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Digital Affect, Clubbing and Club Drug Cultures: Reflection, Anticipation, Counter-Reaction

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Introduction

Those who spend their leisure time in the UK's night-time economy (herein NTE) have higher rates of lifetime and past-month use of illegal drugs than the general population (Measham et al., 2001; Deehan and Saville, 2003), whilst electronic dance music (herein EDM) clubbers have the highest illegal drug prevalence rates in the UK's NTE.¹ Patterns of drug use also vary according to the EDM 'scene', with for example those frequenting hard dance and trance nights having the highest rates of ecstasy and ketamine use, compared to those frequenting drum and bass nights who have the highest rates of cannabis use and the lowest rates of ketamine use (Measham and Moore, 2009). Most recently, emergent psychoactive substances or (formerly) 'legal highs' such as Gammahydroxybutyrate (GBL or 'G') and mephedrone ('Meph' or 'M-Cat') have been added to clubbers' polydrug repertoires of more familiar club drugs such as ecstasy, cocaine and ketamine (Measham et al., 2010; Winstock and Power, 2011).

EDM clubbers – like many young and not so young adults – also engage with digital technologies. The Internet and specifically social networking sites now supplement and in some cases have supplanted more 'traditional' forms of communication across clubland such as paper-based fanzines, flyers and fly-posters. EDM music production and consumption have been transformed, with digital downloads all but replacing 12-inch vinyl within EDM scenes. EDM club community participation is as active online as it remains offline more than 20 years after the advent of acid house and rave.

To be a 'committed clubber' (Moore, 2004) is not solely about the intensities of one spectacular moment of music and drug consumption

1 at a set time and place; it also involves embodied emotional encounters
2 with digital technologies which enable those spectacular moments to
3 occur. How are those emotions involved in 'being a clubber' – and (typi-
4 cally) a drug-user – produced, managed, negotiated and displayed via
5 engagement with digital technologies? Are EDM clubbers committed to
6 a particular emotionalized reflexive project of the self (Holmes, 2010),
7 and if so, what enabling/constraining role do digital interfaces play in
8 such a project? How, if at all, may the concept of *digital affect* aid our
9 exploration of such processes?

10 This chapter presents two explorations of digital affect.² First, memo-
11 rial websites to now-defunct clubbing spaces (*The Republic*, Sheffield and
12 *The End*, London) are explored as instances of *mourning-nostalgia* for past
13 experiences embedded in a particular leisure-pleasure landscape. Posts
14 on Facebook sites for forthcoming clubbing events are also highlighted
15 as co-productions of anticipation of pleasurable leisure experiences and
16 as part of clubbers' performances as responsibilized leisure-pleasure con-
17 sumers. Second, the 'Ban the Drug GBL in the UK'³ Facebook group set
18 up after the GBL-related death of 'party-girl' and medical student Hester
19 Stewart is examined. Hester, as an 'A1 girl' or one of post-feminist era's
20 'glamorous high-achievers' (McRobbie, 2009: 15), has become the Leah
21 Betts of the 'legal highs' generation,⁴ a poster girl to the dangers of con-
22 suming *any* intoxicant *regardless* of its legal status (apart from alcohol in
23 moderation). The group is an example of digital affect in action via the
24 production of *mourning-hatred*, where drug-fuelled leisure time is pro-
25 duced as pathological in the face of drug-related death and the clubber
26 as drug-taker becomes a disgusting, abject figure to be despised, pitied
27 and ultimately cast out as the reification of the 'drug-victim' occurs and
28 the threat to the 'innocent' is contained (Manning, 2006).

29 Kuntsman (2010: 9) notes the affective element of digital technol-
30 ogy use; we feel in and through information and communication
31 technologies (ICTs) as we take up, reject and rework the possibilities
32 and constraints that technologies offer into our everyday (or night)
33 lives. Put simply then, the use of digital technologies involves affective
34 investment in situated embodied practices (Elliott, 2004; Gies, 2008).
35 In this chapter, it is the situated embodied practices involved in post-
36 ing on websites and social networking sites that are at stake. These
37 practices are at the heart of digital affect; that is producing, managing,
38 negotiating, displaying and circulating affectual qualities through digi-
39 tal technologies.

40 Digital affect is thus conceptualized as the never-stable process of
41 producing affectual qualities through the intra-action of human *and*

1 nonhuman agents, the organic and inorganic. As a concept it helps
2 'examine the practices through which these differential boundaries (of
3 human and nonhuman) are stabilized and destabilized' (Barad, 2003:
4 808). Digital affect can then be defined as the contested and temporary
5 outcomes of the 'intra-action' of phenomena: technologies (that is com-
6 puters, 'the Internet' and 'drugs'); the materialization and movement of
7 bodies; as well as affect and emotions. Karen Barad's term 'intra-action'
8 captures the ways in which matter has its own internal momentums, a
9 kind of 'activity of matter' (rather than passivity of matter waiting to be
10 inscribed and acted upon) that participates in the processes of its own
11 materialization. Hence digital affect is produced through a symbiosis of
12 technical and material structures (say of social networking sites) which
13 both enable and constrain; historical and cultural happenings which
14 may or may not be significant depending on structural and elective
15 positionings; and emotions 'practised and performed rather than sim-
16 ply recorded and shared' (Garde-Hansen, 2009: 142). For example the
17 morning of a local trance club night holds significance for committed
18 clubbers; excitement and anticipation is practised online in a timely
19 fashion through postings such as '0 Sleeps!!!!!!!!!!!!',⁵ materialized by
20 fingers tapping at a keyboard and enabled by Facebook status update
21 protocols; but simultaneously constrained to 'Facebook friends'.

23 Digital affect in action: Mourning-nostalgia online

24
25 Digital affect produces multiple iterations of forms of online/offline
26 self-presentation to imagined audiences of those understood to be
27 more or less *proximal* to clubbers' (elective) identities and collective
28 allegiances (i.e. drug-taker/abstainer; clubber/non-clubber). In previous
29 work (Moore, 2010), I explored clubbers' responses to the historically
30 and culturally significant moment of Sheffield trance music⁶ venue
31 Gatecrasher One's destruction through fire. Gatecrasher One was
32 memorialized by both digital and physical means.

33 Those 'Crasher kids' (as they were known within UK clubbing cul-
34 ture) unable to visit the venue site in Sheffield expressed gratitude at
35 the existence of Gatecrasher One alongside grief at the loss of such
36 a club via memorializing posts on the Gatecrasher website. The posts
37 imagined a community of 'many others out there who understand'⁷ the
38 grief expressed online about the club's demise and by implication those
39 'non-clubbers' who could not possibly understand. Clubbing memorial
40 websites incorporate practices of 'top-down' history manufacture and of
41 'bottom-up' memory production by corporatized clubbing communities



Figure 7.1 Street commemoration of the fire at *Gatecrasher One*. The note reads: 'The music, the lights, the spirit of the people. We will always remember you' Source: Sheffield, photo by 'Gatecrasherone', 19 June 2007, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/9128543@N03/576366566/> (accessed 24 April 2011).

that work to include some and exclude others – those rendered unwelcome through complex processes of othering – such as the drunken, moribund 'Other' of the binge-drinker. Clubbing cyber-memorials are an example of practices of memory and affectual intensities enabled and circulated through digital technologies (Garde-Hansen, 2009; Kuntsman, 2010). Felt connections to culturally significant 'real-world' spaces are produced through mediated memorialization practices, a unique interplay between commercialized, collectivized and personalized memories of the 'big night out'. Gatecrasher One's memorial site offered Crasher Kids the chance to express their grief at the loss of the venue, with the affectual intensities of ecstasy experiences intertwining with accounts of the consumption of Gatecrasher-branded goods (Moore, 2010; see also Sturken, 2008).⁸

Expressions of denial and shock at the suddenness of Gatecrasher One's demise featured on the Gatecrasher memorial site. Yet what of instances in which the demise of an EDM club venue is meticulously planned? The End was a highly successful club located in central London. Opening in 1995, it closed its doors to clubbers in January

2009 with a series of 'closing parties',⁹ the videos of which remain available on The End's club memorial website:

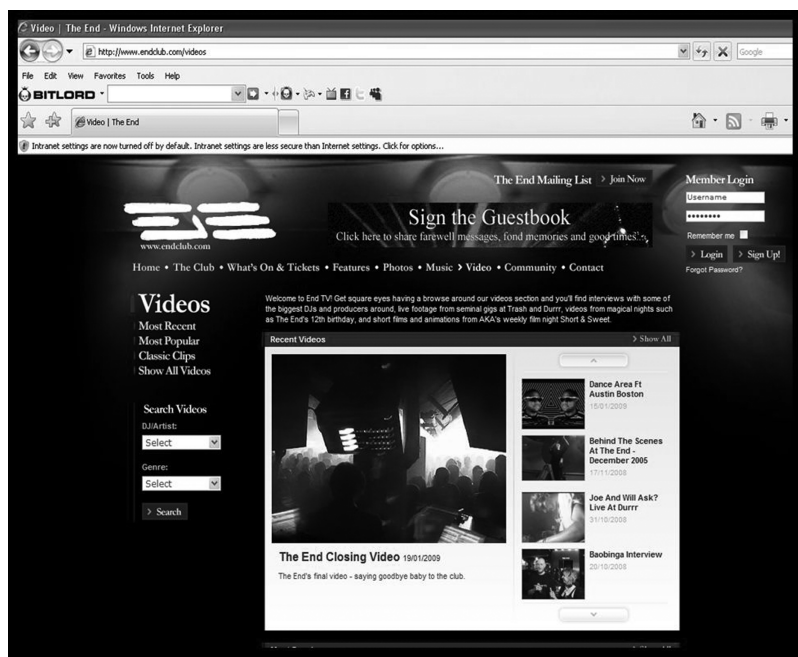


Figure 7.2 The final moments of *The End*, London, commemorated on the club's website

Source: <http://www.endclub.com/videos> (accessed 14 April 2011).

How does digital affect emerge in processes of remembering? As with the Gatecrasher memorial site, remembering 'the end of The End' amounts to an active reconstruction of an historically and culturally significant moment which produces personal and collective (club-crowd) memories. These memories are intertwined with the history of a successful corporate business and well-known clubbing brand. In this instance digital affect emerges through consuming and producing nostalgia whilst engaging with the marketing of (club-brand) memory (Wu, 2010). The End's memorial website highlights tensions and contradictions played out in clubbers' accounts as they connect with and move through a commercialized branded party space from their tenuous position as a criminalized group circulating the 'crime and control' governed spaces of post-industrial NTEs (Chatterton and Hollands, 2003).

The End's website is replete with tagged photos of 'party people' alongside club crowd photos underscored by captions about the particular event they were attending and the 'madness' of the nights in question. The invitation by The End to 'Share Your Memories' by signing the online guestbook continues the theme of sharing (badly kept) secret knowledge about the pleasures of intoxication in EDM club spaces. Posts by former customers and the official website text allude to the role of psychoactive drugs in their experiences of the club:¹⁰

Guestbook: Farewell messages; fond memories; DJs in the blue booth that rocked your world; *the times when you stayed until the morning when you should have been home in bed* – share them all here.¹¹



Figure 7.3 Website of *The End*, London: Farewell messages, fond memories
Source: <http://www.endclub.com/guestbook> (accessed 14 April 2011).

1 Within The End's memorial website there is recognition that spaces
2 in which illicit-drug-fuelled intense feelings circulate (e.g. 'extreme
3 euphoria') and clandestine bodily practices performed (e.g. 'partying',
4 'staying up until daybreak') are highly valued by (former) attendees.
5 Oblique references to drug use, particularly ecstasy which, alongside
6 other stimulants such as cocaine and mephedrone, is the 'drug of
7 choice' for EDM clubbers, acts to reinforce clubbers' self-identification
8 as being a privileged participant (by virtue of economic, social and
9 'subcultural' capital) in a secret or 'underground' leisure-pleasure com-
10 munity (Thornton, 1995; Hutton, 2006). The 'safe' pursuit of hedonism
11 and affectual 'experiential intensities' (Moore and Measham, 2008: 241;
12 see also Massumi, 2002) are key selling-points of commercialized EDM
13 environments such as London's The End, Manchester's The Warehouse
14 Project¹² and Leeds' Stinky's Peephouse¹³ which nostalgically reference
15 'risky' 1980s and early 1990s rave culture.

16 The End's memorial website also encourages reminiscences of 'webs
17 of social solidarities and interdependencies' (Rief, 2009: 135). Clubbers'
18 responses to the Featured Interview: Goodbye Baby¹⁴ repeat the stories
19 posted on the Guestbook page regarding friends made at the club, even
20 partners met there, alongside the sense of solidarity (regular) attendance
21 at the venue afforded, attendance which of course is not open to all
22 (Measham and Hadfield, 2009). 'Clubbing' as a form of 'solidarity' thus
23 becomes an unevenly distributed reflexive tool with which to interpret
24 emotions and define life-experiences as part of a broader project of the
25 self (Holmes, 2010; Wee and Brooks, 2010). The possibilities for elective-
26 identity formation open to the clubber online are circumscribed by
27 gender, age, social class, ethnicity, sexuality and disablement, as well
28 as being determined by the need to 'counter-react' (Murji, 1998) to
29 drug-user stereotypes and emotions (such as disgust) which stick to and
30 shape drug-using bodies.

31 Clubbing (memorial) websites are shaped by the moral regulation and
32 social control experienced by clubbers as drug-takers, just as clubbing
33 spaces and times in contemporary NTEs are (Chatterton and Hollands,
34 2003). The dilemma clubbers face is how best to seek the affirmation
35 and valorization of clubbing significances in the face of accusations of
36 at best nihilistic meaninglessness and inauthenticity and at worst crimi-
37 nality (e.g. Melechi, 1993). One 'solution' is to use 'appropriate' forms of
38 reflexivity (e.g. the 'work-hard, party-hard', 'emotionally-stable' Self) in
39 an attempt to *appropriate* forms of differentiated agency (Holmes, 2010;
40 McRobbie, 2009; Skeggs, 2004; Wee and Brooks, 2010). These struggles
41 are woven into the affective fabrics of digital cultures by clubbers who

1 are well aware that they are prone to unwanted attention from 'moral
2 entrepreneurs' (Becker, 1963) as occurred when clubbers were found to
3 be 'early adopters' of M-Cat/mephedrone (Measham et al., 2010).

4 Affect, narrativization and identity-work intersect at the site of online
5 memorializations. As Doss (2010: 48) highlights, acts of remembering
6 involve public performativity key to the formation and reformation of
7 social identity. Silvia Rief (2009) notes in her ethnography of club cultures
8 in London and Istanbul that 'clubbing' was performed as a meaningful,
9 'authentic' emotional experience in the face of accusations of inau-
10 thenticity given related club drug use. Rief (2009) deploys the 'identity
11 project' to capture how clubbers' retrospectively weave together events,
12 experiences and emotions, producing club culture involvement as a pre-
13 existing, self-revealing, identity-affirming 'telos' (see also Jackson, 2004;
14 Malbon, 1999; Pini, 2001), achieved most notably 'through images of
15 self-realisation, mastery and individual agency' (Rief, 2009: 133).

16 In her study of young people involved in the 'rave' scene in the
17 San Francisco Bay Area in the US, Wu (2010) notes that contemporary
18 'ravers' utilize remembrances and nostalgia – a collectively imagined,
19 or socially created rave-past – to imbue their current experiences with
20 meaning in the face of the widespread belief that rave as a culturally sig-
21 nificant moment/movement is 'dead' or 'over' and that the remaining
22 remnants are somehow profoundly 'passé'. This element of yearning for
23 a past of perfect raves and pure drugs is indeed part of global contempo-
24 rary club cultures. As Siokou and Moore (2008) argue in relation to the
25 contemporary club scene in Melbourne, Australia, commercialization
26 may have brought about 'a sense of nostalgia and even of mourning for
27 past rave forms ... that in expressing sadness for the passing of a golden
28 era ... can also be read as claims to subcultural capital' (2008: 51). Hence
29 online memorial websites may also act as spaces for the enactment of
30 digital affect, where performances of emotionality (grief, denial, wistful-
31 ness) and the enactment of an 'orderly goodbye' (to 'the rave era', to a
32 specific rave/club space) shores up claims to an 'authentic' identity.

33 Yet what of clubbers' participation in current and future clubbing
34 events? Anticipation performed online, most recently via social net-
35 working sites such as Facebook, brings us back to the clubbing present.
36 The 'cross-temporality' of affect is crucial here; affect involves transitions
37 across senses, events, spaces and times. Digital affect involves the deploy-
38 ment of emotional narratives and vocabularies to express and 'work
39 through' key moral dilemmas presented by the commercialized and
40 criminalized leisure-pleasure landscapes that post-rave clubbers have,
41 are, and will inhabit. Emotional narratives and vocabularies respond to

such questions – posed by the moral regulation and social control that shapes contemporary life – as ‘What am I committed to?’, ‘How should I conduct myself both online and offline?’ and ‘What risks am I prepared to take now and with the future?’ As Bar-Lev (2008) notes in relation to the performance of emotions in online HIV/AIDS support groups, emotion-talk frames the various and specific moral dilemmas faced by participants. Clubbers – as ‘morally-dubious’ drug-takers – strengthen their claims to ‘sensible recreation’ through online displays of anticipation, incorporating physical and emotional preparation. On Thursday nights, club-related Facebook sites are replete with posts declaring ‘early night for me’, ‘one more sleep’, or ‘not long to go now’.¹⁵ Friday morning posts herald the ‘arrival’ of permissible leisure-pleasure time through phrases such as ‘Bring it on!’ and ‘The weekend has landed’. These stock phrases are repeated on clubbing websites and social networking sites, alongside lengthier personalized messages such as ‘Tonight is a go!!! Sun is out in Leeds, trains are running, DJ’s are on their way. Well I think it’s time to put on my Tranceshoes :-D’.¹⁶ This combination of personalized anticipatory display and communal phrase repetition is capitalized upon by club promoters and owners, with for example the Leeds clubbing behemoth Digital Society (DS) sending out a Facebook message to DS group members stating ‘Only four more sleeps: Ticket alert’¹⁷ prior to a trance music event in December 2010. Just as memories are deployed as revenue-generators for club brands, epitomized by the Gatecrasher Classics CD series – so too is anticipation of, or *intense* expectation about forthcoming ecstatic club *experiences* among committed clubbers. They hope to be ‘moved’, to affect and be affected, but such hopes are difficult to verbalize (Bertelsen and Murphie, 2010) as affect moves bodies, bringing *intensity* (quantity) to *experiences* (quality) (Massumi, 2002). The intensity of corporeal sensations (experienced through moving to music alongside others for example) may ‘mean’ more to people than the cultural ‘meaning’ of the music itself (Shouse, 2005).

Digital affect in action: Mourning-hatred

My second exploration of digital affect has implications beyond clubbing cultures, indeed beyond subcultures and scenes more generally. I look at how demands for future action (here banning a ‘drug’ implicated in loss) and the production of ‘categorical affects’ (that is more recognizable, nameable emotions like disgust and hatred) are experienced with intensity across virtual contexts. To achieve this I focus on an instance of reaction and counter-reaction (Murji, 1998) in

1 relation to the psychoactive substance GBL, exploring how the discursive
2 contestation of drug-users as being in need of moral regulation and
3 social control occurs online, through moderated 'right to reply' posts
4 related to newspaper features and on drug-user discussion forums such
5 as www.bluelight.ru and www.erowid.org/.

6 The concept of 'drugalities' is crucial to this particular exploration of
7 digital affect. Dawn Moore (2006) defines 'drugalities' as the generative
8 capabilities of (usually) criminalized 'drugs'. The term 'drugalities' captures
9 how knowledges about substances (and their users) are produced,
10 contested, legitimized and circulated; knowledges which seek to solidify
11 substances' capabilities, usually as *either* life-saving 'medicines' *or* death-
12 harbouring 'drugs' (Race, 2009). This latter point is crucial for understanding
13 talk of psychoactive drugs on the Internet. Crucially in the case
14 of GBL, the substance had to be 'recognized' as a drug. With this recognition
15 comes calls for regulation, that is the banning of the (now) drug
16 in the UK through its classification under the 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act
17 (MDA). This indeed occurred in December 2009 when GBL was scheduled
18 as a Class C substance following recommendations by the UK's Advisory
19 Council for the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD). Although drug workers had
20 previously raised concerns about GBL, particularly among gay clubbers,
21 it wasn't until in April 2009 that it came to the attention of the general
22 public via intense and extensive media coverage of the GBL-related death
23 of a young woman called Hester Stewart. Such media coverage, circulated
24 online – including the now infamous *Daily Mail* article 'Coma in a Bottle'
25 (Bracchi, 2009) – mediated grief, anger, and notably righteous disbelief
26 and frustration at the (then) legal status of GBL. Although contested
27 among GBL users posting on the Internet, this mediation of emotion –
28 and emotionalized mediation – worked to solidify the meaning of the
29 substance GBL, collapsing its status as an 'industrial cleaner' into that of
30 a 'dangerous drug of abuse'. Drugalities, or as Derrida would have it the
31 *concept of drug* 'instituted on the basis of moral or political evaluations'
32 (Derrida, 1995: 229) may of late and in part be produced through the
33 affective fabrics of digital cultures. In relation to the Facebook group 'Ban
34 the Drug GBL in the UK', the 'drugality' of GBL – the intra-action (Barad,
35 2003) of determining but not (pre)determined pharmacological and cultural
36 properties – is produced, negotiated and managed through online
37 discussions about the drugs' properties and effects, alongside appropriate
38 ways to respond to those who 'insist' on consuming it.

39 Such discussions make manifest both the human and nonhuman
40 'work' that goes into producing GBL as both a *pleasure-giving* and *life-*
41 *taking* agent. As the exchanges continue, GBL's 'true' use as an industrial

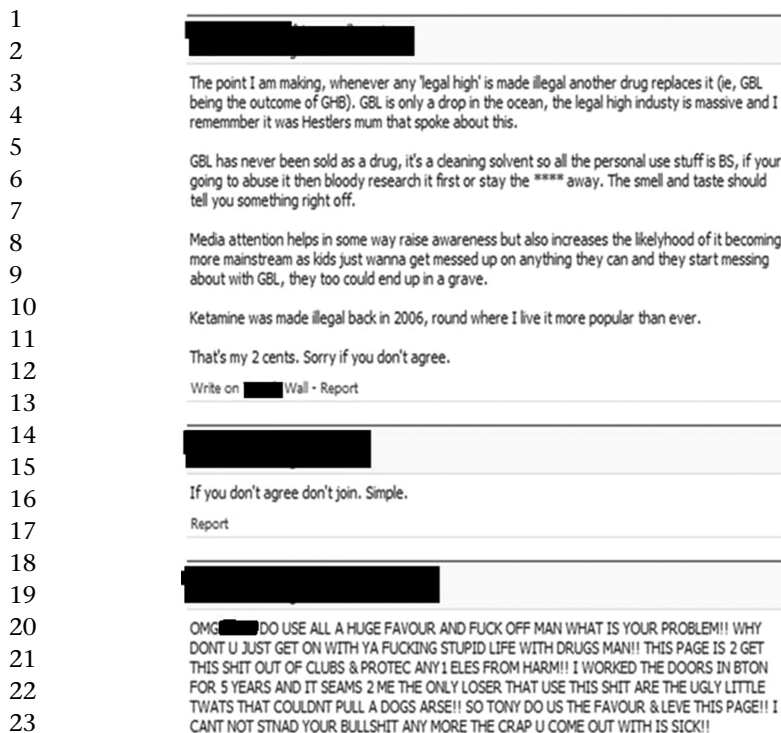


Figure 7.4 Managing mourning-hatred on 'Ban the Drug GBL in the UK' Facebook group site (following Hester Stewart's GBL-related death in 2009)
Source: Posts, in ascending order, dated 2–3 August 2009, <http://www.facebook.com/#!/group.php?gid=75682107669> (accessed 1 October 2009).

cleaner ('cleaning solvent') is then re-referred to by 'Ban the Drug GBL in the UK' Facebook group participants, either as a source of humour (by users) or as indication of the depravity of users (by those aligned to GBL prohibition). Through crime-drug discourses, disgust 'sticks' to the bodies of drug-using subjects 'causing' injury to the law-abiding, non-drug using subject as the proximity of the abject other is read as the origin of bad feeling (Ahmed, 2004). Hence, producing, managing, negotiating, displaying and circulating emotion emerges as a crucial element of these online discussions, particularly given encounters between people situated at incompatible ends of the continuum of possible responses to illicit drug use (strict prohibition through to libertarian decriminalization). The careful management of intense emotions is a more general

1 aspect of online drug-talk given the broader context of the enduring
2 stigma of illicit drug use, despite psychoactive drugs' place as prestige
3 commodities in various cultures, including some UK EDM club scenes.

4 Contemporary drug scares involve demands for (future) action (e.g.
5 intensifying the War on Drugs) and the production of 'categorical affects'
6 (disgust, hatred) experienced with intensity across virtual contexts. Drug
7 scares magnify and dramatize drug problems through the 'routinisation
8 of caricature' (Reinerman, 1994: 96). The routinization of caricature – the
9 repetition of the abject figure of an out-of-control drug use/drug user –
10 involves misrepresenting worst cases (serious mental and physical illness,
11 death) as typical cases, as apparent on the Facebook group site 'Ban the
12 Drug GBL in the UK'. Episodic drug use is reported as an impending
13 epidemic through threat phrases such as 'sweeping Britain' (Clark, 2010).
14 Emotive debates about the 'solution' to drug 'problems' are produced in
15 part through encounters in digital spaces. Typically such debates either
16 commence or increase in intensity following the production of a drug-
17 death victim; such victims become the focus of campaigns to ban the
18 substance involved, whilst those questioning prohibition are framed as
19 disrespectful to the dead (see for example Figure 7.4 above). As Garland
20 notes, one of the key drivers to a more punitive turn in welfare and
21 prisons alike has been the 'victims' movement' (Garland, 2001). This has
22 certainly been the case in relation to drug laws in the UK, with Hester
23 Stewart's family involved in lobbying Alan Johnson, the then UK Home
24 Secretary, to classify GBL under the 1971 MDA. The Facebook campaign
25 was an element of these lobbying activities. In this fraught context it
26 is unsurprising that Facebook encounters between grieving family and
27 friends of a 'drug victim' and those who consume the drug implicated
28 in their relative's death contain 'flaming' and increasingly abusive
29 posts; besieges to leave the discussion forum by anti-drug campaigners;
30 accusations of 'over-emotionality' by drug users; and instances of anti-
31 prohibitionists keen to present themselves as arbiters of 'rational debate'
32 in the face of the 'descent into chaos' posed by prohibitionists opposed to
33 the 'weakening' of drug laws. These are typical elements of drug discourses,
34 as context-specific frameworks, which constrain what can and cannot be
35 presented as 'rational' or 'common-sense' when considering psychoactive
36 substances (e.g. Bright et al., 2008; Fraser and Moore, 2007).

38 **Concluding thoughts**

40 Digital affect can be defined as the continuously contested and always
41 temporary outcomes of the *intra*-action of phenomena: technologies

(that is computers, 'the Internet' and 'drugs'); the materialization and movement of bodies; as well as affectual intensities and emotions. The two explorations of digital affect presented here involve aspects of regimes of responsibilized self-regulation, notably in relation to impermissible pleasures such as illicit drug use. The two explorations have also considered the digital discourses, online practices and virtual encounters involved in the 'self-as-project' (Rief, 2009; Wee and Brooks, 2010). Whilst I have concentrated on UK EDM clubbing culture here, I suggest that there are possibilities for employing digital affect elsewhere as a conceptual tool to explore how technologies mediate emotions, particularly those emotions involved in the pursuit of a viable 'authentic' identity. This concern with 'authenticity' as played out in online spaces has for example been found to be an aspect of other music 'scenes' such as 'Goth' and 'Straightedge'¹⁸ (Williams, 2006), although work on the emotional aspects and affectual qualities of such practices remains scant and ripe for exploration.

I argue that such discourses, practices and encounters produce emotions to be managed and negotiated as they 'impress' (Ahmed, 2004) upon embodied subjects in their crossing of online/offline, work/leisure, pleasure/pain boundaries. Producing, managing, negotiating and displaying emotions (love, euphoria, hate, disgust) across the affective fabrics of digital cultures is crucial to the coherence of the identities of those 'committed' for example to a particular 'scene' and/or who participate in illicit activities which are highly contested such as illegal drug-taking. Drug users are repeatedly the target of criticism, revulsion even. It is in this context that EDM clubbers (as predominately drug-takers) build their claims to 'sensible recreation' in their digital displays of anticipation and preparation for a weekend of partying, whilst more broadly strengthening claims of 'safe-self/unsafe-Other' through community participation online. These practices 'make sense' in light of a consideration of how those committed to certain dubious elective identities engage with those (others) they encounter in the affective fabrics of digital cultures and beyond.

Notes

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1. Five random sample surveys looked at prevalence of illicit drug use among EDM clubbers across a range of venues in the NTE of a large English city between 2004 and 2009 (Moore and Measham, 2009). The findings highlighted that

- 1 EDM clubbers have high rates of drug use compared to the general popula-
 2 tion as captured by the British Crime Survey (BCS) and compared to other
 3 adults frequenting the NTE (Measham et al., 2011). 98 per cent of the 323
 4 clubbers surveyed reported that they had tried an illegal drug at least once
 5 in their lifetime (Moore and Measham, 2009; see also McCambridge, 2007).
 6 By way of comparison, 36 per cent of adults aged 16–59 reported ever hav-
 7 ing used an illegal drug in the most recent BCS (Hoare and Moon, 2010). 79
 8 per cent of the dance club survey sample, compared with only one in twenty
 9 (5%) adults in the BCS 2009/10 survey had taken a drug in the past month.
 10 In addition, 63% of the club survey sample reported illegal drug use on the
 11 fieldwork night, with ecstasy the most prevalent (42%), closely followed by
 12 cannabis (40%).
- 13 2. For this chapter I draw on ongoing ethnographic fieldwork in clubs and
 14 after-parties across the north-west of England and London; interviews with
 15 club owners, club promoters, DJs, clubbers and drug-users (some of whom
 16 are clubbers, others not); in-situ self-report survey research in bars, clubs and
 17 festivals around the UK (conducted with Dr Fiona Measham); and participant
 18 observation work on EDM clubbing websites and forums (including co-
 19 running www.clubbingresearch.com). I have been conducting club and club
 20 drug research for the last 10 years (having been an EDM clubber for around
 21 18 years).
- 22 3. See 'Ban the Drug GBL in the UK': [www.facebook.com/#!/group.
 23 php?gid=75682107669](http://www.facebook.com/#!/group.php?gid=75682107669), last accessed 18 April 2011. The site has 2131 mem-
 24 bers and was set up by Hester Stewart's sister, Phoebe Stewart and a friend of
 25 Hester Stewart, April Edmonds-Ball. The last 'on-topic' post was on 15 January
 26 2010, after which the site has only had 'spam' posts.
- 27 4. In 1995 UK teenager Leah Betts died after consuming an ecstasy tablet sup-
 28 plied by a friend. An inquest returned a verdict of accidental death as a result
 29 of abnormal water retention (dilutional hyponatraemia), kidney malfunction,
 30 and water swelling around the brain linked to Leah's excessive fluid consump-
 31 tion, possibly related to her mistaken belief that large quantities of water were
 32 needed to prevent or reverse overheating from ecstasy. Leah's final moments
 33 were used as part of the government's mid 1990s anti-ecstasy campaign which
 34 consisted of billboards with the slogan 'Sorted: Just one ecstasy tablet took
 35 Leah Betts'. *The Sun* newspaper also ran an anti-ecstasy campaign with Leah's
 36 death as its centrepiece.
- 37 5. Message posted by L on Anthematics trance night Facebook page on the
 38 morning of the event, 4 June 2011.
- 39 6. Trance music, comprising often uplifting lyrics and/or synths driven by a 4/4
 40 beat, germinated from early rave, techno and house music, and incorporates
 41 classical music influences. Trance is now an international music scene popu-
 lar in the UK (particularly the north of England), US, Canada, Australia, India,
 Israel and numerous European countries.
7. Message posted by M on www.gatecrasher.com, 23 June 2007.
8. Expressed for example by posts on the www.gatecrasher.com forum from 20
 June 2007 (two days after the Gatecrasher fire) under the title 'Do you remem-
 ber the first time?' about Gatecrasher trance tunes that accompanied clubbers'
 first ecstasy experience. This thread was removed by moderators ten days after
 it commenced.

9. The phrase 'closing parties' is used among promoters and clubbers in Ibiza to denote the final parties of the summer clubbing season on the island. 'Closing parties' have a particular reputation among committed clubbers for involving the best DJ line-ups and the most debauched crowds of the party calendar.
10. For example Carlos, self-identifying as a 'first-timer' posts that his attendance at The End was 'my first time "partying" and I will never forget! I just couldn't get enough'.
11. See www.endclub.com/guestbook (accessed 9 December 2010), author's emphasis.
12. See www.thewarehouseproject.com/ (accessed 9 December 2010).
13. See www.stinkyspeephouse.co.uk/ (accessed 12 February 2011).
14. See www.endclub.com/goodbyebaby (accessed 9 December 2010).
15. All posts from 'Digital Society' Facebook group page in anticipation of the trance event 'Digital Society Winter Edition' at the O₂ Academy in Leeds, UK, December 2010.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Straightedge emerged in the US from the early 1980s as a punk music-driven 'subculture' or scene; those who are committed to Straightedge disavow the use of alcohol, recreational drugs and promiscuous sexual behaviours.

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