involved in *selling drugs* in order to support existing *drug using* and partying activities (see also Tunnell, 1993; Mohamed and Fritsvold, 2006). Relatedly, people also became initially involved in drug dealing after receiving encouragement and/or support from fellow drug users who also were typically friends (see also Waldorf et al., 1991).[152] Still, the decision to act on these initiatives was typically defined in reference to some of the instrumental advantages (fun and/or profit) of such an involvement. In addition to the routings of instrumentalism and recruitment, three participants became initially involved in drug dealing after developing some more pronounced intrigues or fascinations with the lifestyle, such as personal prestige, the financial and material benefits, using particular drugs, and thoughts of being involved in organised crime (see also Tunnell, 1993; VanNostrand and Tewksbury, 1999; and Mohamed and Fritsvold, 2006). These intrigues were typically developed in interactions with people already involved in the drug subculture or with people who appeared to have some insider knowledge of it. Finally, like the findings of Murphy et al. (1990) and Mohamed and Fristvold (2006), the people interviewed for this thesis expressed few reservations about becoming initially involved in drug sales. Participants cited three reasons for their relative lack of concern about their initial involvements in dealing. These included: (1) the minor role they played in the broader drug

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[152] While I did find one study attending to how people are recruited by fellow users into dealing (Waldorf et al., 1991), most ethnographic studies on drug dealers observe that recruiters are typically friends who are dealers (Fields, 1984; Adler, 1985; Murphy et al., 1990; Desroches, 2005; Decker and Chapman, 2008).

subculture, (2) the minimal concerns of their associates who were involved in selling drugs, and (3) the minimal consequences of being arrested as "young offenders" (Canadian Criminal Code).

Expanding the customer base. After initial involvements, Chapter Five considered how dealers made contacts with customers. In this study, it was observed that dealers developed contacts with customers in three key ways: (1) tapping into associational networks, (2) developing reputations, and (3) attending to price and quality. It also was noted that people might spend some time (4) assessing the viability of potential customers before doing business with them.

Most dealers interviewed for this study began selling to friends, schoolmates, and coworkers, or by *tapping into their existing associational networks* (see also Tunnell, 1993: 368-369; Murphy et al., 1990, Waldorf et al., 1991). Dealers often approached these potential customers in instances of social drug use (e.g., at parties, while smoking marijuana at school) and informed them that they could supply them with drugs in the future. Another arena in which some of the dealers in this study made contacts with customers was "the party scene" or a set of parties frequented by local youths and young adults. Some dealers also became involved in the planning, organising, and performing of these parties (e.g., performing as DJs and MCs at the parties in addition to selling drugs at them). While I was able to locate some literature on people who primarily used drugs at parties, specifically at raves (Lenton and Davidson, 1999; Hammersley et al., 2002; Moore and Miles, 2004), I did not find any ethnographic studies on "rave" party dealers or people specifically selling drugs at parties.

It was observed that most of the dealers in this study initially began to *develop reputations* in the broader drug subculture as they sold to personal contacts or associates. As Tunnell (1993: 368-369) points out when discussing the processes by which lower-level drug

dealers make connections with suppliers and customers, developing contacts in the drug subculture is often a very informal and "loosely structured" endeavour:

Making connections with mid-level or wholesale dealers for buying drugs to re-sell occurred through casual conversation, by having been in the right place at the right time, and by having been introduced to well-connected individuals. In other words, establishing such necessities of the business occurred very informally and did not require conscious decisions to become 'drug dealers.'… Thus, these men approached dealing, especially early in their careers, very casually and informally. They made connections with buyers and sellers through friends, family, by word of mouth, or by street knowledge of where buyers and sellers were likely found.

In a related sense, because making contacts with customers can be done informally, casually, and with minimal direct effort (e.g., some dealers did not expand their customer base intentionally), dealers also may have little control over their reputations in the local drug subculture. Thus, some dealers explained that they received inquires from undesirable people (e.g., much older drug addicts). Still, in assessing new customers, dealers main concerns included: (1) do they have the money and (2) are they discreet / do they pose legal risks (see also VanNostrand and Tewksbury, 1999).

Some dealers attempted to expand their customer base by *attending to the price and quality of their products* (see also Jacobs, 1999). Consistent with the ethnographic literature on drug dealers, it was observed that a considerable amount of dealers' knowledge about product price and quality was initially developed during their earlier involvements as drug users (see also Adler, 1985; Murphy et al., 1990; Waldorf et al., 1991; Hoffer, 2006; Mohamed and Fritsvold, 2006). Some dealers then used this stock of knowledge about price and quality when developing their own product marketing strategies. Accordingly, some dealers engaged in (1) comparison pricing (attending to competitors' prices) and (2) attempting to only offer high quality products. However, it should also be noted that some of the dealers that were interviewed for this study were not especially concerned with maintaining or expanding their customer base through

product pricing and quality. A few of these dealers said that they maintained their market share by being consistent or reliable sources of supply for their customers.

Making sales. Chapter Five next considered the process of making sales to customers. As mentioned earlier, Langer's (1977: 381) conception of dealing "style" would include many aspects of the interpersonal selling process between dealers and their customers:

Practicing one's interactional skills includes methods by which dealers manage their 'front stage' performance while making purchases or selling to customers. The sum total of these methods might be described as a dealing 'style' – a series of behavioral and linguistic conventions which are used in interpersonal business situations and shared in common by middle-level dealers. These conventions include specified verbal exchanges, complex forms of etiquette, personal poise and confidence.

In this section, then, two sub-activities of the sales process (or aspects of dealing "style") were discussed: (1) arranging and performing transactions and (2) obtaining payment. *Arranging and performing transactions* included communicating over the telephone and making exchanges. While some dealers began their careers selling drugs primarily at parties or school, most of the dealers interviewed for this study eventually operated on a product order basis (i.e., dealers would typically have their customers call them to arrange transactions [see also VanNostrand and Tewksbury, 1999]).

In communicating with customers over the telephone, many dealers employed a specialised or coded language. Some of the terms that were used may have been more particular to the local drug subculture (e.g., marijuana became known as "green sweaters" and ketamine became known as "tomato sandwiches"). Dealers said that they often would explain to their customers their preferred ways of sales exchanges (see also Hoffer, 2006: 68-70; Murphy et al., 1990: 339). In an attempt to minimise the chances of arrest, some dealers implemented some precautionary exchange strategies or routines when physically meeting with customers (see also Jacobs, 1999; VanNostrand and Tewksbury, 1999; Waldorf et al., 1991). These included: (1)

minimising the time and amount of possession, (2) changing the location of transactions, and (3) disguising transfers. Customers who did not adhere to dealers' transaction policies were sometimes defined as too troublesome and risky to continue doing business with (see also Hoffer, 2006). Still, even though some dealers developed transaction routines that they intended to strictly abide by, in practice, this was not always the case (see also Adler, 1985)

Another aspect of making sales was obtaining payment. This included the matters of (1) deciding whom to extend credit to and (2) tactics of pursuing debts. After experiencing difficulties in collecting payments from customers to whom they extended credit to, some dealers developed "cash only" policies for their products (see also Murphy et al. 1990: 339). For those dealers that did offer their customers drugs on credit, they were selective in whom they extended this courtesy to. Generally, dealers tried to only extend credit to customers that (1) they knew well and (2) seemed capable of repayment. However, the dealers in this study who did offer credit tended to encounter difficulties in collecting payments from particular customers. When this happened, the most common strategy that the dealers in this study employed was locating customers and asking for repayment. If asking for repayment failed to work and the amount owing was considered to be relatively small, then dealers would generally "write off" these debts as costs of doing business (see also Adler, 1985: 107; Desroches, 2005: 147; Hoffer, 2006: 75).

In Chapter Six "Obtaining Products," I examined dealer-supplier relationships and dealers who became involved in supplying activities (i.e., wholesaling and manufacturing). Again, three main activities were considered in this chapter: (1) making contacts with suppliers, (2) working with suppliers, and (3) becoming suppliers.

Making contacts with suppliers. As used in this thesis, "making contacts with suppliers" referred to dealers developing relationships with drug wholesalers. Two processes were found to

be central in this regard: (1) tapping into associational networks and (2) striving for supplier trust. Consistent with the findings of Tunnell (1993: 368-369), VanNostrand and Tewksbury (1999: 69), and Desroches (2005: 65), I also found that the dealers interviewed for this study typically made contacts with suppliers through their *associational networks* (i.e., through friends, schoolmates, coworkers). Although it was commonly the case that dealers developed relationships with suppliers via personal contacts, it was observed that some dealers still made efforts to establish themselves as trustworthy to potential suppliers (see also Murphy et al., 1990: 339). As Adler (1985: 79) observes, trust, or the confidence in the ability, reliability, and predictability of others, is valued in dealer-supplier relationships as well as the drug marketplace more generally:

Unlike the legitimate business world where cash can be exchanged for goods without fear of theft or arrest, trust, at some level, had to be extended before a drug deal could occur. Drug traffickers had to rely on the associations they formed and on their community's informal credit rating to generate the sense of trust which was such an essential trading requisite.

While Adler (1985), Murphy et al. (1990), and Desroches (2005) all cite trust as being an important aspect of dealer supplier relationships, neither of these studies provided much information on how dealers might try to establish themselves as trustworthy with suppliers. However, the present thesis provided some preliminary insights on this matter. In establishing themselves as trustworthy characters in the drug community, the dealers interviewed for this study expressed that developing reputations as competent and reliable businessmen in their local drug subculture was advantageous for them in attempting to make contacts with suppliers. However, dealers also explained that reputations for being reliable and "solid" were most advantageous in initiating relationships with suppliers. Establishing more enduring senses of trust with suppliers involved dealers continually reaffirming themselves as trustworthy in their

ongoing exchanges with suppliers. Thus, establishing trust was very much characterised as an ongoing social process.

Working with suppliers. Like Adler (1985: 82) and Desroches (2005: 49), I also found the dealers in this study primarily operated as independent entrepreneurs. However, it also was observed that the success of dealers and suppliers was very much interdependent. As Prus (1989b) found with more legitimate dealer-supplier relationships, they also can be envisioned as "partners in trade." A few of the dealers in this study explicitly acknowledged the interdependent nature of their success and that of their suppliers. In doing so, four areas of concern about working with suppliers were identified: (1) product relevancy, (2) supply reliability, (3) prices, and (4) financing concerns. A review of the ethnographic literature on drug dealers revealed some similarities between other drugs dealers and those interviewed for this study. While I did not find any other literature that discussed the concerns that dealers had about the relevancy of suppliers' products (i.e., "hot lines"), I did find research that discussed dealers' concerns about supply reliability, pricing, and financing concerns. Thus, like the findings of the present thesis, Adler (1985: 103) also found that access to reliable sources of supply allowed dealers to achieve greater success and stability in their sales activities. Relatedly, and similar to some of the experiences of the dealers in this thesis, both Langer (1977) and Desroches (2005: 115-117) observed dealers employing the use of multiple suppliers in attempting to remain consistently supplied with products. However, while I found some instances of dealers cultivating relationships with single suppliers because of the benefits that this arrangement might entail (e.g., greater opportunities, greater consistency in transaction experiences, and less problems and/or reservations), the ethnographic literature on drug dealers did not attend to this process. Likewise, I did not find any literature that attended to dealers'

experiences with seasonal or cyclical supply shortages.[153] In terms of pricing, while I only found

one example of this concern in my own research, it was similar to the phenomenon of the "quest

for the good deal" that Langer (1977: 380) observed:

One of the recurrent themes in terms of potential monetary gain is the ever present quest for the "good deal." This quest involves obtaining a large quantity of very potent marijuana or hashish at what would be seen as a fair price. The "good deal" is the best way a dealer can ensure profits as well as satisfied, steady customers.

Finally, in regards to any financing concerns that dealers may have in their relationships with

suppliers, I found the option to purchase products on consignment bases was valued by many

dealers because of the greater opportunities for business that this arrangement could provide

relative to paying for product "up front" (see also Murphy et al., 1990: 337). However, I also

found a few dealers were reluctant to accept product on credit from their suppliers because of the

extra responsibility and risks that this might entail (see also Desroches, 2005).

Becoming suppliers. Following the discussion of working with suppliers, Chapter Six

next considered dealers who became involved in supplying activities (i.e., wholesaling and

manufacturing drugs). This included considerations of dealers (1) getting involved in

wholesaling, (2) recruiting dealers, (3) encountering payment problems, and (4) manufacturing

drugs.

In terms of getting involved in wholesaling, other ethnographic literature on drug dealers

identified two routings: recruitment (and apprenticeship by suppliers) and instrumentalism (see

Murphy et al., 1990; Adler, 1985; Desroches, 2005). I also found some dealers became involved

in wholesaling via recruitment by suppliers. Similarly, recruiters sometimes acted as sources of

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[153] However, cyclical supply shortages may be more particular to people selling seasonally manufactured products (e.g., marijuana that is grown outdoors). Thus, this phenomenon may be more common amongst drug subcultures that more heavily rely on products of that sort (e.g., people located in more rural communities might not have as much access to sources of indoor marijuana, for example).

support (providing advice, contacts, and new products) for dealers making the transition to supplier roles. In addition to being recruited, the dealers interviewed for this study also became involved in wholesaling via instrumentalism (attending to means-ends linkages). Specifically, two main objectives were cited as reasons for becoming involved in supplying activities. Some dealers envisioned wholesaling as providing the potential for (1) greater sales and (2) decreased hassles and/or risks (see also Adler, 1985; Desroches, 2005: 67-74). Thus, some participants engaged in direct attempts to recruit dealers to supply.

Similar to the findings of Murphy et al. (1990: 337) and Fields (1984: 256), it was observed that the suppliers would recruit established dealers because of the dealing experience and customer contacts that they already had. However, I also noted two examples of dealers propositioning newcomers (mainly friends and family) to begin dealing for them (see also Adler, 1985; Desroches, 2005). These suppliers also explained that they would spend some time assessing the trustworthiness and capabilities of dealers (see also Adler, 1985: 79; Murphy et al., 1990: 337; Desroches, 2005: 122; Decker and Chapman, 2008: 96).

However, despite efforts to avoid unreliable and untrustworthy dealers, some suppliers encountered problems in obtaining payments from some of their dealers. It was noted that in an effort to regain lost income, some suppliers extended further credit to dealers who had developed large debts in the hopes that these dealers might be able to make up these debts through future sales (see also Desroches, 2005: 144). Some suppliers also explained that they used physical coercion in their collection attempts with former dealers, especially in instances deemed to involve "large" amounts of money (see also Desroches, 2005: 150).

Finally, the discussion of becoming suppliers considered three case examples of people becoming involved in manufacturing marijuana. Like wholesaling more generally,

manufacturing also was cited as a more lucrative and less troublesome activity than retail dealing. Also, in terms of the case examples of marijuana growers considered in Chapter Six, in addition to being drawn to manufacturing marijuana for its profitability potential, two people also expressed fascinations and intrigues with the biological aspects of the growing process (see also Weisheit, 1991). While both Weisheit (1991) and Desroches (2005: 77-85) provide some descriptions and analyses of people involved in manufacturing drugs, I did not find much ethnographic literature on drug dealers that considers the manufacturing process in any sustained detail.

Chapter Seven "Respectability, Regulation, and Disentanglement" considered some of the identity intrigues and concerns with being a drug dealer, concerns about apprehension, and becoming entangled in drug dealing as a way of life. Specifically, three processes were considered relative to drug dealers' experiences: (1) striving for respectability, (2) encountering regulatory agencies, and (3) the problematics of disentanglement.

Striving for respectability. First, I discussed how some of the dealers interviewed for this study strove for respectability. In this regard, two processes emerged as pertinent: *being somebody* and *concealing discreditable identities*. "Being somebody" referred to the development of desired, elevated, and prestigious senses of self in particular social contexts. Consistent with the findings of VanNostrand and Tewksbury (1999: 67) and Desroches (2005: 89), the dealers in this thesis explained that they developed senses of prestige, importance, and superiority through the control of desired and relatively exclusive products. In addition to this, some dealers also developed elevated senses of self by demonstrating generosity to some of their customers (especially friends). While I did not find any parallel instances in the other ethnographic literature on drug dealers in terms of demonstrating generosity, Prus and Irini

(1980) address this phenomenon in their study of the hotel community, especially in regards to bar patrons.

In addition to emphasising the alluring and advantageous qualities of self that drug dealing involvements may foster, some dealers also acknowledged and attended to the discreditable aspects that their activities entailed. Hence, some of the people interviewed for this thesis attempted to conceal their dealing involvements from particular outsiders (e.g., some family members and friends). Surprisingly, the matter of concealing discreditable identities has been given little attention in the ethnographic literature on drug dealers.[154] However, I found dealers used two methods of concealment: (1) social distancing or "audience segregation" (Goffman, 1959) and (2) "passing" by concealing or hiding their involvements in dealing activity. However, because identities are socially achieved processes (dependent on both the self and other), dealers explained that their ability to cover their discreditable involvements was limited (i.e., some people became aware of discreditable aspects of dealers' involvements). It was also noted that for those dealers who attempted to conceal various aspects of their involvements from others, some did so with variable emphases. That is, some aspects were cited as being of more concern if they were to be revealed than others (e.g., the "dirty work" [Hughes, 1971] taking place in the "back regions" [Goffman, 1959]).

Encountering regulatory agencies. While only a few of the people that were interviewed for this thesis were arrested in relation to their dealing involvements, more dealers were concerned with the threat of arrest at various points in their careers. As noted in the discussion of initial involvements in drug sales, few of the dealers in this study were concerned about

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[154] VanNostrand and Tewksbury (1999: 67) mention that some dealers do not put their profits into bank accounts. I also found one dealer who employed this tactic. However, beyond this example, I did not find instances in the literature of how dealers might conceal discreditable involvements from others, especially family and friends.

encountering law enforcement (see also Murphy et al., 1990; Mohamed and Fritsvold, 2006). Some dealers also discounted the risk of being apprehended later on in their careers (see also Adler, 1985: 109), citing the relatively small role they performed in the local drug subculture as the reason for their lack of concern. While the ethnographic literature on drug dealers gives little attention to the development of concerns about apprehension throughout the process of dealers' careers, it was observed in this study that some dealers became increasingly concerned about encountering law enforcement as they became (1) adults and would be subject to more consequential penalties than as young offenders (under eighteen years old) in Canada and (2) more heavily involved in drug dealing (and also subject to stiffer penalties should they be apprehended). Relatedly, the dealers in this study generally also became more concerned about apprehension after they or their associates experienced "close calls" with authorities. For some dealers, "close call" experiences fostered feelings that their arrest was imminent should they continue selling drugs (see also Adler, 1985: 131; Desroches, 2005: 103). When this was the case, disinvolvement was more likely to occur.

Only a few of the people that were interviewed for this study were ever arrested in relation to their dealing involvements. Of those six dealers that were arrested, three of them became disinvolved after the experience, citing the unpleasant experience of being arrested and jailed as well as the value of their futures in more legitimate, more conventional ways of life as reasons for their departure from dealing. However, two other dealers that were arrested explained that the experience only strengthened their resolve for being involved in drug dealing. Arrest was viewed as "just a part of the job." And some of those dealers who experienced arrest and did not "rat" (inform law enforcement of illegal activities of other people) on others in the community also expressed some senses of prestige and status based on the way they handled

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their encounters with authorities (see also Langer, 1977: 382). As Becker (1963: 37) observes, in deviant subcultures, those people who are undeterred by arrest and jail may become more committed to and entangled in deviant ways of life than those who are not:

Apprehension may not lead to increasing deviance if the situation in which the individual is apprehended for the first time occurs at a point where he can still choose between alternate lines of action. Faced, for the first time, with the possible ultimate and drastic consequences of what he is doing, he may decide that he does not want to take the deviant road, and turn back. If he makes the right choice, he will be welcomed back into the conventional community; but if he makes the wrong move, he will be rejected and start a cycle of increasing deviance.

The Problematics of Disentanglement. Continuity and discontinuity are closely related concepts (Prus and Grills, 2003). Thus, I examined how people may become entangled in drug dealing as a way of life. This provided us with some insights on how anybody may become more committed to and entangled in any realm of endeavour. Following Prus (2004), I used the term "subcultural embeddedness" to refer to the process of more extensively organising one's life (in terms of relationships, perspectives, identities, activities, manners of emotional expression, and linguistic fluencies) around a particular subculture. As people organise their lives around particular ways of life, not only are they less likely to consider disinvolvement, but the process of disinvolvement also becomes much more difficult the more embedded they become. This was evident in the present study of drug dealers in which four general entanglements were identified: (1) embracing the lifestyle, (2) experiencing "closure," (3) embeddedness in the social life, and (4) disenchantment and "career shifts."

The first entanglement discussed was embracing the lifestyle. The people interviewed for this study cited three main allures with the lifestyle: (1) money, (2) drugs, and (3) "being somebody" (see also Adler, 1985: 83-85; VanNostrand and Tewksbury, 1999: 66; Desroches, 2005: 106-110; Waldorf, 1973: 19).

The second entanglement was experiencing "closure," or perceiving limited options in solving problems and/or pursuing objectives. For some of the dealers interviewed for this study, the dealing lifestyle (i.e., money, drugs, "being somebody") was perceived as unattainable through more "legitimate" pursuits (see also VanNostrand and Tewksbury, 1999: 66). Some dealers also expressed pressing problems (i.e., supporting drug addictions, paying off large debts) that they felt could only be addressed through continued involvement in drug dealing (see also Waldorf, 1973: 12-13, 47-54; Tunnell, 1993: 374-375). Relatedly, while the ethnographic literature on drug dealers generally did not address many instances of becoming reinvolved in drug dealing, some of the participants in this study explained how they became reinvolved in drug dealing after former suppliers offered them opportunities to begin dealing again and reminded them that they still owed said suppliers large amounts of money.

The third entanglement in drug dealing observed in this study was becoming embedded in the social world of the drug subculture. Dealers who developed extensive and intensive contacts and friendships in the drug subculture were likely to remain involved or become reinvolved in it. As Adler (1985: 146) observes, "Drug trafficking was by its nature social, requiring individuals' cooperation and contact with at least two parties: a supplier and a customer." In this study, it was observed that many former dealers retained social relationships with people involved in the drug subculture after their disinvolvement. These relationships provided former dealers with opportunities for reinvolvement that were sometimes difficult to resist (see also Waldorf, 1973: 22), especially when they had experienced relatively few opportunities and successes in any legitimate working involvements since their disinvolvement. Some former dealers also explained that they would periodically acquire drugs for friends as "favours." I did not find any similar instances in the ethnographic literature on drug dealing of

reinvolvements through performing favours. Finally, consistent with the findings of Waldorf et al. (1991), some of the dealers who were attempting disinvolvement decided to relocate to different communities in an effort to separate themselves from the temptations and relationships found in their local drug subculture.

This section next considered disenchantment and "career shifts" of drug dealers. Seven of the former dealers interviewed for this study expressed discontent with the hassles (e.g., being busy all of the time, interacting with drug addicts) and risks (e.g., arrest) they associated with lower-level retail drug dealing. However, for these dealers, reinvolvment in another field of the drug dealing subculture was still a viable option. Similar to the findings of Adler (1985: 139) and Desroches (2005: 60-70), some participants planned "career shifts" (Luckenbill and Best, 1981) in the drug subculture. Thus, some participants planned to become involved in manufacturing drugs, citing the potential for greater profit, freedom, and security that manufacturing entails relative to lower-level dealing.

In sum, the findings of this thesis seem to be quite consistent with the broader ethnographic literature on drug dealers. Still, by employing the theory and methods of symbolic interactionism and ethnographic research, this study provides a greater level of theoretical coherence, conceptual development, and comparative analysis than most of the other studies on drug dealers. Comparative analysis is particularly important for achieving generic concepts that can be applied to multiple realms of activity. For example, by employing Prus' (1989a/b) study of the marketplace as a comparative reference point in developing the analysis of the interpersonal exchanges between dealers and their customers and suppliers, this study attends to the generic features of marketplace exchanges much more explicitly than most of the other

studies on drug dealers referenced in this thesis. Furthermore, the formation of generic concepts provides a framework for future studies on the marketplace exchanges in the drug subculture.

As well, this thesis also adds to the literature by contributing some new insights and/or suggestions for future inquiry. These aspects were discussed throughout the preceding summary. Briefly, this thesis provided additional insights to the drug dealing literature on the following topics: (1) "rave" and/or party dealers; (2) striving for supplier trust; (3) attending to product relevancy of suppliers; (4) cultivating (exclusive) relationships with single suppliers; (5) seasonal or cyclical supply shortages, (6) involvement in manufacturing marijuana; (7) concealing discreditable identities via "audience segregation" and "passing" by concealing; and (8) reinvolvement in drug dealing (e.g., performing favours for friends).

Suggestions for Future Research on Drug Dealers

In what follows, I consider two areas of inquiry that might prove intellectually profitable in conducting future research on the drug dealing community. These include studies of (1) deviant marketplace exchanges and (2) working with partners.

Deviant marketplace exchanges. Deviant or underground marketplace exchanges deserve more focused attention in future research. While I did not intend for this to be a study of marketplace exchanges, this activity is fundamental to comprehending dealers' careers of involvement. Thus, even without explicitly attending to these features, by focusing on careers of involvement I ended up with some material on the marketplace exchanges of dealers and their clients. However, this could be developed much more fully in future research, and it seems to be an area given little sustained attention in other studies of drug dealers (e.g., as Prus, 1989a/b,

gives to the legitimate marketplace). This would be useful not only in developing better accounts of deviant marketplaces, but also interpersonal exchanges more generally.

Working with partners. As mentioned earlier in Chapter Six, in developing this project, I somewhat unexpectedly obtained some rich material on dealers' experiences of working with partners. Dealers engaged in three broad types of partnerships: drug dealing, drug manufacturing, and drug smuggling. While the majority of cases involved two person partnerships, there also were some examples of involvement in larger group endeavours. Also, the analytic divisions between dealing, manufacturing, and smuggling partnerships should not be considered as mutually exclusive as these terms imply since people may engage in different types of partnerships on varying levels (e.g., a manufacturing partnership may shift to a dealing partnership once the manufacturing process is complete).

Dealing partnerships include two or more people who agree to combine their efforts in some manner for the purposes of dealing drugs. These partnerships may be made between parties working within more limited levels of the dealing subculture, as well as those engaged in higher level wholesaling and smuggling. In coming together, it is generally expected by the parties that the new partnership would be mutually beneficial in some respect or another in that some things could be accomplished that the individuals would not otherwise be able to achieve on their own.

Manufacturing refers to the process of producing of illicit drugs. Manufacturing operations usually entail significant investments in property, equipment, supplies, and knowledge to function. As such, dealers often form partnerships to lessen the individual costs of each of these required elements.

Smuggling involves the physical transport of drugs from one country or territory into another. Due to the logistics, individuals seldom carry out smuggling operations. Operations of this sort often involve the coordination of many different members who specialise in different areas of the enterprise. When compared to other types of dealing activity, smuggling operations can prove to be quite lucrative, but they are also quite risky and consequential in legal terms.

In the preliminary analysis of partnerships in the drug dealing world, I found partnerships usually developed after people have gained some experience in the drug dealing subculture as both users and dealers. This experience gives dealers an opportunity to make contacts within the scene with whom to develop collective enterprises with, assess their personal skills and knowledge, and assess the skills and knowledge of potential partners.

Partnerships also were processual in nature. That is, having an *initial emergence*, a *sustained presence* or operation, a period of *dissolution* in some cases, and potential *revitalisation*. Thus, the career contingency model used to understand people's individual involvements and pursuits also is quite applicable in understanding the development of collective ventures.

Partnerships also were more likely to develop when prospective members saw the potential relationships as beneficial, especially in financial terms. Dealers often viewed partnerships as opportunities to attain levels of involvement in drug dealing, manufacturing, and smuggling that they otherwise would not have been able to achieve as sole operators.

Thus, joint ventures in the drug dealing world often begin with promise. Later, in the process of carrying out the group venture or mandate, disputes can develop between group members. These disputes often occurred in relation to issues of compensation and member responsibilities. When individual members feel that they have contributed more to the venture

than others, then they are likely to feel that they deserve a greater, or at least an equal, share in the profits. This also was a common argument that arose when individual members felt that the other members had not fulfilled their originally outlined and agreed upon responsibilities. These periods of dispute often resulted in processes of dissolution. When partnerships did not work out as expected, then their original promise often was redefined as no longer valuable or viable and the enterprise was typically dismantled and aborted.

However, when partnerships are viewed in mutually beneficial terms, then they are likely to be maintained and, in some instances, expanded. In these cases, efforts were often made to recruit new members for new ventures planned by the group. As well, groups that achieved an enduring existence were likely to receive sustained commitments (time, energy, allegiance) and investments (infrastructure, equipment, cash) from their members.

Although all social activity, including drug dealing, may be viewed as collective enterprise, it is important to specifically consider the instances where people establish group endeavours in more distinctive terms. Thus, specific groups may develop distinct organisational agendas, insider-outsider definitions, codes of conduct, methods of motivation and discipline, recruitment and promotional practices, instructional techniques, and so on. For those who might be interested in examining matters such as this, Prus (1997: 131-136) offers a generic conceptual framework for studying group endeavours called *Participating in Collective Events*. This concept can be reframed and applied to specific instances of embarking on group ventures. Briefly, this concept includes the following nine subprocesses: (1) becoming aware of, and involved in, collective events; (2) coordinating and sustaining collective events; (3) making sense of collective events; (4) becoming caught up in collective events; (5) assuming more central roles in collective events; (6) avoiding, and withdrawing participation from, collective events; (7)

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resisting collective events or components thereof; (8) concluding collective events; and (9) reviewing, reliving, redefining, and readjusting to collective events.

Some other studies that would likely be useful in studying drug dealing partnerships include studies of: teamwork (Goffman, 1959), outlaw motorcycle clubs (Wolf, 1991), club date musicians (MacLeod, 1993), skid-row bottle gangs (Rubington, 1968), and professional card and dice hustlers (Prus and Sharper, 1977). While Adler (1985) and Desroches (2005) completed studies on upper-level dealers involved in wholesaling, manufacturing, and smuggling, the partnering process remains much more implicit in much of their analyses.

Experiences in Assembling this Project

It seems fitting to conclude this statement with a few thoughts on the experiences had in constructing it. And when I say, "constructing it," I truly mean it in the literal sense. In much the same way as a contractor would construct a building, a thesis must begin with a solid foundation on which to build upon. In the social sciences, this foundation is theory. I feel fortunate to have had a particularly strong base on which to build upon. That is, the symbolic interactionist theory of human group life. If you would have asked me four years ago (as a third year undergraduate student): "What is symbolic interactionism?" I most likely would have responded: "It's micro-sociology. You know, a focus on individuals' experiences in society." And, if my memory was particularly sharp that day, I might have been able to give you the name of Herbert Blumer. Beyond these rudimentary answers, I could offer little else to such a query. Since that time, however, I have learned so much about symbolic interactionism (and still am learning everyday!) in working with my supervisor, Robert Prus, to whom I owe a great debt of gratitude for "giving me an education," as they say.

This brings me to my second analogical point: constructing a building is a collaborative effort involving contributions of much time and effort made by many parties, and so it was with this thesis. Without the insights of my committee, especially the time, effort, patience, and encouragements of Bob Prus, this thesis would not have been possible.

Lastly, in construction,[155] the finishing and detail work may take the greatest amount of time. This also was the case with this project. While this study quickly developed some semblance of a structure or form through a smaller project of eight interviews of drug dealers conducted for a graduate seminar, it has been a long journey from these humble beginnings to this particular point. One might be surprised with how long it takes to peruse, assess, and adjust a document such as this one. But all of the sleepless nights and stressful days were worth it. This is not to say that I did not enjoy conducting this project. Indeed, it was a great learning experience and, after all, learning is fun. A more appropriate conception of this experience, then, is that it was challenging. Much like many other accomplishments in life, the most difficult battles endured and victories won are the ones we are most proud of.

In addition to this preamble, I would like to discuss the evolution of this project, including a few elements that I struggled with, was surprised by, and/or enjoyed along the way. My introduction to symbolic interactionism and ethnographic research was in an undergraduate seminar taught by Professor Robert Prus. In this course I conducted an ethnographic research project on weightlifters. To my genuine surprise, this project was quite enjoyable and, apparently, I had some "natural" abilities for this type of research.[156] But more importantly, this

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[155] I will spare readers from further analogies between constructing a building and constructing a thesis after this one because I realise they can lose their appeal and sense of playfulness quickly.
[156] Rather than run the risk sounding self-congratulatory, it should be noted that I was quite "rough around the edges" then and, in many respects, still am.

experience provided the impetus for the decision to continue my education and attend graduate school.

The present project on drug dealers was initially conceived after learning of my acceptance in the MA program in Sociology at the University of Waterloo. I began brainstorming for a potential thesis topic by listing the people that I knew and the activities that they were involved in – a good strategy for novice researchers who are looking for a topic. I could hear Professor Prus' mantra for novice researchers: "Study what and who you know." I kept coming back to drug users and dealers. Although, in part, this focus on dealers also emerged out of a belief that this topic would be of some interest due to the "mystique" that surrounds this realm. However, I was determined to permeate the "drug dealing mystique" in my ensuing analysis.

While I was aware that getting this topic approved would be a challenging task, I was steadfast and resolute in my desire to see it through. This resolve was due partly to the "obdurate character" (Blumer, 1969) of my temperament, and partly to my tendency to try and do things that people suggest cannot be done. In any event, after spending some time convincing Professor Prus that I would remain alive and well at the end of this endeavour, I completed an ethics application and, to my surprise, it passed with minimal difficulty.

As mentioned earlier, the first eight interviews were conducted when working on a smaller ethnographic project for a graduate seminar on symbolic interactionism and ethnographic research. This smaller project provided the base from which this larger one developed and served as some reassurance to Professor Prus that I had the contacts and wherewithal to continue with the study. And so I did.

This seems to be an appropriate time to discuss some specific themes that emerged during the research process. Thus, I will briefly outline the matters of (1) studying deviants and managing respectability, (2) managing dealers' reservations about participation, and (3) tensions between providing idiographic detail and conceptual analysis.

Studying deviants and managing respectability. Nothing is inherently deviant from an interactionist perspective, but rather reflects audience definitions of acts, actors, ideas, or other humanly produced phenomena as negative (immoral, evil, disturbing, disrespectable) in some way (Prus and Grills, 2003). Given this definition, drug dealers would seem to be designated as deviants by broader society. While there is much variability in people's receptivity to drug dealers (e.g., those who oppose drug dealing might still enjoy a good movie on the topic), generally it would be safe to assume that many people not involved in the drug subculture would consider selling drugs as a disrespectable activity to be involved in. Thus, people may become caught up in the "deviant mystique" (intrigues and fascinations but also condemnations and fears) that surrounds this realm. Now, this mystique may not be limited to the activities of dealers. There also seems to be a sense of mystique that surrounds the other members of the drug subculture as well (i.e., drug users, suppliers, regulators). It also has been my experience that researchers of deviance may experience some stigma related to their involvements. At times, I found myself engaging in some *impression management* (Goffman, 1959) by concealing some of the potentially discreditable qualities of my involvement in this project. Thus, when asked about my thesis topic by people other than close friends, I would generally respond by saying: "My thesis is on being involved in deviance. Specifically, the deviant careers of youths." I generally hoped that this answer would suffice, but sometimes, people probed further and, if I felt that they could handle what they were about to hear, I would tell them that I was doing a

study on drug dealers. Although, this revelation was generally something that I attempted to avoid because, shortly after it was made, it was likely to lead to further questions about the activities in the "back regions" (Goffman, 1959) of the project. For example, some of the common questions and comments were: "You're allowed to do that?"; "Is that a real study? Is that sociology?"; "You interview drug dealers? How is that?... These are people you know!" These questions often were accompanied by expressions of surprise and bewilderment. Thus, I found myself engaging in some of the tactics that the dealers in this study employed. That is, I attempted to strive for respectability by selectively revealing and concealing particular aspects of the research. As Prus and Grills (2003: 269) note:

Not only do ethnographers typically (and necessarily, if they are to be effective) develop closer and more sustained contact with the people whose life-worlds they are studying, but those studying deviance commonly also face problems pertaining to the disrespectability and possible illegality associated with the activities with which the participants in the setting may be involved. To some extent, both insider and outsider resistances may be overcome when researchers exercise care, sincerity, and confidentiality in their dealings with others, thereby fostering higher levels of trust on the part of others. Still, this is no guarantee that researchers will not become caught between two or more sets of antagonists or encounter people (insiders or outsiders) who define researchers more exclusively in troublesome terms.

  Managing dealers' reservations about participation. As mentioned earlier, the majority of the participants in this study were personal contacts of the researcher. Still, recruiting participants for a project of this sort was not without some challenges. Whereas those people who were personal friends were easily recruited to participate in this project, those participants who I had not been in contact with for some time required more convincing.

  The recruitment process generally began with a phone call by myself to potential participants. During this call, I would let the potential participant know that I had been accepted into graduate school and that part of the requirements was to complete a thesis on a sociological topic. I then let the person know that my topic might be of interest to them and I hoped that they

would be able to participate. Without getting into too many details over the telephone,[157] it was implied that my thesis would be on involvements in deviant hustling activities (and usually they would understand what this meant specifically). A meeting would then be arranged between myself and the potential participant to discuss the project more candidly.

Some of the more common concerns expressed had to do with (1) being identified, (2) the audience of the project, (3) the suggested length of the interview (i.e., two hours) and their ability to talk for that length of time, and (4) who would be listening to the audio recordings of the interviews.[158] In these situations, I would explain the entire research process to the participants as clearly as I could, notifying them that I would be the sole audience of the audio recordings and that no identifying information would be used in the thesis itself. I also found it useful to show potential participants a copy of the ethnographic study that I had conducted on weightlifters. This gave people a tangible example of how the data would be presented, and it also served to further establish my authenticity as a researcher doing "real research." In the end, nobody that I approached denied to participate in this project, although not many were terribly "eager" to participate either.

Idiographic detail and conceptual analysis. This thesis has very much been an educational endeavour for me personally. Not only did I learn much about the activities and interchanges of drug dealers, I also learned a great deal about symbolic interactionism and

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[157] As mentioned earlier in the discussion of arranging and performing transactions, many dealers are wary of discussing potentially incriminating topics over the telephone.

[158] Many dealers were concerned that the audio recordings of the interviews would be played as a part of presenting this project. Relatedly, during the interviews, many participants seemed to be trying to speak as clearly and politely as possible because they thought that these recordings would be played for others to listen to. I usually caught this early on in the interviews and informed and assured them that these recordings would only be listened to myself so that I may transcribe them later on, so feel free to "speak freely" and use profanities if you wish. I found that this seemed to ease participants' concerns and fostered more candid discussions of sensitive topics.

ethnographic research. One of the more central things that I have learned is you cannot include every instance observed or recorded in the field in an ethnography. My supervisor pointed this out to me after reviewing some initial drafts of this project. I was trying to do "too much" by providing some commentary on every aspect of every interview. In the process, I was losing the emphasis on the more generic aspects of the data. Thus began the process of mercilessly casting out more extraneous and exotic instances from this study.[159] I had to learn that in order to accurately represent a social world for an outsider, focus should be on the more common activities and processes before the less common or unique ones. However, a careful balance must be attained between striving for generic accounts and cutting more extraneous materials. Ultimately, it is a judgment call on the part of the researcher but still based on the data at hand. This is where having, in Herbert Blumer's (1969) terms, an "intimate familiarity" with one's subject matter is so useful in striking this balance and achieving accurate accounts of social life.

Looking Ahead: Intellectual Intrigues

Although I have been fortunate to have had extended experience to a variety of sociological approaches in my studies to date, my present academic approach may be best defined by the theory and methods of symbolic interactionism, based on the works of George Herbert Mead (1934) and Herbert Blumer (1969). I also have related (and broader) interests in (a) interpretivism; (b) social constructionism; (c) pragmatism; (d) the sociology of deviance; (e) the sociology of knowledge, science, and technology; (f) comparative analysis; and (g) qualitative methods. In what follows, I outline my doctoral dissertation proposal in which I continue my

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[159] The initial drafts of this paper exceeded three hundred and fifty pages.

work on the moral and social order of community life from the theoretical and methodological tradition of symbolic interactionism.

The title of my Doctoral dissertation proposal is "Character as a Sociological Phenomenon." Accounts of "character" (as in people's habits, dispositions, and interactional tendencies) have been scattered and unfocused in the sociological literature. Two of the earliest (and most astute) examinations of character as a group based phenomenon are found in the works of the classical Greeks. Specifically, this includes Plato's considerations of character in *Republic* and Aristotle's contributions in *Nicomachean Ethics*. This material and other interim literature will provide a transhistorical reference point for developing a more complete understanding of the ways in which people in different places and times have conceptualised character. Some of the more notable contemporary attempts at developing a comprehensive account of character have been seen in Emile Durkheim's (1961) *Moral Education*, Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills' (1953) *Character and Social Structure*, and Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) concept of *habitus*. Part of the reason for the limited attention that character has received from the sociological community may be the perception that it is fundamentally a psychological concept (as entirely individual traits or tendencies). However, psychological approaches neglect much of the social process (i.e., symbolic interchange, relationships, identities, activities, perspectives, and forms of emotional expression in the community) through which people develop character. Character is not an individual essence. Rather, it can only be understood within the context of community life. The role of the social process cannot be dismissed in conceptualising character since it is only in group contexts that character may be developed, achieved, enacted, regulated, and attributed to self and other. In my research, I am interested in conceptualising and examining character as an interactively achieved social process, as in (a)

invoking agency (the role of character/self-regulation in the decision-making process), (b) attributing character definitions to self and other, (c) managing self (character as habitual/self-regulated activity), (d) influencing the characters of others (attempts to regulate others), and (e) acquiring perspectives on morality. Most centrally, this project will build upon Emile Durkheim's (1961) consideration of character, morality, and discipline as social essences in *Moral Education* and G.H. Mead's (1934) interactionist conception of self and identity in *Mind, Self, and Society.*

This dissertation will be based, in part, on ethnographic research, in particular by interviews. The ethnographic research will focus on how character is understood, enacted, managed, regulated, and developed in the broader community on a day-to-day basis. Some of the different realms of character that will be addressed are the related notions of (a) courage and cowardice, (b) integrity and dishonesty, and (c) perseverance and apathy. The analysis will center on the development of a more coherent, theoretically grounded, process oriented conception of character for the social sciences.

In addition to this project on character, other topics I would like to examine include: (1) the social world of professional photographers, (2) drinking and driving as activity, (3) being a ketamine user, and (4) being involved in amateur bodybuilding and steroid use.

This fall, I will begin the doctoral program in sociology at McMaster University. An awareness of McMaster's program has been fostered through discussions with professors (Robert Prus, Rick Helmes-Hayes, and Martin Cooke) and former students of "Mac" (Scott Grills, Andy Hathaway, and Antony Puddephatt). I also had the opportunity to see conference presentations made by faculty and students at the *25th Annual Qualitative Analysis Conference* at UNB and was impressed with the showing McMaster made at the conference. Moreover, McMaster has

developed an excellent reputation in my areas of interest – symbolic interactionism and ethnographic research. Thus, completing a Doctorate at McMaster would be beneficial as there is a well defined core of scholars that I could work with in developing this dissertation, namely, William Shaffir, Dorothy Pawluch, and Charlene Miall.

My ultimate objective is to become a university professor and continue working in and contributing to the areas of symbolic interactionism, social theory, comparative analysis, and ethnography.

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