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"This is not a rave": An ethnography of changes in the Melbourne rave/dance party scene, 1996-2006

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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

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Abstract

The increase in 'recreational' or 'normalised' party drug use by young Australians, particularly at raves/dance parties and clubs, has led to party drug use becoming a research, policy and practice issue: however, there has been little ethnographic research on the social contexts and cultural meanings of party drug use.

This thesis is concerned with the changes that occurred in the Melbourne rave/dance party scene between 1996 and 2006. In considering these changes, the central question explored in the thesis is: *How has the commercialisation of the Melbourne rave/dance party scene affected the identities and party drug use of scene participants?* The dominant approaches to the study of drug use in Australia have been epidemiological and medical. These approaches ignore the cultural meanings and social contexts of party drug use, and as a consequence, they tend to represent party drug users as an essentialised category. By contrast, this thesis is positioned within the body of ethnographic work on drug use that has emerged since the 1990s (e.g., Bourgois, 1995; Bourgois and Schonberg, 2009; Dwyer, 2009; Green and Moore, 2009; Maher, 1997; Moore, 1993, 1995; Slavin 2004a, 2004b). It draws on two previously distinct literatures – the drug-specific literature on party drug use, and the sociological and cultural-studies literature on raves, dance parties, clubs and youth.

Few qualitative Australian studies examine the commercialisation of the rave/dance party scene in relation to party drug use. If the Australian drug field has been comparatively neglectful of raves/dance parties, the same could not be said of cultural studies of youth, which have become increasingly interested in this social phenomenon. An extensive literature on raves/dance parties and clubs has emerged in sociology and cultural studies during the past two decades with the increasing commercialisation of raves/dance parties being a key topic of interest: however, how this commercialisation is experienced by those attending such events has received relatively little attention. This thesis explores some of the changes associated with the commercialisation of the Melbourne rave/dance party scene before examining the representations of past and present raves/dance parties articulated by a group of long-term rave/dance party attendees.

The analysis I present draws on ethnographic research within social networks of young people who use 'party drugs' at raves/dance parties and clubs in Melbourne. Many of these people had been attending raves and other dance events since the mid-1990s and self identified as 'old skool ravers'. The most common party drugs used were ecstasy and speed with some ice use. Most were in their twenties, had completed secondary school, worked full-time and lived in Melbourne's outer northern and western suburbs. While almost all members of the sample were born in Australia, they were ethnically mixed, with European, Anglo-Celtic or Middle Eastern family backgrounds. This last feature sets them apart from the participants described in most previous studies of party drug use.

My ethnography reveals that raves/dance parties and clubs are constituted by complex and changing forms of party drug use, social relationships and cultural practices. My analysis shows the significance of commercial changes, in relation to party drug use at rave/dance parties and clubs. By exploring the changes that the scene has undergone in the last 10 years, it provides some insight into the subjectivities of old skool ravers and their changing patterns of party drug use and identity formation. In this thesis, I explore some of the changes associated with the commercialisation of the Melbourne rave/dance party scene focusing on four changes: the location, marketing and size of rave/dance party events; the composition of attendees; drug-related practices; and the 'vibe' or atmosphere. I argue that these changes have produced a set of nostalgic representations about past rave forms but that they can also be read as claims to "subcultural capital" – that is, to the possession of an 'authentic' rave identity.

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Glossary of Terms

Bass: Underlying beat of music

Blue Tuesday: Low mood often experienced a few days after consuming party drugs

Bong: Device used to inhale cannabis smoke

Beefcakes: Men who are heavily built, often wear tight singlets and considered unintelligent, a non-ethnic version of muzzas.

Bush doof: Outdoor rave held in the bush

Come down: When the effects of drugs start wearing off

Caned or caning it: Taking a considerable amount of drugs over extended period of time

Choof: Marijuana

Coke: Cocaine

Commercial: Popular in mainstream not considered underground

Club: Nightclub

Dealer: Somebody who sells drugs

DJ: Disk jockey

Dirty clubbers: Undesired club attendees such as muzzas and beefcakes

Docks: Abandoned warehouses around the Dockland area in Melbourne that raves were held in during the 1990s

Door bitch: Term for women operating the cash register at the entry to clubs

Drug fucked: Somebody on a considerable amount of drugs who appears they cannot handle it

Ecstasy: MDMA also referred to as pills, e, flippers and bikkies

Electro: Relatively new form of house music

Freaked out: Upset, confused, not having a good time

Getting high: Taking drugs

Good shit: High quality drugs

Gram: Measurement for powdered drugs including amphetamines and cocaine

Guest list: Names on club list usually offering cheaper or free entry

Gutter drug: Refers to 'hard' drug use including ice, GHB, heroin

Hoddies: Jumpers with hoods, popular at raves

House: Musical style, minimal lyrics, repetitive beats

In: Generally refers to something viewed as cool, for example 'the in crowd'

Ice: Meth-amphetamine

Joint: Rolling tobacco with marijuana to make a large cigarette which can be smoked

Jungle: Music style pre-cursor to drum and base

Junkie: Generally a negative term used to describe a person who is viewed as using excessive amounts of party drugs. Can also used in humorous context regarding oneself when using a large amount of drugs

K: Ketamine

Lines: Often cocaine or speed which is in powered form and made into a line on a smooth surface such as a mirror so it is easier to inhale (often using a rolled up bank note)

Lost it: Feeling disorientated and confused

Muzzas: Also see 'beef cakes' guys who are heavily built, often wear tight tops and not considered intelligent. Muzza also has ethnic overtones

Old skool: Rave music, event or person from the rave past (generally early to mid 90's)

On tick:	Drugs that are obtained on credit
Passout:	Either a stamp or wrist band issued at raves/dance parties or clubs to let one in and out of the venue
Peaking:	Somebody at the height of the ecstasy experience
Pills:	MDMA
Pippy:	Small glass pipe used to smoke ice also referred to as 'cracky' and 'crack pipe'
Point:	Powdered drug measurement one tenth of 'gram'
Pissed:	Drunk
Phat pants/phatties:	Rave pants which are often oversized and very colorful
PLUR:	Rave saying meaning **P**eace **L**ove **U**nity **R**espect
Punters:	People who make up a crowd at a rave or club
Racking up:	Making lines of powdered drugs mainly speed and cocaine
Recovery:	Usually refers to after party held at a club the following day
Rocking:	Having a great time usually dancing
Scattered:	Feeling disorientated and confused usually happens when coming down of drugs
Scene:	Refers to either raves and clubs or both
Score:	Buy drugs or have sex
Scum/my:	Negative term for someone who appears unclean or feeling dirty
Shout:	Offer drugs to somebody for free
Shuffle:	Melbourne rave dance style
Sickies:	A day of sick leave from work whether genuine or not
Snorting:	Inhaling drugs
Speed:	Amphetamines, also referred to as louie, whiz, charlie
Techno:	Electronic music dominated by fast repetitive beats

Teeny-boppers: Young ravers/clubbers

Tracks: Songs

Trance: Music with psychedelic influences, repetitive beats

Track: Song

Underground: Events that are not considered commercial or mainstream

Vibe: Whether rave or club has a good atmosphere

Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis provides an ethnographic analysis of the complex, changing forms of party drug use at Melbourne raves/dance parties and clubs. The terms 'rave'[1] and 'dance party' refer to all-night parties, open to the general public, where loud 'electronic' dance music is played and drug use is common.[2] Contemporary 'raving' and clubbing are popular activities among young people in Australia and around the world: the category 'party drugs'[3] includes the amphetamines, ecstasy, cocaine, LSD, GHB and ketamine. This thesis assesses the significance of the commercialisation and popularisation of the rave/dance party scene, and how it has affected some of the participants within this scene. More specifically, the following question is addressed: *how has commercialisation and popularisation of the Melbourne rave/dance party scene affected the identities and party drug use of participants?* In focusing on changes in identity and party drug use, I give voice to the young people who participated in the study, many of whom come from culturally diverse backgrounds.

The analysis offered in this thesis builds on Thornton's (1995) notion of "subcultural capital", which she derived from Bourdieu's definition of "cultural capital" (Bourdieu, 1984). Subcultural capital refers to knowledge of crucial cultural distinctions within a specific "social field" such as the rave/dance party scene − in other words, knowledge of what is 'hip' or 'cool'. Thornton argued that club cultures are "taste cultures", which operate along the same hierarchical lines as "high cultures". Subcultural capital bestows status on its owner and can be 'objectified' in the form of fashionable haircuts or 'embodied' in the form of being 'in the know' −

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[1] I use single quotation marks for general terms used in everyday language and double quotation marks for concepts, direct quotes from other sources and fieldnote and interview extracts.

[2] I use the term 'raves/dance parties' throughout the thesis because 'rave' and 'dance party' were often used interchangeably by the participants in the research. 'Raves' generally referred to parties held in the mid-1990s and 'dance parties' to events held from the late 1990s onwards, although there was some overlap, particularly in the late 1990s when many of the changes I describe began to occur.

[3] I have elected to use the term 'party drugs' in preference to 'amphetamine-type stimulants', 'ecstasy and related drugs' or 'psychostimulants', because the research participants understood and related to this term. Moreover, 'psychostimulants' does not include 'club drugs' such as ketamine and GHB.

such as using "current slang and looking as if you were born to perform the latest dance styles" (Thornton, 1995: 11-12). It puts a premium on the 'second nature' of knowledge: "Nothing depletes [subcultural] capital more than the sight of someone trying too hard" (Thornton, 1995: 12). Thornton used "subcultural capital" to analyse the distinctions made by 'cool' youth, noting, in particular, their criticism of the 'mainstream' against which they measure their alternative cultural worth. However, Thornton's analysis does not consider ethnicity, which I show in this thesis to be a crucial element of subcultural capital.

I also examine the thesis put forward by Howard Parker, Judith Aldridge and Fiona Measham (1998), which identifies a process of "normalisation" or "cultural accommodation" of recreational drug use. The five characteristics of "normalisation" that they discuss are: 1) high drug availability and accessibility, 2) increased drug 'trying' rates, 3) high frequency of use, 4) social acceptability amongst young people, including non-users, and 5) supportive cultural references in local and wider contexts. Parker *et al* claimed that such drug use was no longer seen as a form of rebellion or resistance by young people, but had been subsumed into a wider, acceptable range of leisure activities. This view of a new generation of drug users – as ordinary and everywhere – poses potential challenges, empirically and conceptually, for drug policies based on pathology or deviance. More recently, Sharon Rødner Sznitman (2008) identified a need for qualitative accounts of the contested social processes constituting normalisation in different youth contexts, and this thesis provides an example of such contested processes. This thesis also draws on Fiona Measham and Kevin Brain's (2005) research, which explored the relationships between the night-time economy, the commercialisation of rave culture, youthful drinking and drug taking and "the extent to which consumption remains bounded depends on the context in which drinking occurs and is mediated by socio-demographic characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity and socio-economic class" (Measham and Brain, 2005: 274). Furthermore, (Brain and Parker, 1997; Brain, 2000; Measham, 2002) have also drawn attention to the various ways in which gender, socio-economic class and exclusion may lead to more unbounded forms of consumption.

By exploring the changes that rave/dance parties have undergone in the last 10 years, this thesis provides insights into the subjectivities of old skool ravers and their changing patterns of party drug use and identity formation. This thesis argues that the four changes brought about by commercialisation – in the location, marketing and size of rave/dance party events; the composition of attendees; drug-related practices; and the 'vibe' or atmosphere – created a sense of nostalgia and even of mourning for past rave forms among old skool ravers. These interpretations can also be read as claims to subcultural capital and to the possession of an authentic rave identity.

Epidemiology of party drug use in Australia and Victoria

After cannabis, party drugs are Australia's most used illicit drugs, particularly amongst young people (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007). In 2007, the National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS), which is Australia's largest national survey of drug use and related issues, surveyed more than 23,000 people aged 12 years or older via home telephone interviews. Table 1 shows that higher proportions of the 20-29 year old age group had used meth/amphetamines, ecstasy or cocaine in the last 12 months ('recent use') when compared to other population subgroups.

Table 1: Recent use of party drugs, 2007 National Drug Strategy Household Survey

	14-19yo	**20-29 yo**	**30-39 yo**
% recent use meth/amphet	1.6	7.3	3.9
% recent use ecstasy	5.0	11.2	4.7
% recent use cocaine	1.1	5.1	2.9

(Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2008: 31, 33, 36)

Table 2 compares the 2007, 2004 and 1995 NDSHS results for recent use of party drugs. The comparison shows a steady increase in recent use of ecstasy from 1995-2004 and a slight increase in recent use of meth/amphetamine, with a levelling out in the recent use of these drugs between 2004-2007. Cocaine use appears to have

decreased from 1995 to 2004 and then increased, particularly for males, from 2004-2007.

Table 2: Recent use of party drugs in the 1995, 2004 and 2007 National Drug Strategy Household Surveys

20-29 year olds	1995		2004		2007	
% recent use meth/ amphet	M*10.5%	F**6.3%	M12.4%	F 9.0%	M 9.8%	F4.8%
% recent use ecstasy	M 5.1%	F 2.9%	M 15.1	F 8.8%	M13.8%	F8.7%
% recent use cocaine	M 5.6%	F2.4%	M3.7%	F 2.3%	M 7%	F3.1%

*M = Males   ** F = Females   (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2008: 32, 34, 37).

Evidence of increased party drug use was provided by the final report of a Victorian parliamentary inquiry, which stated that "the research and anecdotal evidence available does point to a trend towards increased use of amphetamines and ecstasy internationally, nationally and in Victoria" (Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee (DCPC), 2004: 96). The use of multiple party drugs is also common (Breen, Degenhardt and White, 2003; Stafford *et al*, 2004).

Victorian data are consistent with national data and show that young Victorians use party drugs more than other Victorian population groups. Data from the Victorian Youth Alcohol and Drug Survey (Premier's Drug Prevention Council, 2003) show that of the 16-24 year olds surveyed (n=3032), 21% of males and 18% of females reported using ecstasy in their lifetime, and 15% of males and 12% of females reported use in the 12 months prior to the survey. With regard to amphetamines, 17% of males and 14% of females reported using amphetamines in their lifetime, and 11% of males and 9% of females reported use in the 12 months prior to the survey. According to the Victoria Department of Human Services, "there has been a recent escalation in Victoria of the misuse of amphetamines and methamphetamines" (DCPC 2004: 93).

It is also important to acknowledge, in an Australian context, that the epidemiological data on party drug use is limited. For example, the surveys mentioned on the previous page do not collect epidemiological data on ethnicity. And in cases where such data are collected they can be problematic. For example, in the epidemiological component of the NHMRC study of which this ethnography was a part, the survey instrument only enquired about the main language spoken at home, thus often excluding second- and third-generation migrants who were bi-lingual. Moreover the Public Health Division of the Victorian Government Department of Human Services (2000: 2) has found that:

> Research on illicit drug use among those of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CLDBs) had methodological problems including inadequate conceptualisation, inaccuracy of definitions and inappropriate research designs. Socioeconomic status, rather than ethnicity *per se*, was considered to be the major contributor to high risk behaviour and drug use. Research on simplistic ethnic categories without regard to factors of sociocultural variables is not only scientifically meaningless, but is a great disservice to the people from CLDBs.

Epidemiological data on ethnicity and class are important information sources for quantitative examination of differences in party drug use. They can provide important insights into party drug trends, and differential usage rates, as well as the relationships between ethnicity, class and drug use. Recent Canadian research (Duff, *et al*, 2011) further supports these insights pointing in particular to the ways class and material advantage mediate the incidence and prevalence of substance use in various ethnic communities. However, the findings in these studies – such as differential usage rates – need to be followed up with qualitative studies which examine the context and purpose of party drug use and what actions could be expected to flow from it (see Morrissey, 2005 for a discussion on the problems of American epidemiological data collected on both drug use and race and ethnicity).

Evidence of high levels of party drug use at clubs, raves and dance parties is provided by the Party Drug Initiative (PDI) survey, which has monitored national

trends in party drug use since 2003. In the Victorian arm of the 2007 PDI, survey participants reported a range of places where they usually used ecstasy over the past six months, most commonly at nightclubs (78%) and raves/doofs[4]/dance parties (34%) (Quinn, 2007: 33). In addition, these figures suggest that polydrug use and 'bingeing' on party drugs (i.e., using them continuously for more than 48 hours without sleep), which is widely accepted as a more harmful pattern of use, is common. "Forty-six percent of the sample had binged on one or more ecstasy and related drugs in the preceding six months. The median length of the longest binge was 72 hours (range 49-120 hours)" (Quinn, 2008: 29).

Problems associated with the use of party drugs

Side effects of psychostimulant party drug use (i.e., ecstasy, amphetamines and cocaine) may include jaw clenching, teeth grinding, tachycardia, vasoconstriction, arrhythmias, hypertension, malignant hypothermia, blurred vision, chills, sweating, dehydration and poor concentration. They are also associated with a range of potential harms including renal problems, nerve toxicity, strokes and seizures. Other potential party drug harms include dependence, anxiety, depression, paranoia, psychosis, aggression and violence. Acute reactions include death from cerebral haemorrhage and cardiac failure (Chesher, 1993; Darke *et al*, 2000).

Side effects of GHB and ketamine can include impairment of movement and speech, dizziness, complete dissociation, nausea, blurred vision, hot/cold flushes, vomiting, headaches and profuse sweating. They are also associated with a range of potential harms including overdose, coma, blackouts or memory lapses, serious respiratory problems, tremors, heart palpitations and seizures. Side effects of LSD include mood changes and muscle twitches, with potential harms including paranoid delusions, depression, anxiety and panic attacks (Drug Info Clearinghouse, 2005; NDARC, 2005).

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[4] A 'doof' or 'bush doof' refers to an outdoor rave/dance party held in a rural location. Doofs generally have DJs and other live electronic artists that usually play psychedelic trance and Goa electronic music.

The risks associated with party drug use have been documented by the Victorian arm of the Party Drug Initiative (PDI). For example, with respect to ecstasy, "The majority (90%) of the REU [regular ecstasy users] sample … perceive there to be risks associated with their own use of ecstasy. Cognitive damage such as memory impairment (21%) and impaired decision making/risk taking (10%) and emotional problems such as depression (17%) figured relatively prominently in the risks identified by ecstasy users" (Stoovè, Laslett and Barratt, 2004: 24). The 2007 PDI (referred to as the Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS) which is funded by Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing) does not ask the same question but it does claim that 56% of REU report that their drug use has caused some sort of problem (Quinn, 2008). Although the prevalence of serious harms from party drug use appears to be relatively low (DCPC, 2004: 95; Stafford *et al*, 2004), further research is required to investigate party drugs harms in a range of social settings and range of groups.

The studies mentioned above suggest that the use of party drugs amongst young people is more prevalent now than it was in the early 1990s and that their use is associated with a range of potential risks and harms. What is less clear is the relationship between types and extent of harms and the social contexts in which they develop. In order to address this situation, the Victorian parliamentary inquiry cited above, the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee (DCPC – A Victorian parliamentary inquiry), recommended "that more in-depth social research be undertaken into specific populations of users that have been identified as high risk", including 'party/club drug users' (DCPC, 2004: 630). Further it suggested that "qualitative research studies, particularly longitudinal ones, are a very valuable addition to knowledge building in the area of drug policy" (2004: 626). International researchers including Anderson and Kavanaugh (2007) and Sanders (2006) have also called for academic investigations that contextualise club and dance party drug use and the lives of these young people.

Significance

Despite the widespread use of party drugs by young Australians, there has been little ethnographic research on the social contexts and cultural meanings of their use. This

project is significant in that, by exploring individual, social and cultural aspects of party drug use within the Melbourne rave/dance party scene, a better understanding of such use and related problems may be developed. In turn, these findings may inform interventions aimed at reducing harm amongst rave/dance party and club attendees. International researchers in the field have recognised that "research that delves beyond statistical presentations of club drug users is much needed in order to demystify stereotypes and correctly gauge the accuracy of perspectives on youthful drug use and the policies that such perspectives generate" (Sanders, 2006: 11, see also Anderson and Kavanaugh, 2007). Following international trends, much Australian research has been medical and epidemiological in approach. These approaches ignore the cultural and social contexts of party drug use, and as a consequence, they tend to represent 'party drug users' as an essentialised category. This thesis challenges such representations by showing the individual differences within a group of long-term party drug users who attend raves/dance parties in Melbourne, Australia.

The research reported in this thesis is also significant because it builds conceptual and empirical links between two previously distinct literatures – the drug-specific literature on party drug use, and the sociological and cultural-studies literature on raves, dance parties, clubs and youth. Anderson and Kavanaugh (2007: 499) rightly pointed out that the "many cultural traits and behaviors [of raves] have garnered much sociological interest, which mostly falls into two competing perspectives: cultural studies and public health". More specifically, this thesis will build on the existing work on subcultural capital and the normalisation of drug use. Finally, the relationship between ethnicity and the use of party drugs, which has received little attention in Australia and internationally, will be explored.

The commercial transformation of Melbourne raves into dance parties

Given the common use of party drugs at raves, dance parties and clubs, Melbourne is an apt place to undertake this project. It has a well-developed rave and dance party scene – vibrant and ever-changing, attracting thousands of people to events, well organised, with frequent events and featuring international musical artists. In

addition, Melbourne has a lively and varied nightclub culture ranging from dance to goth, RnB and salsa. The focus of this thesis is dance clubs.[5] At the time of my research, there were approximately 70 dance clubs listed in the dance music section titled *100%* of the popular street newspaper *Beat*.

Melbourne is also an apt research location because of my personal history (see Chapter 3 for further discussion of my personal relationship to the field of study). My interest in raves began 14 years ago when I began regularly attending them in the summer of 1996-97, which coincided with my undergraduate studies in sociology at the University of Melbourne. During these studies, I completed a Research Internship (1998) with Hardware Records, a Melbourne rave company, which allowed me to observe the commercial production of raves. My honours thesis on cultural representations of the rave 'vibe' and identity construction, particularly the notions of collective and multiple identities, was completed at La Trobe University (later published as Siokou, 2002). I then commenced a Masters thesis[6] on cultural identity in the Melbourne rave scene (late 2002 – early 2005) before accepting the offer of a PhD scholarship to work on this thesis. Where relevant, I draw on my previous undergraduate research (Siokou, 2002) and unpublished Masters research.

In Melbourne, raves date back to 1988 (St John, 2001: 11) and their primary music and fashion influences included the Manchester warehouse scene, the Detroit techno warehouse parties, the Chicago house black/gay scene and the trance beach parties of Goa (see Collin and Godfrey, 1997; Reynolds, 1998). In the early years (1988–92), raves were part of an 'underground' niche scene whose members expressed an ideology of peace, love, unity and respect (or 'PLUR'). Common venues included abandoned warehouses and sheds. Over the next few years, raves evolved into a semi-commercial alternative music scene and were held in warehouses and sheds in the Melbourne's inner-city industrial and port areas. Flyers promoting events could be found in specialty music and clothing stores, and "party locations were advertised

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[5] By 'dance club', I am referring to clubs that play electronic dance music, predominantly house, techno and trance.

[6] My MA research primarily involved conducting 284 participant surveys at five different rave/dance parties held in Victoria in late 2002 and early 2003. The rave/dance parties chosen were the larger events in Melbourne (2000-5000 patrons) and were organised by different companies. The survey was followed by 35 in-depth interviews with rave participants, organisers and DJs undertaken via email interview or face-to-face.

using the Telecom 0055 recorded message service, enabling the party to remain aloof from media, the police and rival promoters (until the last minute)" (St John, 2001: 11). Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, mirroring international trends, raves became increasingly commercialised and commodified. Dance parties were held in large licensed nightclubs and sporting complexes. Ticket prices for larger events ranged up to $135, with events attended by several thousand people. For example, a 1997 New Year's Eve event at Victoria Dock's Shed 14 hosted an estimated 10,000 people. Such events were sponsored by large companies such as Motorola, Smirnoff, Vodafone, and Ticketek and widely advertised through mainstream print and electronic media.

This thesis is primarily concerned with the commercial rave/dance party and dance club scene in 2006-07. I compare this with the semi-commercial warehouse raves, based in the industrial areas of Melbourne in the mid-1990s. Nevertheless, it is important to note that both the Melbourne and Australian rave/dance party scenes are diverse, with many subdivisions. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to investigate the various subdivisions, such as the gay dance scene, (see Slavin, 2004a; 2004b); the 'doof' or DiY scene (see St John, 2001) or the drum and base (D'n'B) scene (see Cull, 2005).

My research method is ethnographic, a investigative style that produces richly contextualised accounts of human behaviour via participant observation. With its emphasis on social relationships and contexts, it is an apt methodology for understanding party drug use within the Melbourne rave/dance party and club scene.

My choice of research participants was shaped by several considerations. I utilised pre-existing contacts from previous research on Melbourne's rave/dance party and club scene. Conducting research among this group allowed for a unique longitudinal perspective on party drug use within this scene, because many of my 'research friends' had been recreational users of party drugs for approximately 10 years. I use the term 'research friends' (see Dwyer, 2009; Siokou and Moore, 2008) rather than 'informants', 'participants', 'contacts' 'subjects' or 'respondents', because most of the people involved were known to me prior to the research, in some cases for many years. Focusing on the perspectives of old skool ravers also offers an alternative

perspective rarely examined in the Australian drugs literature. In addition, I have several contacts within the broader dance party community, including rave and dance party organisers, DJs and peer harm minimisation groups such as DanceWize (formerly RaveSafe).

During the fieldwork period, I came into contact with hundreds of young party drug users, had regular contact with a subset of 60 and spent the majority of my time with a core group of 12 research friends (the composition of which changed during the course of my fieldwork). Many of these people had been attending raves and other dance events since the mid-1990s and refer to themselves as 'old skool ravers'; most were aged in their mid-twenties, had completed secondary school, worked full-time and lived in Melbourne's outer northern and western suburbs. The majority had been using party drugs such as ecstasy and speed recreationally for over 10 years (see Chapter 4 for an in-depth description). While almost all members of the sample were born in Australia, they were ethnically mixed, with the majority from Southern European family backgrounds. This last feature sets them apart from the overwhelmingly Anglo-Celtic samples reported in previous studies of party drug use.

Case studies of the Melbourne rave/dance party scene

To begin my examination of how the commercial changes in Melbourne's rave/dance party scene might be interpreted by rave attendees, I present two case studies. The first account is set in 1996 at a warehouse rave in the inner-western, industrial suburb of Footscray and is drawn from my honours thesis. The second is an extract from a fieldnote from this ethnographic study conducted for this thesis, was written about a rave/dance party held in an inner-city Melbourne nightclub in 2006. I am fortunate to have remained in contact with some members of the 'rave crew' with whom I attended raves in the mid-1990s. Through our ongoing friendship and their subsequent participation in this research, I was able to explore how they experience raves/dance parties 10 years later. Further, during the course of this research, I came into contact with newcomers to the scene and recorded their perceptions and experiences. These case studies (Burawoy, 1991; 1998) provide examples of key, recurring themes in the scene and describe many of its central features. As Burawoy writes:

> The *extended case method* applies reflexive science to
> ethnography in order to extract the general from the unique, to
> move from the "micro" to the "macro," and to connect the
> present to the past in anticipation of the future, all by building
> on pre-existing theory (Burawoy, 1998: 5).

The sentiments articulated by my research friends during the second evening were echoed on many occasions during my ethnographic fieldwork by them and other people I met during my doctoral research.

Case study 1: Jade Jungle

Picture this: It is 11pm on a Saturday night in 1996, and we are standing outside a huge abandoned warehouse located in the back streets of Footscray known as 'Tribal Community'. My friends are dressed up; Jade[7] is wearing a silver suit like a spaceman. The queue is about 50 people long and we are all eagerly awaiting the doors to open. It is chilly outside but my bright red bubble jacket and my friends block out some of the cold wind. The spectacle of people with colourful clothing around me keeps me amused. At last, the line starts moving and we get our tickets while trying to calm the butterflies in our stomachs. Not knowing what to expect, we hand our tickets to the girl dressed as a fairy at the entrance, and then make our way inside. My friends and I are stunned as we find ourselves at the bottom of a spiral staircase with real gum leaves scattered on the floor and tree branches attached to the staircase. We are up to our knees in leaves, thousands of leaves; it almost feels like we are in a forest. As we climb the steps, an array of colourful lights making holographic pictures on the wall capture our imaginations. We follow white arrows along the floor and finally arrive at a wall which seems to be made out of thick black plastic. I look at my friends, confused. We can hear the music and I wonder, what we are going to do; there is just a massive black plastic wall! Luckily, regular ravers arrive and find the opening, just a tear in the plastic. Bright green and pink lasers blind us as we enter the main dance floor. The music is deafening and hundreds of people are frantically dancing, facing the disc jockey (DJ) who is playing in what

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[7] Identifying details, such as the names of people, places and venues, have been altered to preserve anonymity.

appears to be a tree house. Behind the DJ are two huge overhead projectors showing colourful cartoon characters and other graphics separating and merging into each other. Huge glow-in-the dark jungle animals are suspended from the roof and arranged on the floor and give the warehouse an other-worldly party atmosphere. Holographic butterflies fly around me. In the centre of the dance floor there is a huge glow-in-the-dark sign, which reads 'Jade Jungle'. My friend Jade then pulls my arm and snaps me out of my reverie. I am still in awe at the sight of the funky people in bright tops, tracksuit pants and outrageous hair who are everywhere, with neon lights partly lighting up their faces. I then see young people blowing bubbles at each other and soaking each other with water pistols in fits of laughter. The atmosphere is fun loving and carefree; I am in my kiddie wonderland!!

As I have noted elsewhere (Siokou, 2002), raves at this time were characterised by loud electronic music, dancing, drug-taking, colourful lighting and décor and a feeling of safety which assisted in the creation of a collective identity at rave parties; 'the vibe'. At this time, when asked to distinguish raves from other forms of night-time entertainment, many ravers believed there was a unity or collective emotion that arose between participants. As researchers such as Hopkins (1996) have claimed, this sense of unity could not be found in other forms of night-time entertainment. One of Hopkins' interviewees aptly sums this up: "The aim (of a rave) is not to pick up, or to have a fight, or to get drunk ... the number one thing is the feeling, the GROUP" (1996: 15).

In relation to party drug use, the surveys I undertook in 1998 indicated that approximately 75% of respondents had ever used ecstasy, and 60% had used amphetamines and marijuana. Alcohol use was rare, with less than 20% of ravers drinking alcohol, and there was little or no heroin or cocaine use. Many ravers described drugs such as ecstasy and amphetamines as enhancing their appreciation of the music and their ability to dance, so that they literally 'felt' the music through their bodies. The majority were under the age of 25, and my survey results indicated that over 30% of people who attended raves were under 19 years old, while 23% were 20-21 years old and 20% were 22-23 years old. Only 21% were over 24 years of age. There was a slightly higher attendance by males, my survey results showed just under 60% of participants were male.

Common rave venues in Melbourne in the 1990s included warehouses and sheds in the industrial inner-city and western suburbs, such as the Victoria Docklands – known as 'the docks' – and various warehouses including those hosting the 'Global Village' and 'Lesley Street' raves. The warehouses were colourfully decorated, with a DJ playing extremely loud music through the speaker systems. In these large venues, decorations were used to add to a rave's atmosphere. Popular decorations included multi-coloured lasers, huge wired glow-in-the-dark animals, the smiley-face motif[8] and rave art painted in psychedelic colours. There were often several stalls selling clothing, accessories, fruit and hotdogs, as well as skating ramps and 'fairies' offering massages to ravers. There were also rave parties held in locations outside the Melbourne metropolitan area, such as Kryal Castle in Ballarat (see Chapter 5 for further detail on venues).

At this time, the majority of ravers expressed the view that raves provided them with a friendly, easygoing and welcoming atmosphere, where they could be themselves. A sense of feeling free and safe contributed to the collective consciousness experienced at raves. Raving assisted many in 'getting out of themselves' by experiencing a momentary loss of self through musically- and often drug-supported social interaction. Over 90% of survey respondents stated that they felt safe at raves and had never been harassed by anyone. One female interviewee, Anna (aged 26), stated that "I feel safe at raves even if I come alone and I have never been hassled by anyone. I would be too scared to go to a nightclub alone". She added: "a club to me is like a room full of people trying to pick each other up and the males are arrogant and aggressive". Anna argued that alcohol consumption could be blamed for this behaviour. The low level of consumption of alcohol at 1990s raves, combined with a focus on music and dancing rather than 'picking up', created a greater feeling of safety for participants that they did not experience in other forms of night-time entertainment.

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[8] The 'smiley face' logo, an iconic image, has a long history in Acid House and rave culture (Widdicombe and Woodfitt, 1995).

Case study 2: A night of 'old skool flava'

In 2006 I began ethnographic research for this project; the accompanying fieldnotes reveal some of the vast changes that had taken place in the decade since 'Jade Jungle' and the ways in which these changes were understood by my research friends, the old skool ravers. The following extract is taken from my fieldnotes describing the Retro 14 rave/dance party. 'Retro parties' began in Melbourne in 1995, the organiser naming the parties after the techno track bearing the same name. They have been held annually or bi-annually since 1995 in various locations around Melbourne. At the time of the research, Retro parties were considered 'old skool' by many of my research friends and much of the electronic music played dated from the late 1980s through to the 1990s. The 2006 Retro flyer reads:

> Roll up, roll up, roll up! On the eve of Spring, the Retro Carnivale hits Melbourne for another night of old skool flava. The original retro rave-up, Retro transforms the Metro into a ravers [sic] paradise! Whether old or new to the scene, nows [sic] the chance to hear and see what the fuss is all about! From 88 to 98, 10 years of how we got to where we are today. From Acid House to ghetto funk, German trance to Belgium rave, Chicago house to Miami Electro, Retro will have it all over 4 areas featuring some stellar performances from Melbourne's finest. Roll up, rock out and let us take you higher ...

About 11pm on a wintry Friday night in 2006, Vivienne, Michael, Simon, Isabel and I arrive at an 'old skool' rave/dance party, being held in one of the larger clubs in central Melbourne. As we walk through the entry foyer and into the club's main area, loud electronic music can be heard. An oversized plastic 'smiley face' is mounted on the wall behind the DJ and the smiley-face motifs hanging from the roof are partially illuminated by laser beams. The people who make up the small crowd of about 100-150 are aged in their twenties and appear to be mainly of Anglo or European background. Most of the men are wearing t-shirts or 'hoodies' (hooded jumpers or jackets) and jeans or 'phat pants' (brightly-coloured pants with wide legs). The women's attire is more diverse with some wearing singlets and jeans, some in

dresses and others wearing phat pants and hoodies. Whether male or female, most are wearing runners although some women are in high-heeled shoes.

Vivienne and I walk to the bar to purchase drinks. Vivienne surveys the room and laments that "Raves are dead, there's no vibe in here […]. This is not a rave". We rejoin our friends and the conversation turns to drugs. Isabel has one 'pill' (ecstasy tablet) to consume later. Vivienne and Michael plan to drink alcohol, whilst Isabel and Simon are hoping to obtain more pills or 'speed' (powder methamphetamine) later in the night, preferably from a friend rather than an unknown dealer.

Later, when the club is more crowded, the 1990s track 'Only Way is Up', by Yazz, is playing. Vivienne takes my arm and raises it in the air, shouting, "I love this song" and leads me to the dance floor. We are joined by others streaming on to the dance floor, shrieking with joy. There are several hundred people dancing, all facing the DJ, and Vivienne is still waving my hand in the air and shouting.

On the dance floor, they see Robbie: tall, blond, Anglo-Saxon and overweight, wearing a red hoodie and aged in his early thirties. Vivienne, Isabel and I hug and kiss him in greeting. We have not seen Robbie for 7 or 8 years. He was a regular raver in the 1990s and we saw him at most of the raves we attended. 'Back in the day', Robbie was considered to be the 'coolest' raver by my research friends. They would comment favourably on his dress sense and style, dancing ability, desirable physical appearance and ability to consume large amounts of drugs. At the time, it was said that Robbie had once taken 14 LSD 'trips' at a music festival in 1998. In these earlier times, many of my female research friends had found Robbie very attractive.

Vivienne, Isabel and I begin talking with Robbie on the dance floor, although it is difficult to hear over the loud music. We talk about how many years have elapsed since we have seen each other and which clubs we now frequent, all admitting that we do not go out as often as we used to 'back in the day' when raves were 'good'. Shortly afterwards, Robbie leaves and the following conversation takes place on the dance floor:

Vivienne:	I can't believe that's Robbie, he used to be so hot!
Isabel:	Thank God you were here to see it Vivienne, otherwise you wouldn't have believed me.
CS:	He's almost unrecognisable.
Vivienne:	I remember at Bliss [a rave held in 1998] and he'd dyed his hair red and was dancing with no top on and had abs [abdominal muscles].
Isabel:	Didn't you [Vivienne], Amanda and Danni all like him?
Vivienne:	I used to stalk him.
Isabel:	It's not that he's just fat; what's happened to his face? He looks retarded, the poor thing. Do you think it's because of the drugs?
Vivienne:	I don't know, but that was a shock.

Simon then joins the group and asks, "Who's that guy?" Isabel begins to explain Robbie's apparent physical decline and how, 'back in the day', all the girls had been attracted to him. Simon, in total disbelief, says, "Yeah right, as if Vivienne would like him". Isabel retorts, "It's true, if you saw him back in the day, he was cool and the best dancer!"

The group of friends continue dancing and waving their hands in the air, enjoying the 'old skool' tracks. Shortly afterwards, Michael rejoins them, claiming he has found a guy selling speed. Isabel is excited at the prospect of using speed and Michael introduces her to the dealer. She decides to buy two 'points' (2 x 0.1 grams) and gives the dealer $40 on the dance floor. He then heads off into the crowd. Approximately five minutes later, he returns and hands Isabel two 'g' [gram] bags containing white powder. Isabel appears excited, saying: "It's rare to get speed at a rave, it's usually easier to get pills. Thanks for finding him Michael!" Vivienne and Isabel then take one g bag and go to the women's toilets. Michael and Simon take the other bag and go to the men's toilets to snort a line or two of speed each.

Shortly afterwards, the entire group walks upstairs to the first level of the club. The music playing in this area is 'NRG' or 'hard' (i.e., fast) techno music. Isabel notices

a petite girl wearing 'phat pants' and dancing 'the shuffle', a dance style that originated in Melbourne. The following exchange takes place:

Isabel: Look at that girl, that brings back memories! I can't
             dance like that anymore; remember [rave club] and when
             DJ Tom and Wind used to DJ?
CS: Yeah.
Vivienne: You went through a phase of dancing, Isabel?
Isabel: I remember you at Fantasy, Vivienne, you would dance
             for hours.

They decide to go to another room, which overlooks the main dance floor. As we enter, I notice staff from RaveSafe (a harm reduction program run by VIVAIDS, the Victorian drug user advocacy group) set up at a table in one corner. We walk past to the main area overlooking the dance floor. People are scattered around dancing, but it is not as 'high energy' as downstairs. They all dance but their energy is waning. Isabel and Vivienne lean on the glass wall that overlooks the main room and the following conversation takes place:

Isabel: I'm getting tired and it's not even 3am. Let's see if we
             can get a pill off somebody … Who can we ask?
Simon: I'll ask that Asian guy over there. He might be able to
             help us.
Isabel: Really?

Simon walks over to the 'Asian guy' and starts a conversation. He returns a few minutes later, saying, "He said to ask his mate over there [indicating another man] but he seems a bit paranoid. Maybe one of you girls should ask him?" Isabel begins dancing next to the identified guy and offers him a sip from her water bottle, which he accepts and they dance next to each other for a while. Shortly afterwards, Isabel hurriedly returns to the group with her pills having negotiated the drug purchase.

Isabel gives Simon and Vivienne a pill each and they swallow it with a sip of water. Later, Isabel tells me that the guy from whom she 'scored' had originally told her

that he did not have any pills. However, she said that she did not believe him and tried to reassure him by saying, "I'm coming down from my first pill … I'm not an undercover cop or anything; you can have a look at my [driver's] licence". He replied that, "you can't be too careful these days" before admitting to having pills for sale.

All the group then return to the main room downstairs. There are now hundreds of people dancing, all facing the DJ's platform. I dance next to Michael, who has consumed alcohol and several lines of speed but has refused the free pill Isabel offers him, because he doesn't want to risk getting 'messy'. About 30 minutes later, I notice that Vivienne and Simon are sitting down while Isabel continues dancing. Robbie rejoins them, enquiring as to whether they are 'on anything' tonight (have taken drugs). Isabel replies that she has consumed a pill and some speed. Robbie says he has had one pill and half-a-trip, and invites them to an after-party at his house, where DJ Vice will be "spinning a few tracks".

At about 5am, the group of friends decide to leave. Everyone is tired except for Isabel who is happily talking in the taxi on the way home:

Isabel: I can't believe what's happened to Robbie.
Simon: What, huggie bear?
Isabel: He used to be cool. OK, I've put on weight since those
             days but I'm not that bad! He looks really bad!
Vivienne: Back then, I would've chopped off an arm to be invited
             back to his house to an after-party. Now that he's shit,
             and I don't want the invite, I get it!

Thesis outline

The case studies presented above exemplify some of the changes that have taken place in the Melbourne rave/dance party scene, and how these changes are interpreted by a group of old skool ravers. This thesis will examine four interconnected changes: the location, marketing and size of events; the composition of attendees; changes in party drug use; and changes in the 'vibe' or atmosphere. In

discussing these changes and how they are perceived by my research friends, I will show how they have impacted on identity formation and nostalgia among old skool ravers.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of existing literature in the drug field, focusing on Australian ethnographic studies of recreational drug use and on studies that have contributed to the "normalisation" debate. It also examines cultural-studies literature that addresses the social and cultural aspects of rave/dance parties and clubs, and explore the strengths and limitations of that work, and explores the literature on youth subcultures. Chapter 3 outlines my research methods and explores the consequences for the research of my 'insider' status in this social world. Chapter 4 provides necessary background information, introducing the people, places and social organisation of party drug use.

In Chapter 5, I explore changes in the location, marketing and size of rave/dance party events. Chapter 6 focuses on changes in the composition of attendees, while Chapter 7 examines changes in party drug use, showing how it has moved from a subcultural to mainstream practice. These ethnographic chapters show how my research friends (old skool ravers) view and interpret the commercial changes in the rave/dance party scene, an area that has received relatively little attention in the literature. In Chapter 8, the focus shifts and I explore the impact of the commercial changes described in chapters 5-7 on the rave 'vibe' and atmosphere. I also consider the consequences of these changes for identity formation, drawing on the work on subcultural capital of Thornton (1995) and Moore (2005), as well as research on nostalgia (Davis 1977, 1979; Wilson 2005). Finally, Chapter 9 draws together the substantive themes and arguments of the thesis, concluding with reflections on the implications of the analysis for understanding changes in party drug use in the rave/dance party and club setting. The thesis concludes with recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2

Studies of normalisation, clubs and raves, and youth subcultures: A literature review

This chapter reviews the literature relevant to my thesis, including research on the "normalisation" of recreational drug use, raves and clubs, and youth subcultures. Two key points emerge from this review. First, there are few qualitative studies that examine commercialisation and identity formation in relation to party drug use within the rave/dance party scene. Second, the impact of commercialisation on drug use and drinking is influenced by the context in which the drug use and drinking takes place and is mediated by socio-demographic characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity and social class (Measham and Brain, 2005).

This thesis argues that the construction of identity is central to youthful drug use and that the normalisation or mainstreaming of party drug use in the Melbourne rave/dance party scene has led to changes in the way these drugs are used. In the latter part of the chapter, I review the cultural studies literature on raves/dance parties and clubs, as well as providing a brief overview of research on 'youth subcultures'. Insights from these studies, and from anthropological and sociological theorising on identity, subcultural capital and nostalgia (discussed in more detail in later chapters of the thesis), inform the ethnographic analysis presented in Chapters 4 – 8).

The "normalisation" debate

A key debate regarding young people's drug use focuses on the issue of "normalisation". This work overlaps some of the arguments of previous research on "recreational" drug use (e.g., Fitzgerald, 1996; Lewis and Ross, 1995; Moore, 1995) in that it attempts to map the dimensions of non-dependent, low-harm drug use. The "normalisation" debate began in the late-1990s with the work of Parker, Aldridge and Measham (1995, 1998). Their data were drawn from the North West

Longitudinal Study (1991-96) of adolescent drug use in Britain, the largest single such survey ever conducted in that country. The survey revealed an unprecedented rise in illicit drug use by diverse groups of young people of all socio-economic backgrounds, leading Parker *et al* to identify a process of "normalisation" of recreational drug use. The five characteristics of "normalisation" are: high drug availability, high frequency of use, social acceptability amongst young people, including non-users, and supportive cultural references in local and wider contexts. Parker *et al* claimed that their view of normalisation does not suggest that *all* young people use drugs: rather, they (Measham *et al*., 2001; Parker *et al*, 2002) argue that the use of certain drugs, particularly cannabis but increasingly also party drugs such as ecstasy and amphetamine, has come to be viewed as 'ordinary' rather than 'deviant' and no longer associated with specific subcultures. Drug use has become a common and important aspect of youth leisure, "part of the broader search for pleasure, excitement and enjoyment framed within consumption-oriented leisure lifestyles" (Measham and Shiner, 2009: 1). They claimed that such drug use should no longer be understood as a form of rebellion or resistance by young people, but as subsumed into a wider, acceptable range of leisure activities. This view of a new generation of drug user – as ordinary and everywhere – poses potential challenges, empirically and conceptually, for drug policies based on pathology and deviance.

Since the publication of Parker *et al*'s original thesis, extensive debate has emerged on the concept of normalisation. For example, Damon Taylor (2000), who examined the normalisation of drug use in relation to advertising and drug education in the United Kingdom (UK), is also supportive of the normalisation thesis. Taylor argued that commodities were being marketed to young people in the UK via drug references.

Other UK researchers, such as Michael Shiner and Tim Newburn (1997), rejected the normalisation thesis, arguing that there is little evidence to support the theory that drug use is becoming normalised amongst young people. Shiner and Newburn claimed that the normalisation thesis exaggerates the extent of young people's drug use, and argued that drug use remains a minority activity and that the thesis simplifies the choices young people make about drugs. However, in their analysis, Shiner and Newburn overlooked a key characteristic of the "normalisation" thesis:

that it does not suggest drug use is a statistically normal activity for young people, rather that drug use is perceived by many young people as something 'ordinary' and not necessarily 'deviant'.

Tracy Shildrick's (2002b) qualitative study, also from the UK, critiques the normalisation thesis, arguing that it does not capture the diversity and complexity of individual experiences of drug use and exaggerates the extent of illicit drug use amongst young people, thus imposing its own 'meta-narrative' (Shildrick, 2002b: 45). For Shildrick, the concept creates an exaggerated distinction between 'recreational' and 'problematic' illicit drug use; moreover, she viewed it as potentially stigmatising, because it may inadvertently demonise and pathologise some forms of young people's drug use (see also Holt, 2005). Shildrick coined the term 'differentiated normalisation' to replace 'normalisation'.

The majority of studies on normalisation have been UK-based. An exception is Sharon Rødner Sznitman's (2008) Swedish study, which focuses on normalisation from a different angle, by focusing on the 'micro-politics' of drug users. She argues that because Parker *et al* (2002) begin with the premise that drug use is already normalised amongst young people, they:

> pay no attention to the potential micro-politics that drug users might have been engaged in when trying to challenge the stigma attached to them. Parker's story starts from the assumption that drugs have become normalized, something which is revealed through focusing on five different dimensions (Rødner Sznitman, 2008: 456-457).

For Rødner Sznitman, normalisation is an ongoing and negotiated process rather than an either/or state. The two forms of micro-politics relating to the management of the stigma associated with illicit drug use are "normalised drug use as adjustment or assimilation" and "normalised drug use as transformation". Assimilative normalisation refers to the practices employed by illicit drug users in order to manage their stigmatised or deviant behaviour. They accept that drug use is a stigmatised activity and attempt to enhance their "skills and images to bring them

into line with valued social norms" (Rødner Sznitman, 2008: 450). By contrast, transformational normalisation involves attempts by illicit drug users to "reject prevalent constructions" of drug use and drug users (Rødner Sznitman, 2008: 452). For example, they challenge the status quo by campaigning for changes in the legal status of illicit drugs.

In an Australian study, Amy Pennay and David Moore (2010) drew on Rødner Sznitman's work to investigate the micro-politics of recreational use of party drugs in a social network of young 'drug enthusiasts' (Dance and Mugford, 1992). Their research revealed two co-existing discourses: some group members invoked the need for self-control in relation to drug use and developed strategies to cease or control their use, whilst others rejected the need for self-control, choosing instead to emphasise the value of drug-induced intoxication. Following Rødner Sznitman, Pennay and Moore argued that "future studies of illicit drug use, and harm reduction initiatives, need to be more attentive to the micro-politics of normalisation" (2010: in press). Such work highlights the need for qualitative studies that investigate the often contested social and cultural processes constitute normalisation within different contexts.

More recently, Measham and Shiner (2009), two of the major protagonists in the normalisation debate — the former a supporter of the normalisation thesis and the latter a critic – co-authored a paper in an attempt to bridge some of their differences in relation to normalisation. They concluded their joint article by stating that "while some areas of disagreement remain, they agree that normalisation is best understood as a contingent process negotiated by distinct social groups operating in bounded situations" (Measham and Shiner, 2009: 502). Measham and Shiner, (2009: 502) highlight that:

> contributors have tended to take one 'side' or the other and 'both sides of the debate over-egg the pudding in order to strengthen their case—leaving room for both sides to criticize the other's argument' (Wibberley & Price, 2000, p.161). Some attempts have been made to find a middle path (see, for example, Manning, 2007; South, 1999).

The most relevant publication in the normalisation debate for this thesis is an article co-written by Fiona Measham and Kevin Brain (2005), who outlined a new 'culture of intoxication', which embraces both legal and illicit drugs, and encompasses a broad social spectrum of young people. They argue "that we cannot understand developments in alcohol use without an attendant appreciation of changes in attitudes and behaviour relating to illicit drugs" (2005: 266).

Measham and Brain (2005) suggested that cultural changes in the British acid house and rave scene, which developed into what has become known as the 'decade of dance' (1988–98), led to a:

> shift from alcohol to dance drugs and dance clubs for a
> significant minority of young people in the late 1980s and early
> 1990s [that] concerned the alcohol industry enough for them to
> reconsider and recommodify alcohol as a psychoactive product
> to appeal to young adults (Measham and Brain 2005: 266).

In addition, Measham and Brain commented that "given the longevity of the popularity of the dance club scene in the UK and elsewhere [such as Australia], one might expect that after over 15 years or so, fashions in psychoactive recreational drugs would move on" (Measham and Brain, 2005: 266). Nevertheless, as Shapiro noted "as drug use becomes increasingly a fashion accessory, it may be even more at the whim of fashion than in previous times" (1999: 33). Thus, the choice of party drugs can change due to music, fashion and style, and perhaps because every new youth generation wants to leave its own 'original' mark.

Measham and Brain suggested that "psychoactive drug use follows cycles which alternate between predominantly depressant drugs and predominantly stimulant drugs" (2005: 266). Given that the 1990s were known as the 'decade of stimulants' (Davies and Ditton, 1990), this line of argument could characterise the post-rave period as a period favouring psychedelics and/or depressants, with alcohol the most widely used (and in most countries legal) depressant drug in the world (Measham and Brain 2005: 266). Measham and Brain identified 'a new alcohol order' which,

in their view, caters for a new generation of young, culturally diverse consumers and has become central to the development of night-time economies in urban Britain. They identified four transformations:

> [First,] alcoholic beverages have been recommodified in several stages over the last decade to create a wide range of new alcohol products: with the introduction of high-strength bottled beers, ciders, lagers and fortified wines in the early 1990s; first generation alcopops or alcoholic lemonades in the mid-1990s; second generation ready-to-drink spirit mixers (RTDs), flavoured alcoholic beverages (FABs) and 'buzz' drinks containing legal stimulants such as caffeine and guarana in the late 1990s; and shots or shooters in the early 2000s. Second, the strength of traditional alcohol products such as wines and beers has been increased by up to 50 per cent within the last 10 years alongside the introduction of these new high-strength alcohol products, in a direct attempt to compete in the psychoactive market and appeal to a new generation of psychoactive consumers. Third, alcohol products have been increasingly advertised as lifestyle markers in sophisticated campaigns to appeal to and develop market niches in the fragmentation and diversification of the alcohol market. Finally, there has been a major overhaul in the design and promotion of drinking establishments through the creation of café bars, dance bars and themed pubs opened in the last 10 years in the UK (Measham and Brain, 2005: 267).

This trend of overhaul and diversification of the alcohol retail trade is mirrored in Australian cities, including Melbourne (Chikritzhs, 2009). As Measham and Brain suggested:

> the consequences of a decade of increased sessional consumption of alcohol are apparent in increased admissions to accident and emergency units, facial injuries, liver disease,

alcohol-related arrests, and in the notable increase in young women involved in these incidents of alcohol-related violence, disorder, injury and harm (see Strategy Unit, 2004, quoted in Measham and Brain 2005: 268).

Several key points emerge from Measham and Brain's article. First, it highlights the effect of the night-time economy or commercialisation in relation to youthful drinking and drug taking. Second, it recognises that the "extent to which consumption remains bounded depends on the context in which drinking [and drug taking] occurs and is mediated by socio-demographic characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity and socio-economic class" (2005: 274). Finally, it claims that most drinkers *do* manage their intoxication in terms of desired and actual states, and *do not* utterly lose control and become unbounded in their consumption practices.

Drawing on the normalisation debate as a theoretical starting point, and in particular on Measham and Brain's (2005) identification of a new 'culture of intoxication' embracing both legal and illicit drugs, this thesis offers a new perspective by detailing the commercial changes in the Melbourne rave/dance party scene, focusing on the way these changes are interpreted amongst 'old skool ravers' in relation to their identities and party drug use.

The "normalisation" debate in Australia

The normalisation debate has influenced Australian drug research, with some researchers providing critiques of the normalisation thesis. For example, Gourley's (2004) qualitative research on ecstasy use amongst young people in Canberra suggests that subcultures continue to play an important role in shaping initiation, as well as patterns of ecstasy use, behaviour and the social sanctions around use. For Gourley, the subcultural perspective remains vital for understanding ecstasy use, despite the challenges raised by normalisation theories of drug use or by post-modern theories of youth subcultures. On the basis of survey data, Martin Holt (2005) argued that illicit drug use appears to be normalised only among specific groups of young people in Australia, and in particular contexts, rather than throughout the general population.

Others researchers have argued that recreational drug use has become increasingly normalised in Australia. For example, Cameron Duff (2004, 2005) has used survey findings to argue that, as in the UK, drug use was becoming increasingly normalised within certain youth populations in Australia, such as dance or club cultures (see also Hansen *et al*, 2001). Duff found that the use of alcohol and other drugs was widespread, with 96% of survey respondents identifying as 'current drinkers', whilst 56% reported 'lifetime use' of illicit drugs. Just over a third (35.2%) reported recent (last month) use of an illicit drug, typically ecstasy, cannabis and/or amphetamine (Duff, 2005: 161). On the basis of these findings, Duff argued that party drug use had shifted from 'underground' subcultural settings such as raves to more 'mainstream' contexts in the night-time economy such as clubs and bars. In a later qualitative study on party drug use amongst young people in Melbourne, Duff *et al* (2007: v) argued that such use had become increasingly normalised and commonplace within Melbourne's club, bar and rave scenes and the popularity of club and bar cultures was contributing to party drug use.

With the exception of work by Duff *et al* (2007), Lewis and Ross (1995), and Moore (1995), Australian research on recreational drug use and the possible normalisation of drug use amongst young people rarely focuses on party drug use in the context of raves and dance parties. This is surprising considering that raves are settings in which party drug use is common. This debate forms a backdrop to my investigation: that is, the extent to which drug use at raves/dance parties can be considered culturally normalised and what sorts of challenges this may pose for drug users and drug policy. In summary, a review of the drug literature indicates that party drug use is increasing amongst young Australians and becoming "normalised" in dance party and club settings.

Research on raves and clubs

Despite the widespread use of party drugs at raves and dance parties, Australian drug research has rarely explored these important contexts of use, but the same could not be said of other fields of social research. An extensive literature on raves, dance parties and clubs emerged in sociology and cultural studies during the last ten years.

This literature focuses on a range of topics, including: the sense of community formed at raves, the increasing commodification and commercialisation of raves, the gender relations constructed through rave participation and raves as a form of play. An understanding of rave and dance party cultures is important because these cultures provide the contexts in which young people experience both the pleasures and harms associated with party drug use.

Rave community and commercialisation

Sociologists studying raves and dance parties have argued that participation creates a form of community, with a sense of unity and collective identity. Melbourne raves in the early years (late-1980s – mid-1990s) were part of an 'underground', niche scene that was founded on and expressed through principles of peace, love, unity and respect (PLUR). Early raves attracted only a few hundred people, many of whom knew each other, which often created a sense of community. Previous studies (e.g., Bradby, 1993; Lenton and Davidson, 1999; Malbon, 1999; Moore, 1995; Siokou, 2002) showed that this sense of community was created by a shared appreciation of music, dancing, lighting, drug use, and a lack of violence and predatory male behaviour. Raves have also been viewed as providing spiritual and religious experiences for some participants (St John, 2004; Takahashi and Olaveson, 2003) and some authors have claimed that the altered states of consciousness experienced at raves can have therapeutic effects (Hutson, 2000). A sense of community expressed through tribalism has also been linked to raves and dance parties (Brookman, 2001). In particular, Maffesoli's (1995) concept of "neotribes", which are micro-groupings that form within specific social situations and which are based on the eclipse of individual identities through identification with a group, has been applied to raves and dance parties. The word 'tribe' has also been used within the rave scene itself, with references to the term appearing in rave promotional materials and on internet websites and forums. A popular rave/dance party event held annually in most Australian capital cities is called 'Two Tribes' and one group of Sydney-based rave organisers use the term in their name – 'Vibe Tribe'.

Today, raves are increasingly commercialised and 'mainstream', and are held in licensed venues, often attracting thousands of people. The sense of community

reportedly associated with earlier raves appears to be diminishing. An extensive literature on the increasing commodification and commercialisation of the rave scene emerged during the last decade (e.g., Brewster and Broughton, 1999; Chatterton and Hollands, 2003; Collin, 1997; Luckman, 1998; Thornton, 1995). Some of the issues covered in this work include: raves and dance parties being organised by large corporations which focus on profit maximisation, events being widely advertised and marketed (including TV and commercial radio advertisements), inflated ticket prices, and raves moving into licensed venues. Rave culture simultaneously functions as a site of incorporation into and resistance against capitalist enterprise, and the association of rave culture with criminal activity, particularly the consumption of illicit drugs, has facilitated capitalism's co-optation of the subculture (Luckman, 1998).

This thesis builds on and extends this literature by exploring the commercialisation of raves/dance parties from a different angle, by investigating how it may be contributing to changes in drug-related use at these events. An ethos of care for others experiencing drug-related harms may have existed in earlier rave forms, due to their small size and the dense social ties binding participants together. With the development of a more commercial, anonymous scene, where there is a less-developed sense of collective identity, what are the consequences for reducing and managing drug-related problems? These questions will be addressed in Chapter 7.

Gender relations at raves

Another area of interest in sociological and cultural studies research on raves/dance parties is gender relations. Many studies have focused on the changing gender relations at raves and dance parties, identifying changing modes of masculinity and femininity, lack of violence and feelings of freedom and safety, which some argue is assisted by the use of drugs such as ecstasy. For example, Sarah Henderson (1997) claimed that women from 'culturE' are liberated and that 'a picture of girly ease' emerges, with a lack of 'pick up' pressure or violence, and freedom to express oneself dancing. Others have focused on femininity within rave and club cultures. Maria Pini (2001) claimed a new type of 'feminism' was evident within accounts of female ravers, with women claiming to feel safer, freer and more 'at home' within

contemporary club environments. However, in Pini's view, this was related to the ways in which clubbing/raving masculinities are seen to have changed (e.g., men dancing and a lack of 'pick up' pressure). Other authors, such as Angela McRobbie (1994), claim that although women may appear to be more liberated in rave culture, they are less involved in the cultural production of raves (e.g., in the organisation of events or DJ'ing). McRobbie also argued that changing modes of masculinity at raves were linked to the use of ecstasy, which led to 'laddishness' being replaced by 'friendliness'. The literature also suggests that men and women may experience raves differently, including the gendering of participation at all levels. This thesis draws on these debates by exploring how men and women perceive drug use at raves/dance parties and clubs, how their drug-using practices differ, and whether the gender hierarchy constructed through rave/dance party and club participation has any implications for understanding party drug use (see Chapter 4 on the social aspects of party drug use). I also show how feelings of safety and lack of 'pick up' pressure have changed over time for old skool ravers (Chapter 7).

Play, pleasure, hedonism and 'losing it' at raves/dance parties

The 'play', pleasure and fun associated with raving is a frequently-discussed topic in the rave literature (e.g., Collin, 1997; Jackson, 2004; Malbon, 1999; Thornton, 1995). Raving as a form of hedonism and an escape from reality has been explored (e.g., Chatterson and Hollands, 2003; Collin, 1997; Malbon, 1999), as have the associations between raving and 'losing it' or 'going mad' (Pini, 2001). Ben Malbon (1999) suggested that an 'oceanic experience' can be achieved at raves and clubs where participants feel freed from societal standards, prejudices and restraints, obligations, insecurities and, most importantly, time and space. Party drugs are also used by some to prolong/enhance this "oceanic experience". Fiona Measham (2004: 343) introduced the concept of "head space":

> Drinking and recreational drug use occur at specific times and in specific places. The counter balance to the control, stress and performance of our work lives, is the distinct physical, social and 'head' space we mark out to facilitate a "controlled loss of control" in leisure time and in the consumption of a range of

legal, prescription and illicit drugs to medicate for the problems

and maximise the pleasures in an increasingly stressful world.

This body of literature, however, neglects the potential relationship between the pleasure seeking and play elements of raves/dance parties and the harms associated with party drug use in this setting. It is common for young people at raves to seek pleasure and an avenue to play and to escape from reality or 'lose it'. Interviewees from my earlier research (Siokou, 2002) commented that "a rave is like another world, much like a childhood fantasy" or "a fun, colourful dream" where they "could forget about everything" and "escape from the real world". This project investigates whether there are potential problems associated with the pleasure of 'losing it' and seeking "oceanic experiences" under the influence of drugs (see Chapter 7).

This brief review of the literature from drug studies and sociology indicates that our understanding of the social and cultural aspects associated with party drug use at raves and dance parties remains limited. The drug field has produced little research on raves and dance parties; the sociology of youth has explored raves and dance parties but has been less interested in changes in the use of party drug use and the associated problems. This thesis describes an attempt to address this lacunae in our knowledge by producing in-depth qualitative data- which provides a better understanding of party drug use and related harm at raves/dance parties and clubs.

The subcultural tradition in youth and drug studies

The vast literature on "youth subcultures" is also relevant to this thesis. Much of the literature on youth in sociology and cultural studies has focused on subcultures. In the 1970s, this literature focused on 'spectacular' British youth subcultures such as mods, rockers and skinheads. The more recent literature on youth, particularly those studies focused on rave and clubs, now employ terminology such as "scenes" and "tribes" or "neotribes" (Anderson and Kavanaugh, 2009; Bennett, 1999; Brookman, 2001; Malbon, 1999; St John, 2001) rather than "subculture". Nevertheless, debate continues over the ongoing relevance of "subculture" in the study of youth. In the following section I briefly review two key bodies of work, - the first emerging from the University of Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies on youth

subcultures in the 1970s, and the second on post-modern theories of youth subcultures published mainly since the 1990s. The review of this literature provides a backdrop to Thornton's theory of "subcultural capital".

The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies

During the 1970s, at the University of Birmingham, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) undertook ground-breaking work on youth culture (see, for example, Clarke, 1981; Hall and Jefferson, 1976; McRobbie, 1980). The CCCS approach to youth subcultures is most explicitly defined in *Resistance through Rituals* (Hall and Jefferson, 1976). The pioneering work undertaken by the CCCS and by Dick Hebdige (1979) on subculture, style and youth transformed the field of youth studies. The focal point was post-Second World War working-class youth cultures, such as punks, mods, rockers and skinheads. They claimed that by applying such a framework, "it was possible to map the stylistic responses of postwar working-class youth cultures, against a backdrop of socio-economic forces, which were only weakly understood by those involved" (Bennett, 2002: 453). Thus, as Waters stated, in the CCCS work, the actions of postwar youth cultures represented a "half-formed inarticulate radicalism" (1981: 23).

To paraphrase Bennett (2002) the CCCS structuralist narratives rendered fieldwork redundant in social settings understood to be underpinned by irremovable socio-economic conditions which, it was argued, fundamentally shaped the consciousness of social actors. Bennett, (2002: 453) argued that:

> According to the CCCS, the symbolic shows of resistance engaged in by postwar youth cultures, although at one level indicative of the symbolic creativity of youth, amounted to little more than a spectacular form of bravado when viewed within the wider context of the social relations of capitalism; the teddy boy's "all-dressed-up-and-nowhere-to-go" experience of Saturday evening' (Jefferson 1976: 48) or the skinhead's magical recovery of community (Clarke 1976) reflecting the

'historically located focal concerns' of the equally *trapped* working-class parent culture (Clarke *et al.* 1976: 53).

The key implication of the CCCS work (with Willis's (1978) ethnographic case studies of a working-class motorbike gang and middle-class hippies, and McRobbie's (1980) ethnographic studies of the 'bedroom culture' of teenage girls being notable exceptions) is that fieldwork would serve only to reveal something which is already known, the misconception of working-class youth concerning the socio-economic forces which conspire to produce the everyday experience of class. The CCCS scholars maintained that a more accurate or 'real' understanding of youth's symbolic forms of resistance could only be grasped through theoretical abstraction (Bennett, 2002: 453).

Hall (1980: 31) noted:

> …to think about or to analyse the complexity of the real, the act of practice of thinking is required; and this necessitates the use of the power of abstraction and analysis, the formation of concepts with which to cut into the complexity of the real, in order precisely to reveal and bring to light relationships and structures which cannot be visible to the naked eye, and which can neither present nor authenticate themselves.

The CCCS research was undoubtedly ground-breaking and has stimulated considerable debate; however, as this brief review demonstrates, the CCCS scholars focused heavily on a semiotic analysis of class and subcultural style and virtually ignored the views of the young people involved in subcultures. They have also been criticised (McRobbie, 1980) for the invisibility of women in their portrayal of youth subcultures. Many researchers have borrowed from the CCCS tradition, but it is now widely accepted that the CCCS's work on subcultures was too narrowly focused on class, power and social structures; by doing so, they ignored the social processes and cultural contexts of youth subcultures. For example, Stan Cohen (1987) argued that youth subcultures are not coherent social groupings that arise instinctively as a reaction to social forces. In his view, media labelling of young people results in the creation of youth subcultures by imposing an ideological framework in which people

can locate their behaviour. And whilst the subcultural framework could be applied to the 'spectacular' British youth subcultures of the past, such as teddy boys, skinheads, mods and rockers, it was inadequate for analyses of rave and club studies in the 1990s and 2000s (see, for example, Bennett, 1999; Muggleton, 1997, 2000; Muggleton and Weinzier, 2003; Thornton, 1995, 1996).

Post-modern theories of youth subcultures

Many postmodern theories of youth subcultures have arisen (see, for example, Bennett, 2000; Bennett and Kahn-Harris, 2004; Blackman, 2005; Hesmondhalgh, 2005; Jackson, 2004; Malbon, 1999; Muggleton, 2000; Muggleton and Weinzierl, 2003; Redhead, 1997; Rietveld, 1998; Shildrick and MacDonald, 2006). Some, such as David Hesmondhalgh (2005), criticise the use of new terms such as "scenes", "tribes" or "neotribes", instead arguing that "subculture" remains relevant to the sociology of youth, but is not so useful in studies of popular music. Blackman (2005: 8-9) posits:

> This new 'postmodern' work on subculture has been criticized
> by MacDonald *et al.* (2000), Cieslik (2001), Hollands (2002)
> and Blackman (2004) as creating problems for sociology
> because of the apparent reluctance to integrate social structures
> into the analysis and instead promote an individualistic
> understanding of the social.

Tracy Shildrick (2002a) has argued that the focus on choice in postmodern theories of subculture ignores social categories such as class, ethnicity and socio-economic background, seeing them as reductive and universalistic. There is reluctance to consider the way in which choice is imposed on young people by social structures which can fail to give voice to disadvantaged young people's experiences. Thus, as Shane Blackman argued: "On this basis postmodern theories of subculture do not address or critique the relations of dominance and subordination exercised through social and cultural structures of society" (2005: 12).

For this thesis the most significant work in relation to postmodern subcultures for is Sarah Thornton's (1995) analysis of youth subcultures and her notion of "subcultural

capital". Thornton recognised that the CCCS studies over-politicised youthful leisure and simultaneously ignored the subtle relations of power within them. By exploring the social logic of youth subcultures, she claimed that "distinctions are never just assertions of equal difference, they usually entail some claiming authority and presume the inferiority of others" (1996: 201) and subsequently coined the term "subcultural capital" as a way of understanding these distinctions (see Chapter 8).

Carrington and Wilson (2004), Moore (2005) and Thornton (1995) further built on concepts of "subculture" and "subcultural capital". Thornton's work on "subcultural capital" (drawing on Bourdieu's notion of "cultural capital") remains attentive to the intricacies of micro-level interactions that underlie subcultural life, including the ways that and 'outsider' subgroups are distinguished by young people themselves. She draws on Becker's (1963) ethnographic research on jazz musicians which produced detailed descriptions of hierarchies of 'hip' or 'cool' with outsiders being viewed as 'square'.

Other researchers, such as Ben Carrington and Brian Wilson (2004:67-68), later critiqued Thornton's work, arguing that:

> the concept of subcultural capital is misleading when
> understood as a derivative of Bourdieu's notion of cultural
> capital and taste because Boudieu's depiction of taste was
> interwoven with a view of (French) society that was structured
> by social class based difference reinforced through status.

In Thornton's *Club Cultures*, class has little to do with taste cultures. Thornton argued: "although it converts into economic capital, sub-cultural capital is not as class bound as cultural capital. This is not to say that class is not irrelevant, simply that it does not correlate in any one-to-one way with sub-cultural capital" (1995: 12-13). Carrington and Wilson (2004: 68) critiqued this argument by claiming: "If class is 'barely relevant' to Thornton, then the sub-cultural capital concept is little more than a descriptive term (that is, only a slight revision of Becker)". Nevertheless, in their critique, Carrington and Wilson overlooked that Thornton does in fact recognise class distinctions. In Chapter 3 of *Club Cultures*, Thornton argued that the

clichés clubbers employ, do in fact have class connotations. For example, the clubbing cliché of why Sharon and Tracy (rather than, say, Camilla and Imogen) dance around their handbags, highlights that they are "guilty of being trapped in their [working] class" and do not "enjoy the classless autonomy of hip youth" (Thornton, 2005: 206).

Angela McRobbie also criticised Thornton's analysis of subcultural capital, claiming that she ignores the subordinate position of women. McRobbie wrote that Thornton avoids "engaging with the perceived poor taste of girls and women in the field of subcultural capital" (1999: 147). By contrast, Pini's (2001) ethnographic account is centred on young women's experience of raving. Her research revealed the physical pleasures of dance, the excitement of ecstasy-induced euphoria and communality. Pini also responds to postmodern accounts that exaggerate the extent to which sex, class and ethnic based identities disappear within the liminal spaces of the rave by proposing that these identities remain, but that they are re-worked within these spaces (Pini, 2001: 6-7).

Jensen (2006), who conducted fieldwork among underprivileged young men of non-Danish ethnic background, further criticised Thornton's work. For Jensen, Thornton's analysis does not provide sufficient "analytical attention to the social position and other socio-structural variables of the participants in the subculture" (Jensen, 2006: 257). However, Jensen used Thornton as a useful theoretical starting point (as do I) when he argued (Jensen, 2006: 257) that:

> The relation between the subculture and its surroundings is best understood by focusing on what is appreciated within the subculture (i.e. subculture capital) and at the same time analytically situating the subculture in terms of class, gender, ethnicity and 'race'.

Despite Thornton's under-theorisation of ethnicity, and of the wider socio-structural variables that influence subcultural capital, the strength of her work lies in her focus on how identities are formed and re-made within particular dance cultures. Nevertheless, this detail is presented only through Thornton's single authoritative

voice and her participants are silenced and remain in the background, a weakness of her approach. She stated that "my method was more one of ethnographic survey rather than the more common ethnographic case study which meant that representativeness was a particular concern" (1995: 107), and this could account for the criticism that her data lacked depth. By contrast, this thesis privileges the voices of my research friends, who self-identify as 'old skool ravers'.

It should also be noted that little of the post-subcultural research is based on ethnographic research and there is little discussion of methodology. As Bennett notes:

> With the exception of Paul Willis […] little attempt was made by youth researchers to engage with the social actors at the centre of their work using ethnography or other qualitative fieldwork methods… [and there is a] lack of attention to methodological detail in current research on youth and music (2002: 452).

My review of the post-subcultures literature reveals that, for many youth researchers, the term 'subculture' has been replaced by "scenes" or "tribes" (see, for example, Anderson and Kavanaugh, 2007; Bennett, 2000; Brookman, 2001), whereas for others, such as Hesmondhalgh (2005), "subculture" remains a relevant concept. For this thesis, the post-subculturalist work of Thornton on subcultural capital is most useful. Although it has been criticised for its under-theorisation of ethnicity and gender, it remains a useful theoretical starting point for my analysis of 'old skool ravers'.

Thesis contribution to literature

The above review of literature from drug studies and sociology indicates that our understanding of the social and cultural aspects of party drug use at raves/dance parties remains limited. This thesis contributes to the literature by exploring the complex social contexts and cultural meanings of party drug use. This kind of work is important because, as discussed in Chapter 1, the dominant Australian approaches

to the study of party drug use have been epidemiological and medical. While these approaches provide important information on prevalence, patterns and associated harm, they ignore the cultural meanings and social contexts of party drug use. As a consequence, these studies tend to represent party drug users as an essentialised category. By contrast, this thesis is positioned within the body of ethnographic and qualitative work on drug use that has emerged since the 1990s (e.g., Bourgois, 1995, 2009; Dwyer, 2009; Gourley, 2004; Green and Moore, 2009; Maher, 1997; Moore, 1993, 1995; Pennay and Moore, 2010; Slavin 2004a, 2004b).

Drawing on the normalisation debate as a theoretical starting point, and in particular on Measham and Brain's (2005) identification of a new "culture of intoxication" embracing both legal and illicit drugs, this thesis offers a new perspective by detailing the commercial changes in the Melbourne rave/dance party scene and focusing on the way these changes were interpreted by 'old skool ravers' in relation to their social identities and forms of party drug use. The thesis will build on the "normalisation debate" by showing how the construction of identity is central to youthful drug use and that the "normalisation" or "mainstreaming" of party drugs in the Melbourne rave/dance party scene has led to changes in the way these drugs are used (see Chapter 7).

Two key points have emerged from the above review of the literature. First, the impact of commercialisation on drug use and drinking is influenced by the context in which these activities take place and is mediated by socio-demographic characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity and social class (Measham and Brain, 2005). Second, there are few qualitative studies that examine commercialisation and identity formation in relation to party drug use within the rave/dance party scene. More generally, the drug field has produced only limited research on raves and dance parties; researchers studying the sociology of youth have explored raves and dance parties but have been less interested in changing forms of party drug use and the associated problems. This thesis addresses this gap in knowledge by producing an in-depth qualitative analysis that reveals how the commercialisation and popularisation of the Melbourne rave/dance party scene affects the identities and party drug usage patterns of a group of long-term attendees – the 'old skool ravers'.

This thesis builds on the sociological literature surrounding the concepts of "subcultural capital" and "nostalgia" which have not been combined in the same analytical frame in the literature on raves/dance parties and clubs to date. There have been few qualitative Australian studies that examine the commercialisation of the rave/dance party scene in relation to party drug use. The findings presented in this thesis will provide a better understanding of party drug use and related harm at raves/dance parties and clubs. It will show how the commercial changes in the Melbourne rave/dance party scene were negatively interpreted by 'old skool ravers', who expressed a strongly-felt nostalgia for past rave forms as part of their critique of the present situation. It will also be shown how the elusive rave 'vibe' – which, for 'old skool ravers', was made up of a combination of elements: music, dancing, the crowd and feeling free and safe – was considered to be lost. Commercialisation of the rave/dance party scene affected the group identity of 'old skool ravers' by creating the conditions in which nostalgia becomes a means of providing continuity of their identity. It subsequently led to changes in their party drug use patterns – from "subcultural" to "mainstream" (see Chapter 7), and these resulted in changes in the culture of raves/dance parties. The nostalgia narrative also contains another element; 'old skool ravers' were also making claims to superiority – that is, to the possession of subcultural capital and to the possession of an 'authentic' rave identity which they were claiming through a re-writing of history. Furthermore, these claims to authentic identity and membership of an underground, pre-commercialised rave scene were being made on the basis of rave participation from the mid-1990s onwards, by which time raves had already begun their rapid evolution from underground to commercial events.

This thesis will highlight an under-explored area in the literature; the importance and relevance of ethnicity within current dance party contexts, which I examine via my analysis of the old skool ravers' response to muzzas (see Chapter 6). To date, this is the first study to consider ethnicity within the Melbourne rave/dance party scene. I had not specifically intended to focus on ethnicity in my study, but my findings highlighted that ethnic stereotypes are produced and deployed within the Melbourne rave/dance party scene. This finding raises questions about how ethnicity impacts on social relations at these events and on forms of party drug use, an issue that has received little attention in the literature. I will demonstrate how old skool ravers

made claims to the possession of subcultural capital by employing ethnicity, drug use and other aspects of style and behaviour in their negative labelling of muzzas. It will be shown how they used nostalgia to mount a critique of the situation and in doing so claimed subcultural capital for themselves.

Having outlined the relevant literature in this chapter, the following chapter details my ethnographic research method and some of the associated ethical considerations.

Chapter 3

Research methods: Ethnography and 'insider' knowledge

The research described on this thesis was primarily concerned with the cultural practices and social contexts of party drug use; therefore, the most appropriate research method was ethnography. Ethnography, in its most characteristic form, involves the researcher participating "in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 1). The aim of ethnography "is to discover the shared understandings, values and beliefs which inform behaviour by observing and participating in a social context" (Moore, 1993: 12). Agar (1983: 33-4) suggested that what makes ethnography "unique among the social sciences [is its] commit[ment] to making sense out of the way informants naturally talk and act when they are doing ordinary activities rather than activities imposed by a researcher". As demonstrated by many researchers, it is well suited to understanding 'hidden' or 'hard to reach' populations such as illicit drug users (e.g., Becker, 1953; Bourgois, 1995; Maher, 1997; Moore, 1993b; Slaven, 2004a, Slaven, 2004b).

Research process

My research design involved identifying and accessing appropriate social networks of young people using party drugs at dance parties and clubs, starting with friends established in earlier honours and postgraduate research, and through personal social networks. Next, ethnographic mapping was used to establish the socio-demographics, drug use places and patterns, and geographical aspects of these networks. I then began to document the social contexts and cultural practices of party drug use in dance party and club networks- through ethnographic fieldwork.

Entering the field

I began the project, with contacts who had participated in my undergraduate and Masters' research, along with friends and acquaintances to whom I had described that research, and 'snowballed' from these initial contacts. I used ethnographic mapping to establish the socio-demographics, drug use places and patterns as well as the geographical aspects of these networks. I then utilised purposive sampling techniques, which are guided by the evolution of concepts, insights and reflections, to assist me in identifying people and categories of information appropriate to key research aims.

My desired population for the study was difficult to locate and recruit because it was a hidden population of illicit drug users. Purposive sampling, which targets a particular group of people selected in a deliberative and non-random fashion to achieve a certain goal, was a suitable method for my research situation. In my case study, I initially began with 12 key research friends (see Chapter 4 for in-depth information on participants) who had participated in my earlier MA and undergraduate research. All had been involved with party drug use, most since the mid-late 1990s, and regularly attended clubs and dance parties and so were ideal for investigating changes over time including: changes in the location, marketing and size of rave/dance party events; the composition of attendees; drug-related practices; and the 'vibe' or atmosphere and personal identities.

Fieldwork was undertaken in Melbourne for 16 months, from December 2005 to April 2007. The fieldwork involved attending clubs and raves/dance parties, often held at clubs, sporting and entertainment complexes, and parks. I also often spent time at places where my research friends gathered directly before and after attending these public events, including private homes of participants, motels and 'recovery' day parties and clubs (see Chapter 4).

A typical night out would involve me visiting a research friend's home at approximately 7pm. Four or five members of the group would arrive and have a couple of alcoholic beverages. Soon after it would be decided if ecstasy, speed or ice (sometimes combinations of all three) would be purchased from other research

friends, which would usually involve driving to their homes or meeting them in an agreed location. At about 10.30-11.00pm, I accompanied them by either car or taxi to a nightclub or dance party and often arrangements would be made via mobile telephones to have our names on the guest lists of various clubs, which meant discounted - or free - entry. On many occasions more party drugs - mainly ecstasy but also speed, ice, and/or cocaine - would be purchased if the supply had already run out for the night. Sometimes my research friends attended two or three different night clubs in one evening-morning. During the research period, I accompanied my research friends on visits to 26 different clubs and 10 dance parties. The majority were located either in the Melbourne CBD, St Kilda or South Yarra and several clubs were within walking distances of each other. Generally we would return to a research participant's home in the early hours of the morning (see Chapter 4 for an in-depth discussion).

I kept a small notepad in my handbag and jotted down notes on key events or conversations during these nights out. Initially, after a conversation or event took place I would go to a toilet cubicle to jot down notes; I did not want to do this in the public areas of the club or dance party for three reasons. First, many clubs were poorly lit so it would have been difficult to write; second; it would have appeared out of place to make notes in public, as it is generally not consistent with club behaviour; and third, it may have created suspicion amongst patrons that I was a journalist or undercover police officer. Later, I realised it was more convenient to type brief notes into my mobile phone. This meant I did not have to leave the public and my note-taking attracted no attention, as it was extremely common and acceptable to see people texting messages on mobile phones in clubs and at dance parties. In the following days, I would type a comprehensive account of the evening on my laptop. I also took fieldnotes on many conversations I had with research participants during weekdays, which often included discussions about the weekend and drug use. These conversations offered insights into the way research friends explained our nights out and what was important or noteworthy to them.

Approximately two to four days per week were spent with my core research friends and I was in daily contact with some of them via telephone, text message and email. The time I spent with the larger networks of the core group (see Chapter 4) and

others involved in the scene varied, ranging from weekly to every few months (e.g., at special dance events). During the research period, I also came into contact with old acquaintances and friends from the 'rave' scene 'back in the day'[9] at dance parties and clubs as well as by chance in other contexts, including meeting a rave organiser whilst shopping with my mother.

I endeavoured to meet a wide range of people whilst at clubs and dance parties and would listen to and compare different attitudes to the dance party scene as well as to alcohol and other drug use. To achieve this aim, I used snowballing from my initial contacts as a sampling technique because it assisted in identifying cases of interest from people who were suitable. This was a particularly useful sampling technique when studying behaviour such as illicit drug use. Snowballing and the fieldwork itself facilitated access to other social networks of young people from mainly Southern European, Middle Eastern and Anglo backgrounds. The aim was to gain insights into young people's own perceptions and experiences; the emic or 'insider' perspective that is invaluable for enriching our understanding of 'hidden' behaviour such as drug use. To do this I utilised grounded theory, which does not test a hypothesis, and can be differentiated from other research because it is explicitly emergent. The aim, as Glaser (1992) in particular states it, is to discover the theory implicit in the data. This distinction between "emergence and forcing", as Glaser frames it, is fundamental to grounded theory. Every few months during the fieldwork period (December 2005-April 2006, May-July 2006, July-August 2006, December-February 2007) I wrote short summaries of what had been happening during my fieldwork, which I also provided to the wider NHMRC group (see below). My summaries included: basic description of socio-demographics of field contacts, their current patterns of drug use, the social organisation of the networks, how the drug market worked (i.e. how and from whom do people buy drugs), harms I observed and how people discussed them, and possible trends. Some key themes that emerged included: the increasing commercialisation of raves, increased use of concurrent alcohol and party drugs by my research friends, the role of ethnicity, a perceived lack of vibe, and nostalgia for raves, which were considered "not as good as they used to

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[9] 'Back in the day' refers to the period of raves dating from the mid- to late-1990s and is a term often used by my research friends.

be back in the day". These themes then began to form my thesis outline and structure.

Between September and early November 2006, I reduced the time I spent in the field to approximately one day a week (although I maintained regular contact with my core research friends). The main purpose of this withdrawal from the field was to review the data collected so far and to start formalising some of the themes and issues identified through the ongoing inductive process of recording and reflecting on field observations and relations. The withdrawal from fieldwork provided me with some distance from the immediacy of my research friends' lives, providing an opportunity for critical reflection on the broader processes occurring in the dance party and club scene. This period of reflection and preliminary analysis guided subsequent data collection from November 2006 to April 2007.

The value of fieldnotes

I recorded the social contexts and cultural practices of party drug use in ethnographic fieldnotes. I focused on gaining an insider's perspective on the use of party drugs through observation of drug-related activities. Many ethnographic researchers (e.g., Bourgois, 1995; Maher, 1997; Moore, 1992, 1993) have written about their experiences entering drug fields and have described a particular moment or incident that enabled them to feel as though they were part of the group or an 'insider'. Moore wrote that "in ethnography, there is often an incident which marks the transition of the research from 'outsider' to 'insider' (Moore, 1992: 315). After reading these ethnographic accounts, I realised that my situation was unique in that I was already an 'insider' to the scene and social landscape prior to becoming a researcher. When I became a 'researcher', my position shifted from solely 'insider' to the more complex 'insider/outsider' position experienced by many ethnographers studying their own cultural group. Often during a single event, my own experience alternated between the two positions; sometimes I would be dancing and listening to the music, soaking up the atmosphere and feeling I was just another member of the crowd, and at other times I would assume the role of researcher, busily typing notes into my phone and speculating on the meanings of the behaviour I was observing.

In-depth interviews

In order to enrich the data collected through ethnographic fieldwork, and to conduct more focused investigation of key topics, I undertook semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 25 young party drug users and other people involved in the scene. The interviews were conducted from September 2006 to May 2007 in various places including my house, participants' homes and cafes around Melbourne that were convenient for the interviewees. The interviewees were reimbursed $30 for their time and travel expenses.

The interviews were informed by my fieldwork and focused on the interviewees' backgrounds and socio-demographic characteristics. The topics covered included: education and employment history; entry into the rave dance party and/or club scene; drug use history, including initiation to party drug use; current party drug (and other drug) use; drug-related practices; knowledge of problems; accounts of risky behaviour; sources of information about party drug use; incentives and disincentives for safer drug use; perceptions of the drug-driving trial; rave and club social networks; reasons for attending raves and clubs; the sense of 'community' at raves; and changes in the rave/dance party scene. The focus was on identifying the social contexts and cultural meanings of party drug use and related problems, and the ways in which these problems were perceived and addressed by party drug users themselves.

During the interviews, people (particularly women) with whom I had the closest relationships (my core research friends) would often share more personal experiences. Some of my interviewees shared personal information with me that they may not have done if they had known me only in a 'researcher' capacity. For example, one female interviewee spoke of how she had been given GHB and assaulted by a young man she had been seeing and one of his friends. Nevertheless, a few of my interviewees were relative strangers (friends of my research friends) and some of them also shared very personal details with me, including one young woman who recounted being diagnosed as an alcoholic and living on the streets during her teens.

I conducted interviews with two participants with whom I had no previously established relationships and in which it seems likely that acts of "impression management" occurred (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Both interviewees were 18 year-old and male, and appeared uncomfortable and embarrassed during the interviews. For example, one of them had a nervous twitch in his arm. When I asked whether he had ever consumed large amounts of party drugs, he said no. His denial suggested a desire to present a favourable image of himself. He had never participated in an interview about his party drug use before and the fact that I was audio-recording the interview may also have contributed to his discomfort. I later heard two other research friends tell a story about this particular interviewee having consumed large amounts of ice and speed over the course of two days without sleep, after which he began whipping an imaginary blue wombat in his room. They also informed me that my interviewee may have been embarrassed because he was from an Albanian background, and it was considered taboo to speak about drugs, particularly with a woman.

In relation to conducting interviews, Hodkinson (2005: 140) argued for the value of an insider perspective:

> in the presence of someone they perceive as already 'clued-up',
> [interview] respondents may be discouraged from the worst
> excesses of conscious inaccuracy. It may be particularly easy for
> respondents to make exaggerations, omissions, guesses and
> throwaway statements in the presence of a relatively ignorant
> 'professional stranger' and, for this reason, I found myself
> grateful to be perceived by my goth respondents as someone
> liable to identify obvious inaccuracies.

Hodkinson also noted; "in the presence of someone they perceive as an insider, respondents may feel disproportionately encouraged to provide answers consistent with dominant thinking within the group" (2005: 140). He referenced a personal email from Karenza Moore in 2004, who suggested that:

> …because there is normative pressure within club culture for
> participants to be rather blasé about, or even proud of, their
> experiences with illegal drugs, it is possible that clubbers taking
> part in interviews may be wary of disclosing personal anxieties
> about the effects of drugs to an interviewer they perceive as an
> insider (Hodkinson, 2005: 147).

Hodkinson and Moore's points are valid, and I was mindful of both scenarios during interviews and when analysing interview data.

Analysing fieldnotes and interview transcripts

The extensive fieldnotes and interview transcripts generated by this project were managed using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo 7. Data analysis involved identifying and coding emerging themes, patterns and trends (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Coding and re-coding involved the constant comparison of data and the identification of themes, characteristics, categories, properties and contradictions. Coding is a 'sense-making' exercise in which the data is analysed as a way of establishing its meaning and relevance. It allows the more 'grounded' development of plausible explanations, and also allows determination of when data saturation (typically defined as the point at which no new codes are emerging in the data) is achieved (Glaser, 1994). Thematic coding of data allows the comprehensive drafting of theoretical memos in order to theorise relationships between codes. This step involves the more systematic elaboration of emergent research themes and codes in the analysis of research materials and the generation of research findings. Interpretations were shared with participants to evaluate whether they recognised themselves in my descriptions (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Categories and concepts emerged from the data but were, at the same time, shaped by my initial research interests regarding the cultural categories of young party drug users as expressed in language and practice.

As categories emerged from my data, I sought to add to my core group of research friends to further increase the diversity of my study. The purpose was to strengthen my emerging themes and theories by defining the properties of the categories, and

how those mediate the relationships between categories. A number of themes and patterns emerged in regards to my research friends' party drug use practices at rave/dance parties and clubs. Initially I had 28 themes, which I tightened and re-grouped, consolidating and linking relevant themes. Finally, the main themes I focused on were: commercialisation of the rave/dance party scene, subcultural capital, nostalgia, identity and ethnicity.

Overview of the wider NHMRC project

This thesis is one component of a larger multisite, multidisciplinary research project funded by National Health and Medical Research Council Project Grant 323212: "Improving understanding of psychostimulant-related harms in Australia: An integrated ethno-epidemiological approach" (hereafter referred to as the 'wider project'). The project involved the National Drug Research Institute, Curtin University of Technology; Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre; the School of Public Health and Community Medicine, University of NSW; and the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, The Australian National University.

The wider project focused on street-based injecting drug users in Sydney, rave/dance party and club drug users in Melbourne (this doctoral study) and recreational drug users in Perth. In each social network, the three ethnographers – Suzie Hudson (based in Sydney), myself (based in Melbourne) and Rachael Green (based in Perth) – conducted participant observation and in-depth interviews with young party drug users. Epidemiological surveys conducted by Rebecca Jenkinson were undertaken concurrently with the ethnographic fieldwork in the selected sites. Agent-based modelling was used to integrate the ethnographic and epidemiological data on individuals, social groups and drug markets. Agent-based modelling provided a specific focus for discussion, as well as a platform for running simulations to assess the potential impact of interventions such as pill testing on the prevalence of drug-related harms (for a more detailed discussion of the wider project, see Moore *et al*, 2009).

Data collection for wider the NHMRC project

During the research phase, I contributed to the wider multisite project through the regular provision of aggregated social and cultural data. As part of my involvement in the wider project, I attended bi-annual meetings with 10 other researchers. In these meetings, the PhD students conducting the ethnographic arm of the project (Rachael Green, Suzie Hudson and I) would provide summaries of our findings in the field, and the PhD student conducting the epidemiological component (Rebecca Jenkinson) would report on survey-related issues. In addition, the modellers involved in the project would discuss the integration of the ethnographic and epidemiological findings.

Midway through the fieldwork, the PhD students thought it would be beneficial to hold monthly teleconferences. During these teleconferences, we reported on the progress of our fieldwork and discussed any difficulties experienced in the field - we discussed our thoughts on the progress of the project and whether we were addressing aims for data collection. The ethnographic PhD students also provided feedback to the epidemiological student – on both the first and second survey instruments, which were designed to test some of the ethnographic findings in larger samples of young drug users. This feedback included the addition of extra questions or themes specific to the field sites, and the removal of some items from the second survey.

I also assisted in administering the epidemiological component of the study, which consisted of two surveys (in which I administered 60 questionnaires), conducted concurrently with my ethnographic fieldwork. The questionnaires took approximately 1 hour and respondents were reimbursed $30 for their time. Eligibility criteria for participation in the surveys were: 1) participants had to be aged 18-30 years old; and 2) to have used ecstasy, methamphetamine or cocaine at least once a month during the previous six months. Participants were recruited through targeted advertising (in music street press, on club/dance/drug websites, at events/dance parties) and through researcher contacts and peer referral. Whilst I administered the questionnaires, respondents would sometimes begin conversations on related topics which would feed into my fieldwork and could be further discussed in interviews.

For example, while I completed questionnaires with young men, some of them claimed to inject steroids or told me that their friends were using them.

Researching the familiar: The use of 'insider' knowledge

The positioning of ethnographers with respect to data collection and analysis is a central issue in both anthropology and sociology. Halstead (2001) identified the academic 'pressure' on indigenous fieldworkers to stand outside the group they are researching. However, as Abu-Lughod (1991: 139, 141) claims, such researchers cannot avoid also being the 'familiar'. For example:

> A person studying his or her own culture can be likened to a fish trying to describe water. While the insider is capable of noticing subtle local variations, the outsider is far more likely to notice the tacit understandings that local people take for granted as 'common sense' or 'natural' categories of thought (Monaghan and Just, 2000: 30).

However, a number of 'halfie' anthropologists (Abu-Lughod, 1991) draw on their 'insider' knowledge of particular areas, benefitting from their familiarity with the patterns of everyday life. As several recent ethnographic studies reveal, insider knowledge and familiarity with local settings substantially assist researchers to gain access to particular social groups and know which social roles to play once access is achieved. For example, Malbon (1999: 32) suggests that:

> My own background as a clubber was, I believe, crucial in establishing my credentials as someone who was both genuinely interested in and could readily empathise with [clubbers'] experiences rather than merely as someone who happened to be 'doing a project' on nightclubs as his 'job'.

Gary Armstrong, in his research on the 'Blades' (supporters of the Sheffield United Football Club), also claimed that his 'insider' status assisted in his research. He writes that: "A Sheffield background was vital for taking part in the chat and gossip

which took up a major part of the time when Blades met together" (1993: 26). Paul Hodkinson (2005: 139), in his ethnographic research on Goths, drew on Armstrong's work to argue that:

> An ability to share subcultural gossip, anecdotes and observations with respondents further enhanced initial rapport, as well as offering an invaluable and effective additional stimulus for conversation during the interviews themselves. While care must be taken to avoid leading respondents towards particular answers through such contributions, the ability sometimes to move interviews towards a situation of two-way exchange rather than the usual question-and-answer format can offer substantial advantages in terms of trust and conversational flow (Armstrong 1993: 26).

Hodkinson posited that an insider research position offers significant advantages during the research process and analysis. However, drawing on Bennett (2003), he cautioned that "such potential advantages are only realised when insider status is combined with a variety of generic social and research skills" (Hodkinson, 2005: 138). He also warned against complacency on the part of insider researchers and advocates a cautious and reflexive approach (an argument also made by Bennett, 2002).

Bennett argued that "such developments in ethnography resonate with a broader critique of sociological research's claim to provide 'objective' or 'value-free' analysis" (2002: 460-461). Thus, as Hine observed (2000: 42):

> The basis for claiming any kind of knowledge as asocial and independent of particular practices of knowing has come under attack, and ethnography has not been exempt. The naturalistic project of documenting a reality external to the researcher has been brought into question. Rather than being the records of objectively observed and pre-existing cultural objects, ethnographies have been reconceived as written and

unavoidably constructed accounts of objects created through disciplinary practices and the ethnographer's embodied and reflexive engagement.

For Bennett, "the use of 'insider knowledge' by contemporary youth and music researchers is simply following a current methodological trend in ethnographic work, at the centre of which is an open acknowledgment of the researcher's tiedness to space and place" (2002: 461). However, he has rightly drawn attention to studies of youth and music where researchers have displayed an uncritical acceptance of insider knowledge as an end in itself. He criticises youth and music researchers who are not reflexive about the research process:

> …youth and music researchers [tend] to engage in an uncritical celebration of their insider status as a means by which to distance themselves from *other* researchers whose interest is apparently motivated simply by the demands of the research project itself. However, as critical, self-reflective accounts of the research process in other areas of ethnographic sociological work reveal, there are contradictions present in the 'insider/researcher' role which often create tensions in the research setting (2002: 463).

During my fieldwork, a major advantage of my insider status was that I had already gained the trust of my participants, and I was also aware of the wider contexts of their lives, not just the rave/dance party context. Thus I experienced the advantages and limitations of both insider and outsider status (see below for further elaboration).

Critical reflexivity: Deconstructing the researcher/fan position

Several researchers, including Bennett (2002, 2003), Hodkinson, (2005), Marcus (1998) and Measham and Moore (2006), have called for critical reflexivity in relation to implicit insider knowledge in ethnographic studies. To quote Marcus (1998: 190): "What remains is how to deal with the fact of reflexivity, how to handle it strategically for certain theoretical and intellectual purposes". Measham and

Moore (2006), writing about music research, argued that many researchers are reluctantly reflexive in regard to their research. Bennett (2002: 461-2) went further, calling for a deconstruction of the researcher/fan position, arguing that:

> It is important for those who become researchers of music and style-centred youth cultures because of prior engagement as fans to effect a level of critical distance from the fact of being a fan, and from popular fanspeak contrast-pairings such as 'underground' and 'commercial'; 'authentic' and 'packaged'. At the same time, it is equally desirable that such critical distance does not result in the conducting of research from what Jenson refers to as the 'savannah of smug superiority', that fandom does not come to be perceived as 'what "they" do' (1992: 25, 19). Indeed, there may be much to learn about the social significance of contemporary youth cultures and music using an approach which combines critical reflexivity with an intimate knowledge of fan discourse.

Taking this into consideration, in the following section I provide a reflexive account of my method, critically examining some of the strengths and limitations of my insider position that I encountered during my fieldwork.

Strengths of my research method

My personal history and previous research provided valuable connections to a variety of people in the Melbourne club and dance party scene, ranging from organisers, DJs, bar staff, bouncers, promoters and 'punters' (those attending events). As outlined in the previous chapter, I was fortunate to have contacts within the rave/dance party scene dating from the mid-1990s including three of the major companies involved in the production of raves/dance parties. These companies allowed me into their events to undertake previous research, but excluded researchers whom they did not trust to interview their clientele regarding sensitive issues such as use of illegal drugs. As mentioned in Chapter 1, I undertook a research internship at a rave company in 1998 as part of my undergraduate studies at The

University of Melbourne. Later I was employed by the same rave company to administer market research surveys at their events from the 1999 to 2002.

I had established relationships with many of my core 'old skool ravers' prior to my PhD research and we had a high level of trust and rapport. As an insider, I could understand the complexities and subtleties of certain relationships and conversations which would have been difficult to distinguish for an outsider or somebody new to the scene. For instance, my background knowledge of changes in personal relationships and past events meant I had a more comprehensive understanding of people's lives. It also meant I was able to easily gain access to old skool ravers' extended networks.

My role as a researcher in the field is likely to have had a minimal impact on the people and settings I studied. As a researcher, I am a "positioned subject" (Rosaldo, 1989 cited in Moore, 1995: 2). My age, gender, ethnicity and class background combined to make me similar to my research friends and I was generally perceived as 'one of them' (i.e., as an insider). The conversations I had, the accounts I was given, and the practices that occurred in my presence were 'natural' and similar to those that would have occurred had I not been present. For example, it "has been noted in many previous studies [that] drug-using networks…often possess a large specialized argot" (Moore, 1992: 320). A positive feature of my study was that I was already familiar with the language used by this network. For example, I understood the meaning of terms like 'peaking' (used to describe the period of strongest feeling associated with ecstasy), 'racking up' (meaning preparing speed or cocaine to be snorted by tipping the powdered drug onto a smooth surface and cutting it into lines with a credit card or driver's licence), 'dropping' (swallowing ecstasy) and using a 'pippy' or 'cracky' (the small glass pipe used to smoke crystalline or powder methamphetamine). Of course, my research friends' perceptions of me were fluid, changing as circumstances, and our relationships, developed through the years of fieldwork, as is evident in the examples given later in the chapter.

Most old skool ravers believed my topic to be inherently interesting, so they would often express their opinions and thoughts on related issues, and would regularly introduce me to people they thought might be of interest to my research. Most

believed I was fortunate to hold such a position, some of whom would joke and ask "do you need me to be your assistant?" or comment "no way, how did you get a job like that?" They would often boast to their friends and acquaintances that "Christine is writing a book about us, do you want to be in it?"

Whilst researchers such as Pini, (2001), Thornton (1995) and Wilson (2006) have made significant contributions to our understandings of rave and club cultures, the majority of researchers have spent relatively short periods of time in the field. Even when they have spent longer periods in the field, they were not necessarily deeply immersed and often positioned themselves as outsiders. For example, Thornton wrote that "I was an outsider to the cultures in which I conducted research […] I was *working* in a cultural space in which everyone else (except DJs, door and bar staff, and perhaps the odd journalist) was at their *leisure*" (1995: 2). She also noted that her age, beginning her research at 23, and Canadian nationality (her participants were British), further contributed to this sense of detachment.

By contrast, I have a shared 'rave' history with many old skool ravers, having myself attended raves since 1996, when I was 17 years old. My research findings date back to my undergraduate surveys and interviews, conducted in 1998, followed by my Masters' research in 2002-03 and this doctoral research in 2006-07. This provides me with a unique and longitudinal perspective on changes in rave identities and culture. Knowing many of my research friends for over 10 years, and in some cases since we were children, I have seen them pass through different life stages and experiences. For example, I observed, as did Wilson (2006), a "waning of idealism" that young people experience at raves which can be attributed to an increased knowledge of rave politics and a greater understanding of hazards associated with party drug use. Wilson also wrote that "the long time ravers I spoke with suggested that as they gained more rave related experience they did not need to 'show off' their rave status to others" (2006: 111-112). My earlier research suggests this may indeed be true for a certain period of time (in some cases for several years); however, during my fieldwork, my research friends, the old skool ravers, returned to showing off their previous rave status to demonstrate their subcultural capital when perceived outsiders such as 'muzzas' began attending events (see Chapter 6).

Limitations of my research method

My research method was not entirely unproblematic. Although I benefitted from my insider knowledge, there is the possibility that I may have been too familiar with the setting and people involved, and could therefore have failed to observe some occurrences that a researcher new to the context may have noticed. During my fieldwork, one of the main methodological problems that emerged was how to remain critical in the context of a familiar setting. Mason (1996: 67–8) suggests that:

> Although the purpose of observation is to witness what is going on in a particular setting or set of interactions, the intellectual problem for the researcher is what to observe and what to be interested in. [The researcher] must work out how to tackle the questions of selectivity and perspective in observation, since any observation is inevitably going to be selective, and to be based upon a particular observational perspective.

I therefore had to balance being an insider with trying to maintain a critical distance from the research setting. Ruth Finnegan (1989), in her ethnographic study of local music-making in the English town of Milton Keynes, also had to balance this role. Finnegan was a resident of Milton Keynes, where she undertook her research, and, like me, was unable to take advantage of the reflexive detachment available to those ethnographic researchers who enter a new research setting for a given period of time, ultimately withdrawing to analyse their data and write-up the findings. Thus, as Finnegan observes, "the well-known issue of how far one should or should not 'become native' looks rather different, if still pressing, in one's own community. Being too much of an insider (and ceasing to be a detached observer) was always a danger" (Finnegan, 1989: 343).

In order to overcome this familiarity, regular discussions with my PhD supervisors assisted me to think critically about my research and the everyday occurrences and language I sometimes took for granted. For example, in the beginning of my research, I took for granted some of the old skool ravers' language and drug-using practices. Conversations, emails, meetings and teleconferences with the other PhD

students and researchers involved in the wider project were helpful in making me think critically about my observations and fieldnotes. In addition, I read descriptions of ethnographic methods (e.g., Buroway, 1991; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Hobbs and May, 1993; Moore, 1992) that examined issues such as negotiating access to the field, management of field relations and ethical codes. Finally, when I partially withdrew from the field, (September 2006 to early November 2006), the break provided me with some distance from my research friends' lives so that I could review my data more objectively.

Another methodological consideration was balancing my roles as 'friend' and 'researcher'. I had established relationships with several research friends who were also personal friends. Knowledge of past events in their lives had many benefits, as I noted above, but also had some limitations. At times, I had a strained relationship with Adam, one of my key research friends (a drug dealer) for reasons that will become clear in the following description of some of my interactions with him.

Case Study: Trying to 'pick up' using K

Two years prior to commencing my PhD research, Adam tried to 'pick up' Vivienne by 'shouting' her lines of ketamine (or 'K') and the following is my recollection of the night. A group of us were at a club in South Yarra. Adam was sitting near the dance floor 'racking up' lines of 'K' between his legs and 'shouting' everyone but paying particular attention to Vivienne, he took her away from the group, into another room, and gave her a greater amount of 'K', so her judgement would be impaired, and she would be 'out of it'. This was evident when she asked me "is it ok that I'm kissing Adam" (on previous occasions she had said she did not find Adam attractive). She also asked Adam directly "don't you have a girlfriend at home?" When I confronted him about Vivienne and asked what he was doing, he told me to "fuck off" and leave her there, because it was "none of my business". At this point I was extremely angry. Vivienne and I left with our friends Simon and Isabel.

After that night, I became wary and distrustful of Adam and did not speak to him for several months. However, Simon offered a different reading of the situation and claimed Vivienne accepted the free lines of 'K' of her own free will. A few months

later, Adam and I began talking to each other, mainly because he was a close friend of Simon's and we frequented the same clubs. Adam was a key research friend initially because, as he was a dealer, his house was often a focal point for everyone to congregate before and after going out clubbing. Midway through my research, Adam and Simon had an argument which ended their friendship; as the relationship I had with Adam was conditional on maintaining a relationship with Simon, I lost access to Adam as a research friend. This example also highlights that my gender did place some limitations on my access to information, particularly with respect to male-only conversations regarding drugs and women. For example, I was excluded from Simon and Adam's private conversations about that night, which may have been very different from those they engaged in with other people, especially with Simon initially siding with Adam over his treatment of Vivienne.

At other times, I found the fieldwork difficult because I saw friends experiencing health problems arising from their drug use. For example, as her use of ice increased dramatically over the years, Amanda became increasingly paranoid and constantly thought that strangers were following and spying on her. When I tried to talk to her about her drug use, she argued that her paranoia was not connected to her ice use and accused me of not believing her, claiming that some of the 'other' friends were 'bad' people. Amanda was assaulted on a night when she had asked me to attend a dance party with her. She claimed one of her other friends had eight free dance-party tickets, but I declined the offer because she phoned me late at 12.30am. The following day, I learnt that her male 'friend' had locked her and another woman in his house and assaulted her by punching her nose and pulling her hair. She only escaped because the assailant's father made him release the two women.

Vivienne also experienced serious health problems that appeared to be related to her drug use. After a weekend of using party drugs and alcohol, she experienced an erratic heartbeat and found it difficult to breathe whilst driving home from work. Shortly afterwards, she visited her local GP and he explained that it sounded like she 'almost' had a heart attack. Incidents like these highlighted the difficulties that could be experienced when positioned as both insider and outsider. At times, I questioned my loyalty as a friend, and felt guilty when recording negative or critical information, including the negative comments research friends would make about

one another. As the fieldwork progressed and I became more immersed in the research, the insider/outsider balance shifted and I developed a more critical and analytical stance towards the actions my research friends. This was beneficial for the process of data analysis, but presented significant challenges for me on a personal level as I attempted to maintain relationships with friends who were also my research participants.

In this thesis, I aim to give old skool ravers a voice through their expressed opinions and observations of people and their behaviour at clubs and dance parties, offering a plurality of opinions. Moreover, interpretations were discussed with my research friends to assess whether they recognised themselves in my accounts (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). This process generated further clarifications and sometimes provided new data which allowed for the development of more concise definitions of categories and concepts. Therefore, data analysis was inductive and iterative, in that interpretations were developed through observation, incorporated back into the research process to assess their explanatory power and used to guide the collection of further data (Moore, 1993a).

Ethical issues

My project raised several ethical issues. First, in relation to gaining informed consent, potential interviewees were given a Participant Information Sheet, which described all aspects of the study (including data collection methods, procedures for ensuring confidentiality, and so on). Consent to participate was audio-recorded at the beginning of the interview. Gaining written consent from participants would have raised ethical complications by requiring written admission of illegal behaviour. With respect to fieldwork, written informed consent was not sought because previous ethnographic drug research (Bourgois, *et al*; 1997; Maher, 2002) established that it can impede the creation of rapport. Furthermore, people's status in relation to the research cannot be established right away but depends on how relationships develop between potential participants and researcher, and between participants themselves. Groups being studied often contain people who do not end up being part of the research, so gaining their informed consent is unnecessary. There was also the issue of risking disclosure of participants' drug use to non-users. Therefore, participants

(during the early fieldwork stages) were verbally informed of the fieldwork, my position (PhD student), and the purposes of the research as soon as it was deemed viable and safe to do so. I always had a Participant Information Sheet available for any participants who sought further information, although none of them took me up on this offer.

A second ethical issue related to ensuring the anonymity of my research friends. The in-depth interviews and ethnographic fieldnotes did not record any identifying information (e.g., people and places) and pseudonyms are used for all participants mentioned in the thesis. Furthermore, no identifying information (whether about individual participants or clubs) has been used in the reporting of research results including this PhD thesis, conference presentations and articles in peer-reviewed journals.

The third ethical issue concerns the potential risks for participants arising from the research. The young people with whom I spent time with were engaged in the illegal activity of party drug use, and the information I collected could have been damaging to their relationships with family, employers and others, and could have put them at risk of prosecution if it had become publicly available in a form enabling identification. To minimise this risk, data collection, management, analysis and publication incorporated stringent procedures to ensure confidentiality. The young people involved in this research were asked about their own use of party drugs and any related problems they had experienced; although my previous research suggests that this would not cause the participants undue distress, I always carried contact numbers for counselling and other services and agencies and, if necessary, would have facilitated access to appropriate services. I also carried information on reducing drug-related harm for distribution in the event of observing risky drug-using practices.

In this chapter I discussed the methods and ethical considerations pertaining to the data collected for this thesis; in the following chapter I consider the place of party drugs in the lives of research participants. I describe the people, places and social

organisation of party drug use to provide a broad context for the empirical chapters that follow.

Chapter 4

Setting the scene: Introducing the people, places and social organisation of party drug use

In this chapter, I set the scene for the ethnographic analysis presented in the following chapters by introducing my research friends and describing the contexts and social organisation of their party drug use. The use of party drugs is a lived practice and the cultural meanings and social contexts constituting and constituted by this use varied. Despite these variations, several themes and patterns emerge in regards to the party drug use practices of my research friends. These themes emerge not only in terms of the basic ethnographic questions of what, where, how and with whom, but also through people's interpretations of their own and other people's behaviour whilst using party drugs.

Introducing the 'old skool ravers'

During my doctoral fieldwork, I came into contact with hundreds of party drug users. I recorded fieldnotes and had regular contact with a subset of 60 people aged between 18 and 38 years old, but the majority of fieldwork was spent with a core group of 12 research friends, most of whom identified as 'old skool ravers' (see Table 3 on the following page). The membership of this core group changed during the course of my fieldwork for a variety of reasons, including people moving interstate and relationships changing between group members. The vast majority of the party drug users with whom I had contact during this period were involved, to various degrees, in the Melbourne dance party and dance club scene; they included rave/dance party organisers, DJs, promoters, door staff, bouncers and general participants or 'punters'. As I noted in Chapter 3, access to, and familiarity with, a range of people occupying all levels of the scene was facilitated by a long-standing personal and professional involvement in the rave/dance party scene which began in the mid-1990s.

Core group

Most of my core group of 12 research friends had been attending raves since the mid-1990s, when most of them were aged in their mid- to late-twenties. At the time of my fieldwork, people within the core group were aged between 21 and 33 years old, with the majority aged in their mid-twenties. The core group was composed of slightly more men than women (7 and 5 respectively) and, with the exception of two gay men, all were heterosexual. All but one had completed secondary school, two were engaged in tertiary study and part-time work, and the remainder worked full-time in the trade and service industries (including one man who was a 'drug dealer'). Table 3 below provides brief details (pseudonym, gender, age, suburb of residence and rave/club history) of the 25 research friends I interviewed. All 12 core research friends were interviewed and 13 from the wider network of 60 participants. The names of those marked in bold font considered themselves to be 'old skool ravers'.

Table 3. Interviewed research friends (n=25)

NAME	GENDER	AGE	SUBURB	RAVE/CLUB HISTORY
Adam	Male	34	Western suburbs	Attending raves and clubs since mid-1990s
Amanda	Female	27	Western suburbs	Attending raves and clubs since mid-1990s
Arianne	Female	28	Northern suburbs	Attending clubs since mid-1990s and raves from late-1990s
Ben	Male	24	Western suburbs	Club promoter since 2007
Brad	Male	23	Western suburbs	Attending raves and clubs since mid/late-1990s
Chloe	Female	32	Inner suburbs	Attending raves and clubs since mid-1990s
Christian	Male	19	Northern suburbs	Attending clubs since mid-2000s
Dan	Male	18	Northern suburbs	Attending clubs since mid-2000s
Daniel	Male	21	Northern	Attending raves and clubs since

				suburbs	early-2000s
Dave	Male	18	Northern suburbs	Attending clubs since late-2000s
Guy	Male	22	Northern suburbs	Attending raves and clubs since early-2000s
Isabel	Female	27	Northern suburbs	Attending raves and clubs since mid-1990s
Jack	Male	23	Eastern suburbs	Club promoter since mid-2000s
Jones	Male	29	Western suburbs	Attending raves and clubs since early-1990s
Kate	Female	27	Western suburbs	Attending raves and clubs since mid-1990s
Lucas	Male	35	Eastern suburbs	Rave organiser since late-1990s
Mark	Male	25	Western suburbs	Attending raves and clubs since mid-1990s
Michael	Male	22	Western suburbs	Attending clubs since early-2000s
Natalie	Female	20	Eastern suburbs	Attending raves and clubs since early-2000s
Seb	Male	24	Eastern suburbs	Attending raves and clubs since late-1990s
Simon	Male	34	Inner Eastern suburbs	Attending clubs since early-90s and raves since late-1990s
Tristan	Male	33	Inner Eastern	Rave organiser since early-1990s
Tyrone	Male	28	Western suburbs	Attending raves and clubs since mid-1990s
Victoria	Female	32	Interstate	Club organiser and attending raves and clubs since mid-90s
Vivienne	Female	27	Western suburbs	Attending raves and clubs since mid-1990s

Seven members of the core group - Vivienne, Ben, Amanda, Michael, Jones, Tyrone and Adam - lived in close proximity in the outer western suburbs. Vivienne and Ben were neighbours and had attended the same secondary school as Amanda and Jones. Jones was also Vivienne's cousin. Tyrone was a close family friend of Jones and Vivienne. Michael was the youngest at 21 years old and the former partner of Vivienne, but they remained friends during the fieldwork period. Isabel and Arianne lived in the outer northern suburbs and had been friends since secondary school. Isabel was related to Vivienne. Simon and Seb lived in the inner eastern suburbs and Simon was the partner of Isabel. From this core group, Vivienne, Isabel, Amanda, Jones, Tyrone and Ben began attending raves in the mid-1990s with Jones taking Vivienne and Tyrone to their first rave. Vivienne then introduced Isabel, Amanda and Ben to raves, and in turn, Isabel initiated Arianne, her old secondary school friend, who had been a clubber in the late-1990s. Isabel met her partner Simon during the early-2000s whilst out clubbing with Ben and they were subsequently introduced to Simon's friends Adam (the dealer) and Kate. Seb was introduced to the group by Ben, whom he briefly dated.

The diversity in location partly reflects my personal background and long involvement in the rave/dance party and club scenes. The majority of the core group lived in the parental home or in share houses, with a few paying off mortgages on their own homes. Their incomes ranged between approximately AUD$25,000 and $60,000 per annum. Throughout the research period, the majority of the core group were single. Some had casual relationships during this time, with a minority in long-term relationships; only Jones was married. Thornton (1995) noted that loss of interest in clubbing or raving typically coincides with moving out of the parental home and forming romantic relationships. None of my core research friends had children. Ten of the core group were of Southern European heritage, with one from an Anglo-Celtic background and one from a Middle Eastern background. Eleven were born in Australia and ten were bilingual.

The larger networks of 60 key participants

Many of the people that I saw on a regular basis (and recorded fieldnotes on) were linked to my core group or worked at clubs or dance parties, some of whom I knew

because of my previous rave participation. Their social networks featured clusters of close relationships linked to other clusters by bridging ties. For example, some members of this subset were long-term friends from childhood, school or tertiary education, whereas others were related to each other, were friends of friends, partners or ex-partners. Members of the subset ranged from 18 to 38 years of age and had diverse backgrounds and histories of drug use. This group came from various ethnic backgrounds, mainly European, Anglo-Celtic and Middle Eastern. Their level of education varied from Year 10 to tertiary degrees. The majority worked full time in a range of employment positions from trade and service industries to professional positions. Most lived in the western, northern and eastern suburbs of Melbourne.

Drug use: Past and present

Most of my core group members had similar histories of party drug use. Many had been using party drugs recreationally for over a decade; some had used them for 1-5 years. It is important to note that by the time my research commenced, several of my research friends no longer used party drugs regularly (i.e., at least monthly) for a variety of reasons (e.g., the perceived low purity of party drugs or a preference for alcohol). Most had experimented with tobacco, alcohol and cannabis in their teens, then began using LSD at rave parties in the mid-1990s when they were aged 16-18 years, before progressing to the use of ecstasy and speed at around 18-19 years of age.

Over the course of their party drug-using careers, all of my core research friends had used cannabis ('choof'),[10] ecstasy ('pills'), powder amphetamine ('speed'), cocaine ('coke'), and crystalline methamphetamine ('ice'). Eleven had used LSD ('acid'), ten had used ketamine ('K'), two had used GHB ('G') and one had used heroin ('H' or 'smack'). The average number of party drugs ever used by each member was six. The majority drew a sharp distinction between ice, heroin and GHB (often referring to them as 'gutter drugs'), and all other drugs, associating the former with addiction and often using the term 'junkie' to describe those who regularly consumed them. For example, Adam and Amanda were regular ice users (at least twice weekly) and

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[10] In keeping with my ethnographic approach, I employ the colloquial names for drugs, because this is how my research friends referred to them.

they were stigmatised by the wider group who used ice less frequently. Amanda and Ben had experimented with G in the past, with this drug being seen as harmful and dangerous, except by one of the gay men, who enjoyed its use.

At the time of the fieldwork, the drugs most accessible to and commonly used by my research friends were alcohol, tobacco, ice, speed and pills. Coke and choof were used on a semi-regular basis (less than monthly for most). There was no use of acid[11] and K[12] during the fieldwork period, and little use of G.[13] Coke was used rarely - when the opportunity arose. Several preferred combinations of party drugs were identified in interviews: speed with ecstasy, alcohol with speed, cocaine and speed, and ecstasy and ice.

The frequency of each person's party drug use varied over the fieldwork period. Two key factors usually determined when and how often a person used party drugs: work and money. Party drug use during work hours was not practiced by the majority. Most did not use party drugs between Monday and Friday, at least partly because of the impact this would have on their ability to work. Instead, party drug use was limited to Friday and Saturday nights. Often, party drug use would commence on a Friday evening around 9 or 10pm, although not all of my research friends used party drugs each week; some used fortnightly or monthly. Holiday periods and the summer months generally coincided with increased party drug use. The availability of money also constrained their choices about when and how often to use party drugs, and when to abstain. Occasionally, 'shouts' from friends (gifts of drugs), and on a few occasions strangers, led to party drug use.

The general patterns of party drug use among old skool ravers can be divided into two categories – 'caning it' on big nights and 'just drinking' on low-key nights. These categories usually shaped their general intentions regarding the drug/s they

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[11] LSD was most commonly used amongst this group during the mid- to late-1990s when they attended rave/dance parties.
[12] Ketamine was regularly used amongst this group during 2002-03 and this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.
[13] GHB was not used in my presence and one of the two people who had consumed the drug did so prior to the fieldwork period.

planned to use. Big nights involved polydrug use (e.g., ecstasy, speed, ice) and alcohol, whereas consumption on low-key nights was usually limited to alcohol.

'Caning it': The big night

A typical Friday or Saturday evening for old skool ravers would begin at a private house. Those attending would arrive with alcohol and party drugs (a half or full gram of speed/ice and a pill or two each), depending on their finances. The group usually left the house around 10 or 11pm, reaching their destination between 11pm and midnight. If they were attending a rave/dance party, they would usually pre-purchase tickets; if they were attending a club they would usually have their names on a guest list (paying a discounted price at the door). On Friday and Saturday nights, most clubs opened at 10pm and closed at 6am the following morning, as did most rave/dance parties. Some nights they came home 'early' at 3am or 4am, but most nights would last until sometime between 6am and 9am the following day. At this stage, they would decide whether they wanted to go home or continue to 'stay up' and use additional party drugs at a person's home or gamble at the casino or a gaming machine venue. A big night would generally cost my research friends from $100 to $300 per person. The following extract describes some of the key features of a big night and is drawn from fieldnotes made in March 2006.

I arrive at Jones' house at 8.30pm one Saturday night. Vivienne, Isabel, Jones, Andrew, Charlize and Peter are sitting around the backyard drinking Pulse (a pre-packaged vodka and energy drink). After some discussion, they decide to go to a club – 'Midnight Run'. Isabel calls Ben to ask him to add our names to the guest list because he has "made friends with the door bitch[14] last week". We then meet up with Ben (Vivienne's neighbour) and she buys three pills from his friend Jack. Vivienne consumes her pill (an 'orange dolphin'[15]) right away.

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[14] 'Door bitch' is the colloquial term for women operating the cash register at the entry to clubs. They were so named because of their power to restrict entry into the clubs. Interestingly, door men were not referred to in such a negative way but bouncers were viewed in overtly negative ways because of their perceived aggressive and negative attitude as well as their physical size.

[15] Pills were referred to by their brand name or sometimes by their colour (see Chapter 7).

We both go into Vivienne's house to get ready. Michael arrives. Vivienne says, "I can feel the pill, do you want yours Michael?" Michael replies, "I'll wait till we get there [to the club]". Amanda also arrives shortly after Michael, saying "I went to a friend's place [last night] and we had a bit of speed and some blue dolphins and pink doves but we didn't go out. I'm like a stoner [feeling laid back or relaxed from the effects of cannabis] on speed these days". I ask "did you sleep at all?" Amanda replies, "I had about 5 hours sleep". Vivienne is in a good mood and says "this pill is pretty good, I hope it lasts till we get there". In response to Vivienne's positive assessment of her pill, Michael says, "OK, give me mine then".

After waiting for a taxi for 30 minutes, Amanda says "fuck it, I'll just drive". We drive to South Yarra in Amanda's car. Amanda, Michael and Vivienne each have a line of speed in the car before we enter the club. There are two queues: one for people on the club's guest list, the other for general admission. Ben, who had arrived at the club earlier, comes outside to meet us and says, "come on the guest list side and say you are on a guest list, they don't check until inside when you pay". The 'door bitch' is tall, thin, has short, spiky red hair, dramatic make-up (dark lipstick and eye shadow), and wears a see-through lacy black singlet covered by a small sleeveless vest. She holds a clipboard and displays a matter-of-fact attitude when she yells out, "Guest list doesn't guarantee you entry tonight!" She says to the people standing around but not in the queues: "Please get off the road, you're a public liability and for your own safety as well".

After waiting 20 minutes, Vivienne asks the bouncer, Anthony: "Hey, do you think you can help us out? Do you know my cousin Jones?" After a pause, Anthony lets us through the barrier where we pay the entrance fee. The venue has modern décor. The bar is large, made mostly from glass and features clever lighting in a range of colours giving the bar a futuristic appearance. A Blondie concert and a kung fu movie are playing on two large plasma screens to our right, the dance floor is in the centre and there is a stage at the front. The music playing is house and there are about 500 people on the first floor of the venue.

Ben shows me the second floor balconies that overlook the first floor. There are approximately two hundred people upstairs, most sitting down or standing around

talking. Ben and I look over the balcony and Ben says "this is a gay-friendly club; they don't let groups of wog guys in". I reply, "the venue is great, but I don't know about the music. There's no bass". Ben replies, "The music is all right, it'll get better". I ask Ben "how are you going?" and he replies, "I'm all right, I've only had one pill". I ask whether he plans to have more. Ben replies, in an annoyed voice, "I don't know. Jack has already sold seven on his own in here, we'll see". Ben is annoyed because he will only be able to receive more free pills if Jack doesn't sell all of them.

Vivienne then asks Ben for more pills. Ben suggests that she ask Jack. Vivienne buys three pills from Jack and 'shouts' Amanda one of them because Amanda shouted Vivienne some speed earlier in the evening. Vivienne swallows her pill whilst sitting on the couch, giving Michael and Amanda one pill each. Amanda, who by her own admission is not a 'pill person' and who prefers stimulants such as speed or ice, goes to the toilet to have her half-pill.

We dance for a while and then decide to walk to Orchard, another club located in the road. Orchard is a small club with a single floor and a patron capacity of between 300 and 400. In contrast to the house music at Midnight Run, 'hard' trance music (blends traditional trance sounds [melodic] with harder elements more reminiscent of techno) is playing. There are two bars, one near the entrance and another at the rear of the venue. The dance floor is in the centre of the room with a small, elevated booth for the DJ. Behind the DJ is a partially sectioned-off area. The venue has brick walls painted red and mirrors behind the bars. Red couches surround the dance floor. 'Antique' lamps sit on small tables next to the couches. Hundreds of little white flags hang from the roof and change colour when illuminated by the laser lights. Most of the crowd is aged in their twenties with many of them wearing clubbing clothes. The majority appear to be from European, Anglo-Celtic or Middle Eastern backgrounds.

At approximately 5am, Amanda drives to a friend's house in St Kilda to buy more ice. She and Vivienne smoke some ice in the car whilst Michael and I watch, and then we return to Orchard once more. There are a few hundred people inside. We dance for a while and then leave about 7am for Vivienne's house. Amanda smokes some more ice in Vivienne's bedroom while Vivienne, Andrew and Michael chat in

the lounge room. At about 8.30am, Vivienne announces that "I'm going to try and go to sleep" and we take this as our cue to leave.

In summary, the main elements of a 'big night' were: extensive polydrug use, often combined with heavy alcohol consumption (typically more than 10 standard drinks); visits to several clubs or a dance party; expenditure of several hundred dollars per person; and partying (in a club or at a friend's home) until 7am or 8am.

'Just drinking': The low-key night

In contrast to 'caning it', which featured heavy drinking and extensive polydrug use, low-key nights involved 'just [heavy] drinking'. These nights typically occurred on Sundays but could occur on Fridays or Saturdays when my research friends decided they needed a break from party drugs or did not have the required money for a big night. The venues frequented for low-key nights were generally local and were often pubs or bars rather than dance clubs, entry was usually free and drinks were cheaper than the clubs located in the city centre, however, there were occasions when dance clubs were visited on low-key nights. On these occasions, old skool ravers would arrive at the club around 6 or 7pm and leave around midnight-1am.[16] A low-key night would cost between $40 and $100 per person. The following extract is drawn from fieldnotes recorded in February 2006 and describes some of the key features of a 'low-key' night.

Vivienne calls me one Sunday afternoon to ask if I want to go to the Yacht Tavern for a few drinks with herself and Michael. We arrive at the venue around 6pm and are pleased to see that there is no queue. We walk through a passage way, which is lined with framed photographs of famous footballers and celebrities (the tavern is part-owned by a high-profile footballer). We reach the main room, which has a large circular bar in its centre and tables and chairs around the left-hand side. The kitchen is located on the right-hand side and is open until about 9pm. Adjourning the main room is a large outdoor area with a small stage (a live band plays every Sunday) and a moderate-sized dance floor and bar area, which is partly undercover. There are also

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[16] Clubs usually opened earlier on Sundays compared with Friday or Saturday nights, when they often opened at 10pm or later.

tables and chairs around the outdoor area which are not undercover. We proceed to the bar in the main room. Vivienne says, "I'm buying" and purchases a bottle of white wine. Michael finds us a table outside. The crowd appears to be enjoying the band and there are approximately 100 people on the dance floor, many of whom are singing along to the music. The crowd consists mainly of people in their early twenties and the dress code appears to be similar to club attire: tight jeans, singlets and tops for the women, and t-shirts or shirts and jeans for the men. Most of the night is spent drinking beer and mixed spirits, mingling with friends and strangers, and occasionally dancing. At 11pm, the band finishes and we leave along with most people.

In summary, the main elements of a low-key night were: heavy alcohol consumption; a visit to a single club or bar; an early finish (usually before midnight) and expenditure in the range of $50-$100.

'Scoring and using': Patterns of drug consumption

Old skool ravers preferred to purchase their party drugs through known dealers, friends or acquaintances prior to attending clubs and dance parties, but it was also common for them to 'score' at these venues (these practices are described in detail in Chapter 7). $30 was the going rate for one pill but this dropped to as low as $20 if the pills were bought in bulk (i.e., as a '10 pack'). Adam, the sole dealer in the group, paid as little as $12 per pill. Speed generally cost about $200 per gram or $100 per half-gram. Ice and coke were more expensive – both cost around $150 for a half-gram and $300 per gram.

Preferred modes of administration of party drugs for my research friends depended on the drug type but the most common methods were swallowing or snorting (used intranasally). There was some smoking (mainly of ice) but no intravenous drug use by the core group.

Speed (powder methamphetamine) and coke were usually snorted. The usual practice would involve tipping the speed or coke powder onto a hard surface, frequently a compact mirror or CD cover, and then cutting it into lines using a credit

card. The lines were then snorted through a rolled-up bank note or drinking straw (which had been trimmed to about 10cm). On some occasions, speed was consumed in a drink or rubbed on the gums (old skool ravers believed that rubbing speed on the gums produced a more rapid onset of effects than drinking it).

In general, snorting speed was considered by my research friends to produce quicker and more intense drug effects than drinking the drug with liquids. Some members of the core group claimed that snorting speed was usually associated with a hyperactive mind whereas drinking it was felt through the entire body but the feeling was less intense. Towards the end of my fieldwork, core group members began to smoke speed. However, this method required a different form of speed called "rock", which was more combustible and therefore easier to smoke than the powdered version. Rock speed commanded a higher price because it could be smoked.

Pills were most commonly swallowed by my core research friends. On occasion, they were snorted, particularly if there were more people than pills available. At the time of the fieldwork, old skool ravers purchased only tablet forms of ecstasy, which were ground into powder and snorted. There were no capsules available during this time, even though they were considered more potent (in Chapter 7, I describe the different types of pills and their brands in greater detail).

Ice was usually smoked using a small glass pipe commonly known as a 'crack pipe', 'cracky' or 'pippy'. The ice (which was more granulated in texture than speed and so was often referred to as 'rock') was placed in the pipe and then heated with a lighter whilst gently turning the pipe and inhaling the ice vapour. Experienced users often claimed that they could gauge the purity of the ice from the way it burned. The pipe was usually cleaned by heating it over a gas stove to remove any burn residue, then washed with water and dried with a tissue.

Typical contexts for use

Party drug use amongst my research friends took place in various locations.

Home

Party drug sessions usually began at private homes, where my research friends would gather before going to a dance party or club. Typically, they consumed a few drinks, usually pre-mixed drinks (such as Jack Daniels and Coca-Cola or Smirnoff Ice) or energy drinks combined with alcohol (such as Pulse or 'Jagerbombs'). In addition, a few lines of speed were often consumed to 'get in the mood' for partying. On occasion, pills were used at home, but this was generally when speed was unavailable. The majority preferred to save their pills until they had arrived at a club or rave/dance party.

Clubs

Most of the clubs attended by my research friends were located in Melbourne's Central Business District (CBD) or in the South Yarra/Prahran or St Kilda entertainment precincts. At the end of June 2007:

> there were 17,519 liquor licenses in Victoria of which 1,033 were authorised to trade to 3am or later (comprising 270 in the CBD, 565 metro & 198 country). Of these, only 719 are defined as nightclubs or bars (the others being gaming venues, clubs, restaurants, etc). These businesses comprise 4% of the licensed premises in Victoria (Iwaniuk, 2008).

Melbourne's CBD

Melbourne is the capital of the State of Victoria, and the second most populous city in Australia. As a multicultural city, it has often been viewed as a 'melting pot' with residents from over 230 countries (Victorian Multicultural Commission, 2007: 31). Moreover, "43.6% or 2,152,279 Victorians were either born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas" (Victorian Multicultural Commission, 2007: 9).

Melbourne's CBD is home to many bars, pubs and clubs, the two largest clubs being The Metro (renamed since fieldwork as The Palace) and the Queens Bridge Hotel or QBH, located in the Southbank precinct. Each of these venues has the capacity to

hold approximately 2,000 people. The *100%* lift-out section of the street magazine *Beat* (which has been published in Melbourne for about 20 years, and which focuses on dance music and associated venues) lists 96 clubs and bars in the CBD and the adjoining commercial and residential areas of Southbank and Docklands.

South Yarra and Prahran

The suburb of South Yarra, home to some of Melbourne's most prestigious residential addresses, is located 4km south-east of Melbourne's CBD. At the 2006 Census, South Yarra had a population of 17,992 residents (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007). The South Yarra entertainment precinct, including Toorak Road and Chapel Street, has many boutique shops, restaurants, bars, clubs and a cinema complex known as the Jam Factory. Beat lists 27 clubs and bars in South Yarra and the bordering suburb of Prahran, with its popular Greville Street shopping strip which includes several bars, clubs and cafes.

St Kilda

St Kilda is a bayside suburb in Melbourne, 6km south of Melbourne's CBD and one of the main centres of nightlife. St Kilda is home to many of Melbourne's famous tourist attractions including Luna Park, the Esplanade Hotel, Acland and Fitzroy Streets, St Kilda Beach and several renowned theatres and music venues. St Kilda has a diverse population ranging from marginalised street sex workers and homeless drug injectors to recently-arrived 'yuppies'. It hosts many of Melbourne's big events and festivals. The Acland and Fitzroy Street shopping strips are home to many cafes, bars and clubs. *Beat* lists 26 clubs and bars in St Kilda.

Clubs frequented during fieldwork

During the fieldwork period, I attended 26 different clubs with my research friends. Various establishments catered for, or were frequented by, different types of clientele. Nevertheless, the majority of them shared some common elements of structure and design. All had bars located within the main structure of the building, often with tables and chairs or stools situated around the perimeter for the use of

patrons, and with dance floors in the main areas. Most clubs we attended played dance music and were open until the early hours of the morning. On some occasions, we attended clubs that played other types of music such as 'RnB' (rhythm and blues). Speed and pills were usually consumed inside toilet cubicles at these venues but sometimes pills were openly consumed on the dance floor or at surrounding tables. At other times, smoking ice or snorting a few lines of speed took place in a nearby car.

The clubs attended by old skool ravers were often distinguished by the type of clientele they attracted. Most of the clubs we attended had fairly comparable entry and alcohol prices; nevertheless, most of my research friends observed that different "types" of people frequented different clubs.

The 'in' clubs

'In' clubs (as in currently fashionable) were supposedly frequented by a 'cool', 'classy' and 'good-looking' crowd. The clientele in these clubs appeared to be mainly of Anglo-Celtic or European backgrounds with minorities appearing to be from Southern European and Middle Eastern backgrounds. There was a noticeable absence of Asian, Indian and African clientele. A protocol was followed when we attended such clubs, beginning with the securing of a group member's name on the guest list; this could usually be done through a friend or relative of one of the core group members. A second aspect of this protocol was to wear appropriate clothing, including designer-label clothing and accessories, in order to ensure entry. The women typically wore tight jeans and tops, or dresses with high-heeled shoes, while the men wore collared shirts or designer-label t-shirts, jeans and shoes. If a large group was attempting entry to an 'in' club, we would break into threes (usually two women per man) as this was considered more likely to guarantee entry. It was more difficult for large groups to gain entry, especially if they were made up solely of men.

On occasion, one of my research friends or myself would be an associate or acquaintance of a bouncer or 'door bitch', which would typically guarantee the group's entry – often at a discounted price and without having to queue. A few of my

core research friends worked as hosts or promoters at some of these clubs, which assisted the group to gain entry and receive complimentary drinks. On occasion, when we were not on a guest list, a 'cool' attitude and knowing how to speak to bouncers and the 'door bitch' without coming across as over-eager or excessively confident was essential. It is important to note that a name on a guest list did not necessarily guarantee entry, but certainly assisted the process. Typically, Saturday nights were considered the most difficult to gain entry into clubs, with often stricter door policies and queues ranging up to the hundreds during peak periods. Once inside such clubs, everyone could relax and get ready to party. This usually involved heading to the bar and purchasing drinks, followed by a trip to the toilets to snort a few more lines of speed or drop a pill.

My research friends attended these clubs for several reasons. In Vivienne's words, they were patronised by 'cooler' and 'better-looking people' and played 'rocking' music. The music played at these clubs was considered 'better' than the commercial dance, RnB and retro that they often heard at mainstream/commercial clubs (defined below). Another positive aspect was that the women in the group were less likely to be approached by 'drunk' and 'sleazy' men. This was because the clientele appeared to be using party drugs (often in combination with alcohol) and they generally kept to their own groups, so women would not be hassled, which was common in commercial clubs. It is important to note that 'in' clubs retained their status for a few weeks or months and then the 'cool kids' would move to the next 'in' club. This was particularly the case when perceived undesirables or outsiders, defined by my research friends as 'suburbanites', 'teeny boppers' and 'muzzas' (the focus of Chapter 6), began to frequent the 'in' clubs. Their attendance would lead to a loss of status for the club and it would subsequently be viewed as 'going downhill'.

'Commercial' clubs

The 'suburbanites', 'teeny boppers' and 'muzzas' 'rejected' from 'in' clubs were viewed by 'old skool ravers' as the types of patron more likely to frequent 'commercial' clubs (Vivienne once described them as 'normal' and 'ugly'). No protocol was required as entry to these clubs could be gained with little or no difficulty, which made the idea of a 'guest list' redundant. Unless someone appeared

heavily intoxicated or annoyed the bouncers, most people were permitted entry. The perceived positives in attending such clubs were that there was no pressure associated with attendance, mainly because the dress style was relaxed in comparison to that required for entry to the 'in' clubs. It is important to note that the ethnic diversity at these 'commercial' clubs appeared to be more pronounced, with a mixture of Anglo-Celtic, European, Asian, Middle Eastern and Indian patrons. These types of club were a realistic option, particularly when the men heavily outnumbered the women or when a group of men wanted to go clubbing.

Dance parties

Most dance parties were held in licensed venues such as large clubs (capacity approximately 2,000 people) or large sporting and entertainment complexes (capacity approximately 15,000 people). During my fieldwork, I attended 10 dance parties with my research friends, most of them located in Melbourne's CBD, St Kilda, South Yarra or Prahran. Generally speaking, my friends would pre-purchase tickets and party drugs, often consuming greater amounts than if attending a regular club night. There was no dress policy involved and everyone who had a ticket was permitted entry. My research friends would often be excited to see some of their favourite international DJs (see Chapter 5).

Cars

Party drugs were also regularly consumed in cars. Before entering a club, my research friends often snorted a few lines of speed or smoked a few pipes of ice in a car. During the evening, one or two 'chill out' breaks were taken in the car (depending on how far away it was parked from the club; if it was considered too far away, the club toilets were used instead).

Less common venues frequented by 'old skool ravers' when they used party drugs included shopping centres, the casino and other gaming venues. However, party drug use was generally not intended for these settings but they were frequented afterwards – for example, if a club was 'no good', they might visit the casino. My research friends would often express sentiments of regret after attending gaming venues,

mainly because they would lose more money than they intended. They claimed that they were unable to control their spending under the influence of stimulants such as speed and ice. These types of venues were rarely frequented when using pills and alcohol separately or in combination. The stimulant properties of speed and ice, especially not being able to sleep, were seen as key contributing factors to the desire to gamble.

'Party people'

On most occasions when my research friends gathered to drink and consume party drugs, they would do so with people of similar age and similar socio-economic status. Party drug companions were usually similarly-aged relatives, partners and, old or recent friends, some of whom were friends from school or colleagues from work. Generally speaking, my research friends did not take party drugs with people they did not know, unless that person was introduced to a party drug session by a friend or relative. Most of the time women and men used party drugs together, except for when they were consumed inside the cubicles in male and female toilets. Party drug use was almost universally regarded as a group activity, with lone party drug use being extremely rare. I learned of only one case during fieldwork where a person used ice alone on a regular basis.

When people who abstained from using party drugs joined the group at clubs and rave/dance parties, they were generally not involved in party drug sessions which often took place in the toilet cubicles or cars. When such people accompanied us on our nights out, it was usually because they were friends or relatives of at least one member of the group. They were not pressured to use party drugs, which were often used covertly in their presence.

Benefits associated with party drug use

The effects of party drug use were understood to be complex, contradictory and variable, and all of the people with whom I talked were aware of the range of experiences produced by the same drugs. Party drugs could make people happy, energetic and sociable – enabling them to talk to strangers and potential sexual

partners, and motivating them to dance without inhibition. They also made users relax and escape the pressures and stresses of the 'real world'. The following brief accounts give some sense of old skool ravers' views and establish why they use party drugs in the contexts described above. Their views on drug-related benefits echo some of those documented in the research literature (e.g., Collin and Godfrey, 1997; Duff *et al*, 2007; Jackson, 2004; Malbon, 1999; Moore, 1995; Siokou, 2002).

Experiencing pleasure, happiness and enjoyment were common motivations for using party drugs. Party drug use was considered to be good fun and capable of making people happy because of their effects on feelings and emotions, and due to observation of other people who were using party drugs. Party drug use, which often included concurrent alcohol use, brought my research friends together socially. Old skool ravers would be more social and talk with one another about things that had been happening in their lives and in the lives of other people they knew, and discuss relationships and events that had happened in Melbourne and beyond. For example, Simon said: "Ecstasy, if it's a good pill, when I feel good pills you feel a good camaraderie with people, you know, everyone's your brother, everyone's your sister" (July 2007).

The stimulant properties of many party drugs was another common motivation for their use. They were perceived as being functional because they provided stamina for all-night dancing. For example, "speed's moving fast, you know, and you're like talking fast and moving fast" (Simon, June 2007).

Using party drugs and drinking alcohol also allowed people to relax and unwind. The 'relaxation' induced by party drugs and alcohol was of a special kind, because it did not necessarily involve rest. The research friends who told me that party drugs and alcohol helped them to relax were the same people who would party until the early hours of the morning. Party drug use and drinking enabled them to forget about work and relax in the sense that they would be able to feel more at ease around other people. The act of consuming party drugs and alcohol held considerable meaning as a way of differentiating periods of work from periods of recreation.

According to Gusfield, alcohol acts as a symbolic marker of the move from work to leisure. Within the domain of leisure, he also distinguishes a subset called "play": "Play is […] leisure characterized by spontaneity, by unscheduled action, by a blurring of social boundaries and by activity which is chiefly unproductive from an economic viewpoint" (Gusfield, 1987: 84). Most alcohol and party drug consumption amongst my research friends was consistent with Gusfield's characterisation of "play", within the more general domain of "leisure". Furthermore, the "play", pleasure and fun associated with raving/clubbing are frequently-discussed topics in the rave literature (e.g., Collin and Godfrey, 1997; Jackson, 2004; Malbon, 1999; Thornton, 1995). Raving as a form of hedonism and an escape from reality has been explored (e.g., Chatterson and Hollands, 2003; Collin and Godfrey 1997; Malbon, 1999), as have the associations between raving and "losing it" or "going mad" (Pini, 2001). Malbon (1999) suggested that an "oceanic experience" can be achieved at raves and clubs where participants feel free of societal standards, prejudices and restraints, obligations, insecurities and, most importantly, time and space. Party drugs are also used by some to prolong/enhance this "oceanic experience". Although "play" encompasses many of the 'positive' aspects of party drug use experienced by my research friends (such as a diminished concern for social status, and a willingness to approach strangers), the term should be used with caution; it fails to capture the 'negative' aspects of party drug use (discussed in Chapter 7). This body of literature neglects the relationships between the pleasure-seeking and play elements of raves and the problems associated with party drug use in this setting. I explore this gap in Chapter 7.

Survey findings from the wider NHMRC project

The benefits associated with party use reported by my research friends are mirrored in the survey results for the wider project (n= 220; Jenkinson, 2010: 73). For example, when asked what was the 'best' thing about using psychostimulants (party drugs), participants reported:

> the high/rush/buzz (18%, n=39), fun/enjoyment/good time
> (16%, n=36), enhanced mood/euphoria (16%, n=34), enhanced
> communication/more social (13%, n=28), increased energy/stay

awake (13%, n=28) and enhanced closeness/empathy (9%, n=20). When asked what activity they most liked to engage in when using psychostimulants, the most common answers were socialising/talking to friends (36%, n=80), dancing (34%, n=76) and partying (14%, n=31). Most respondents (78%, n=171) believed that the benefits of using psychostimulants outweighed the possible risks.

Problems associated with party drug use

Having established why old skool ravers use party drugs and alcohol, often concurrently, it is important to also discuss the downside of party drug use. Core group members reported experiencing several problems as a consequence of their regular party drug and alcohol use. The most commonly-reported effect was feeling 'scattered', which involved impaired concentration and memory, and/or depression and anxiety, particularly several days after use. They often referred to these negative effects as 'Blue Tuesday' or 'Westgate Wednesday'[17].

Old skool ravers also regularly complained about sleeping difficulties. For example, Ben sent me the following text message: "Amanda's stuff [ice] kept me up all night" (April, 2006). They managed insomnia in various ways, including using sleeping tablets, drinking alcohol or cough medicine, and smoking cannabis; this often led to reduced work performance and absenteeism. For instance, Vivienne, Ben and Michael often 'pulled sickies' on Monday, as is evident in the following text message that Ben sent to me one Monday morning: "I'm still out, going home now apparently work starts at 10am and you will call me Amanda"[18] (December 2006). Others claimed that they had low immune systems because of their party drug use and complained about 'bad skin'.

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[17] The Westgate Bridge provides access from the CBD to the Western suburbs and some of my research friends would return home on Wednesdays after clubbing sessions lasting several days.

[18] Ben refers to himself as 'Amanda' because he has consumed an excessive amount in the manner of a perceived 'junkie'.

Drug-related problems also included conflict and arguments with friends and family, both those who used drugs and those who did not. On a few occasions, this led to violence, such as the example of Amanda being assaulted (see Chapter 3). The depletion of savings and the accumulation of drug-related debt, which was commonly referred to as obtaining drugs 'on tick' (or credit), were also problems for some. For example, Ben sent me the following message: "Didn't want to ask but can you lend Amanda $100 bucks" (September, 2006). Ben refers to himself as 'Amanda' as a way of distancing himself from this 'junkie' act and the fact that he has spent all of his money on drugs (see Amanda case study below).

A few female old skool ravers complained that their menstrual cycles had been interrupted or had ceased, perhaps due to low body weight. They also engaged in risk-taking activities such as driving under the influence of alcohol and party drugs (see Chapter 7) and having unprotected sex. One was in drug treatment for her party drug use and two had been treated for depression. Two others had been before the Magistrates Court (one for drug-related offences, the other for driving infringements).

In this thesis, I chose not to provide a detailed discussion of the risks and harms experienced by party drug users. These have been well documented in other research (e.g., Chesher, 1993; Darke *et al*, 2000, Drug Info Clearinghouse, 2005; NDARC, 2005; Stoovè, Laslett and Barratt, 2004) but were not the main focus of my research. While not denying the potential risks and harmful effects associated with party drug use, the key aim of this thesis is to explore how old skool ravers perceive the commercialisation and popularisation of the rave/dance party scene, and how it has affected their identities and changed their drug-using practices. Whilst the negative aspects of party drug use are important, studies that focus only on them may contribute to negative stereotypes of party drug users and ignore the intricacies and complexities of their daily lives.

In addition to omitting a detailed discussion of the risks and harms experienced by party drug users my account does not provide a detailed discussion of the dealers and suppliers from whom some of my research friends purchased their party drugs, although they were part of their social lives. This was a deliberate methodological

choice, because recording the illegal activities of dealers, is a potentially dangerous activity in terms of risks for the research participant. In any case, found some dealers and suppliers (who were also heavy drug users themselves) to be considerably more paranoid and not as forthcoming about their daily lives compared to my research friends.

The case of Amanda: "She's a junkie, not like us"

The following case study focuses on a research friend named Amanda. I begin by giving an overview of Amanda's background followed by her drug use history and perceptions of her own drug use, as well as the wider group's perceptions of her. I conclude by showing how Amanda's drug use became problematic over time. It is also important to note that Amanda is the exception in this group and experienced greater problems than the other old skool ravers.

Amanda's background

I was introduced to Amanda by a mutual friend in 1990 when we were both in our early teens. In the mid-1990s, at the age of 16-17 years old, we started regularly attending raves with our friends. Both passionate ravers, we continued to socialise for the following two or three years. At our peak, we would go raving and clubbing for the entire weekend – from Friday evening through to Sunday night. We eventually lost touch as we entered different relationships and social networks – our only contact being an occasional telephone call or text message. Several years later, when Amanda and her long-term partner ended their relationship, I began to socialise with her again; we began to attend raves/dance parties and clubs together in 2005.

At the time of my fieldwork, Amanda was single, 27 years old and living in her parents' home in Melbourne's western suburbs. Of Southern European background but born in Australia, Amanda completed secondary school in the late-1990s and then undertook a course in the hair and beauty industry. She later undertook a business course at TAFE and moved into management in the retail/service industry. During the early stages of my fieldwork, Amanda was working full-time as a

manager and earning approximately \$700-800 per week, but was subsequently demoted to working full-time as a retail assistant.

Amanda's drug of choice was ice (crystalline methamphetamine) which she smoked approximately 2-4 times a week. When ice was not available, she would use speed (powder methamphetamine). Although Amanda generally smoked ice at a friend's or dealer's home, in her own words, she would use it: "Anywhere. In my car, yeah, where[ever] I think it's safe to smoke it". Amanda would attend clubs and sometimes dance parties with her friends at fortnightly to monthly intervals. Sometimes she would save some ice or speed for work on Monday. She also took breaks from using drugs, usually for one or two weeks. Amanda has said of her own drug use:

> I used to like going to my friends and doing it [smoking speed
> and ice], but then it ends up becoming more of an addiction
> where I didn't need them to come with me to do it, it was more
> of a – I don't know – sort of an escape thing where I could do
> my own thing (March 2007).

Amanda's drug history

When interviewed, Amanda said she had "tried speed, ecstasy, heroin, liquid G, acid and that's it". She neglected to mention her cannabis use in her mid-teens where she smoked it (via 'bongs') with her friends at parties and at their homes. However, as mentioned earlier, using cannabis was not really seen as drug-taking by this group. Shortly afterwards, at 16 years of age, she tried her first acid trip at a rave and continued using acid at raves for a few months. Amanda then began using speed at raves and clubs regularly and later tried ecstasy. She claimed she preferred speed to ecstasy, which she found 'too intense'. Amanda said:

> I'm not fond of the drugs I started with. I'd rather do speed,
> things that are a bit more alert. I don't like being so out of it and
> so out of control. I used to like that at the beginning and now I
> sort of like something to just lift me up as an upper (March
> 2007).

During the early 2000s, when I rarely saw Amanda, she started using a range of other potentially more dangerous drugs. Her partner at the time, Jeremy, was an injecting drug user who used a wide range of drugs. He introduced her to ice and heroin, which she smoked, and GHB, which she drank. Of this time, Amanda said: "I never injected anything; Jeremy told me not to get into it and I didn't want to anyway". She claims: "heroin is the worst; I just slept all day. I didn't want to do anything. I couldn't even work". In the mid-2000s, when I began to go out with Amanda again socially, she was a regular ice and speed smoker who occasionally drank alcohol and used pills. At the time of fieldwork, Amanda had enrolled in a drug treatment program which involved her taking tablets that prevented her from craving heroin.

Amanda's view of her drug use and health

During the time I have known Amanda, she has experienced several harms directly or indirectly related to her drug use. Amanda's mental and physical health have deteriorated. Before I discuss these harms and outline how the wider group perceived Amanda, it is important to consider her own perceptions of her drug use and health. When I asked Amanda about her health, she initially claimed:

> Well, my bones ache all the time. I'm 27 years old and I ache a lot, like I don't do any physical sport or anything like that because I've been so sore. I think it's from years of taking the drugs, it's been eating away at my bones. My skin is dry and I think I'll age much quicker than what I could have if I didn't take drugs.

However, later, when I asked her about how she would rate her physical health, she said: "Probably average. Like I've got a bit of a flu at the moment, yeah, but not too bad. I'm not a heavy user so I'm not too bad. My health is all right so far". When I asked a general question about some of the negatives associated with party drug use, Amanda found them easier to talk about. She said:

Negativesis your health and your mental status, your confidence, your money situation. There's a lot more negatives than positives I think, but at the time when you are doing it you know that there's negatives but you just do it because it's a habit or addiction or just a routine of going to get it or whatever (March 2007).

Finally, when I asked Amanda what she worried about most in her life, she said:

My future, like just having to settle down and get out of this scene. You know I want to settle down and have kids and teach them not to sort of take the path I did. Not that if they did – that doesn't really worry me, but still, try to influence them in a better life ... If I want a future or whatever, I need to start getting into a straighter life, not partying as much (March 2007).

Amanda's perceptions of her drug use and health seemed somewhat contradictory. At times, she claimed that her physical health was average, then said her bones ached all the time and she was aging more quickly then she should. She also said that she is "not a heavy drug user" but later admitted that she used drugs because "it's a habit or addiction". Amanda's friends and acquaintances offered a much less equivocal interpretation of her drug use and health.

"She's a junkie": Group perceptions of Amanda's drug use

The wider group's perceptions of Amanda and her drug use differed greatly from her own. Whilst Amanda said: "I always have fun when I go out with you guys, you are the friends I'm proud of and I want to introduce to people", the others were not so proud of Amanda.

During fieldwork, Ben, Simon, Vivienne and Isabel made frequent comments about Amanda's "junkie" behaviour. Vivienne said, "I feel sorry for her parents" and "I feel sorry for her. She needs to get out of it and find another guy that doesn't take

drugs" (at the time, Amanda was in a relationship with a drug dealer). Ben said that "my friends thought she was a homeless person" and he referred to her as a "junkie", "rat", "skank" and "drug-fucked slut". Furthermore, Amanda's other friends were also viewed as junkies by the wider group. The following extract is illustrative:

> I don't know if I can hack going to a motel room with Amanda and her junkie friends […] I felt bad that you went [to Amanda's birthday last year] and I didn't but you can't trust Amanda; she doesn't even rock up half the time or comes at God knows when after she has got [ice]. (Vivienne, October 2006)

Furthermore, the wider group rarely took Amanda seriously. For example, one afternoon, Vivienne, Stephanie, Amanda and I were sitting in Vivienne's bedroom when Amanda announced, "I quit ice". Stephanie said: "That's really good. When was the last time you had it". Amanda replied, "this morning". The wider group often re-tell this story with amusement and as an illustration of Amanda's dubious mental state. Another example is provided by a text message exchange prior to a dance party. I had text messaged Amanda to ask if she was coming to the event and she initially replied, "Yeah I'll come". However, she changed her mind the night before, saying "I don't have the money". Vivienne had warned me that this might happen and said that she couldn't "see Amanda paying 50 bucks to get in [to the dance event]" and that "she probably wasted all her money on ice" (February 2006). At the time, Vivienne was reluctant to go out with Amanda because "all she wants to do is score ice all night". This behaviour frustrated Vivienne because she didn't like ice or Amanda asking her to put in money so Amanda could buy a larger amount. Vivienne also commented that Amanda became frustrated when Vivienne said she didn't want to take drugs and was going out drinking. Amanda was also viewed as unreliable, especially in regard to arriving on time. On Isabel's birthday, Amanda promised to arrive at the club around 11pm (the wider group having arrived at about 9.30pm) but did not arrive until almost 4am, when everybody had gone home. The following extract is taken from my fieldnotes:

At 6.00am I am awoken by my mobile and the number displayed is unknown to me. I answer the phone and hear "hey Christine it's Amanda where the hell are you" and I say "in bed sleeping" and Amanda says "we're here now, but I'll let you sleep" and I hung up the phone. I then see five missed calls on my phone from Amanda (June 2006).

The wider group's negative perceptions of Amanda were circulated to other friendship networks. Seb, a research friend (who I know through Ben), has heard 'Amanda stories' through Ben, Vivienne and Isabel. Seb found them humorous, claiming that "the Amanda stories crack me up; I have told my other friends about her". Seb had not met Amanda but claimed he would like to because she sounded like 'a crack up'.

In addition to the stories about Amanda's drug-related escapades, standardised references to her were used in the everyday language of the group, particularly when another group member thought he or she had consumed an excessive amount of party drugs. For instance, if group members had a 'big weekend', they might describe this as 'an Amanda weekend'. Or, if they were heavily intoxicated, they might claim that, 'I'm an Amanda who rocks non-stop' or 'you will call me Amanda'. At times, some group members expressed genuine concern about Amanda's health and at other times made jokes about her and criticised her actions and appearance. Although they were all party drug users, they made a clear distinction between their own 'recreational' use and Amanda's heavier, 'junkie' use. Amanda was a scapegoat and whenever another group member felt as though she or he was slipping into problematic/heavier drug use, they referenced her.

Amanda's case provides an example of some of the potential negative outcomes of party drug use over time – ridicule and ostracism by friends, and physical health and mental health problems. Most old skool ravers are able to cope with the changes in drug use by remaining moderate users and restricting their use to when they go out to raves/dance parties and clubs. However, for Amanda, her party drug use moved into her everyday life and in fact took her out of the rave scene. The stories told by old

skool ravers about Amanda were part of a wider discourse that distinguishes 'junkies' from 'recreational users'.

'Junkies' versus 'recreational users'

Smoking ice was a relatively new practice for my research friends, having emerged within the last two or three years, prior to the commencement of my fieldwork in 2006. During my fieldwork, it quickly became evident that a division existed between those research friends who were primarily ice smokers and those who used ecstasy and speed. Smoking ice was one of the most socially stigmatised practices, along with using G and heroin, in the social networks involving my core research friends. In this section, I discuss the group's reaction and attitudes to Adam and Amanda, who both primarily consumed ice and were viewed as 'junkies' by those who defined themselves as 'recreational users'. Simon said:

> Amanda and Adam both abuse drugs, they're not like us who use recreationally. I mean they are fucked all the time, seven days a week, like the way I am on the weekend. Imagine living out of reality all the time, they are not like us who take when we go out. I mean I took stuff [1 and a half pills and 2 lines of speed] at Sasha and Digweed [a dance party] and didn't have stuff before that since Retro [a dance party held over 2 months before] (November 2006).

Isabel said, "I sent Amanda a text message to go out on Saturday and she replied 'What's so good [a]bout Saturday? Nothing. We'll get fucked together, trust me" (April, 2006). The frequency of drug use by 'junkies' was the main criterion by which they were distinguished. A few voiced the opinion that a 'junkie' was a person who injected drugs. The practice of smoking ice every day or several times a week (i.e., beyond weekends) was seen as having serious repercussions for 'junkies' – primarily because it interfered with their capacity to work and be productive, and caused arguments with family and friends. Second, 'junkie' behaviour was associated with poor physical and mental health. Third, junkies were perceived as having no or little control over their drug use and were often accused of 'putting

drugs first'. For example, Vivienne claimed that: "You can't trust Amanda" (October, 2006) because she arrived very late after she had purchased ice or not at all. The following extract from my interview with Jones and Tyrone is illustrative of the negative perceptions of ice, which the majority of my research friends commonly referred to as a 'gutter', 'dirty' or 'junkie' drug.

Jones: Ice, I reckon it's shit. I don't like it.

CS: Why?

Jones: I think it's dirt.

Tyrone: Don't touch the stuff.

CS: Why do you think it's dirt?

Jones: Well, I've done it before. You smoke it, you feel dirty
            after a while, like you feel dirty I don't know for some
            reason.

CS: Does it like irritate you or …

Jones: No, it doesn't irritate me but just like coming down from
            it is shit, to come down from it is shit.

Tyrone: I just see the effects other people have in real life and on
            TV and I'll [say] 'fuck it'.

Jones: And this new drug, I don't know how long it's been out
            for, I've been at it a couple of times, I don't like the
            actual feeling. It's similar to speed but the come down's
            a bit worse, way worse.

CS: Worse mentally or physically do you reckon?

Jones: Mentally.

Tyrone: Both.

CS: Both. Do you think from smoking it, because you smoke
            it or because you're snorting?

Jones: Maybe smoking. I've never snorted it.

Tyrone: I think if you smoke it, maybe the effects are more
            damaging (May, 2007).

Moreover, the term 'junkie' was not applied universally to all people for whom ice consumption caused ill-health or consistent problems with friends and family. In

some cases, when my core research friends 'binged' on ice or other party drugs they, were not referred to, and did not redefine themselves, as 'junkies'. For example, during one holiday period, Ben consumed large amounts of party drugs including ice, speed, ecstasy and alcohol, which caused his jaw to lock and saw him admitted to hospital; despite all this he was not considered a 'junkie'. This was mainly due to his appearance and clothing and the fact that he did not appear rundown and dishevelled like a stereotypical 'junkie'.

In this chapter, I introduced the old skool ravers and described their drug histories and current drug-using practices. I described the typical physical and social contexts of party drug use including the motivations for use and the general patterns of problems experienced. In general, my research friends found the stimulant properties of many party drugs functional, because they provided energy for all-night dancing and a sense of social connectedness. They also cited the synergy between the music, lighting and drug use. They talked to each other and strangers more often and on different topics than when not using party drugs, and felt happy and excited. Party drug use within the raving/clubbing context provided them with an avenue to escape everyday stresses and the 'real' world, albeit for a short period of time. They considered party drugs to be an important part of their social lives and, in the course of using them, formed obligations and expectations of one another to reciprocate favours and 'shouts'. Although friendships were made quickly through party drug use, they were also sometimes short-lived. The distinction between 'recreational users' and 'junkies' was also explored. This background information lays the foundation for the following chapters, in which I analyse how my research friends perceived the changes that occurred in the rave/dance party scene since after 1996. In the following chapter, I discuss the impact that changes in the location, marketing and size of rave/parties has had on old skool ravers.

Chapter 5

Why 'rave' became a dirty word: Changes in the location, marketing and size of dance events

I go to Andrew's bar fridge in the garage and notice an "Every Picture Tells a Story 98" rave sticker which is bright purple with silver sparkly writing. When I point it out, Andrew sighs; "The good old Every Picture parties. I used to have a whole stack of stickers but I don't know where they are". Vivienne then says: "That's when raves were good, there are no real raves any more". She says to Michael, "You never got to go to any of the good raves" and he replies, "So you keep telling me". I comment, "They're not like they used to be, no more Docks, Global Village or Altona, the good old days" (March 2007).

"Raves are dead, there's no vibe in here […] This is not a rave" (Vivienne, August 2006).

The above extracts, taken from my fieldnotes and interviews, illustrate some of the changes in the Melbourne rave/dance party scene. They highlight a common recurring theme that was present throughout my fieldwork – that "raves were good back in the day" and that "there are no *real* raves any more". After describing my research methods in Chapter 3, and introducing the people, places and social organisation of party drug use in Chapter 4, in this and the following three chapters I present an ethnographic analysis of old skool raver perceptions of the changes in the Melbourne rave/dance party scene. In this chapter, I explore changes in the location, marketing and size of dance events; in Chapter 6, I analyse changes in the composition of attendees; and in Chapter 7, I explore changes in the way that party drugs were used. Finally, in Chapter 8, I investigate the perceived changes in the

rave 'vibe' and atmosphere and the impact this has had on the construction of social identity amongst old skool ravers.

The main focus of this chapter is to examine how the changes in location, marketing and size of dance events from the mid 1990s to 2006-07 were viewed by old skool ravers. A secondary concern is how they perceived the extensive media attention to raves and dance parties. My focus here is on showing how changes in the location, marketing and size of dance events shaped the experiences of my research friends. Before discussing their interpretations of these changes, I provide a brief overview of common rave locations in Melbourne in the mid- to late-1990s and compare these with the dance venues operating during my fieldwork in 2006-07. This background information is important in order to fully understand the sentiments of my research friends and to show how commercialisation impacted on the location, marketing and size of dance events. The first part of the chapter draws primarily on ethnographic fieldnotes and interviews with my core group, the old skool ravers. Where relevant, I include interview extracts from earlier research conducted in 2003-04.

Locations

During the mid-1990s, raves/dance parties in Melbourne were predominantly held in abandoned warehouses and sheds in inner-industrial areas such as Footscray, Altona and Port Melbourne. During this time, common shed and warehouse locations for raves/dance parties included: 'The Docks', 'Global Village', South Kensington warehouse and the Leslie Street warehouse in Brunswick. These warehouses were often large, dark, dirty and empty spaces with an industrial feel. People who 'weren't in the know' would not expect a party to be held in such remote, abandoned and rundown buildings and in that sense they were considered 'underground' locations. They often had graffiti spray-painted on the walls and sometimes handmade glow-in-the dark decorations. The DJs were often elevated from the main crowd and lasers lit up the otherwise dark space. Chloe recalled:

> I used to love the old skool real warehouse parties where it would
> be just some old concrete place in Collingwood that everyone has

taken all the furniture out of and put up some decks and that is the

way it is (May 2007).

Old skool ravers often reminisced about the parties held at these types of venues and about the venues themselves. Of these venues, 'The Docks' and 'Global Village', in particular, were considered cultural institutions amongst Melbourne ravers.[19]

The Docks

The Docks were large docking warehouses in Port Melbourne which fell out of use following the containerisation of shipping traffic. The space remained vacant and unused during the 1980s and was used for raves and dance parties during the 1990s. The docks, particularly Shed 13 and 14, have a special place in Melbourne raving folklore, hosting parties such as 'Welcome', 'Two Tribes', 'Hardware', 'Gatecrasher' and 'Belfast'. Tristan a rave organiser reminisced:

'The Docks' were special to the Melbourne rave scene and we were one of the few places in the world that still had warehouse parties during the late 1990s. 'The Docks' gave both Hardware and Future Entertainment their big breaks (interview, September 2006).

Melbourne DJ Dare also laments the changes to The Docks due to commercialisation of the Docklands area. He says that:

over the last 10 years, raves have become household names […] Six years ago, you say to someone, Docks, they think 'rave' […] Now you say Docks, you think very expensive property (email interview, June 2003).

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[19] This claim is based on hundreds of interviews and surveys I have undertaken over the previous 10 years with 'ravers', rave/dance party organisers and DJs. This view is further supported by Internet forums, street magazines and the novel *Playgrounds: A portrait of rave culture* (Griffin, 2005).

The final dock party was held in 2002, and the area was subsequently redeveloped into the new inner-city suburb known as 'Docklands'.

Global Village

Another rave venue of the past about which old skool ravers reminisce is a warehouse called Global Village:

> So many people cried and were so upset when Global Village
> shut down, because it was a big part of their life (Phil Voodoo,
> quoted in Sounds like Techno, 2003: electronic).

The Global Village warehouse complex in Footscray, Melbourne, was run by Melbourne Underground Development (MUD) with a collective of other artists (such as the Mutoid Waste Company) and DJs. Heidi and Richard John teamed up with Phil Voodoo (Melbourne décor artist) to form MUD. They are fondly remembered by my research friends for their 'Every Picture Tells A Story Parties'[20] (which continued for almost 10 years with 21 parties held in total) and 'Pleazure' parties. The following quote from Phil Voodoo provides some background information on Global Village as a venue and the lifestyle and art behind it:

> The very first party was 93-94. That was Every Picture 7. So
> that was kind of the beginning of Global Village. The first part
> of this warehouse got to be known as The Strange Warehouse,
> and everyone kind of lived in there, and that was our art studio,
> and then the surrounding family of everyone that kind of lived
> there and different DJs and all artists kind of formed the Mud
> crew. It was our own little world, and we never had to leave
> there, it was great. Just made parties, and that was our life
> (Sounds like Techno, 2003: electronic).

Andrez Bergen, a Melbourne journalist and former editor of the *Zebra* section in street magazine *Inpress,* adds:

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[20] Refer to Appendix 1 for examples of flyers from 'Every Picture' and 'Pleazure' parties.

The crew behind Global Village, namely M.U.D., were very supportive of the more cutting edge live acts, for example Voiteck, Zen Paradox and TR-Storm – who were then known as Void – and it gave these guys the opportunity to play before large and often more-into-it or dare I say 'enlightened' audiences. It also gave audiences the opportunity to see these guys because at more mainstream parties or clubs more mainstream music was played (quoted in Sounds like Techno, 2003).

MUD parties were renowned for their décor and ability to create different themes and fantasy worlds. The 'Jade Jungle' party described at the beginning of this thesis was held at Global Village and organised by MUD. Other rave organisers and DJs would also comment favourably about MUD parties. DJ Dare states that: "Every Picture were very good at creating a fantasy with their décor" (email interview, June 2003).

In comparison, common dance party venues at the time of my fieldwork for this thesis were mainly licensed clubs and sports stadiums and arenas: for example, Rod Laver Arena, Vodafone Arena, Palace Nightclub,[21] Queensbridge nightclub (formerly Queens Bridge Hotel, QBH), the Melbourne Showgrounds and the Sidney Myer Music Bowl. A sign of the commercialisation of venues was the renaming of Vodafone arena to Hisense Arena on the 1st of July 2008 after a multimillion dollar deal with a Chinese electronics company (Herald Sun, 13 May 2008). DJ Delight commented:

The differences are that raves these days are generally held in larger, more unusual venues: not unusual as in weird, but for the most part not in established licensed venues. Warehouses, which today are almost unheard of, were the traditional choice of the rave party promoter. Nowadays it's more like convention

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[21] Palace Nightclub, which was located on the Esplanade in Melbourne's bayside suburb of St Kilda, burned down in July 2007 after a deliberately lit fire (ABC News, July 17, 2007, http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/07/17/1980455.htm accessed on October 14, 2008).

centers [sic], sports complexes, tennis courts (email interview,
April 2004).

These mainstream, commercial and 'sanitised' venues are very different from the underground 'dirty' warehouses and sheds of the mid-1990s. In this context, the word 'dirty' is considered a positive attribute by my research friends and its use legitimised specific venues as 'underground' and therefore 'real' or 'authentic'. By contrast, in their eyes, 'sanitised' was equated with 'commercial' and therefore 'inauthentic'. This categorisation is illustrated in the following quotation from Jeremy, who likened current rave/dance party venues to McDonald's restaurants.

Venues like this one [Melbourne Park] are like going to
McDonald's, I know what I'm going to get every time, but
going to a rave back in the day was like going to a burger shop
that I haven't been to before. It was exciting because I didn't
know what I was going to get (October 2002).

The two comments reproduced above were made by organisers and DJs. Now I consider how regular attendees, commonly referred to as 'punters', viewed these changes. At the beginning of this thesis, in Chapter 1, we saw that even though the Retro party had the appropriate music, smiley-face logos and clothing styles, it was not considered to be a 'real' rave for several reasons. First, it was held in an unsuitable location: a large, licensed club located in the city centre. Talking about current venues in general, Arianne, who was originally a clubber before Isabel introduced her to ecstasy and raving in the late 1990s, remarked that, "venues have lost that rave underground feel; it doesn't feel like a rave, it just feels like a big ... festival … feels like just a hall like just like a stadium with a DJ" (interview, June 2007). Likewise, Ben expressed the view that, "the dance party is now a big club […] things that were underground are now commercial. Now it's a big event" (interview, April 2007).

For many old skool ravers, an unsuitable venue was reason enough not to enjoy dance events. For example, during a dance party held in a large sporting stadium, Isabel, who began attending raves in the mid-1990s, remarked: "Fuck, this does my

head in. It reminds me of going to the tennis". Her partner Simon added that "the Footy Show grand final [episode] was [televised from] here too".[22] Vivienne and Amanda, who were close friends of Isabel and Simon, also disliked the venue, claiming that it was unsuitable for a rave because it was 'not underground' (i.e., 'too commercial').

If my research friends' assessments of past and current rave venues are compared, the way they link them to commercialisation is clear. For example, the following extract was taken from a joint interview with Tyrone and Jones, friends from childhood who grew up in Melbourne's western suburbs and began attending raves together in the early- to mid-1990s:

Jones: Well, the venues, say the rave parties, they used to dress
            them up.
Tyrone: They used to be more feral.
Jones: Like they used to dress them up. You used to go to a dance
            party [and] you were in an actual shed but it was like old
            school and it was underground, yeah, like …
Tyrone: It wasn't as commercial
Jones: It wasn't glamorous, you know what I mean? It felt like you
            had all these people around who were the only ones who
            knew about this party, yeah, that's how it was.
Tyrone: Underworld.
Jones: It was underground. It wasn't like your fucking little Metro
            [a 'commercial' nightclub in the CBD] and everyone knew,
            'Oh, we'll go to Metro'. It was underground (interview,
            May 2007).

We can see that both Jones and Tyrone distinguish 'underground' raves from 'commercial' nightclubs. Arianne agrees:

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22 The 'Footy show' is a Melbourne based television show about the AFL (Australian Football League).

We used to go to the docks, [which] used to look a lot more underground. Now it's a lot more commercialised. There's a lot more promotions and things like that. The venues are a lot bigger. The venues have lost that rave underground feel; it doesn't feel like a rave (interview, June 2007).

Vivienne and others also spoke of the excitement of attending raves in warehouses and sheds, which was lost when these events were held in commercial venues such as nightclubs and sports stadiums. For example, Vivienne reminisces about a warehouse in Melbourne's inner suburb of Brunswick, known as 'Lesley Street' (named simply after the street on which it was located). Vivienne says fondly:

Oh, Leslie Street. Just remote places, it's like you'd never think there was a party and when you turn the corner you see all these people and massive loud music. You're like, "Oh, how exciting" and there's thousands and thousands of young, young happy people, you know what I mean, running around happy and they used to take such pride in decorations back then (interview, May 2007).

Jones' view echoes that expressed by his cousin Vivienne when he describes attending a rave held in the early-1990s at 'The Docks'. Jones passionately says:

Shed 14, parked the car, we're like kilometres away from the shed, yeah, you can hear the tin shed going "tsss, tsss" it shakes after like the base, yeah. So we walk in there … you're walking faster because you want to get there, yeah … You'd open the fucking blind, whatever the place you used to walk through and just see thousands of people facing the DJ and just hands up in the air. What an awesome atmosphere, yeah. So what I do, the first thing, get on the dance floor and that's it (interview, May 2007).

Moreover, my research friends would often reminisce about and mourn past rave venues. Victoria laments, "Oh, bring back the parties at the flower centre [warehouse

in Port Melbourne]. Tear down all the buildings at the docks and put the sheds back up" (interview, March 2007). Vivienne would text me messages about past rave venues, for example: "Oh, I just got bombarded with memories … shed 14 to the flower warehouse to Leslie street … they were the best days of our life" (July, 2006) and "ive [sic] squeezed into my silver rave dress, lets go – global village emerald forest" (December, 2007). However, some old skool ravers, such as Vivienne's cousin Jones, considered venue changes to be unavoidable, due to increasing commercialisation and popularisation. He says:

> You don't have the sheds anymore like the shed 14 and the Global Village. Do you know what I mean? They're not as underground where they used to be underground where now it's out there … that's what happens with time, it gets bigger and they go to better [less rundown] venues I guess (May 2007).

Marketing

The movement of raves/dance parties to larger, more 'mainstream' locations, such as licensed clubs and sporting complexes, was facilitated by commercial marketing and advertising; in the eyes of the participants in this research, this dramatically altered the scene. The most common forms of advertising of raves in the mid- to late-1990s were word-of-mouth and flyers. My undergraduate research, which involved surveying 500 ravers in 1998, found that "over 50% of survey respondents found out about upcoming raves via word of mouth, just over 20% found out via flyers and 10% via street posters. Club and rave magazines such as *Inpress*, *Beat* and *Tekno Renegade* were not regarded as a primary source of information nor was the radio" (Siokou, 2000: 14). DJ Dare supported this view, commenting that "its [sic] becoming more mainstream and a lot more people have opened their eyes to the culture. Its [sic] also getting marketed in a way where everyone hears about it … no longer an underground word of mouth community!" (email interview, June 2003). In the early- to mid-1990s, attending a rave meant knowing the right people or finding flyers in speciality rave music or clothing stores, mainly located in the inner city and surrounding suburbs. Tickets were generally sold only in a select few speciality stores or at the door. For example, Vivienne, who was an avid raver, remembered:

You used to get like flyers from the certain shops and they'd say "Oh, look there's going to be a party but we're not telling you where until the night, you must ring this number" just so the cops you think can't find out, or you know if it was just a bit exclusive or underground, and you know they used to be held in sheds, at the Docklands, underground warehouses (May 2007).

Vivienne's cousin and close friend Isabel, who has attended raves with Vivienne since 1996, added that "back in the day we used to get so excited going into Renegade [a rave store located in the CBD] to buy our tickets for the next rave" (June 2007). The changes in the availability and design of tickets were illustrated during a night of fieldwork in August 2006. The following conversation took place between Vivienne and me, when I gave her a ticket for the rave/dance party that night. The ticket was bright orange with silver metallic stars and black writing, approximately 15cm long and 10 cm wide. In comparison, the tickets produced by Ticketek and Ticketmaster are smaller, plainer and a pale-yellow colour.

Vivienne: This looks exactly like the old rave tickets
CS: That's 'cause I got it from the rave shop and not Ticketek.

At the time of the fieldwork 2006-07, flyers were not only located in speciality music and clothing stores but could be found at commercial music and clothing stores such as Sanity and Jetty Surf. In addition, posters advertising upcoming events could be seen on light poles in the inner-city suburbs as well as the outer suburbs. It was common for commercial radio and television stations to advertise rave/dance parties, which was unheard of in the 1990s. Moreover, commercial radio stations such as Fox FM and Nova FM would stage competitions to give away free tickets as prizes. Tickets could be purchased from national ticketing companies such as Ticketmaster and Ticketek, in addition to speciality stores. On-line ticketing was also available through dance music websites such as www.inthemix.com and www.moshtix.com. More broadly, the internet became a tool used for further mass marketing of rave/dance parties. At the time of the fieldwork, most of the major dance party organisers and clubs based in Melbourne had their own websites and email lists. Some of my research friends would regularly receive email updates about

upcoming events. It was also common for clubs to text message subscribers about coming events, and social networking sites such as Myspace and Facebook were used by organisers as marketing tools.

The mass marketing of raves/dance parties led to greater numbers and different types of people attending these events. For example, Isabel, with her long history of attending raves, said: "I heard somewhere that Jack, the guy who runs [dance party company], said when his dad had a heart attack his doctors in the hospital were asking him for free dance party tickets. How bad is that!" (June 2007).

Increased marketing led not only to the sponsorship of dance events by large companies (e.g., Vodafone) but also to increased merchandising. At the time of my fieldwork, it was common for dance party and club organisers to launch CDs at events. T-shirts and other items of clothing with the dance party logo could also be purchased. This marketing was blatantly obvious at a dance party my research friends and I attended in February 2006. The party was sponsored by Vodafone, Smirnoff, Nova FM, Club V and inthemix.com; the event had its own website with details of the DJs and venue. Tickets could be purchased through the website as well as from major ticketing companies. A CD bearing the name of the event was launched and advertised on the flyer. Event t-shirts and other paraphernalia could also be purchased. There were also themed areas, some sponsored by global brands, and a private function room for VIPs. Finally, our bright yellow wrist-bands (given to all attendees as passouts) carried an offer from music company Sanity of a $5 discount on CDs if shown at their stores.

Another aspect of marketing that has changed dramatically in the last 10-15 years is the design and wording of rave/dance party flyers. Flyers in the mid- to late-1990s carried an eclectic mixture of New Age, futurist, fantasy or cartoon-inspired themes (see Appendix 2 for examples). They rarely included photographs of people or venues. The wording of flyers also often played on themes of fantasy, space and magic. For example, the flyer for the 'Every Picture Tells a Story Chapter 16' party, which was held in October 1998, reads:

We welcome all magical beings of near and far away lands with a positive vibration to bring magik [sic] alive through the ritual art of dance in this sacred space. We, on this special day Halloween, a night celebrated throughout history to remind us of our spiritual connection to each other and the elements of the earth, request your presence to collectively throughout the night, focus your love of life and happiness to the heart of planet Gaia to heal and energise her rainbow crystal.

Images and messages of this kind contrast starkly with those featured on flyers at the time of my fieldwork, which were usually more literal and realist. They often included photographs of large crowds, 'superstar DJs' or attractive young people (usually female) surrounded by their friends (see Appendix 3 for examples). The wording of flyers also changed dramatically; the spruiking jargon of advertising and marketing replaced references to magic, outer space and fantasy. Raves/dance parties were described as the 'biggest', 'number 1', 'boldest', 'best' and 'contemporary'. For example, the 2006 Two Tribe flyer reads:

Australia's biggest and number 1 dance festival returns for yet another exciting year … Hot on the heels of the phenomenal Two Tribes 2005 strives [sic] once again to capture Australia's imagination and proudly present the boldest and most contemporary line-up of the world's best DJs and live artists … Make Two Tribes 2006 part of your plans this summer.

The changes in the wording, themes and images on mid-2000s rave/dance party flyers, aimed at a wider, more 'mainstream' audience, were accompanied by the word 'rave' being dropped from much marketing (the Retro party described in Chapter 1 was an exception). At the time of my fieldwork, most rave/dance parties were marketed as 'dance parties', 'music festivals', 'special events' and 'lifestyle festivals'; this was, no doubt, a way for organisers to distance their events from the stigma of 'raves' and illicit drug use. Furthermore, local council concerns and media hype can be deflected by changes in marketing terminology. An example of this attempt to differentiate dance parties from raves involved dance party organisers

preventing 'RaveSafe' (a peer-based drug education group) from attending events because of their name. Purple Hazelwood (a project officer for RaveSafe) notes that, as a result, 'RaveSafe' changed its name to 'DanceWize' so that its staff could attend rave/dance parties. Hazelwood writes:

> It was a promoter that was trying to get away from this [negative rave] publicity that asked us to change our name. While in the permit meeting for his dance event, he adamantly denied that he was holding a Rave, BUT to the people sitting around the table having RaveSafe at the event was a confirmation of this.

> He was adamant that the event he was organising at the time was not a rave. So why was he inviting RaveSafe? RaveSafe's presence was seen as confirmation that it was a rave and not a dance event. As frustrating as these perceptions are, we have to accept that. RaveSafe is from a bygone era and 'Rave' is now a dirty word! (Hazelwood, 2008: 2)

The increased marketing of raves/dance parties and use of overseas 'superstar' DJs are two of the main factors contributing to the rise in the cost of tickets. Attending a rave/dance day party during the mid to late 1990s generally cost between $15 and $40. At the time of fieldwork, prices had doubled, and in some cases tripled, and most large events cost upwards of $85 (ranging between $50 and $135).

Old skool ravers held negative views of the marketing changes described above. Chloe, who referred to herself as 'techno royalty', complained that raves had begun to be advertised on commercial television and on billboards in 'the suburbs', commenting that when this public advertising began, "that's when it went pear-shaped" (interview, May 2007). Others, such as partners Isabel and Simon, claimed that they were 'disgusted' when they saw dance parties advertised on TV. Isabel, who was a passionate raver, reflected: "I remember coming home one day and my mum says 'I saw a commercial for one of your raves on TV', that is when I knew it was the beginning of the end" (June 2007). On another occasion, her partner Simon telephoned me, saying: "it makes me sick that Channel 9 news had a rave advertised

during the commercial break, it wasn't even at night, but prime time" (October 2008). Moreover, when I examined the flyer for the dance party in question, I noticed that it was sponsored by the television program 'Videohits' and Channel 10. On hearing such news, many of my research friends said that they would not attend parties even though some of their favourite DJs were playing. The main reasons they gave were dislike for the venues, which were 'too commercial' and expensive, and which attracted the 'wrong' crowd. Vivienne's younger brother Mark stated:

> Well, lately [I've] just been going to clubs, things have changed.
> There's not really much raves that we can go to or that we like to
> go to. They're all commercialised now or [patronised by] too many
> junkies (interview, April 2007).

On several occasions during fieldwork, my research friends would not attend parties due to the associated high costs. For instance, when the group was organising to attend a dance party in February 2006, both Vivienne and her neighbour Ben did not attend due to the costs involved. Vivienne said that, "tickets are 100 bucks not to mention buying shit [drugs] and the hassle of getting there", while Ben claimed that, "I really wanna come [to the dance party] but I'm not paying 100 bucks".

In the eyes of old skool ravers, the increased marketing and focus on profit by organisers "has gone too far". For example, VIP tickets are now available to be purchased at an extra charge of as much as $100 on top of standard ticket prices, which allows VIP ticket holders to access special, sectioned-off, 'private' areas at dance events. The following quotation from Isabel is representative of the wider group's views:

> You can now buy VIP tickets to dance parties. That makes me sick.
> It's not what the scene was about. I mean, back in the day, you
> would get one if you were maybe working at an event or something
> like that and it wasn't really something to brag about, whereas now
> you can buy one (June 2007).

Most of my research friends, including some organisers, generally perceive the changes brought about by mass marketing in a cynical and negative way. When asked if the scene had changed, Mark replied:

> Yes, dramatically. I remember when you heard about a dance party back in the day; they were exclusive and all done up with themes. These days, they charge a arm and a leg for some commercialised event (interview, April 2007).

Others, such as DJ Dare, expressed more nuanced opinions. DJ Dare states that:

> there has been a lot of mass marketing for raves now, which brings a lot of strangers to the scene. Some of them blend in well and add value, some of the others spoil the show (email interview, June 2003).

My research friends held a common view that the semi-commercial rave/dance party scene of which they were part in the mid- to late-1990s was 'underground', 'authentic' and 'the real deal' (even if they also realised that this period was coming to an end). They categorised dance parties at the time of the fieldwork as 'commercial' or 'mainstream' (see Moore 2005; Thornton, 1995) and therefore as 'inauthentic', and did not identify with the scene as closely as they had in the past.

Size

In early rave forms, events were typically attended by a few hundred people. During the mid- to late-1990s, partly due to the marketing and venues changes discussed above, parties began attracting larger numbers of people, from several hundred to a few thousand. By the late 1990s, raves/dance parties could attract over 10,000 people. According to Richie McNeill, the organiser of the millennium New Years Eve party in Melbourne, the event was attended by 14,000 people (September 2006). For many of my old skool ravers, the late-1990s to 2000 marked the point where, to quote Chloe, the scene started to go 'pear-shaped'.

Comparing past and present raves/dance parties, Arianne noted that "it was a lot more empty, not as packed".[23] Many of my research friends preferred crowds in their hundreds rather than thousands. Chloe, speaking about her favourite DJ, said: "I would rather go and see him with 400 people than 1400" (May 2007). At a dance party in February 2006, Simon and Isabel were both annoyed that they did not have adequate room to dance due to the size of the crowd.

At the time of fieldwork, dance parties usually catered for between 2,000 (three clubs in Melbourne have this capacity) and 15,000 people for outdoor and sporting stadium events held at the Rod Laver and Vodafone arenas, the Sidney Myer Music Bowl and the Showgrounds. This led to promoters and organisers requiring thousands of people to attend in order to fill large venues and make a profit. Chloe said: "I know the owners and the Centro is a good venue but when you need to get 2,000 people in there, you can't be selective I suppose. I mean I was at Pleasure Dome with three of my friends and we were dancing and were the only girls with runners on" (March 2007).

Attending dance parties at the time of fieldwork was commonly viewed as 'a hassle' by some of my research friends, mainly because these events were seen as over-crowded and expensive. The following extract is drawn from fieldnotes recorded after attending a large dance party with the group in 2006.[24]

> There are approximately 800 people queuing to enter [dance party].
> Simon says "look how big the line is, it's going to take hours to get
> in". [Once inside] there is another queue approximately 100 people
> long in the foyer waiting to get into the main arena. Whilst we are
> waiting in the queue it is getting hot with sweating bodies all trying
> to make their way in and some pushing and shoving. One guy in the
> queue with no top on yells "everyone is so close it fucken stinks". I

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[23] For a similar view, see Tom Griffin's novel on the Melbourne rave culture, *Playgrounds: A portrait of rave culture* (2005), in which he claimed that 1998-1999 was the tail-end of rave culture.
[24] The dance party was held at a large sporting arena and estimates of attendance numbers varied depending on the source. Television reports claimed that there were 10,000 people in attendance whereas the organisers' website claimed 14,000.

say to Isabel and Simon, "I can't believe how chockers [full] it is. I hope there's room on the dance floor." […] Isabel replies "I don't know where all these people are going, they keep pouring through the door and the dance floor is full".

Several of my research friends, including Vivienne, Ben and Amanda, who used to regularly attend raves in the mid- to late-1990s, did not attend this party because of all or a combination of the following: the venue, crowd numbers, high ticket price and possible police presence. This, however, did not stop any of them using party drugs that night. Ben and Vivienne attended smaller clubs and Amanda went to a friend's house to consume party drugs.

What can be derived from these narratives? In essence, old skool ravers believed that marketing and advertising to such large audiences and subsequent relocation to larger venues attracted the 'wrong' type of people/crowd, many whom they considered to be musically uneducated and interested only in becoming 'drug fucked'. They portrayed certain groups in a negative light by using derogatory terms such as 'teeny boppers' and 'muzzas' (see Chapter 6).

Media coverage

The mass marketing, location in 'mainstream' venues and size of rave/dance parties, and increased policing at these events (see Chapter 7), led to greater coverage in print and electronic mass media.[25] Media reports and articles repeatedly focused on drug overdoses, drug arrests and policing (e.g., the use of passive-alert drug detection (PADD), or 'sniffer', dogs and roadside testing to detect drink- or drug-driving). The following fieldnote extract describes how the 'Two Tribes' dance party was reported in the mass media:

During the evening news on Channel 7 Sunday night the reporter claimed that there were 63 drug related arrests (most were issued with warnings) which was up on last year's 42 arrests and 3

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[25] This is not to say that raves/dance parties in the mid-1990s did not also attract media attention, but that this attention increased as the visibility and profile of raves/dance parties increased.

overdoses with one person in a critical state in hospital. The footage shown was mainly of police and sniffer dogs outside the venue and the drug/booze buses [roadside testing buses]. Two young girls were also interviewed outside [the event] and stated that it was easy to get drugs inside. The reporter also commented that considering that there were approximately 10,000 people in attendance the crowd was well behaved. The Hardware Corp website claimed 14,000 people were in attendance (Fieldnotes, February 2006)

In Australia, mass media outlets rarely report on rave/dance parties without focusing on drug use, often using sensationalist and alarmist language. This type of reporting assists in fuelling public outcry and creating moral panic. Push and Mireille Silcott, in *The Book of E*, showed how the British print mass media's response to raves sensationalised the negative aspects and linked them with drugs (2000: 40-3, 82-6). This portrayal is in line with Australia's mass media representation of raves. Table 4 presents examples of the reports on raves/dance parties that appeared in Australia's major newspapers during the period 1995-2007.

Table 4: Australian newspaper headlines 1995-2007

REPORT AUTHOR/S	REPORT TITLE	NEWSPAPER	REPORT DATE
Ben Mitchell	Raves review after ecstasy death	*The Sunday Age*, p 2.	10.12.95
Belinda Goldsmith	Australian authorities fight growing ecstasy use	*Sydney Reuter*, p 10.	14.01.96
Greg Bearup	Doctor links Anna Wood's death to taking ecstasy	*Sydney Morning Herald*, p 3.	30.05.96
Julie Szego	From cradle to rave	*The Age*, p 6.	02.10.99
Sophie Douez	Pills, people and exploding music, what a great rave	*The Sunday Age*, p 10-11.	23.04.02
Lyall Johnson	Five risked death from fantasy drug	*The Age*, p 2.	26.07.02
Tanya Giles	Rape drug alert sounded, liquid ecstasy at nightclubs	*Herald Sun*, p 17.	17.08.02
Nicole Brady	Why the rave's a fave	*The Age Greenguide*, p 17.	22.08.02

Steve Dow	A bit of GBH can be terminally bad for your health	*The Age,* p 19.	28.11.02
Farrah Tomazin, Patrick Donovan and Meg Mundell	It's called the shuffle, and it's Melbourne's own	*The Age*, pp 1 and 10.	02.12.02
Farrah Tomazin, Patrick Donovan and Meg Mundell	Dance trance	*The Age*, p 3.	07.12.02
Fay Burstin	Intimacy now all the rave	*Herald Sun*, p 18.	22.02.03
Farrah Tomazin	Angliss students really know how to party	*The Age*, p 3.	06.06.03
Cameron Smith and Mark Butler	Drug clubs	*Herald Sun*, p 1.	20.06.03
Mark Butler	Drugs sent Laura mad	*Herald Sun*, p 12.	20.06.03
Cameron Smith	Zombies on the dance floor, evil in the shadows	*Herald Sun*, p 4.	20.06.03
Lucy Beaumont	Party pill still not safe, experts warn	*The Age*, p 8.	13.09.03
Claire Halliday	Pill seekers	*The Sunday Age*, p 5.	14.09.03
Carol Nader	Pill cocktail party scene's new fad, study finds	*The Age*, p 7.	28.11.03
Dan Oakes	Summadayze draws thousands to strut their stuff at the bowl	*The Age,* p 3.	02.01.04
	Ten overdose on rave drug	*Sydney Morning Herald* online smh.com.au	08.03.04
Jamie Berry	12 overdoses as party drug hits dance festivals	*The Age*, p 3.	09.03.04
Kenneth Nguyen	A nasty substance at the bottom of the hit list	*The Age*, p 3.	09.03.04
Christine Caulfield, Milanda Rout and Paul Anderson	Youth put lives on line to party	*Herald Sun,* p 3.	09.03.04
Paul Anderson, Christine Caulfield and Milanda Rout	Party drug may be fatal in tiny doses	*Herald Sun*, p 8.	09.03.04
Milanda Rout	GBH dose a weekly habit	*Herald Sun*, p 8.	09.03.04
	Deadly drug swaps city raves	*Herald Sun*, p 3.	09.03.04

	Party drugs leaves 10 unconscious	*Herald Sun*, p 3.	09.03.04
Carly Crawford,	Ravers crackdown sunday report, pill cooks' deadly recipes	*Sunday Herald Sun*, p 9.	14.03.04
	Should the State government ban raves?	*Sunday Herald Sun*, p 82.	14.03.04
	Ambos praise for two tribes rave	*The Age* online www.theage.com.au	14.03.05
	The new drug culture	*The Age*, p 12.	22.03.04
Anthony Dowsley	63 drug arrests at dance party	*The Herald Sun* online www.heraldsun.news.com.au	27.02.06
Matt Cunningham	Drug dogs crash the party	*Herald Sun*, p 5.	09.10.06
Jane Metlikovec, Shannon McRae and Paul Anderson	Teenage dealers hit clubs	*Herald Sun*	14.10.06
Jane Metlikovec	Police officers attacked	*Herald Sun*, p 28.	14.10.06
Jane Metlikovec and Shannon McRae	Club patrons' privacy fears	*Herald Sun,* p 28.	14.10.06
Jane Metlikovec and Shannon McRae	Dancing with devils	*Herald Sun*, p 29.	14.10.06
Antonia Magee	Dance party drug blitz at Vodafone arena	*The Herald Sun* www.news.com.au/herealdsun/	10.06.06
	Two men stabbed at Melbourne music festival	www.news.com.au	12.03.07

Other researchers have been critical of mass media representations of party drug use at rave/dance parties and clubs. For example at the Victorian Party Drugs Symposium, held in 2003 Paul Dillon stated that "contrary to media reports the vast majority of party [drug] users do not experience significant negative consequences. Party drug users tend to use recreationally, do not experience severe problems, attend treatment services or come into contact with law enforcement". He further argued against "media sensationalism and inaccurate reports" (Dillon, 2003).

Due to the high profile of rave/dance parties, created in part by the media coverage, many of the old skool ravers I interviewed believed that, in the eyes of their

employers and non-drug taking friends and family, rave/dance party attendance automatically equals party drug use. Many old skool ravers never disclosed their party drug use to parents, extended family or non-drug taking friends. As Chloe says:

> I come from a very religious background and I used to talk quite openly: "Yes, I love techno music; I go out and listen to it, dah, dah, dah". My mum and all that, they used to know that I would go out and listen to electronic music, because I knew they wouldn't necessarily make the connection between drugs and electronic music. So they didn't care, they were just like, "Oh, that's fine". I remember picking up *The Age* one day and it had like a four-page spread on the ecstasy experience, describing one of the nightclubs that I quite openly talked about going to. Thinking, "Oh my God, my mum is going to pick this up and just freak" (interview, May 2007).

Ben, who was introduced to raves by Vivienne and Isabel in the late-1990s, added: "I'm not going to tell my work people I was at a dance party on the weekend. They'll think I'm on drugs for sure" (April 2007).

Mass media reporting from the mid 1990s to mid 2000s rarely included any of the perceived positive aspects of raves/dance parties, such as low levels of violence, and, when these aspects were mentioned, it was only in passing. For instance, the single positive comment about the rave/dance party on the Channel 7 news report cited above was: "considering the size of the crowd it was well behaved". This reporting frustrated several of my research friends. For example, Simon accused the media of using 'scare tactics', exaggerating the facts for a story and singling out raves/dance parties for negative attention. He commented that: "they don't threaten to ban the Melbourne Cup when thousands of people get pissed and have accidents and start fights" (March 2007). Other research friends, including Vivienne, her younger brother Mark and DJ Delight, expressed more nuanced opinions. They claimed that the mass-media portrayal of raves/dance parties was indeed accurate because drug use does take place but that the reports exaggerated and sensationalised this aspect. DJ Delight stated:

> For the most part honestly: people go to these 'raves' to dance all night and to do this a lot of people have to take drugs. Not all people do though. There is a healthy proportion who don't. But what you do hear and see via the media is definitely hyped up and blown out of all proportion: there's a lot of scare-mongering going on (email interview, April 2004).

Most of my research friends agreed that the media was influential in creating negative attitudes towards raves/dance parties, particularly in the wider community, and that more balanced representations were necessary. For example, DJ Delight stated:

> The media would need to get their facts right and not pander to doctoring it to make it more 'television-worthy'. What they say a lot of the time is true to a degree but it has a tendency to over dramatise, playing on the worried parent's fears. And television is hard to argue with: when you see "ravers" coming home from their parties off their heads, making fools of themselves (unwittingly) in front of the cameras, it obviously paints a corroborative picture (with the negative reports) (email interview, April 2004).

This media coverage drew negative attention to raves/dance parties and fuelled 'moral panics' surrounding drug use from the mid 1990s to mid 200s. Subsequently, old skool ravers believe police presence at events, including undercover police and PADD (sniffer) dogs, as well as the introduction of the 'drug [roadside testing] bus'. These policing practices had several implications for my research friends and are discussed further in Chapter 7.

In this chapter, I described some of the changes to rave/dance parties associated with commercialisation – changes in the venues hosting raves/dance parties, increased marketing (including television and radio advertising) and the increasing size of dance events – and how these changes were viewed by old skool ravers. As I show, old skool ravers hold remarkably similar views on these issues; however opinions

diverged in relation to media coverage. Whereas Simon and Kate, for example, criticised and dismissed mass media reporting, claiming that it was exaggerated and employed scare-mongering tactics, Vivienne, Mark and DJ Delight considered the mass media to be accurately reporting on the drug use at raves/dance parties; however, they also agreed that this reporting was exaggerated and sensationalist. In the following chapter, I show how changes in the location, marketing and size of rave/dance parties from the mid 1990s to 2006-07 altered the composition of attendees.

Chapter 6

'Normal people' versus 'techno royalty': The changing composition of rave/dance party attendees

When we were lining up for [French DJ] Laurent Garnier [at a dance party] … There was these little ... for want of a better word ... wog boys behind us [and they were saying] 'What is this dude's name again? I think I have heard of him. I think he is good, you know.' You think he is good?! – Godfather of French techno! Go away, seriously, go home, go! (Chloe, interview, May 2007).

It depends on which era you're talking about, and I assume your talking about the large-scale, commercial events that now prevail? If it is, then I would have to be honest and describe it as a melting pot of mostly suburban, clueless morons, blindly following the hype, with little actual knowledge (or care) of the DJs playing. I know it's harsh but it is, in my opinion, what today's raves feel like to me. For the most part, it seems its just a semi-safe place for most of these people to see who can eat the most drugs. Sad! (DJ Delight, email interview, April 2004).

The quotations above highlight the sentiments of many of the old skool ravers involved in the early rave scene in Melbourne, who considered today's 'teeny-boppers' (teenagers under 16 years old attending dance parties) to be ignorant and possessing little or no understanding of the music and culture of raves. The 'wog boys' Chloe mentions, who were commonly referred to as 'muzzas', were also unwelcome attendees, according to the old skool ravers. In the Australian context, the term 'wog' is a negative stereotype that typically refers to people from a Southern European or Middle Eastern background. Historically, the use of the term

began with the waves of migration of Southern Europeans, particularly to Melbourne and Sydney, in the 1950s and 1960s. By the 1980s, there were moves to reclaim the label 'wog', in particular by some Greek and Italian comedians. Today, the extent to which its use evokes racist connotations varies with context and some of the research participants identify themselves as 'wogs' in their interactions with friends. 'Muzzas' are defined by old skool ravers as heavily-muscled young men, commonly of Southern European or Middle Eastern background, who use cocaine and steroids, wear tight clothing, have gelled spiky hair, are obsessed with cars, have 'no class', dance in an overly aggressive way and hold extremely sexist views. This chapter explores these sentiments and other negative views of contemporary rave/dance party attendees.

A commonly-held view amongst the old skool ravers who participated in my research was that changes in the location, marketing and size of raves/dance parties, examined in the previous chapter, have had profoundly affected the composition of those attending such events. Furthermore, they argued that commercial changes have facilitated a blending of rave and club cultures, with changes in fashion, dancing and attitudes. This chapter consists of two parts: the first of these examines how old skool ravers perceive changes in the composition of attendees, including a discussion of the ways in which newcomers are characterised as 'outsiders' (notably 'muzzas' and 'teeny-boppers'). The second part of the chapter addresses how these perceived changes affected old skool ravers and examines the importance and relevance of ethnicity within current dance party contexts.

My use of the concept "ethnicity" is influenced by the constructivist approach, which acknowledges that ethnic identity is socially constructed and that "ethnic boundaries, identities and cultures, are negotiated, defined, and produced through social interaction inside and outside ethnic communities" (Nagel, 1994: 152). In recent years, theories of hybridity drew on this approach to describe the kinds of 'cultural mixing' engaged in by young people (Butcher and Thomas, 2003); however, I also recognise that ethnicity can be "imposed, as well as assumed and inherited" (Bottomley, 1992: 60). As critiques of "happy hybridity" argue, the power relations impacting on cultural identities need to be acknowledged (Lo, 2000). Thus, while ethnicity can be analysed as socially constructed, it may be experienced and

perceived as fixed and associated with particular characteristics. This understanding of ethnicity leads to a focus on the way that ethnic identity is experienced and perceived by young people of 'mixed' heritage and those born to migrant parents.

"I used to be a raver"

As shown previously, my research friends often described themselves, and others who attended raves and dance parties in the mid-1990s as old skool ravers. This common identification led to a sense of community which was sustained by friendliness, unity of purpose (often referred to as seeking 'the vibe'), feelings of safety and the freedom to express oneself (Siokou, 2002). Many old skool ravers considered themselves participants in an alternative youth subculture rather than being part of the 'mainstream'. However, by the time of my fieldwork in 2006-07 this self-perception had changed as evidenced in statements such as 'I used to be a raver'. This is a local example of a more widespread trend across Western dance scenes (see Anderson, 2009; Anderson and Kavanaugh, 2007; Collin and Godfrey, 1997; Measham and Brain, 2005) in which former participants "seldom use the word 'rave' today largely because the scene has declined or changed so dramatically" (Anderson and Kavanaugh, 2007: 501). Even though they continued to attend clubs and other dance venues, the old skool ravers did not identify with the current dance scene when creating personal or group identities. They blamed commercialisation and the consequent influx of 'normal' (i.e., mainstream) people, which had 'ruined' the dance scene. Consider the following quotation from Chloe:

> Club L [rave club] is funny, because Club L was always
> commonplace, just because of where it is and that sort of stuff
> … [What] the guy that owns Club L really taught me was that
> you could make Club L really, really exclusive and all that sort
> of stuff, but you don't make any money. And if the only people
> that are sitting up at the bar are the people that are drinking off
> drinks cards and all that sort of stuff, you are not making any
> money. You need a certain amount of that wanker element to
> make the cash. But in Club R's case a friend of mine used to be
> the bar manager at Club R, before that 7 am to 5 pm Saturday to

Sunday shift and they would make like $25,000 over the bar in that space of time. It is nice to be able to say, "Okay, we'll keep it as [a] nice crew hanging out and get really strict with the door", but $25,000, you know $50,000 in two days, is a bit hard to turn down (interview, May 2007).

The arrival of clubbers and 'the wanker element' led to a perceived loss of friendliness, increased interest in 'picking up' (initiating casual sexual encounters), the use of large amounts of party drugs and alcohol with little concern for safety, and little interest in dance music (Siokou and Moore, 2008). Furthermore, 'dirty clubbers' do not tend to identify with the earlier rave ethos, identity markers including clothes and accessories, and associated norms and behaviours. These issues are explored in greater detail below.

Changes in rave fashion: 'Phat pants' and 'fluffies' versus 'slut tops'

You wouldn't see a girl in high heels at a rave, there was just no point. You went there to dance (Vivienne, May 2007).

According to old skool ravers, the changes in the types of people attending rave/dance parties were reflected in their clothing styles and accessories. During the raves of the 1990s, people would regularly dress up in hand-made outfits made specifically for the events. For example, Vivienne, whose dressmaker mother made her many rave outfits, said:

Then there was such passion in what you were going to wear, you'd be getting ready for weeks, "Oh, what are you going to wear to the next rave?", because everyone would outdo everyone else and we used to buy wigs, them little earmuff things […] I used to get my mum to make outfits …Yeah, like Kitty tee-shirts and, yeah, you'd just be getting ready for hours.

CS: Butterfly wings.

Vivienne: Yeah, some girls rock up in little nurse outfits, butterfly wings, some fantasy creatures, anything, it was like so interesting.

CS: Pyjamas.

Vivienne: You'd see people in pyjamas.

CS: Robbie G with that red hair.

Vivienne: Yeah, colour hair was a big thing back then, and everyone had their own little style, it was so cool, you just.

CS: You could wear anything (June 2007).

Natalie described her past rave style as 'absoulutely fabulous'. She said:

> Back then, when I started, I tried to go out there and be absolutely fabulous. I actually got Victoria to make me up a thing for Energy 5 that year. It was this [pair of] phat pants with sort of pink slits. No reflectors, I didn't like reflectors and still don't. I wore this pink top. I'm not one to like pink, but I went pink and this sort of fishnet thing with like fluffy, pink frills along the cuffs and I looked very pink and dyed my hair all multi-coloured and so I looked very, very colourful (May 2007).

Chloe's sentiments (below) are similar to those expressed by Vivienne and Natalie, but introduce the idea of the transition in fashion from home-made to commercially available in shops. In Chloe's view, commercialisation facilitated the change in clothing styles:

> You know you had to make it yourself. Now I guess that is the next step of that commercialisation of it, is that you know you used to have to make these clothes yourself, because you couldn't buy them anywhere, and now these sort of clothes are the stuff that is

cropping up in Jeans West and ... Yes and influencing everything else. Like there is those shops like Society or what is Charlie's shop called in Chance Street? Bizarre Days … Yeah. Like even shops like that, hundreds of dollars to buy the pants and that sort of stuff. And where I really, really noticed how commercial it has all got, they are up on my hit list of things that shouldn't be on television anymore, is Hi-5 [a children's television program], because I think that Hi-5 are promoting that whole culture, the look, the sound ... all their clothes, they look like little raver clothes. It is instilling that idea in kids really young (May 2007).

The following conversation between close friends Jones and Tyrone highlights their views about rave fashion. Jones claimed that his style was created before the arrival of 'Renegade', a rave-clothing brand popular in the 1990s.

Jones: I used to wear phat pants.

Tyrone: Phat pants [laughter].

Jones: We'd call them phat pants …[laughter] …phat pants.

Tyrone: Renegade [rave clothing brand].

Jones: Renegade, no, we were before Renegade. We used to wear the old skool puma tracksuits, something out of our old man's closet. The Adidas jackets, the old skool beach street Pumas.

Tyrone: We were beat boppers.

Jones: We were beat boppers, like funky you know? (May 2007).

Many research participants articulated the view that in previous rave forms they could freely express their identity through the clothing of their choice and did not have to conform to strict dress codes. The following interview with Vivienne, who was introduced to raves in the mid-1990s by her cousin Jones, demonstrates this further:

Vivienne: Yeah, you could wear anything, everyone was accepted, you know what I mean? Now it's just like a nightclub when you're going […] You have to be dressed a certain way, you can't come in fluffy pants (May 2007).

Isabel, who was introduced to raves by Vivienne, also lamented the changes in rave/dance party clothing: "Did I not crack it [become very annoyed] when I couldn't wear runners [casual sports shoes] and I had to start carrying [high-heeled] girl shoes in the car. That was the end" (June 2007).

As these extracts indicate, during the mid-1990s my research friends would often make their own clothes and wear 'runners' to raves/dance parties rather than high-heeled or dress shoes. When raves started to move into clubs, many old skool ravers complained about having to follow dress codes in order to gain entry. 'Nightclubber clothes' were particularly an issue for rave/dance parties held in clubs rather than sporting or entertainment complexes, mainly because of door policies. In some cases, this led to a sense of pressure to conform to club-style clothing. Below, Chloe describes how she was 'knocked back' from a Melbourne club for wearing runners, but was able to enter another 'alternative' (or underground) club:

I remember getting knocked back from 'Violet Emerald' once because I had runners on, and this was not long after Honkytonks had just opened, and nobody could ... no normal person could get into Honkytonks. It was really for alternate culture and the bouncer ... it was funny. We were lining up and the bouncer came up to me ... He quite liked us ... "Guys, I am really sorry to tell you this, you are not going to get in". "It's because of the runners isn't it?" He is like, "Yep". Fine, we are just going to go to Honkytonks. He is like, "Ah you know no-one is going to get into Honkytonks..." I said, "Dude, I will get into Honkytonks", because I *have* got runners on ... you know... (May 2007).

Old skool ravers considered past raves/dance parties to be places where they could express themselves through their clothing; they were considered safe spaces in which they could dress creatively or choose to wear casual clothes. When raves and dance parties moved into clubs, the strict door policies and different dress codes meant that old skool ravers could no longer express their identities through their clothing. In addition, by wearing 'nightclubbing clothes', they were aware that they looked much like the very people about whom they expressed disapproval, such as the 'teeny-boppers' discussed below.

Perceived changes in rave/dance party attendees

Recurring themes during fieldwork, which were further explored in in-depth interviews, included: a perceived loss of friendliness; the loss of 'subculture' because of attendance by 'normal' people; an increasingly sexualised environment; and excessive amounts of party drugs used with little knowledge or care about rave music or culture. For example, when asked to explain how the rave scene had changed, Chloe said:

> It used to be about music and friends and ... 'tribe' is the wrong word but that almost tribal group ... And the unfortunate thing is, and I have been saying this for quite a long time and I don't know how I think it has got to do with technology but, whenever the underground starts to permeate the mainstream, it is time for the underground to change. I just feel like the underground has not changed, it is just harder and there is no people I sort of feel coming through (interview, May 2007).

Arianne added that:

> People that aren't ravers have come in [and] sort of lost that feeling of all that sort of … I don't know, friendliness … Now it's like become in-fashion and every little shit is there … It's just absolutely packed, it's like everyone has jumped on the

bandwagon and it's not something that's underground [any more] (interview, June 2007).

Chloe felt that there had originally been a "subculture, community kind of thing and now it's not, there is in fact almost no subculture left in dance music" (interview, May 2007). Furthermore, when asked to describe how Melbourne's rave crowds had changed, Chloe claimed:

[They] don't know what they're going to. I remember walking round [a recent rave/dance party] and watching girls dance around their handbags on the dance floor! […] The three of us were [standing] there ... three old skool techno moles standing there and I turned to my friend Sally and just went, "Do you realise that we're the only chicks in here with trainers on?" How can you go to a techno gig [not wearing trainers]? ... You know, people now it's just all about clothes and [high-heeled] shoes and picking up boys and how many drugs have you taken (interview, May 2007).

For Jones, the original raves were:

Underground. If you weren't in that scene, you wouldn't know about it, you wouldn't fucken know about it … It wasn't glamorous, you know what I mean? It was … it felt like you had all these people around who were the only ones who knew about this party. Yeah, that's how it was (interview, May 2007).

Chloe added:

It was about not being a part of the mainstream, being separate from it and living this whole other life. I used to love walking out of [rave club] at 8.30am on Friday morning ... walk[ing] down the road looking at all these people going to work at 8.30, and just going, "My life is so different to yours and that is great". But then something happened and the people that you would see walking

down the street going to work were the people that were at [rave club] in the morning, it was just like 'hang on' (interview, May 2007).

Old skool ravers described mid-1990s rave/dance party attendees as 'ravers' who were friendly towards each other and considered themselves part of a community. The majority of my research friends were not part of the niche rave scene in the early-1990s that was founded on and expressed through principles of peace, love, unity and respect (PLUR). Although, they did not use the term PLUR (Peace, Love, Unity, Respect) but the elements the spoke of in the mid-1990s, were similar. In their view the friendliness, unity, feelings of safety, freedom of expression, and a sense of community that characterised this period continued. Many of my research friends considered themselves to be participants in an alternative youth subculture rather than the mainstream:

> [There used to be a] sub-culture, community kind of thing and now it is not, there is in fact almost no sub-culture left in dance music. …who told all the normal people? I mean club R used to be the last arty place and now they make $20,000-25,000 at the bar on Sat between 9pm and 5am (Chloe, interview, May 2007).

Another example is taken from an interview with Vivienne, who described the 'problems' with current rave/dance party and club attendees:

> I think that's how it is these days. If you go to a drug club these days, everyone's so fucked up on drugs and it's not the crowd that used to be on drugs, like back in the day of rave parties and everyone was on drugs. I don't know if it was the different drugs or that's when there was a different feeling of like an underground funky party, younger crowd, that wasn't so like, I don't know, all these wogs on cocaine that are more like up themselves or they're like, yeah, they form their own groups and they don't sort of socialise with people because they're on that much drugs sort of thing, but as where you go to a drinking

club, everyone's just drunk and wanting to pick-up. Drug clubs, they work a bit differently, but back in the day, I reckon drug clubs were more sociable, everyone'd talk to everyone, they were on either good drugs and everyone was like loved everyone and it was more friendly, yeah, but these days it's changed (May 2007) .

Natalie adds:

I find that the drugs have changed, so therefore it affects the people that are going out and the way that they act. I'm not sure if it's that or I'm just getting older, but I do think that a lot of younger people are getting into it. I think the music has changed a lot, like I've noticed hard style is out everywhere I go and I can't stand it. So generally at a lot of hard trance, hard house clubs, like you'll get a lot of hard style out wherever you go and I don't know, I find that that's sort of being influenced through the drugs that have been out. So through, for instance, G and Ice that are out at the moment, I think people are a lot more drug orientated so therefore are listening to harder, harder music, as opposed to just the normal uplifting trance that I used to listen to when I went out (interview, May 2007).

These depictions of current rave/dance party attendees and their practices – their perceived lack of friendliness, scant knowledge of rave music and culture, lack of knowledge about party drugs, and promotion of a sexualised environment – amounted to a sense of a loss of "subculture" as Chloe's quotation above highlights. These patrons are perceived as being vastly different from attendees in the 1990s. For example, Victoria, comparing past and present raves/dance parties, stated that:

the people were different … 10 years ago, you'd have a great time, you'd share life stories with strangers. Anyone could come up and give someone a massage and there was no sexual

connotation. You could go out, you could have fun, you could dress up in your fluffies, you could just dress casual, you could be whatever you wanted to be, there's no judgment. No one judged you. At a true rave, everyone was just there to have fun (interview, March 2007).

Melbourne DJ Rex, who has worked in the industry since the early-1990s, echoed the views of old skool ravers. When I asked if he thought raves had changed during the last couple of years, he wrote:

Of course – it changes every 6 months or so so its quite hard to see as its not so obvious but if you look back on the changes of the last 15 yrs its incredible. over the last few years – i think its almost got to a point where its uncool – definitely the big parties – that now for the outer suburban people who are seen as trend followers not makers (email interview, June 2003).

'Teeny-boppers'

One group of newer rave/dance party attendees – 'teeny-boppers' – drew particular scorn from old skool ravers. 'Teeny-boppers' were defined as young, ignorant ravers/clubbers with little understanding of the music, drugs or scene.[26] Brookman (2001), in his study of the Sydney rave scene, suggested that: "Younger people at raves is frequently cited as a negative outcome of commercialisation" (2001: 55). Discussing changes in rave/dance party attendees, Tyrone stated that "the kids are getting younger, heaps younger, more teeny-boppers" (interview, May 2007).

Furthermore, when deciding which rave/dance parties or clubs to attend, old skool ravers would avoid certain dance parties and clubs that they felt would attract a teeny-bopper crowd. For example, Isabel said "there is no way I'm going to club C. It's a really young crowd and is going to be full of teeny-boppers" (fieldnotes, December 2006). Victoria notes the changes in the drug use of these young

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[26] At the time of fieldwork, most dance parties were supposedly 18+ but some young people used false IDs to enter. In the mid-1990s, most raves were open to all ages.

attendees, claiming that, "drugs [were used] to enhance the music so you can enjoy it and you can rock all night. Like, [for] my niece in the country, it's about getting fucked up. It's not about enhancing your time" (interview, March 2007). Another example is provided by Chloe. At a dance party in 2007, she said, after a teeny-bopper had tried to 'pick [her] up', "Does he know who I am? I'm techno royalty compared to him". However, others, such as Vivienne, had more nuanced interpretations: "We were only 16 or 17 years old when we started going to raves, the same age as teeny-boppers" (Vivienne, June 2007).

The arrival of the 'muzzas'

For my research friends, who saw (and see) themselves as old skool ravers, the worst of the dirty clubbers, the epitome of the mainstream crowds against which they contrasted themselves (Thornton, 1995; Moore, 2005), were the 'muzzas'. Muzza is possibly a derivative of Mario, a name commonly associated in Australian ethnic stereotypes with Southern European males; muzza chicks or 'Marias' are the female equivalents. Old skool ravers routinely refer to 'Summadayze', a popular annual Melbourne dance party, as 'Muzzadayze' because of the composition of the crowd at these events. In the eyes of old skool ravers, muzzas, and other dirty clubbers such as 'beefcakes' (a non-ethnic version of muzzas) and teeny-boppers were typical of the people found at mainstream clubs, who began attending dance parties only after they had become commercialised.

Muzzas were generally viewed with contempt by old skool ravers. For example, at a dance party in April 2006, Isabel claimed that there were too many muzza guys and sleazy beefcakes trying to 'pick her up'. Surveying the crowd, she commented that "they should call this place 'Wog Nation' not 'Trance Nation'".

The old skool ravers' negative perceptions of the aggressive behaviour of some muzzas are further highlighted in the following fieldnote, made after a dance party in 2007:

> Seb, Isabel, Ben, Simon and myself are dancing upstairs in the
> side room. I hear a smashing of glass and turn around to see a

heavily muscled shirtless man standing in front of two young females who were sitting down. Seb says: "He smashed the glass table because the girls wouldn't get up to dance', and Isabel says: 'That never used to happen, why do they let the muzzas in? Seriously, I can't party with those people".

Old skool ravers believed that the aggressive behaviour of muzzas was fuelled by a combination of cocaine and steroids. For example, when I asked Simon what drugs he thought muzzas used, he replied that "the muzzas are all on roids [steroids] and coke and maybe speed, that's why they're like that [aggressive]" (fieldnotes, April 2006). My research friends also considered themselves to be more knowledgeable about drugs and their effects than muzzas. Simon and Paul often mocked how muzzas used pills, imitating their 'woggy' accents and drug vocabulary:

Paul: Da pills are kicking in *re* [Greek for 'mate'].

Simon: I need a water man, I need to sit down man, I got some
            pills on me man and they're fully sick. All my mates are
            rocking on em, are you peaking or what? (fieldnotes,
            April 2006).

The exchange between Paul and Simon highlights the perception of muzzas as unsophisticated. It also suggests that although muzzas, like my research friends, were using ecstasy, their alleged use of cocaine and steroids (and, to a lesser extent, of methamphetamine powder) was blamed for their perceived aggressive behaviour.

The perception that muzzas were 'uncultured' and unsophisticated was also expressed in other ways. For example, group discussions often highlighted the use of 'ethnic' words and accents by muzzas: *malaka* (Greek for 'wanker'), *ciccio* or the shortened version *chich* (Italian for 'buddy') and the Macedonian words *chojek* (person), *mochan* (pissed) and *lesh* (lazy) (see Butcher, 2008 on 'ethnolects').

Contrasting dance styles: The 'Melbourne shuffle' vs the 'muzza dance'

Another significant change in rave/dance party attendees highlighted by old skool ravers related to dancing styles. Traditionally, rave dancing was gender neutral in nature and women, in particular, felt safe to dance alone whilst belonging to a collective group. The 'Melbourne shuffle' (see Coles *et al*, 2005) was one of the 'original' rave dance styles practiced by many old skool ravers. The shuffle, also known to ravers as 'rocking', has no set steps, but the basis is footwork either performed by sliding from left to right or in a triangular direction, or remaining on the spot. The shuffle incorporates dance moves from numerous dance styles such as miming, popping and locking, liquid and breaking (see Tomazin *et al*, 2002 and Coles, *et al*, 2005).

By contrast, old skool ravers criticised what they labelled the 'muzza dance' and it was another issue regularly aired in derisive discussions of muzzas, particularly when attending dance parties and clubs where muzzas were present. The muzza dance involves shirtless muzzas punching the air and rolling their hands while keeping the feet relatively still. The extract below is drawn from fieldnotes recorded following a dance party in April 2006, when Isabel noticed a muzza chick:

> Isabel spots a girl of Asian[27] appearance dancing in front of us
> and says in a sarcastic voice "oh please, look at the way she is
> dancing". The girl in question was dancing with her arms rigidly
> in a punching forward motion and moving her feet backwards
> and forwards.

Many old skool ravers claimed that they did not feel comfortable with 'new' attendees. The muzza dance moves were seen as aggressive by old skool ravers who often ridiculed them. Some of my research friends, particularly women such as Isabel, Vivienne and Amanda, felt uncomfortable dancing next to a group of muzzas and avoided them at raves/dance parties. My research friends avoided muzzas for three reasons: first, they did not want to get 'picked up' by the 'sleazy muzzas';

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[27] The majority of my research friends agreed that 'muzzas' were commonly from a Southern European or Middle Eastern background but, as witnessed in Isabel's comment, they term could also be applied to those from other ethnic backgrounds.

second, they were perceived as ruining 'the vibe' and atmosphere at events; and third, they were concerned about aggressive or violent behaviour from 'roid-munching, coked-up muzzas'.

Nevertheless, it appears that muzza guys did not intimidate all female rave/dance party participants. For example, Daniel [who is considered a muzza] commented that at:

> the last big dance party we were at, this rave girl with attitude says to my mate, who was trying to dance with her, 'fuck off, what do you think you are doing?' I like it, girls with attitude, not like those dumb girls. I mean my mate is a big cunt and this little girl gave it to him (April 2007).

It was also common for old skool ravers to retell 'funny muzza stories'. For example, Stephanie told her older sister Isabel and me:

> Youse are gunna laugh. I spoke to Daniel the other day and he was saying his trainer at the gym says: "Come on boys, there is only 28 days till Summadayze: work it". How funny! (December 2006).

These stories also often focused on the inappropriate behaviour of muzzas at dance events:

> This girl from work went to the [dance party] and told me I wasn't missing much: a beefcake was on the dance floor with no top on eating tuna from a can, so he didn't miss his daily protein. I heard the crowd was really bad, full of muzzas (fieldnotes, Ben, March 2007).

The telling and retelling of these humorous stories about muzzas was part of a wider dialogue in which old skool ravers claimed the possession of subcultural capital (Thornton, 1995). They did this through claims that, unlike the unsophisticated, hypermasculine, appearance-obsessed muzzas, they attended dance parties and raves

before them for the 'purest' of reasons, such as a love of dance music and culture, and did so well before these new arrivals.

The impact of the muzzas

The arrival of muzzas, beefcakes and other 'dirty clubbers' at dance events influenced the practices of old skool ravers in several ways. First, many of them chose not to attend those dance parties that developed reputations for drawing 'bad' crowds, including muzzas. The following transcript of a conversation I had with Ben, concerning a dance party, is illustrative:

Ben: Where is it [the dance party]?

CS: Club B

Ben: Your gunna get all the muzzas that think, 'Yeah, let's go to a dance party' just because it's at Club B.

CS: Well, there is another dance party at Club C, the same people that do Daydream parties, so hopefully they will go there. Plus it's $70 to get in, so hopefully only people that like Sasha and Digweed [UK DJs] are there (November 2006).

Another example, taken from my fieldnotes, describes how Isabel would rather not use drugs with an 'unsuitable' (i.e., muzza) crowd:

It is almost 3am and Simon asks Isabel, 'Are you sure you don't want anything [any drugs]'? Maybe it will get rid of your bad mood'. Isabel replies, 'I don't want to take drugs with these people'. Simon says, 'Why did you want to come and get me to buy tickets? You knew what it was going to be like'. Isabel says, 'I didn't think they [the 'muzzas'] would be that bad' (November 2006).

Although some old skool ravers continued to visit dance events during 2006-07, muzza displays of hypermasculinity, and their disrespectful and sometimes violent treatment of women, led to feelings of unease and a perceived loss of freedom and safety. Consider the following conversation:

Vivienne: Dance parties back in the day I always felt safe, the crowd, you had nothing to fear, there wasn't those big type of characters that were out there looking to pick-up and … beefcakey wogs, you know, that are there like preying on young girls, it was a young crowd, all sort of your age or my age back in, you know, [when] I was 17 or 18, all similar age, all just like, yeah, fun-loving, caring not like – they'd be out to help you instead of, you know, doing you any harm. These days, there is a bit of a fear factor from those type of people, those beefcakes that are there that want to buy you a drink, that want to offer you some drugs but then they want something in return. Like a few months back, I went to a nightclub and this guy got high on pills, so I asked him and he was the owner of the club [considered to be a muzza] and he was like 'Yeah, no worries, come, I've got some [drugs] for youse', you know, and I was going to pay him and everything and he took me in[to] the little back room and he was like 'Oh, here they are'. I gave him the money and he expected something in return and I was like, he tried to kiss me and stuff, and I was like 'What are you doing?' and to him it was like he expected and nothing less you know and I was like …

CS: And you paid him the money?

Vivienne: I paid him the money but still he expected more, it was like, you know, 'She's come here with me and I'm giving her the stuff' so hello. And lucky I quickly lied my way out of that one, I just said 'Oh, I need a mint, can you just hang on, I can't kiss you without a mint so let me just run out and get a mint and I'll be back in one second', and he unlocked the door and let me out and I ran to my friends and I go 'Help me now' (interview, May 2007).

Vivienne's experience was quite common; several women in the fieldwork group had experienced unwanted male attention, which occasionally led to aggressive behaviour and sexual assault. In the following fieldnote, Isabel describes her experience whilst attending a club with her partner Simon, and friends Adam and Kate:

> We were all at Club V and I was at the bar ordering a drink and some sleazy beefcake guy pulled my top to the side and bit my breast. I totally freaked out and told him to 'Fuck off' and he said 'What baby' and shrugged like he had done nothing wrong. I just ran to my boyfriend and friends. I was so scared and shaking. My boyfriend and friends wanted me to point him out but I couldn't remember what he looked like, just that he was big, it really done my head in, I couldn't take my jacket off all night. That would never have happened at a rave back in the day. I always felt safe at them, safe enough even go by myself (June 2007).

Not all wogs are muzzas

Interestingly, many of my research friends had kinship or other social links to some of those they regarded as muzzas. For instance, Isabel, Vivienne and Stephanie regarded their relatives Daniel and James as muzzas. In the context of dance parties or clubs, 'muzzas' were seen as intimidating., but in other social contexts in which 'muzzas' were known individuals, they were not considered to be threatening and interactions with them were often light-hearted and humorous.

In addition to their social ties with muzzas, my friends also shared the muzza practice of employing ethnic words in their everyday language, including those describing drugs. For example, amongst my Macedonian friends, 'speed' was sometimes referred to as *belo* ('white') or *berso* ('fast'). Amongst my Greek friends, speed was referred as *treximo* ('run'). These codenames were used to conceal drug

use from people of other ethnicities and from parents, relatives and friends who did not use drugs. Although my research friends ridiculed the muzza tendency to use ethnic terms and accents, they engaged in similar linguistic practices.

Although many old skool ravers themselves came from Southern European backgrounds, they did not use ethnicity as a primary resource in the creation of their own identities, and ethnic markers had not been a feature of raves held in the 1990s. For example, Vivienne says: "If you were a raver it didn't matter what nationality you were, you were just a raver" (June 2007).

Arianne explains how current attendees at raves and dance parties differ from those at earlier raves:

Arianne: They don't speak, they're not, they're not social. Because ravers used to have that sort of happiness, cause they probably used to take drugs too, but it was more of a community whereas now these chocks[28] [Arianne's term for 'muzzas'] and people that aren't ravers have come in [and we've] sort of lost that feeling of all that sort of, I don't know, friendliness … First time I went to a rave it was very different to how it is now.

CS: In what way?

Arianne: It was a lot more empty, not as packed. There was a lot of guys and not as many girls. People were very friendly and there was a lot of Australians I'd say. And it was more, almost like a little fantasy land, like everyone used to dress up and do all that type of stuff ….[Now] there's a lot of mixed nationalities, a lot of Europeans now are going. It's almost become cool and in fashion and it's just absolutely packed … it's not something that's underground or more sort of isolated like in groups, you know, like how there's grunge people and ravers, there

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[28] A racist slang term that refers to people with dark skin, short for chocolate.

used to be ravers, there used to be ravers who had their own little group. Now it's like the rave is like the basic nightclub and there's all sorts. You get chocks, you get people with their tops off, you get little ravers, they're all, they're almost a dying breed. You don't see many of them anymore, you just see marias and show ponies, just show-offs and just people that think that they're good (June 2007).

The above examples all show that a key part of how the old skool ravers read muzzas was through their perceived 'undesirable' aggressive behaviour and 'sleaziness', which was mainly attributed to their use of drugs, in particular cocaine and steroids. In earlier rave forms, ethnicity could be considered 'invisible' (even though there appeared to be a diversity of ethnicities present) but, in the mid 2000s there was a noticeable increase in awareness of ethnic difference and in the use of ethnic labelling, including newly constructed labels such as 'muzza'.

When I began attending raves/dance parties in the mid-1990s, most of my friends were from a European background. Ethnicity was not an issue discussed by the ravers that I encountered then, despite the fact that those attending were from a range of ethnicities. During my MA research in 2002-03, 18% of a sample of 284 people interviewed at Melbourne dance parties identified as being from a 'European background'.[29] In the absence of other data, it appears that patrons with European backgrounds were present at previous dance parties, however the identification of ethnicity as an element in discussions over authenticity is a relatively recent development. When muzzas began to be readily identified at dance parties, some research participants felt embarrassed and that their ethnicity had now taken on a negative character. At dance events in the mid-1990s, ethnicity was not an issue; subsequently, old skool ravers distanced themselves from and ridiculed muzzas.

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[29] Approximately half (45.4%) of the respondents self-identified as 'Australian', 8.1% as 'British' (including English, Irish and Scottish) and 4.2% as 'half-European, half-Australian'. Smaller percentages (2.1% or less) of respondents self-identified as 'Asian', 'Middle Eastern', 'New Zealander', 'Maori', 'Latin American' or a combination such as 'half-Asian, half-Australian', or 'half-Middle Eastern, half-Australian'. Almost 9% of those approached in the survey declined to respond to this question.

Young (2009: 139) has argued "that the enactment of a racial self is not always a conscious part of one's identity. Rather, we each enact racialized cultural identities that are contextually performed and continuously shifting". This concept is reflected in the way the research participants were often comfortable with people referred to as 'muzzas' in social settings such as their homes, where they were more comfortable with their own ethnic identities. Moreover, in these more private settings, the role of muzza was not enacted as it would be in clubs and the term itself was rarely invoked. This highlights the shifting performance of ethnic identity as well as the importance and relevance of context in the use of ethnic labels.

The use of 'muzza' in wider discourses

The derogatory use of the term 'muzza' and assessments of the negative impact of muzzas on the Melbourne dance scene were not limited to my research friends and their social networks, but also circulated more widely within the Melbourne dance community. For example, while writing this chapter, a friend sent me a hyperlink to a Youtube video featuring the 'muzza dance' at a Melbourne dance party. A subsequent search on the Youtube led me to 40 more 'muzza' videos, some of which had been viewed in excess of 84,000 times.[30]

The topic of muzzas and their impact on the dance scene was also the focus of an internet discussion forum entitled 'What are muzzas?', hosted by an Australian dance music website 'In the Mix' (www.inthemix.com.au).[31] Echoing the comments of old skool ravers, the discussion included negative comments about muzza dress, use of steroids and cocaine, dance style, behaviour and ethnicity. The following comments, reproduced as they appeared in the forum, seek to define muzzas, with the second also offering a more nuanced typology of 'ordinary' and 'power' muzzas:

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[30] The muzza dance link can be viewed at:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MvmSCGHWfus&feature=related.
[31] The forum received 515 posts from October 2005 to 22 Feb 2007 when it closed because of '1. continual racial comments, 2. attacks on individuals both of which are against ITM forum guidelines' (Cosmica, 2007).

They are Chapel St faring, man-bag wearing, fully sik car driving, sub woofer pumping, [C nightclub] frequenting mummies boys ... of ethnic background. [32]

O.k. look some of you are a little confused and to be quite honest bordering on racist. But it's o.k. cuz I'm here now and I can sort it out for you. Sure you have your Muzzas in diesel and politix tops but there is nothing wrong with them there just your standard Muzzas. What most of you seem to be describing is the **power muzza**. A special 'powered up' version of your commen garden variety muzza. These are the type you find at Summadayze on top of the hill wearing silver hot pants and no shirts. It is unclear exactly how a regular muzza makes the massive transformation from muz to power muz but it is clear that a special diet of cocaine and anabolic steroids will usually enhance the process. Got it? Good. Carry on then.

Muzza dancing was also a popular topic in the forum discussion. For example, one respondent wrote that muzzas:

are one of the few cultured beings that assume that punching the air while stomping their feet is a form of dancing. Just think... Roid-Rage. Muzzas are the people that you do not want to see at raves ... Egotistical coke head, roid munching wogs.

Another added:

Power muzzas actually think that they are controlling the music they are hearing and therefore the crowd. It's hard to break the power muzzas zone once he starts voguing on top of the hill

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[32] All extracts from the forum are reproduced verbatim except for club names, which were replaced by pseudonyms.

controlling the entire Music Bowl [dance party venue] with his
vacant stare and massive biceps.

Interestingly, a key debate in the forum discussion concerned whether ethnicity was an essential criterion in the definition of muzzas or whether one's attitude, dancing style and dress sense were sufficient, regardless of ethnic background. Some forum contributors (as we see in the quotation above) argued that a Southern European or Middle Eastern background (commonly referred to as 'wog') was a prerequisite for inclusion in the muzza category, whilst others claimed that ethnicity was irrelevant. For example, one respondent wrote:

it is a racist term muzza is short for mario. but anyone can have
the power muzz attitude.

Likewise, another added:

 I dont reckon it has anything to do with race. I've seen muzzas
of all races.

Another respondent who, like some of my research friends, is a self-proclaimed 'wog', defines muzzas more narrowly:

LMAO!! [laughing my ass off] This thread is pure gold... and
this is coming from a wog Muzzas are the retards of wogs, its
actually simple when you think about it... every race has retards
associated with it

Like the smacked out asians at [club B] who enjoy spending
their night being G'd out [high on GHB] on the floor of a club,
while people trip all of them. Or they think they are part of the
Triad, try talking to them and they will proberly try and stab
you.

Then you have the australian yobs who you can find at [clubs A,

B or C] that are dressed in clown pants, have more lights hanging off them than a christmas tree, and dance as if they are having some sort of epileptic fit. Ohh and lets not forget the baby powder all over the place[33]... its like a johnsons & johnsons convention gone wrong.

But alas we come to the Muzzas ... these are the guys who wear no tops in clubs (which should be outlawed imo [in my opinion]) and when you walk past them you are covered in their sweat from their topless backs (isnt that some sort of health issue?) To put it frankly, they are a bunch of Wankers who think they are tough because 7 of them bashed the shit out of one bloke.

The most pathetic Muzzas ive ever seen were at the last summadayze, they were 2 brothers who were topless (of course) and were only wearing PINK SPANDEX BICYCLE SHORTS. i wonder what was going through their minds when they both decided they were going to dress the same, and on top of that wear pink fucking bicycle shorts!!! 10 minutes later one of them was doing push ups on the grass, while the other brother was counting how many push ups he had done out a loud next to him.

Another contributor to the forum references cocaine use, and adds:

I've seen that too. Summadayze one year. Totally insane, down on the floor there was the big boy section, ****s going completely fucking sik in a frenzy of coke dance and demented sweat. I was frankly terrified and ran.

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[33] Baby powder is commonly applied to the dance floor to facilitate dance moves.

Earlier, I described how Ben, Stephanie and Isabel often told 'funny muzza stories'; many forum participants also had humorous stories to share. For example, one respondent wrote:

> Best muzza moment: Walking into the male toilets at the old [C nightclub], seeing 5 of them in front of the mirror in various states of distress due to a hair being out of place, seeing another guy with the same shirt, or pecs not looking big enough.... Then the ringleader of the crew announces 'Time to get pumped up boys!' and all 5 immediately start doing push ups against the wash basins....Fucking funniest sight ever.

Interestingly a self-proclaimed 'muzza' joined the forum and posted the following retaliatory response:

> Its ok to be jelous forming a nice group to express ur feelings between urselves i thinks its kinda ...... SAD! .... Muzza? how u define Muzza 😊.... its Funny how u preach and give shit to us because we have the things that u DONT! ... so what if i drive a VL turbo or an SS ... ur just jelous that u drive a 1972 Toyota Corolla ... I got parents that look out for their kids 😊.. unlike urself that has parents that dont love you ... u see it as self-independant but reallly ur mad that u have a 1500 dollar car 😊 and we have bodies to actually show off on the dancefloor xD .. we have confidence with woman unlike yall ... who goto a club with a group of friends and stand in the corner all night and dance the night away in the dark cause u dont have the balls to approach someone half decent unlike "MUZZA's" ... Sniff Sniff jelosy is a curse guys ... also.. get with the fashion.. industie and Diesel are clothing ... just because i dont wear PipingHot and quicksilver doesnt make me any less of who i am ...
>
> Yeah i like dancing with my top off and have glasses on .. yes i like a turbo car .. and YES! i loveeeee industrie ....

you guys can stick with Piping hot toyota corolla's and ur sad

way of having fun .. we only live once .. make the most of who

u are .. 🙂u wish u could be a Muzza and u know it ....

Muzza BACK!!!"

The above extract suggests that for this self-identified muzza, the label 'muzza' was not so clearly defined. He later claims that other website users are "je[a]lous" and that he is proud to wear clothing brands such as Industry and Diesel, dance topless and drive a turbo car. By doing this, he attempts to reclaim the negative stereotype of 'muzza' and turn it into a positive label.

Theorising ethnicity within subcultures

The material thus far presented, particularly on muzzas, highlights the importance of ethnicity within current rave/dance party contexts. Yet, social and cultural research on rave and club cultures has largely neglects issues of ethnicity and race (e.g., Anderson and Kavanaugh, 2007; Malbon, 1999; Pini, 2001; Thornton, 1995; Wilson, 2006; for exceptions, see Collin and Godfrey, 1997; Reynolds, 1998; and more recently Measham and Hadfield, 2009).[34] Moreover, when ethnicity is mentioned, it is often in passing with many claiming that raves transcended ethnic and racial barriers, and none reporting the recent changes regarding ethnicity that I have described in this chapter. For example, Wilson, in his study of Canadian ravers in the late-1990s, argued that "to some extent, the bonds people formed at raves they attended appear to transcend racial barriers" (2006: 114). He later claimed that they were "populated predominantly by 'white' youth with some minorities present [and] there was no apparent animosity or segregation and certainly violence" (Wilson, 2006: 114-115). This finding is consistent with my late-1990s research on Melbourne raves, at which ethnicity was not an issue of concern to participants; however, as the discussion of muzzas clearly demonstrates, by the time of fieldwork in 2006-07 ethnic stereotyping and segregation was more apparent.

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[34] Collin and Godfrey's (1997) journalistic history traces the black, Hispanic and gay roots of the house music scene and Reynolds's (1998) book identifies issues to do with race and black identity and the influence of US hip-hop and rap on UK jungle and trip-hop musical styles. Measham and Hadfield (2009) explored the interweaving practices of cultural distinction and structural discrimination within English nightlife.

Carrington and Wilson called for a "need to re-centre discussions of race and ethnicity within contemporary accounts on dance-music cultures" (2004: 66). They pointed to: "The surprising lack of attention paid to issues relating to racial formation, ethnic identity construction, and the articulation of racism within and between sub-cultures" (2004: 71). They offer Thornton's study (1995) as an example claiming she "acknowledged that subcultural identities 'are often inflected by issues of nation, race and ethnicity' (p. 30)…[but] the subcultural ideologies she investigated 'are those of predominantly straight and white club and rave cultures' (ibid)" (Carrington and Wilson, 2004: 71).

As (Carrington and Wilson, 2004: 71) posit:

> …cultural formation [such as subcultures] cannot be understood within racialised societies such as Britain, America and Canada *without* an account of how the processes of racialization mediate taste cultures, give value to certain styles above others, and how these often used to maintain, and occasionally challenge, social hierarchies.

My research suggests that ethnicity is an important variable within the current rave/dance party context, and future research could specifically focus on how ethnicity influences party drug use in this scene. As was shown, many old skool ravers themselves come from Southern European backgrounds, but they did not use ethnicity as a primary resource in the creation of their own identities, and ethnic markers had not been a feature of past raves. As noted earlier, Vivienne said "it didn't matter what nationality you were, you were just a raver" Vivienne's quote suggests that for old skool ravers, an ethnic identity was seen as a negative attribute or liability in the dance party and club context, suggestive of an inferiority complex with the denial or rejection of an ethnic identity. According to Phinney (1996: 922), ethnic identity "includes a sense of membership in an ethnic group and the attitudes and feelings associated with that membership". Phinney (1996) identifies three aspects of ethnicity: cultural values, ethnic group membership and minority group status. The third element is particularly relevant in this context. Phinney (1996)

defined minority group status as "the struggle to gain equality, recognition, and acceptance within a predominantly European society". Although old skool ravers are European, they are from Southern European backgrounds and, within the Australian context, are negatively labelled 'wogs' (see Butcher 2008). Phinney argued that the experience of negative stereotypes can have detrimental effects on self-esteem. Therefore it may be that my research friends rejected their ethnicity in this context as a way of preserving their self-esteem and self-worth. Sam deBrito (2009) in *The Age* newspaper online similarly found that ethnicity was a contributing factor in getting admitted into clubs and bars in Sydney. In his piece he quoted 'Steven' (not his real name) who has worked at Sydney night-time venues including The Loft, Middle Bar, Ladylux and Piano Room:

> While factors such as ethnicity unfortunately play a part in this
> (hello to all the Lebanese and Asian guys out there, I feel for
> you boys) "your vibe and your style are much more important.
> And your vibe is more important than your style, says Steve.

The above quote is suggestive of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, with Middle Eastern and Asian men, in particular, facing racism at clubs. Moreover, club owners capitalised on this and awareness of ethnic discrimination by holding ethnic 'theme nights' at nightclubs, such as 'Asian night' or 'Greek night'.

In previous rave forms where ethnicity was not an issue, it appears that minorities felt free and safe. Wilson argued "that as rave has become a 'cool' thing to do, it has also become less welcoming for the marginal" (2006: 119). Furthermore, my research friends claimed subcultural capital and 'relived' their positive past rave identity (superseding their ethnic identity), thus allowing them to feel positive and allowing them a continuity of identity (the main focus of Chapter 8).

In their study of English clubland, Measham and Hadfield (2009) drew on Bourdieu to argue that the exclusion of certain groups can be viewed as a form of symbolic violence:

gentrified, commercially and culturally elite nightlife spaces exert a form of 'symbolic violence', wherein the relative value, meaning, and 'feel' of certain products, experiences and spaces is imposed by the holders of economic and (sub)cultural capital, largely to the detriment of those who lack it (Measham and Hadfield, 2009: 383).

Measham and Hadfield (2009) argued that many young people are excluded from such spaces, either directly, through being denied entry, or indirectly, by being made to feel uncomfortable or unworthy. Their research suggests that those at the bottom are increasingly excluded from night-time entertainment venues, drinking and socialising at home, in their local neighbourhood or on the streets.

Ethnic tensions and racism leading to exclusion and segregation are, of course, not the only characteristics of young people's interactions that are shaped by their constructions of ethnicity. There are many positive inter-ethnic interactions as well, and sometimes a complex combination of both positive and negative attitudes are expressed in the same context. The example below draws on fieldnotes recorded in April, 2006, and demonstrates this point well. On this occasion, I was sitting in Vivienne's car outside a club during the early hours of the morning. Vivienne, Michael, Amanda and Joe were with me:

Joe: I've drank too much alcohol tonight and there are too
           many curry munchers[35] in there. What nationalities are
           you guys?
Vivienne: I'm Macedonian
Michael: I'm Aussie but one of my grandfathers was German.
Joe: I'm Syrian but we are Orthodox Syrian not Muslim. You
           guys must have had your Easter then same time as us.
Vivienne: Yeah, do you do the red eggs[36] and stuff?

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[35] 'Curry munchers' is racist slang for people of Indian background.
[36] He was referring to the Orthodox Christian tradition of dying boiled eggs red at Easter to symbolise Jesus' rebirth. On Easter Sunday, each person holds an egg and taps another person's egg; the person whose egg does not crack is the winner.

Joe: Yeah. [He then begins discussing at length the differences between the Muslim and Orthodox religions].

My research friends were discussing their ethnic similarities and differences with humour and goodwill yet the conversation had begun with Joe's racist description of Indians as 'curry munchers'.

Discussion

Old skool ravers claimed possession of subcultural capital (Thornton, 1995) via an 'authentic' rave identity. This claim is grounded in their past participation in an idealised and now defunct golden era, which is inaccessible to 'young kids today'. In this chapter, I explored another supporting element in this claim to authentic identity and subcultural capital – deeply negative assessments of muzzas and teeny-boppers. In their 'ethnic' language, drug use, dancing, attitudes to women and ignorance of rave ethos and practices, muzzas and beefcakes were considered to be the *least* authentic of the new wave of dance party patrons, one index of the alleged pollution of rave culture by the mainstream.

Although the analytical use of the term "mainstream" in subcultural studies has been criticised (e.g., Thornton, 1995: 93; see also Hodkinson, 2002; Muggleton, 2000; Muggleton and Weinzierl, 2003; Redhead, 1997). Moore (2005) argued that young people continue to employ the notion in their own categorisations. In his research on UK clubbing, Malbon (1999) noted that most club-goers consider themselves to be 'cool' and define themselves in opposition to a 'mainstream' of which Malbon has never met a self-proclaimed member. This also appears to be the case in Melbourne's rave scene; during my fieldwork. I did not speak to anyone who self-identified as 'mainstream' and it appears to be an imagined opposite. Nevertheless, as Moore (2005: 233) suggested, when 'underground' music and culture is commercialised and made widely available through the mass market, 'insiders' experience a sense of alienation because they no longer have influence in a culture they have helped to produce. Thus they experience a loss of identity because their sense of themselves depends on an opposition to 'the mainstream' against which

they define themselves. Subcultural capital is seen as a scarce commodity that can only belong to a minority (see Chapter 8).

As a result of the arrival of dirty clubbers such as muzzas and teeny-boppers, the old skool ravers who participated in my research felt alienated from the dance scene and mourned the loss of their raver identities. We can see that for them, nostalgia for past rave and other dance events was an important element in the formation of their contemporary identities (Davis, 1977, 1979; Wilson, 2005). I take up this issue more fully in Chapter 8. When muzzas and teeny-boppers began attending dance parties, my research friends experienced a loss of identity. Despite their similarities to muzzas, they felt they no longer had anything in common with, or control over, the types of people attending dance parties. According to Aden, discourses of nostalgia emerge when individuals try "to regain some control over their lives in an uncertain time" (Aden, 1995 cited in Wilson, 2005: 34) and provide a means of temporal escape.

The relevance and importance of ethnicity within the rave/dance party context was not an issue on which I originally intended to focus in my research, but during the analysis of my fieldnotes and interviews it emerged as an issue of importance. My research is the first to examine the ways in which ethnic stereotypes are produced and deployed within the Melbourne rave/dance party scene. It highlights the relevance of ethnicity in relation to drug use within dance party and club contexts, an issue that has received little attention in the research literature. I demonstrated how old skool ravers made claims to the possession of subcultural capital by drawing on ethnicity, drug use and other aspects of style and behaviour in their negative labelling of muzzas. I also showed how old skool ravers negatively viewed changes in attendees, particularly the arrival of muzzas and teeny-boppers. In their eyes, feelings of freedom and safety had disappeared from rave/dance parties and dance clubs in 2006-07. Furthermore, they claimed that the sense of community and trust present in earlier rave forms had vanished. In the next chapter, I explore how the changes wrought by commercialisation impacted on the rave 'vibe' (or atmosphere).

Chapter 7

"The drugs have gone to shit!": Changes in party drug use in the move from subculture to mainstream

In the previous two chapters, I showed how changes in the location, marketing, and size of rave/dance parties and changes in the profile of attendees were viewed by old skool ravers. This chapter examines changes in the practices associated with party drug use amongst my research friends. It compares party drug use in the mid-1990s, when I first began researching raves/dance parties, with party drug use during my doctoral fieldwork in 2006-07. This comparison is achieved by outlining eight trends in party drug use. I suggest that these trends contributed to the creation of several new drug-related risks for many of my research friends, even though for most of them their drug taking decreased significantly between the mid-1990s and 2006-07.

In this chapter, I draw on my previous research (Siokou, 2002) and on studies by other Australian researchers including Brookman (2001), Hopkins (1996), Lenton and Davidson (1999) and Moore (1995). These studies offer insights into and help to build a picture of the rave/dance party scene in Australia during the 1990s. My doctoral fieldwork and interviews are then used to show how party drugs were used by my research friends in 2006-07. Epidemiological data, including the Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS) and data from the wider NHMRC project (see Chapter 3) are also used to provide a backdrop to these qualitative studies.

My discussion of the changes in party drug use that occurred between the mid-1990s and 2006-07 is structured around eight themes:

1. The extent of party drug use.

2. The way party drug purchases are managed.

3. The variety of party drugs available.

4. Drug quality.

5. Party drug prices.

6. The branding of ecstasy.

7. Concurrent use of alcohol and party drugs.

8. Drug-related demeanour and conduct.

1. The extent of party drug use

During the mid-1990s, the old skool ravers who participated in my research associated raves/dance parties with party drugs (mainly ecstasy, speed and LSD). In their experience, other forms of night-time entertainment were not generally associated with party drugs, especially pubs and bars and even some clubs. Much of the early literature on party drug use, particularly ecstasy use, supports their views and associates young people's use of drugs with attendance at raves/dance parties (Forsyth, 1996; Lenton and Davidson, 1999). However, by the early- to mid-2000s, party drug use was perceived as widespread by my research friends. The following quote from Arianne sums up the group's views:

> Everyone was doing it [taking party drugs]; you were in the scene and everyone was doing it so everyone's got access to it. It was just no big deal, it … didn't feel illegal (interview, June 2007).

As I showed in Chapter 4, my research friends consumed party drugs in a range of locations including clubs, dance parties, bars and private homes; availability was never a problem. For example, Isabel said: "you could never get pills or speed at Club Fire in the 1990s, it was a drinking club with R&B music, but now you can, it's everywhere, [in] pretty much all of the clubs" (fieldnotes, June 2006). Vivienne agreed, claiming:

> I think it's grown, like the drug business has grown so much. Back then it was like you wouldn't associate going to a nightclub and drugs so much, it was like all on the rave scene … but these days drugs are everywhere, drugs are in clubs, pubs, nightclubs, everywhere (interview, June 2006).

The extracts reproduced above indicate that for Isabel and Vivienne, party drug use was considered widespread in 2006-07 because it was occurring in 'mainstream' clubs and pubs, which were beyond the rave subculture, and drugs were being used by 'normal' people. Similar sentiments were expressed by rave/dance party organisers and DJs. For example, when I asked DJ Delight whether he thought drug use was widespread in the rave community, he responded:

> Yes it is. As well as everywhere else: at the office, pubs, even the suburban family home has it going on (email interview, April 2004).

Data from Australian research suggests that ecstasy is increasingly being consumed by a more demographically diverse group of people than has previously been recorded (Topp *et al*, 1998 in Hansen *et al*, 2001: 182). Moreover, later studies showed that ecstasy use was prevalent in other social settings, suggesting widespread use of ecstasy among diverse groups of young people rather than in specific "subcultures" (Degenhardt *et al*, 2004 in Cogger and Kinner, 2008: 1). A study carried out in Perth by Hansen, Maycock and Lower (2001: 182) has revealed that dance music had become increasingly mainstream, and as such ecstasy use was observable in clubs where dance music was played. They argued that party drug use shifted 'underground' subcultural settings such as raves to more 'mainstream' settings such as clubs (see also Measham *et al*,1998).

The 2007 EDRS, which surveyed 741 'regular ecstasy users' [REU] around Australia, provided further evidence of increasingly widespread party drug use in Australia; it found that:

> Younger and older REU also reported using ecstasy in different locations: While younger and older REU were equally likely to use ecstasy at a friend's home or a private party, younger REU were significantly more likely to report usually using ecstasy in public locations such as nightclubs, raves, doofs or dance parties, and live music events, compared with older REU.

Conversely, older REU were significantly more likely than younger REU to usually use ecstasy at home or in pubs and bars (Cogger and Kinner, 2008: 4).

In addition, two separate surveys, conducted in 2006 and 2007 as part of the epidemiological component of the wider NHMRC project, that includes the current research, found that speed and ecstasy were used in locations as diverse as: nightclubs, raves/doofs/dance parties, home, friend's home, pubs and private parties (Jenkinson, 2010: 73).

In previous research, Duff (2003, 2005) and Holt (2005) who drew on the 'normalisation thesis' developed by Parker *et al* (1998) to argue that party drug use in Australia has only become normalised within certain contexts, namely the rave/dance party and club scene. A main factor was the shift from 'underground' warehouse raves to more 'mainstream' venues such as licensed clubs (see Chapter 5 and also Aldridge and Parker, 2001; Hansen, Maycock and Lower, 2001). However, in a later study Duff *et al* (2007), who reviewed both the epidemiological and qualitative data on party drug use in Australia, concluded that party drug use had spread beyond the dance scene. Their project used a multi-method research approach (indigenous fieldworkers undertaking participant observation, research interviews, case studies and key expert interviews) and they suggested that party drug use was:

> increasingly normal and commonplace within Melbourne's club, bar and rave scenes… [The results] indicate that ERDs [ecstasy and related drugs] use is increasingly moving into a number of new cultures and contexts in Victoria. Beyond Melbourne's more underground club and rave cultures, ERDs use is now reportedly occurring in most types of licensed premises and in a broad range of 'leisure' settings, in Victoria's larger rural and regional communities as well as in metropolitan Melbourne (Duff, *et al*, 2007: v).

2. The way party drug purchases are managed

The way drug transactions are managed changes in several respects from the mid 1990s to 2006-07. During the mid-1990s, party drugs were usually pre-purchased from friends or known dealers before attending raves/dance parties. For example, Lenton and Davidson argued that "raves are not 'drug supermarkets' with most respondents obtaining their drugs many days before the event" (1999: 153). This finding is consistent with the practices of my research friends during the mid- to late-1990s. A rave/dance party was viewed as a special occasion and there was much excitement and planning before an event, which included pre-purchasing drugs, getting costumes or outfits ready, and buying tickets.

In contrast, in 2006-07 it was less common to organise drug supplies prior to nights out. Party drug transactions have became increasingly marked by exchanges between anonymous buyers and sellers at events. My research friends described an ethos of care for others experiencing drug-related harms that existed in earlier rave forms due to their small size and dense social ties binding participants together. With the development of a more commercial, anonymous scene with a less-developed sense of common identity, what are the consequences for reducing and managing drug-related harms?

As mentioned earlier, most old skool ravers preferred to purchase their drugs through known dealers, friends, acquaintances and friends-of-friends before attending clubs and raves/dance parties, but, they also commonly 'scored' at raves/dance parties and clubs. The extracts below describe nights when the group had run out of drugs and purchased 'top ups' from strangers and acquaintances in dance venues. My research friends were not always successful in sourcing party drugs from strangers (including both buying and getting them for free), and most of the time they would ask several people before they 'got lucky'. The following example took place at approximately 1am at a rave/dance party held in a nightclub located in Melbourne's CBD in 2006.

Simon: The guy sitting next to me [a stranger] can get a mad
                [good] pill for $30.
CS   How did you ask?

Simon   I'm smart, I didn't just ask him, he came to me and said 'How's your night been, mate?" and I replied, "I'm coming down a bit"; then he said he could get me a pill.

Simon gives the money to the guy, who leaves the room and comes back in a few minutes. He gives the pill to Simon and Simon quickly puts it into his mouth, swallowing it with a gulp from his water bottle. Simon says that the pill is a 'dolphin'. Later that night, Simon tells me "this pill is the best" whilst we are dancing (February, 2006).

On this occasion, Simon 'got lucky' and the pill he purchased from the stranger gave him the positive effects he desired, but this scenario was not always the outcome. Another event described in my fieldnotes which illustrates the changes in party drug practices between 1995 and 2007 took place in an inner city nightclub that played predominantly dance music upstairs and RnB downstairs:

> We make our way to the bar which is in the centre of the room and order drinks. Vivienne then asks me: "Is that the Russian guy from last week? He keeps looking at me". I turn around and have a look and reply, "I think it is" so Vivienne goes over and talks to him. Vivienne, Isabel, Ben and Michael then go to a corner couch and table near the DJ booth and dance floor and the following conversation takes place.

> Isabel   Has he got [ecstasy]?
>
> Vivienne   I haven't asked him but he said he's a dealer so he should have.
>
> Isabel   How much [are they]?
>
> Vivienne $30 each.

> Shortly afterwards, Ben asks, "Have you got the pills yet?" and Vivienne replies "Have you got the money?". Ben gives her $30 and Vivienne finds the Russian guy and gives him the money …
> I then notice Ben just sitting on the couch with his arms crossed

whilst everyone is dancing. I walk over and sit next to him and he says "Where are the pills already". I reply "I don't know" and he says, "I wish they would hurry up" […] About midnight (20 minutes after Vivienne has given the Russian guy the money), he returned to our group [with the pills] (fieldnotes, August 2006).

Although some mistrust is apparent when Ben asks: "Where are the pills already?", this was eased when 'the Russian guy' returned 20 minutes later. Handing money to strangers whilst they leave to obtain drugs is a 'risky' practice, because there is no guarantee that the person will return with the money or drugs; however, during my fieldwork the dealers I observed were completely reliable. For this reason, my research friends reasoned that it was an acceptable mode of purchase. They explained that when a dealer said he was leaving to obtain the drugs from 'a friend', this was a safety measure used to protect sellers from an undercover police officer or a person wanting to steal their drug supply. Both buyers and sellers generally seemed to be aware of this practice. Furthermore, only relatively small quantities (usually one to four pills or a few points of speed) were purchased in this way, which meant handing over only AU$30-$120 at any one time.

The relatively new practice of buying party drugs from strangers intrigued me. During my in-depth interviews and fieldwork nights, I often asked old skool ravers about how and why they approached specific strangers to purchase party drugs. Extracts from some of my interview material are presented below:

CS   How do you know who to go up to [to buy drugs]?
Simon   I look for people with sunglasses, seedy looking people
            and people I get into conversations with.
CS   Do you look for people who are peaking?
Simon   I don't want to bother someone dancing or who looks
            aggressive either (March, 2007).

In her interview, Vivienne said:

> A lot of people can go out to clubs and just say "Hey, have you
> got something [drugs]?"... They [the dealers] want to make
> money so that's why you sort of feel safe to ask people around
> (June 2007).

Furthermore, Ben stated: "I usually look for someone who's rocking". He claimed he had even bargained over the price of drugs with people on the dance floor. For example, during one of our nights out at a Melbourne club, Ben reported after speaking to someone at the club: "He wanted $40 [for a pill] but I bargained him down to $30" (fieldnotes, July 2006). Vivienne's standard line for asking strangers in clubs for party drugs was: "Do you know anyone here who can get [drugs]?" However, other members of the group, such as Isabel, were more cautious and found it difficult to approach strangers for party drugs. During a night out, she said: "I can't ask people I don't know for drugs. I'm too embarrassed and look like an idiot but Simon and Vivienne can do it and Ben goes up to people too" (May 2006).

As mentioned earlier, old skool ravers were not always successful in purchasing ecstasy and speed from strangers, but the main point is that most exhibited little fear in asking strangers for party drugs. Other studies have reported similar findings; for example, Hansen, Maycock and Lower (2001: 181), in their qualitative study of ecstasy use in Perth, noted that:

> a large percentage of the sample indulg[e] in occasional binges,
> spontaneous purchases, polydrug use and purchasing from
> unknown individuals in clubs/pubs. As users became more
> experienced, they tended to become less concerned about the
> risks associated with use and exhibited greater risk taking
> behaviour.

This finding is important because these changes in practices can be used to better inform harm reduction initiatives, which could focus on the risks associated with purchasing drugs from strangers (discussed in more detail in Chapter 9).

3. The variety of party drugs available

Alongside the perception of widespread party drug use, and changes in drug purchasing, there was a greater variety in the party drugs available. In the 1990s, party drugs commonly used in the rave/dance party scene in Australia and overseas included ecstasy, LSD and amphetamines, with little or no use of alcohol (Brookman, 2001; Hopkins, 1996; Lenton and Davidson, 1999; Moore, 1995; Siokou, 2002). In previous research, I found that "approximately 75% have taken ecstasy, and 60% have taken amphetamines and marijuana. Alcohol drinking was rare, and there was little or no heroin or cocaine use" (Siokou, 2002: 15).

At the time of my fieldwork, ketamine, gamma-hydroxybutyrate, crystal methamphetamine and cocaine had joined original 'rave drugs' like ecstasy, amphetamine and LSD. The majority of my research friends regularly used ecstasy and powder methamphetamine; a smaller number regularly used crystal methamphetamine, or ice. Cocaine and ketamine were used occasionally. Ketamine was regularly used amongst this group during 2002-03, as were 'k bombs' or 'k pills', meaning ecstasy containing ketamine. Many of my research friends, such as Simon, claimed that he no longer consumed ketamine because "it's not around that much anymore" and that he preferred the effects of speed and ecstasy. Cocaine was used only occasionally by my research friends, although towards the conclusion of the fieldwork its availability for this group increased, with Vivienne commenting that "coke is everywhere lately". Finally, two of my research friends – Ben and Amanda – had used 'G' (GHB).[37]

Previous research established that polydrug use amongst young people is common and that "the 'pure' ecstasy user is a rarity" (Hansen *et al.*, 2001: 189, see also Boys *et al*, 1997; Sherlock *et al*, 1999; Shewan *et al*, 2000). Likewise, a typical night out for the old skool ravers often involved polydrug use – usually a combination of speed, ecstasy and alcohol; sometimes ice, cocaine and/or cannabis were added to the repertoire. The following extract is drawn from fieldnotes recorded in January 2007. Amanda, Isabel, Vince and I were going to see DJ Slick, one of our favourite

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[37] Neither Ben nor Amanda used GHB in my presence. Ben consumed GHB on a handful of occasions when I was not present and Amanda had consumed the drug prior to the fieldwork period.

international DJs, who was playing at a South Yarra club. We were sitting in Amanda's car, which was parked near the club, when:

> Amanda gets her pipe [out] and Vince places some smokeable speed [in] it and they all have a smoke … After we are in the club for about an hour we go back outside to the car. Amanda [who was smoking ice in the car of a man we had met earlier that night] says, "I'll go ask Claire [about the pills]"… and returns a few minutes later with two "beige doves" and gives them to Isabel, who takes her pill with a sip of Mother (energy drink) and gives the other one to Amanda.

> Later at 7am Amanda and Isabel decide to go to the casino where they meet a man named Bruce. After a short conversation we all leave the casino and are walking to the carpark. Bruce says "Do you want some [coke]? Here's the bag". Bruce then unlocks his car and we all get in. Amanda says, "How much do you want for it" and Bruce says, "I don't sell, this stuff is $6000[38] a gram. It's top quality coke, I'm trying to get my brother off it, he's really bad. If you girls want it, you can have it". Amanda then has a line and says "thanks" and passes it to Isabel (fieldnotes, January 2007).

As this example suggests, polydrug use is not always planned, but may occur as different drugs become available during the course of an evening. Although cocaine was used on the night described, it was used by chance and because it was free. My research friends did not seek out cocaine but were willing to use it when it was offered.

In this section, I showed that drug use at earlier raves was limited mainly to drugs such as ecstasy, acid and speed, with little or no alcohol use. However, during the

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[38] Bruce's claim that the cocaine cost $6,000 per gram appears unlikely, given that the normal range for cocaine at this time was $350-$500 per gram.

fieldwork period of 2006-07, polydrug use was the norm (ecstasy, speed and ice) combined with alcohol use (see point 7 below).

4. Drug purity

In this section, I consider questions around the purity of party drugs. During the mid- to late-1990s, the perceived purity of party drugs, particularly ecstasy and speed, was considered high or 'good' by old skool ravers. Many claimed that the effects of a 'good pill' would last for several hours:

> I reckon those drugs, back in the day, were more pure, more
> clean so whatever I was getting back then, then that was the best
> I'm going to get (Vivienne, June 2007).

By contrast, in 2006-07, old skool ravers often expressed the view that the strength of ecstasy pills had declined over time due to increased adulteration. Nevertheless, police seizure data suggest that the purity of ecstasy has changed little in the intervening years (ranging between 28–34%) (Quinn, 2008: 41). Speed purity is more difficult to ascertain, partly because crystalline methamphetamine (a stronger form of methamphetamine) entered the market and thus methamphetamine powder may have been viewed as 'weaker' by comparison. "The mean purity of all seizures of methamphetamine analysed in Victoria during the 2006/07 financial year was 18% (range 7% to 35%)" (Quinn, 2008: 29). Quinn (2008: 29) also found that:

> There were very few amphetamine seizures (as opposed to
> methamphetamine seizures) made by law enforcement agencies
> in Victoria during the 2006/07 financial year. The purity of the
> small amount of amphetamine seized was generally low
> (<20%), with an average of 16% for 2006/07 (Unpublished data:
> Victoria Police Forensic Services Department).

Ascertaining whether ecstasy and speed purity has indeed fallen (or remained stable) is difficult, with police seizure data reflecting only a small percentage of the drugs available in illicit drug markets. Instead, my main aim here is to explore how old

skool ravers represented the purity of party drugs and how this was related to changes in their party drug use practices.

A qualitative study of party drug use among young people in Melbourne reported the widespread view that the ecstasy market is unreliable, with 'dodgy' (i.e., adulterated) pills sold widely (Duff *et al*, 2007: 62). This view was also widespread amongst old skool ravers, and led to the consumption of greater amounts of drugs as old skool ravers tried to achieve desired levels of intoxication. For example, Isabel said that: "Back in the day, I could rock all night on half or one pill [but] nowadays you need at least two" (fieldnotes, June 2007). My research friends would often discuss the 'shit drugs' (party drugs that produced little or none of the desired effect or a bad effect) available. For example, on one occasion I phoned Vivienne to see if the group was planning to go out. Vivienne replied: "Michael and I saw Patrick a few hours ago and had half a white heart [ecstasy tablet] each". I asked "How was it?" Vivienne replied that, "I can't really feel it, [it's] pretty shit" (February 2006).

Some researchers (Kalasinsky *et al*, 2004; Parrott, 2005) have argued that the perception of low purity has more to do with drug users' tolerance than the drug itself. However, research friends such as Michael, who had only recently started using party drugs, often claimed he did not 'feel anything' and that the ecstasy and speed he was using was mild or 'weak'. During the 16 months of fieldwork, Michael only experienced one 'strong', 'great' and 'clean' pill. Vivienne, Isabel and Ben (who had been using party drugs since the 1990s) agreed that this particular brand of pill was of exceptionally good quality, and similar to the pills available 'back in the day'.

In addition, old skool ravers regularly made comparisons with the past purity of party drugs, most notably speed and ecstasy. They claimed that in the past the drugs were 'cleaner'; by comparison, they were now considered to be 'dirty'. This language is suggestive of the perceived loss of quality: 'clean' is synonymous with a high standard while 'dirty' is synonymous with a low standard. For example, Arianne said that "drugs when I was going out were a lot, I don't know, were more cleaner" (interview, June 2007). The following extract derives from fieldwork at a dance party in June 2006:

DJ Chase had been playing for approximately an hour and most of the crowd were dancing facing him. There were about 10 large screens above his head constantly changing images and the lasers coupled with the loud music and dancing created an energy in the room. Simon was standing watching the crowd and Isabel, who had been dancing, came to speak to him. Their exchange was typical of comparisons often made between the past and current strength of ecstasy pills:

Isabel: Remember when we used to go out and dance all night and [now] I'm getting puffed already.

Simon: You've been dancing for a while.

Isabel: I'm glad I took all of it [the ecstasy tablet]. They're ok. I thought they were the best for about half an hour, like the old days, but it's wearing off already. I can feel it coming and going. Do you want to take half the other one?

Simon: Yeah, they're not the best. I can feel it going already (fieldnotes, June 2006).

In the above example, we see that Isabel associates the initial positive feeling of the pill with past pills; however, when the effects began to diminish about 30 minutes later, she realised that the quality was not as good as she had first anticipated. In response, she and Simon consumed another pill. Later that night, they both said that the pills were 'ok' but not as good as 'back in the day' when a pill would last 3-4 hours rather than 30 minutes.

Many old skool ravers also felt that the purity of speed had also dropped since the mid- to late-1990s. The following conversation took place between Isabel, Vivienne and me:

Isabel: This speed is shit, I don't know what to do with myself, it's irritating. I'm going to kill Adam [the dealer]".

CS	Wasn't it supposed to be good?
Isabel	That's the worst bit. I was expecting it to be good and was looking forward to it, we didn't have it last week [Isabel had saved it].
CS	What does it feel like?
Vivienne	It's dirty, you just feel annoyed and irritated. It's not the same as the other stuff. I now share Isabel's hate for Adam (fieldnotes, May 2006).

5. Party drug prices

The cost of party drugs such as ecstasy and speed fell between the mid- to late-1990s and the late 2000s. My previous research showed that:

> The street price of an ecstasy tablet or a gram of amphetamine is approximately $50 at a rave party and half the dose will keep some ravers happy all night, whilst others take several doses depending on their financial situation and tolerance levels (which build with the continued use of both drugs). However, if people buy in bulk or have a regular dealer the street price can be almost halved to about $25 to $30 per pill or point of speed (ten points making up a gram) (Siokou, 2000: 29).

At the time of my doctoral fieldwork in 2006-07, the street price of ecstasy tablets was between $25 and $35 and as little as $18 if bought in bulk (e.g., in a '10-pack'); the price of speed had dropped to approximately $20 per point. This finding is supported by the wider project's epidemiological data, which shows that the median price of ecstasy at that time was $30, with prices ranging from $12-$40. The median price of a point of speed in 2006 was $30 and the median price of a gram was $200 (Jenkinson *et al,* 2007).

Old skool ravers felt that party drugs in the past were generally of better quality, even if they were more expensive, and that their falling price was indicative of a deterioration in quality. As Chloe put it:

> Back in the day, everyone took drugs and the drugs were better
> and all that sort of cliché stuff. They were more expensive, but
> they were better (interview, May 2007).

The drop in price led to ecstasy, in particular, being viewed as 'cheap' and therefore unreliable amongst my research friends. They regularly commented that they would 'rather pay more for drugs that work' and that the drugs 'are all shit these days, what do you expect for 20 bucks?' The following extract is drawn from my interview with Vivienne:

> In my experience, the drugs back then were so much better, they lasted, like you'd pay about 50 bucks back then for a pill but you'd get your money's worth. You'd take it at 10pm and you'd be like having the fun experience until at least three or four in the morning. These days, if you buy one, all right maybe you'd get it for $35, $40, but the quality is just shit. You get them, like how many I've bought and you don't even get a come-up, it's just like sort of, it's nothing, you don't even get that ecstasy feeling. It's just the same level of boredom and you get agitated quickly.

CS: Do you reckon it's that you're tolerant or it's got nothing to do with it?

Vivienne: I think that could have something to do with it but still I reckon the quality has gone down (Vivienne, May 2007).

Vivienne concedes that she may have built up a tolerance to ecstasy but despite this, she maintains that the purity of ecstasy has also deteriorated. One explanation for the low cost of ecstasy was that it equalled low quality/purity.

6. The branding of ecstasy

Collin and Godfrey (1997: 287) argued that young people are "expert manipulators of mood, choosing exactly what to take in each situation to produce specific psychopharmaceutical responses, applying sophisticated cost-benefit analyses to each substance. They ha[ve] turned into drug adepts". Old skool ravers could be considered "drug adepts" in relation to their extensive knowledge and use of ecstasy, acid and speed during the original 'rave days' of the 1990s. For example, Isabel recalled:

> The pink panthers [a type of ecstasy] were good and I remember
> I had them with half a blue lightening bolt [another type of
> ecstasy] and they had a bit of acid in them I think but the mix
> was really good (June 2007).

On another occasion, Vivienne said that: "I remember the green sex pills [brand name], they were the best pills I've ever had" (June 2007). Simon agreed with Vivienne's assessment: "I had the green sex pills too, they were the best" (June 2007).

In the past, the 'branding' of ecstasy pills with logos and colours – such as the 'beige 007s' and 'white Mitsubishis' – provided some indication of quality. Different ecstasy 'brands' were also associated with different drug effects and experiences. For example, some ecstasy pills were described as 'speedy' (i.e., believed to contain methamphetamine), 'cokie' (believed to contain cocaine), 'smacky' (believed to contain heroin) or 'md' (believed to contain unusually high amounts of MDMA).

The quality of the different brands was a common topic of discussion in the 1990s:

> Many ravers share experiences with each other about how
> various types of ecstasy (such as doves, hearts, mitsubishis,
> apples, ying yangs and supermans) affected them. These
> conversations occur during rave parties but also in other social

settings, and again create a sense of a shared bond between participants that does extend beyond raves (Siokou, 2002: 16).

Old skool ravers would examine the brand or logos of specific ecstasy pills in order to determine the quality. For example, in 1998, the '007' pills were considered to be 'the best pills goin' round'; my research friends would go to great lengths to purchase them. The 007s commanded a price of $60 each rather than the usual $50. However, once a specific brand of pill had gained a favourable reputation (like the 007s), counterfeit, low-quality versions of the brand would flood the market. Old skool ravers believed that dealers would melt down and re-dye pills in order to resell them as the more reputable brand.

By the time of my fieldwork in 2006-07, the party drug practices of old skool ravers had changed markedly. Many considered the quality of ecstasy to be so low that branding was become irrelevant. They would rarely name the pills that they consumed and there was rarely prior discussion of brand names. When I enquired as to the name of the pills they had consumed, my research friends often claimed not to know or would just name their colour – as in 'the good one was pink'. An analogy can be drawn here with the drinking of alcohol; for example, people will often name an expensive brand such as Moet and Chandon or Dom Pérignon champagne, but refrain from naming a lower-quality variety, referring to it simply as 'cheap champagne'.

7. Concurrent use of alcohol and party drugs

As noted earlier in this chapter, party drugs commonly associated with the 1990s rave/dance party scene in Australia included ecstasy, acid and speed. Alcohol use was rare and even frowned upon at 1990s raves/dance parties (Brookman, 2001; Hopkins, 1996; Siokou, 2002). For example, Brookman (2001: 57) noted that:

> 'Drunk people' were often cited as being unwelcome at raves, due
> to the fact that they were seen as inciting violence and other
> alcohol associated problems […] only certain drugs should be
> consumed at raves (speed and ecstasy) rather than alcohol.

My earlier research (Siokou, 2000: 29) also suggested that:

> Alcohol is not a popular drug at rave parties unlike most other social settings including clubs, pubs and parties. Some rave parties have no alcohol because they are open to all ages, and others have a separate licensed room. My surveys indicate less than 20% of ravers drink alcohol, with most preferring ecstasy and amphetamines.

Furthermore, amongst those attending raves/dance parties during the mid- to late-1990s, alcohol use was associated with unwanted outcomes – including aggressive and violent behavior. For example, Anna said: "I feel safe at raves even if I come alone and I have never been hassled by anyone. I would be too scared to go to a nightclub alone". She added that, "a club to me is like a room full of people trying to pick each other up and the males are arrogant and aggressive". Anna argued that alcohol consumption can be blamed for this behaviour. The low level of alcohol consumption at raves, combined with a focus on the music and dancing rather than 'picking up', created greater feelings of safety for participants that they rarely experience in other forms of night-time entertainment (Siokou, 2002: 14).

My previous rave research revealed two reasons underpinning the low rates of alcohol consumption: the effects of alcohol were considered ill-suited to the rave/dance party environment, and alcohol was considered expensive in comparison to party drugs such as speed and ecstasy. For example:

> One interviewee named Tom (aged 19) has been going to raves for a year, and as a former nightclubber states "alcohol just puts me to sleep so now I don't touch it anymore. I have found it [ecstasy] better, plus drinking gets expensive at clubs" (Siokou, 2000: 29).

During my doctoral fieldwork in 2006-07, concurrent use of alcohol and party drugs had become common, and was facilitated by the location of raves/dance parties in

licensed venues. Measham (2004) suggested that this change could also be attributed to a shift in the marketing of alcohol, which increasingly portrayed it as a psychoactive drug. The majority of old skool ravers would regularly drink alcohol whilst using speed and ecstasy in clubs and at raves/dance parties; the effects of speed and alcohol were generally perceived as compatible (provided the speed was taken prior to drinking). Using speed enabled my research friends to drink greater amounts without experiencing the 'messy' effects associated with being drunk – for example, loss of motor control and slurred speech. By contrast, drinking alcohol while using ecstasy was not viewed as a "good mix".

There were several occasions on which my research friends had planned to limit their consumption to alcohol but, once intoxicated, had made the decision to use party drugs. For instance, during one night of fieldwork, Ben said to me: "Fuck it. I'm drunk and I'm going to go to the ATM, take out $60 and get some pills and indulge" (July 2006). On another night of fieldwork, Vivienne and Isabel pre-purchased speed and were hoping to score ecstasy later at the club. They, they were initially unsuccessful in purchasing ecstasy, so they decided to drink alcohol instead; however, a few hours later, Vivienne purchased ecstasy from a stranger in the club. The combination of alcohol, ecstasy and speed led to the following effects for Isabel and Vivienne:

> Isabel dances for about half an hour and then says, "Do you want to go downstairs for a break?" We all go downstairs and start walking to the car. Isabel starts to vomit a small amount of liquid that is a pinky-red colour. Isabel says, "I'm foaming at the mouth" and she spits out some more liquid. I enquire if she is okay and Isabel replies "Yeah, I feel pretty good actually but I shouldn't have drank those vodka and cranberries". [Vivienne says later that] "these [pills] are pretty intense" […] The next day Vivienne calls me and claimed she almost had a heart attack and is never going to touch drugs again (fieldnotes, May 2006).

In the above example, both women knew it was not a good idea to use alcohol with ecstasy. Isabel attributed her vomiting to this combination; Vivienne chose to blame

"the drugs" rather than the alcohol or the drug and alcohol combination. The following extract, from my interview with Arianne, also suggests that although she understood it was not a good idea to combine alcohol with party drugs, her surroundings, particularly the availability of a bar, made her feel like drinking:

Arianne: In the beginning I didn't used to take alcohol with drugs, never used to mix them cause I was too scared, towards the end I got a bit complacent and then I did.

CS: Why do you think?

Arianne: I didn't have that much, maybe two or three drinks. Just, I think when you used to go out to a club, to a bar, just for the social aspect; just so you didn't look like you were just standing there with your hands in pocket, you'd have a drink in your hand.

CS: And I suppose at raves there [were] never any bars [....] before it wasn't in your face, there was a licensed section, but I think now it's easy access.

Arianne: Then you want to talk to guys or meet people so you stand around the bar. You can't stand there empty-handed, you have your drink. I didn't have anything strong but, you know, you'd have at least three drinks a night, you wait till the place fills up and then go into the toilets, have a bit of a sniff [of speed] and then come out and start dancing (June 2007).

The above quotation suggests that, for Arianne, context – particularly standing at a bar in a club – influenced her drinking practices. Furthermore, she claimed that she initially refrained from concurrent alcohol and party drug use but later became complacent as she grew more experienced in the use of drugs. Similarly, research

undertaken by Hansen *et al* (2001) found that concurrent use of alcohol and party drug use increases amongst experienced users. They claimed that:

> Alcohol consumption was generally kept to a minimum; however, as users became more experienced, alcohol consumption (pre-, post- and during) tended to increase (Hansen *et al*, 2001: 190).

Epidemiological data from the wider NHMRC project indicated that alcohol use was associated with 'unplanned' party drug use. "Most participants (84%, n=178) reported at least one occasion during the past six months when they had decided to use party drugs only after they had already been drinking (that is, they hadn't previously planned to use drugs on that/those occasions)" (Jenkinson, 2010).

These figures suggest that alcohol occupies a much greater place in contemporary patterns of party drug use than it did in the mid-1990s. Back then, there was little or no alcohol use at raves/dance parties and many events were all-age events and were therefore unlicensed or hosted only small licensed areas; thus Measham and Brain's (2005) identification of a new "culture of intoxication" that involves both legal and illicit drugs is also applicable to the old skool ravers in Melbourne. Moreover, as Chatterton and Hollands (2003) argue below drink producers have successfully re-marketed alcohol to ravers:

> Drinks producers have responded [to the decade of illegal drug use] by 'recommodifying' alcohol products and creating what Brain (2000: 2) has called a 'postmodern alcohol market', in which the range of alcohol products is more extensive and product strengths are higher in an attempt to win back the 'rave' generation who are eager to find greater highs, and where products are based more around marketing and lifestyle advertising (Chatterton and Hollands, 2003: 69).

8. Drug-related demeanour and conduct

As discussed in Chapter 2, earlier raves/dance parties were seen as a form of hedonism and an escape from reality (e.g., Chatterton and Hollands, 2003; Collin and Godfrey, 1997; Malbon, 1999). Pini's participants made associations between raving and "losing it" or "going mad" (Pini, 2001). Malbon (1999) suggested that an "oceanic experience" could be achieved at raves and clubs where participants were freed from societal standards, prejudices and restraints, obligations, insecurities and, most importantly, time and space. Party drugs are also used by some to prolong/enhance this "oceanic experience".

During the mid- to late-1990s, it was common for young people to use raves/dance parties as avenues to play and to escape from reality or "lose it". Participants in my earlier research (Siokou, 2002) often made comments such as: "a rave is like another world, much like a childhood fantasy" or "a fun, colourful dream" where they "could forget about everything" and "escape from the real world". The following quotation from Claire sums up the sentiments of many old skool ravers: "raves are set up to place the raver in a sphere of unreality. From the dress, to the drugs, to the décor; a rave's aesthetic is centred around fantasy" (email interview, July 2003). Laura adds:

> When I'm at a rave I forget about the outside world. For that short amount of time, this is my world where normal boundaries do not apply. The lights and the music and the general collective vibe from everyone else seems to create this (email interview, December 2003).

As discussed in Chapter 5, early rave/dance party organisers often created a fantasy atmosphere with décor and lighting; many participants would dress up to match (see Chapter 6). This assisted in creating an atmosphere where participants felt free and safe to live out their fantasies without fear of judgement or being reminded of reality.

At the time of my doctoral fieldwork, old skool ravers felt that the fantasy and fun atmosphere of past raves/dance parties had been lost. This impacted upon their party drug use in several ways. First, they often claimed that they did not want to get "too

messy" or "too fucked" when they were out, particularly at commercial clubs and those rave/dance parties held in mainstream venues such as sporting complexes and arenas. Second, these settings were seen as ill-suited to hosting raves/dance parties. Attending events in these locations 'would do [their] heads in' and they felt unable to escape reality. As a result, they generally used speed and alcohol, or cocaine, rather than alcohol alone or ecstasy at such events. For example, at a dance party in 2006:

> I dance next to Michael, who has consumed alcohol and several lines of speed (methamphetamine powder) but has refused the free pill Isabel offers him, because he doesn't want to risk getting 'messy' (fieldnotes, August 2006).

Further, my research friends claimed that the patrons of some of the clubs we attended, especially the 'in' or 'cool' clubs, were generally not open about their party drug use and covert drug use was the norm. By comparison, ravers in the 1990s would commonly ask "What are you on?" as a general conversation starter. The following example is illustrative:

> You go to a drug club, no-one talks to you and you're like 'Fuck, why is no-one talking to me?' and then you go to a club where there's drinking and you're like 'Phew, why are these people trying to pick me up?' Can't handle it, yuk (Arianne, June 2007).

Isabel expresses similar sentiments:

> We were at club Apple and I had brought a pill from some guy [a stranger] and it was great. I wanted to tell everyone what I was on and how I felt, I couldn't stop smiling but I quickly realised no one talks about it anymore even though every one was on stuff going in the toilets two by two. It's not like the rave days when every one was open about it and friendly (June 2007).

Isabel's quotation also highlights the behavioural changes with respect to the use of party drugs. She identifies a loss of friendliness and honesty regarding party drug use and a new focus on control and covert use.

The eight themes together, they show that there were several changes in the way old skool ravers used party drugs from the mid 1990s to 2006-07. My data show how party drug use was perceived as being more widespread, that the way drug transactions were managed changed, a greater variety of party drugs was available, purity was perceived to have declined as prices fell, concurrent use of alcohol and party drugs became more common and drug related demeanour and conduct changed. Old skool ravers were no longer party "drugs adepts" (Collin and Godfrey, 1997), and this is partly due to the fact that they perceive party drugs as 'weak' (poor quality), but also due to the mainstreaming of these drugs: they were no longer seen as 'special'. The eight changes described in this chapter suggest that party drug use in Melbourne over the period of the mid 1990s to 2006-07 was transformed from subcultural to mainstream.

The risks associated with changes in party drug use

Earlier in this thesis, I posed the question: with the development of a more commercial, anonymous rave/dance party scene, where there is a less-developed sense of common identity, what are the implications for reducing and managing drug-related problems? The two main risks of party drug use I identified amongst my research friends were: changes in the way drug-taking practices were managed, particularly purchasing drugs from strangers, and the concurrent consumption of alcohol and party drugs.

Risks associated with changes in the way drug-taking practices were managed

At the time of my doctoral fieldwork, my research friends were generally using party drugs less frequently than they had in the mid-1990s. During their 'rave days', they would use speed and ecstasy more frequently, particularly because of the perceived high purity and positive affects experienced. This made them want to repeat these pleasurable experiences (see also Dwyer, 2008). At the time of fieldwork, many

considered party drug use to be less enjoyable and increasingly 'risky' because of the perceived low purity. Nevertheless, they continued to use party drugs, aiming to relive their past pleasurable experiences, and would often make comparisons to past raves/dance parties.

In spite of lower party drug usage, old skool ravers engaged in potentially riskier drug practices. For example, as described above, my research friends would regularly approach strangers to purchase party drugs. This poses several risks including detection from police, not knowing what is in the drugs, and placing unwarranted trust in strangers (e.g., that they will return with the drugs). Hansen *et al* (2001: 192) argued that:

> Over time, individuals appeared to become more relaxed about their use and at this stage, additional behaviours such as purchasing off the street, spontaneous purchases, increasing the volume consumed and including 'outsiders' to the use group began to occur. Users appeared to become less anxious about potential adverse effects as they became more experienced.

Furthermore, in line with the findings of my research, Hansen *et al* (2001: 192) also stated that "as the user becomes more experienced their perception of the risk of adverse health consequences is superseded by the risk of getting a 'dud' (poor) experience".

My research friends were polydrug users and often used ecstasy in conjunction with speed or ice. In the 2007 EDRS Cogger and Kinner (2008: 5) reported that:

> Overall, older users reported riskier patterns of drug use: they were more likely to use crystal methamphetamine with ecstasy, more likely to have binged on stimulant-type drugs, and among those who had recently used methamphetamine, to indicate possible dependence, compared with the younger group.

However, my research friends also engaged in polydrug use in the 1990s (except for alcohol). My findings indicate that although old skool ravers engaged in potentially 'risky' behaviour, this did not necessarily equate with the experience of greater harms, with most users reporting only mild forms of health-related harm (as detailed in Chapter 4).

Risks associated with concurrent use of alcohol and party drugs

Concurrent use of alcohol and party drugs can exacerbate both the risks and the harms associated with alcohol or any of these drugs when used in isolation (Breen *et al*, 2006). The negative health effects experienced by my research friends ranged from mild effects, such as vomiting and nausea, to physical collapse (temporary loss of consciousness, may involve feeling dizzy with loss of vision and falling or blacking out), but this serious harm was infrequent.

In addition to the potential direct harms listed above my female research friends also felt increasingly unsafe around men drinking. For example, as shown in Chapter 1, Anna's view was: "a club to me is like a room full of people trying to pick each other up and the males are arrogant and aggressive". Anna argued that alcohol consumption was largely responsible for this behaviour. For most old skool ravers, aggressive and violent behaviour was generally attributed to alcohol consumption and, in some cases, to steroid and cocaine use.

Other studies, such as the 2007 ERDS, found that concurrent ecstasy and alcohol use was common, as was polydrug use (see Table 5 below):

Table 5: Use of ecstasy with other drugs

Usually use other drugs with ecstasy (% Last 6 months)	16-25 years (n = 465)	26+ years (n = 276)
Alcohol (%)	77	74
Cannabis (%)	41	48
Speed Powder (%)	24	29
Crystal Methamphetamine (%)	10	19

(Cogger and Kinner, 2008: 5).

The 2007 EDRS also reported that:

> Similar proportions of younger and older REU reported consuming alcohol with ecstasy, although there was a trend for older REU to be more likely than younger REU to consume alcohol when coming down… Despite this, there was evidence of riskier alcohol use among younger REU (Cogger and Kinner, 2008: 4).

These results indicate that drinking and polydrug use are common; however, it appears younger users are more likely to use alcohol and party drugs in a high risk way. This is line with the findings of my research which indicated that heavy drinking (6 or more standard drinks) usually occurred alongside ecstasy and speed use.

It is also worth considering whether using speed in combination with drinking is potentially 'protective'. Earlier, we saw how speed and alcohol were generally perceived as working well together. Combining the two drugs enabled my research friends to drink greater amounts without some of the 'messy' effects associated with being drunk, such as loss of motor control. Green and Moore (2009: 407) showed how their research participants "used dexamphetamine [a prescription stimulant] to avoid getting 'messy', particularly when drinking heavily". This perceived control was empowering to some of my female research friends, who claimed that they often made unwise decisions while affected by alcohol. There was a belief amongst my female old skool ravers that drinking alcohol 'makes you more of a slut'. Two of my female research friends had unprotected sex on several occasions with strangers they met whilst clubbing (see also Breen *et al* 2006, who argued that concurrent alcohol and ecstasy use is associated with increased sexual risk-taking). In situations where this occurred, most have used a combination of party drugs and alcohol, but they attribute the sexual risks they take to their alcohol use.

Policing practices: "Partying under rules and regulations"

Thus far, the discussion in this chapter has focused on the perceptions and experiences of party drug users. Another important factor to consider is the response of police to young people's increasing use of party drugs. This section focuses on the two main changes in policing practices: the introduction of sniffer dogs and the 'drug bus'.

Sniffer dogs

Victoria Police PAD Dog operations, commonly referred to as 'sniffer dogs', were instigated in response to the 11 overdoses at the Two Tribes event of 2004. The police claimed that the aim of such operations was to "deter and detect trafficking, possession and use" (Hazelwood *et al*, 2008). The intended measures of success were increased perception of safety, and decreases in overdoses and the number of criminal charges/court diversions issued (Hazelwood *et al*, 2008).

During the fieldwork period, I did not encounter sniffer dogs when attending raves/dance parties or clubs with my research friends. A few of my research friends had direct experience of the sniffer dogs when I was not present; however, before attending large raves/dance parties, there was often discussion amongst old skool ravers about the possible presence of sniffer dogs. Anticipation of sniffer dogs at raves/dance parties led to two main changes in party drug practices: hiding their drugs more carefully and consuming them before events. My research friends rarely discussed sniffer dogs before attending clubs, because they did not expect to encounter them in that context.

Sniffer dogs were generally viewed negatively amongst old skool ravers. Common themes arising in my interviews and fieldnotes included that sniffer dogs were ineffective and targeted users with small amounts rather than dealers, and they created anxiety and fostered negative perceptions towards the police, who where perceived as harassing rave/dance party attendees. The following transcript of a conversation with Amanda is illustrative:

The police are trying to keep it down, keep the drugs out of the youth or whatever, but sniffer dogs at parties and that, people aren't enjoying themselves at the parties. You know, there's ambulances and things like that. When we used to go to rave parties there used to be people there, not sniffer dogs. That just makes you uncomfortable. I don't feel comfortable going there. I would never go there because I know they will be there.

CS: So do you think they put you off going to the raves?

Amanda: Yeah. I feel harassed.

CS: When we used to go to the raves in the 1990s, there used to be the ambulances, but did you feel harassed then?

Amanda: No. I felt safe. If anything used to happen, they're there, they'll call the police or whatever, but with sniffer dogs, it just really makes you feel uncomfortable (March 2007).

The presence of sniffer dogs led to old skool ravers changing their drug use practices by hiding their drugs more carefully, but it did not stop them from using drugs. For example, Chloe said:

That was pretty funny at Earthdance. I was working in the info' desk on the merchandising team and we were just sort of standing there. And all of a sudden, we were looking at the marketplace and all of a sudden all these people went and it is like 'Where did everyone go? What is going on?' and then you saw the police with the dogs, and you were like 'Ah, everyone has gone back to their campsites to dump the drugs' (April 2007).

Sniffer dogs successfully prompted several younger, less experienced group members to change their drug-using practices. For example, Guy (aged 22 years) felt scared when he first encountered sniffer dogs at a dance party in 2007:

The first time I saw cops and sniffer dogs would have been at [a dance party]. That would have been the first time and I was really, really scared so we ended up going back to the hotel and taking drugs there. Meeting them [his friends] there and then [we] went back […] Especially when you're already high on drugs. It tends to give that feeling of paranoia (Interview, May 2007).

Others, such as Simon and Arianne, claimed to be unaffected by the introduction of sniffer dogs. Simon considered sniffer dogs to be 'scare tactics' employed by the police. The following is an extract from fieldnotes describing the afternoon prior to a dance party in February 2006. Simon called me at home and the following conversation took place:

Simon: Hey, did you here about Two Tribes on the news?

CS: Yeah.

Simon: They reckon they're going to have sniffer dogs, a lot of police and the drug bus.

CS: What are you going to do with your stuff [drugs]?

Simon: It's just scare tactics, I'm still gunna bring my shit.

CS: Where are you gunna put it?

Simon: In my cigarette packet, then my jacket, so it's far away just in case there are dogs.

CS: I have never seen sniffer dogs at a rave yet. Remember when there were rumours they were gunna be at Launch [a rave held last year at Place nightclub] and there was none?

Simon: You know the media is fucked.

CS: Raves have always been an easy target.

Later that evening at the rave/dance party, Simon had consumed his drugs and was looking to buy more pills or speed. The following is another extract from my fieldnotes.

Simon then sits next to two guys who appear to be in their mid-twenties. One is of Asian background and the other guy is fair with blonde hair. Isabel says to me, "It's too hard to score in a place like this". Simon returns in a few minutes and says, "They said they have none and people only brought for themselves tonight, not to deal because of the sniffer dogs and police" (fieldnotes, February 2006).

The presence of sniffer dogs did not deter Simon from asking several people that night for ecstasy and speed. Although preferring to ask friends or associates, old skool ravers often asked strangers for party drugs once inside clubs and rave/dance parties. This was also evident when Isabel, Simon and Michael all asked strangers for party drugs at the Retro party described in Chapter 1. Both Isabel and Michael were successful in buying ecstasy and speed from two unknown dealers that night. Nevertheless, old skool ravers generally agreed that people were less willing to deal drugs at large-scale raves/dance parties, than at some of the clubs we attended. For instance, Adam[39] would regularly deal party drugs at clubs, 'recovery' parties (smaller daytime parties that continue after the end of the rave or club night) and from home but considered it 'too risky' to deal at large raves/dance parties because of the police presence.

Arianne's views on sniffer dogs generally accorded with those of Simon. She claimed:

Sniffer dogs, yeah, I used to get a bit scared when I used to see them cause [of] any traces of anything on me. But I just tried to stay away from them. I don't think they do anything. Besides, if you see a dog you walk the other way, you take a step back and you walk [in] the opposite direction […] You don't go near them. If you take your

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[39] As noted in Chapter 4, Adam was one of the main dealers to the group during the first six months of fieldwork.

drugs on you of course. I don't feel, I don't feel the dogs do anything, they're not taking the dogs in the night club, they're just standing in front of the club. What are they gonna do?

Victoria agreed with Arianne. When the topic of sniffer dogs was raised in her interview, she said:

You're still going to take it [the drug] and I think it's stupid that they go after the little punter who might have like one or two on them. Like if they're that worried about it, focus on the big guys. Because you're going to have … you'll have the punter who gets it off the dude who might buy 100 who gets it off the guy who buys 500 … You've got like five levels before you can get to the source. Why bother the little punters like … I don't think it's bad to go out and have a pill (March 2007).

Mark explained:

I was at a club, had a few drinks and speed. I [saw] the funniest thing. A dog came into the club upstairs [and started] sniffing people, scaring people. Mean looking thing, lucky I wasn't carrying, but me and my mate had a laugh (April 2007).

Arianne's and Victoria's quotations highlight the wider group's perceptions of sniffer dogs. Furthermore, they were often seen as targeting users with small amounts, known as 'cleanskins', rather than dealers and suppliers. The following conversation with Arianne highlights the views of the majority of my research friends:

Arianne   The police, you know, what really annoys me, the police are there with their dogs for these little shits with twenty five dollars worth of drugs on their, on them, trying to

bust them and they're letting criminals and gangsters who are selling the drugs to try-hard druggies and selling them to all these little kids. They're letting them roam around free and I see it every day.

CS: And what do you reckon now about the sniffer dogs and police at events and stuff? Have you ever come across any of that?

Arianne: They just roam around with such arrogance and they just don't give a shit and then they're wasting time in front of a nightclub with the dogs, little kids you know, start at the top work your way down (interview, June 2007).

There also appeared to be confusion about citizens' rights and responsibilities in relation to sniffer dogs. The following extract is taken from a joint interview with Ben and Seb:

Seb: I hadn't [seen sniffer dogs] until [dance party]. We were like 'What, sniffer dogs? That's bullshit' and then walked out of [dance party] and there was about seven [dogs].

CS: Get out.

Seb: That's the first time I've seen them in years.

CS: So what were they doing? Sniffing people?

Seb: Yeah. People were stopping and taking out shit from their pockets.

Ben: It's just for dealers, yeah?

Seb: It's for everyone. But if you've got shit, say you've got a few pills. One of my friends got busted with two pills and a gram of speed and he had to go to, it's like a …

CS: A rehabilitation kind of thing?

Seb: Sort of almost like [that] but at the police station sort of thing. It was just to teach them that you don't need drugs to go out partying recreationally. I don't know exactly

what it was but he had to do that for two weeks (April
2007).

The above examples illustrate the lack of education regarding sniffer dogs. Most of my research friends based their opinions on their personal experience or that of their friends. For instance, we saw that Ben incorrectly believed that sniffer dogs targeted dealers when in fact anyone with any quantity of drugs was targeted, and whilst Arianne thought sniffer dogs were unable to enter clubs, Mark witnessed them inside a club. Simon was of the opinion that hiding drugs in his upper pocket would protect him. A survey of rave/dance party attendees undertaken in Melbourne in 2007 largely supported my old skool ravers' experiences and perceptions of sniffer dogs.[40] Sixty percent of respondents said that the presence of sniffer dogs made them feel anxious and nervous, with only 2% saying that they felt safer in the presence of dogs. Many also took similar precautions to those employed by my research friends when they heard that sniffer dogs were attending events. Common precautions taken before the event included hiding drugs better (43%) and consuming them before the event (38%). If they were already at the event, 30% of respondents said that they would consume the drugs to avoid detection and 26% said that they would hide their drugs better (Hazelwood, Winford, Johnson, Jenkinson and Brogan, 2008). They also suggest that sniffer dogs did not stop them using party drugs and they only slightly modified their behaviour in response to the possible presence of sniffer dogs at events.

The survey findings from the wider NHMRC project also suggest that the practices of my research friends are widely pursued. Over one-quarter of the survey participants (28%, n=62) reported that the presence of sniffer dogs affected their drug-taking practices during the past six months. Of these, most reported that they used drugs before going to events or clubs so that they could avoid detection, or that they purchased drugs at events or clubs from a known or unknown source. Only one participant reported that the introduction of sniffer dogs meant that they didn't use drugs when they were out/at public events (see Table 6 on the following page).

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[40] The study surveyed 253 people at Melbourne raves/dance parties over 5 months in 2007.

The 2007 ERDS (Ecstasy and Related Drug Reporting System) findings also suggest that the avoidance practices of the old skool ravers are widespread. For example, the ERDS results show that:

> When hearing that sniffer dogs were going to be at an event, participants most commonly reported hiding their drugs better (43%, n=19), consuming/using their drugs before attending the event (32%, n=14), choosing not to attend the event (14% n=6)" (Quinn, 2008: 140).

Table 6: Impact of sniffer dogs on drug-taking practices (Survey 2) (N=220)

Past six months	Number (%)
Has the use of police sniffer dogs (PAD dogs) had any impact on your drug-taking practices?	
No	158 (72)
Yes	62 (28)
If yes, please specify (n=62):	
I don't use drugs when I'm out/ at public events	2
I use drugs before going to events/clubs so they can't be detected	63
I purchase drugs at events/ clubs etc from a known source	23
I purchase drugs at events/ clubs etc from an unknown source	14
I use different drugs that are not detectable by the dogs	8
'Other' (included: hide/conceal better, more careful about where we use, risk it)	32

(Jenkinson, 2010: 93)

In addition, the key experts interviewed in the 2007 ERDS argued that the "majority of REU [regular ecstasy users] detected by drug detection 'sniffer' dogs were first time offenders ('cleanskins'), usually possessing only small quantities of drugs (i.e. under trafficable amounts)" (Quinn, 2008: 25).

In summary, sniffer dogs appear to have changed the practices of some of my research friends, as shown above, but not in the way Victoria Police might have hoped. The vast majority of old skool ravers continued to use and purchase party

drugs at raves/dance parties and clubs. Sniffer dogs were successful in creating feelings of fear and resentment towards the police. Changes in drug-using practices as a result of the introduction of sniffer dogs were limited to consuming all of their party drugs in one go before large rave/dance parties and hiding them better. There were no changes to party drug use practices at clubs amongst my research friends.

Drug-driving

Driving under the influence of drugs arose as an issue that arose during fieldwork. On 13 December 2004 the Victorian government began a 12 month trial of drug-driving tests and police frequently targeted rave/dance party events. Louise Degenhardt, Paul Dillon, Cameron Duff and Joanne Ross, have identified that:

> Although the legislation allows for random testing, Victorian Police operational guidelines will target drug screening at locations where high-risk drivers are likely to be present. Targeting operations to times and locations where there is a high risk of drug impaired driving, such as nightclub areas in the early hours of the morning, is believed to minimise impact on the average responsible driver (2005: 43).

The practice of people driving under the influence of drugs to and from raves has been identified as an issue by other researchers (e.g., Degenhardt *et al,* 2005; Duff and Rowland, 2006; Lenton and Davidson, 1999). During my fieldwork in 2006-07, every roadside breath testing bus (or 'booze bus') was also a 'drug bus' with the capacity to detect amphetamines, ecstasy and cannabis via saliva tests.

During my fieldwork, driving whilst under the influence of party drugs and/or alcohol was common by old skool ravers. This finding is reflected in the survey results of the wider NHMRC project, which found that:

> Driving while under the influence of alcohol and illicit drugs was very common among both samples [N=150 survey 1 and N=220 survey 2]: over half of those who had driven a vehicle

reported driving while 'under the influence' of alcohol (with a BAC over 0.05) during the past six months (Survey 1, 53%; Survey 2, 61%), and 58% of each sample reported having driven within one hour of consuming an illicit drug (Jenkinson, 2010: 89).

Although most of my research friends preferred to avoid drug-driving, because of fear of detection and the stigma associated with getting caught, they nevertheless did so regularly because of a lack of alternatives. There was no public transport to the outer suburbs at night and taxis were expensive, usually between $55 and $70 each way. For example, Mark said: "[I] haven't really seen any [drug buses] on the road but it does scare you a bit. I think that there's a possibility that you could get busted and then everyone will find out" (April 2007). Vivienne added her thoughts

> There were tens of thousands of people coming to these things [raves/dance parties] and I think that's why these drug buses and everything else got introduced, because there were just so many people, masses of people going and taking drugs, and these parties, and they like just started blaming everything on them. If anything happened, they started blaming, 'Oh, there was a rave party' (May 2007).

My research friends developed several strategies aimed at lowering the risk of getting caught drug-driving. Some avoided driving into the city and surrounding suburbs, including St Kilda and South Yarra; instead, they would drive in and around the outer suburbs because of a perceived lesser chance of getting caught. For example, during a night of fieldwork, the following conversation took place:

Isabel: Hey, shall I drive [to the dance party] or should we catch a cab? I'm just scared of the drug bus these days targeting raves and clubs.

Simon: Don't risk it, we'll take a cab from here.

Isabel: They probably won't even be there, but I'm just

	paranoid imagine getting done for drug driving. I don't even know what the penalties are.
CS:	When they had the trial it was a $300 fine for [a] first offence but now it's a lot more and loss of licence I think.
Isabel:	I'll still have to drive from Simon's house in the morning to home.
Simon:	No way there will be a drug bus from your house to my house.
Isabel:	Yeah, your right, but what shits me is you can get busted the next day. Arianne's friend had speed and a pill on the weekend and got busted on Tuesday going to work: how fucked is that? (Fieldnotes, November 2006).

In this example, we can see that although Isabel considered driving to the dance party in the CBD, she was scared of getting caught drug-driving (although she did acknowledge the chances were slim). However, Isabel did drive under the influence of drugs from Simon's house in the eastern suburbs to her house in the northern suburbs that morning at around 7am. Other research friends deliberately stayed out for extended periods, sometimes until the middle of following day (often consuming even more drugs) to avoid getting caught. Still others preferred to stay at home or in their local area to consume drugs to lessen the risk of encountering drug buses.

Guy and Amanda, however, regularly drove under the influence of drugs. During a night of fieldwork in October 2006, Guy said that: "I love [driving on] the freeway: I saw a big pink elephant dancing, then closed my eyes and it was gone. Then I see a hotdog talking". Approximately seven months later, Guy voluntarily stopped driving on drugs:

> [I used to] drive every weekend on drugs. I've hit my car four times being on drugs, on poles or on the side of the freeway and things like that. Mind you, I tell my Mum that I went to a shopping centre and somebody must have hit my car while it was parked there […] There's been times when I've been so

awake and I've wanted to drive to Sydney and back. Like I was just that full of energy and there are other times when I can't even keep my eyes open and end up passing out on the road and that's how I suppose I've hit my car four times and I've had my friends quickly wake me up before I hit cars and things. That's what really ruined it for me. […] Like when I do it now – that's why I try and get other people to drive, because I'd rather go out and know I won't have to worry about driving home. You know when you drive, you automatically ruin your drug high, because you've got to switch to 'I've got to drive'. So it just ruins it for me and that's why I think I stopped it.

Amanda also regularly drove while on drugs. The following extract is from a conversation I had with Vivienne about her previous night out clubbing with Amanda:

CS: When did you get home?
Vivienne: About 8am.
CS: Who drove or did you cab it?
Vivienne: Amanda drove.
CS: Weren't you scared?
Vivienne: I was too fucked to be scared and there was cops
            everywhere and the drug bus [was] near Chapel [street]
            and she's driving round like it's no big deal and then
            makes a turn into the car park.
CS: What were the cops doing?
Vivienne: They were drug testing people on the street.
CS: Really? I don't think they can do that. I thought only
            drivers [could be tested].
Vivienne: And making people empty their pockets for drugs (April,
            2007).

Others such as Arianne, Isabel and Vivienne would often 'wait till it [drug intoxication] wore off a little bit' but then 'take the risk' and drive home. They often

did this because they felt 'safer' if they brought their car – it provided security (particularly for women) if they could not get home. On one night of fieldwork, we decided to leave the club just after 3am and the following exchange took place in Isabel's car:

Isabel: I can't drive. This pill is still smacking me around.

Vivienne: No rush, we'll just chill here.

Isabel: Ok. I should be better soon, I want it to go [the 'e' feeling], but I don't and as soon as it does [go] I'll be cursing and [will] want it back (August, 2006).

My research friends held a common perception that driving on speed was safer than doing so on alcohol, cannabis or ecstasy. The following conversation with Arianne is illustrative:

CS: Did you think your driving was impaired [on speed]?

Arianne: No. I think it was, what's the opposite to impaired? Increase[d], my judgment I think [was] better. More alert [than] when they were driving around at three in the morning sleepy as opposed to driving around wired and awake – your reaction time's a lot faster so I think it made me better.

CS: How about on Ecstasy?

Arianne: Ecstasy impairs your judgement completely, you could not drive. And I never drove when I was on Ecstasy, I only drove when I was on speed and I didn't drive when I was peaking. I drove when it started to wear off.

CS: How about on cocaine?

Arianne: I did drive with coke but I didn't – coke you don't really feel much so you can drive quite easily. The more, I don't know, to me coke just felt like it messed with my mood, it didn't mess with my consciousness (Interview, June 2007).

Many of my research friends perceived the stigma associated with getting 'busted' drug-driving as perceived as 'worse' than that associated with being arrested for drink-driving. Accordingly they could be considered adepts regarding the effects of drugs on themselves as well as the experiences associated with certain drugs and drug combinations, however they were not adepts with respect to the realistic evaluation of the drugs' effects on driving.

There were also several stories told of 'close calls' where respondents talked about escaping from drug buses whilst under the influence of party drugs. For example, when asked if he had ever encountered a drug bus, Ben said:

> I have, I've driven past it. Fortunately I was lucky
> enough to be flagged through. I mean I was peaking and
> I was staring right at it […] I couldn't turn away from it,
> like I don't know why; I was like 'Don't look at it man'
> [laughing whilst talking] come through and I just parked
> the car around the block and just I was shaking
> (interview, April, 2007).

Old skool ravers engaged in several practices aimed at lowering the risk of getting caught drug-driving. Some of them would avoid driving into city and surrounding suburbs, instead choosing to drive in and around the outer suburbs because of a perceived lesser chance of getting caught. Others deliberately stayed out for extended periods (often consuming even more drugs) to avoid getting caught. Others preferred to drink alcohol because the stigma associated with drug-driving was considered greater than that associated with drink-driving, and some took the risk of driving whilst under the influence of party drugs.

Conclusion: Why policing practices should be reviewed

In this chapter, I showed how policing strategies at dance parties, including uniformed and undercover police and the presence of sniffer dogs, shaped the drug practices of my research friends. Policing strategies produced a general suspicion of police as well as tactics for probing the trustworthiness of both parties in drug

purchases, including looking for signs of legitimacy as a party drug user. As described in the Retro Party case study in Chapter 1, Isabel admitted prior drug use and offered to show her driver's licence to a potential dealer in order to 'prove' she was a party drug user and Ben, Vivienne and Simon had also developed techniques for asking strangers for party drugs at clubs and raves/dance parties.

In relation to drug driving, the majority of old skool ravers drove under the influence of drugs at some point during the fieldwork period. As I have described, this was a practice most of them preferred to avoid, mainly because of fear and the stigma associated with getting caught, but which they engaged in regularly because of a lack of alternatives. There was no public transport available to the outer suburbs at night and taxis were expensive. I also showed that my research friends developed several strategies for lowering the risk of getting caught drug-driving. These findings raise challenges to the efficacy of policing interventions that are predicated on the assumption that drug users will always react in risk-averse ways; this point is discussed further in the final chapter of the thesis.

In the next chapter, I continue my investigation into changes in the Melbourne rave/dance party scene. Instead of focusing on any single element, I explore the ephemeral rave 'vibe', which, for the participants of this research, was made up of a combination of the elements described in the preceding ethnographic chapters. I also examine how the 'vibe', and nostalgia for past rave forms, influenced the social construction of identity amongst old skool ravers.

Chapter 8

"This is not a rave": Changes in the rave 'vibe' and their impact on social identity

Raves are dead, there's no vibe in here […]. This is not a rave.

(Vivienne, August 2006).

Vivienne: That's why it's not a rave anymore, it's like just like a big nightclub, you know, filled with police and it's just not fun anymore, it's not like a rave party should be.

CS: So you can't say the word 'rave'?

Vivienne: No, that's why I don't call them raves anymore, they're dance parties […] slash nightclub/beefcake hangout. It's just not the same, like that's why I don't go to them anymore, I don't have that same feeling (interview, May 2007).

The above quotations from Vivienne highlight sentiments shared widely amongst the old skool ravers I interviewed. When she mourns the loss of the unique rave 'vibe', concludes that "raves are dead", and says that, "I don't have that same feeling" and "it's not like a rave party should be", she is referring to the loss of communal atmosphere that she used to experience at past raves/dance parties. In this chapter, I first draw on the empirical material provided in Chapters 4-7 to explore how changes in the rave 'vibe' are interpreted by old skool ravers. In the latter part of the chapter, I argue that these changes to the 'vibe' produced a set of nostalgic representations about past rave forms but that they can also be read as claims to subcultural capital – that is, to the possession of an 'authentic' rave identity.

During fieldwork, a recurring theme amongst old skool ravers was that 'the vibe' that they had felt at past raves/dance parties had been lost. This chapter compares their representations of 'the vibe' experienced at raves/dance parties in the mid-

1990s, with representations of the dance events they attended in 2006-07. In the eyes of old skool ravers, the six components that make up 'the vibe' are: the music, dancing, the crowd, décor and lighting, party drug use, and feeling free and safe. When all or a combination of these elements came together, it helped to create a sense of collective identity and unity that many Melbourne ravers called 'the vibe'. The 'vibe is difficult to define using a single word or phrase; however, words commonly used by old skool ravers, rave/dance party organisers and DJs to describe the experience included: 'atmosphere', 'tribal', 'euphoric', 'ecstasy', 'utopia', 'carnival', 'wonderland', 'going off', 'rocking' and 'magical'. In the previous Chapters 4-7, I showed how commercialisation affected the various aspects of raves/dance parties. These, in turn, influenced the six elements of 'the vibe', which led to old skool ravers feeling disillusioned with a youth subculture they were formally passionate about but now consider 'uncool'.

The special atmosphere of raves during the 1990s

Social researchers have written about the special atmosphere at raves/dance parties (e.g., Hopkins, 1996; Jackson, 2004; Malbon, 1999; Moore, 1995; Siokou, 2002; St John, 2001). For example, Malbon (1999: 74) defined this special atmosphere in the following way:

> through movement, proximity to and, at times, the touching of others, and (crucially) a positive identification with both the music and the other clubbers in the crowd, those within the clubbing and especially the dancing crowd can slip between consciousness of self and consciousness of being part of something much larger.

Similarly, Moore (1995: 208) argued that:

> From the Bohemian [the name Moore gave to the rave participants with whom he moved] point of view, seeking out and experiencing this state of being – whether we describe it as 'flow', 'communitas', the unity of selves or even the transcendence of one's self – is the essence of the rave.

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As with old skool ravers, Moore's (1995: 208) rave-goers:

> can easily say why a rave is not 'good', and even describe the features of a 'good rave', but if asked to define the additional ingredient that transforms a 'good rave' into a 'great one', they choose phrases such as 'Well, it just felt right' or 'It was really cranking' (an attempt to re-create the moment). They are reluctant to delineate exactly and explicitly what it is that makes for a truly special event.

Hopkins (1996), in her study of rave culture in Queensland, Australia, also draws attention to the significance of the rave atmosphere, which she defines as 'synthetic ecstasy'. One of her interviewees summed this up when he stated that "the aim [of a rave] is not to pick up, or to have a fight, or to get drunk ... the number one thing is the feeling, the GROUP" (1996: 15). Hopkins reproduced a common rave slogan, which she defined as exasperating and seductive: "For those who know, no explanation is needed. For those who don't know, no explanation is possible!" (1996: 17). This work is important because it drew on young people's views and highlighted that: "This is a culture of immersion and excess which cannot be understood from a distance" (Hopkins, 1996: 17). Moreover, Hopkins pointed out that social theorists should not be searching for the "message" of rave, but would do better to consider techno culture as a new medium and a new way of feeling and knowing (Hopkins, 1996: 17). However, researchers have not explored how rave participants view changes in the special atmosphere of raves over time and how this affects their identities and subsequent party drug use.

Old skool raver views of 'the vibe'

In the 1990s, old skool ravers defined 'the vibe' as a special energy that could not be adequately understood or expressed in words but was physically experienced at those times during a dance event when the various elements would 'come together'. Vivienne recalled the special atmosphere of earlier raves/dance parties that she attended:

It was generally just a really fun-loving atmosphere, and there [were] people dancing all night … Me dressed up in my silver suit like a spaceman [sic] … people all dressed up in these funky shiny clothes, all stars, big hats, sparkly wands. Oh, it was like I was just in some fairyland (May 2007).

In the 1990s, many old skool ravers distinguished raves/dance parties from other forms of night-time entertainment (pubs and bars) and believed that there was a sense of unity or collective emotion that arose between ravers. As Malbon (1999: 72) argued:

It is through the sharing of emotion – or, to put it differently, the evolution of a group ethos or 'we-rationale' (Goffman, 1963: 96) – that the disparate individuals forming a gathering can become bound into a crowd, a 'single being' in which a collective mind, albeit transitory, is tangible.

Music and the vibe

Music is the central focus at raves/dance parties, with patrons generally facing the DJ (the source of the music). The 'vibe' is built upon a shared appreciation of the music and, through the identificatory power that loud music wields over the raving crowd, a communal atmosphere, "the vibe", can be created amongst what is largely a group of strangers. Research on raving and clubbing cultures (e.g., Jackson, 2004; Malbon, 1999) has acknowledged the power of music in creating a collective identity. For example, Malbon, who has written extensively on the role of music at raves and clubs, argued that it "provides us with an intensely subjective sense of being sociable […] it both articulates and offers the immediate *experience* of collective identity" (Malbon, 1999: 77). He (Malbon, 1999: 79-80) also suggested that the "power of music to unite ostensibly disparate individuals, particularly when combined with other emotive environmental features or events, such as lyrical messages, can be terrifyingly impressive". He went even further when he argued that the "level and intensity of meanings invested in music by young people is unmatched by any other organised activity in society, including religion" (Malbon, 1999: 77).

Music can also serve to intensify "shared experiences through magnifying an emotion or set of emotions that an event or social interaction brings forth by simultaneously evoking similar emotional and physical responses amongst a group of co-present people" (Malbon, 1999: 78). This shared experience can create bonds between people at a rave/dance party. For example, Kylie said that:

> It's like we all have this [the rave scene] in common, connecting us. And on the dance floor, early in the morning when everyone is at the peak of their night, you can feel the energy and excitement as everyone goes off at the same time (email interview, January 2004).

Lauren echoes Kylie's sentiments when she says:

> When I go to a rave I always feel like part of a 'social collective'. It is a very exciting 'community vibe' where everyone has come to dance, have fun and celebrate electronic music (email interview, December 2003).

Many old skool ravers believed that sharing the experience of dancing to electronic music at a rave was crucial to achieving 'the vibe' or a sense of collective identity amongst the crowd. This is exemplified when a classic or anthemic song gets played. Interviewee Gwen stated "when a great track gets played, everybody goes off, we love the track and know what's coming next, it creates a bond with the other dancers and the DJ".

Dancing and the vibe

Old skool ravers considered that dancing, in which ravers face the DJ rather than one another, was of central importance in creating the vibe. Jackson (2004: 15) has argued that the advent of raves/dance parties contributed to:

> dance re-emerg[ing] as a mass form of social experience, particularly amongst men, and the majority of them had spent the preceding years standing round in clubs, clutching pints, watching women groove around their handbags and fearing that dancing

would emasculate them and leave them open to ridicule by their peers.

In Melbourne, a particular style of rave dancing emerged. This was known as 'the Melbourne shuffle', 'the shuffle', 'going off' or 'rocking' amongst old skool ravers and others involved in the scene (see Chapter 6). The 'shuffle' is recognised in international dance circles' Richie McNeill (a rave organiser) wrote:

> The shuffle was born summer of 90/91. A guy called Andrew who lives in Sydney and is a photographer invented it. He was a scally in London and moved out here (Online Hardware Forum, 2004).

Most people involved in the Melbourne rave/dance party scene were familiar with the Melbourne shuffle. Many old skool ravers commonly performed the dance style at raves/dance parties and those clubs playing electronic music. For Claire, the shuffle was an important factor in creating the vibe at raves/dance parties. When asked about whether she felt 'the vibe' at these events, she said:

> Yep, for sure. There is definitely a sense of unity at raves. For instance at [a dance party] coming up this weekend we've organized a group morning shuffle and we should get about 50 plus people there (email interview, July 2003).

Glen, another old skool raver, said that he felt the vibe "especially on the dance floor when everyone is dancing" (email interview, February 2003). In 2002, Melbourne newspaper *The Age* published a front-page article on the shuffle, which detailed the steps and included interviews with several people involved in the Melbourne rave/dance party scene.

The crowd and the vibe

Fellow rave/dance party participants are commonly referred to as 'the crowd' by old skool ravers, and as 'punters' by DJs and event organisers. The composition and

mood of the crowd was a central feature in 'getting the vibe right' at raves/dance parties.

Most of the old skool ravers claimed that they attended raves/dance parties for the music and with a group of friends, rather than to meet members of the opposite sex or 'pick up'. For example, when asked whether or not she 'picked up' at raves/dance parties, Claire responded:

> I have a few times, but it is extremely rare. Considering I have been going out every single weekend for the last 1.5 years and I could count the number of times I have picked up on one hand, you can see it is not a priority or focus for me. It's not something I look for (email interview, July 2003).

On the same topic, Kylie stated that: "I have a boyfriend now but even if I didn't I wouldn't pick up at a rave unless I really liked the person" (email interview, January 2004). Henderson's (1997) study of British ravers revealed similar findings. For example, one of Henderson's female interviewees is quoted as saying that "We do fancy blokes at raves and enjoy flirting with them … [but] you don't want to get them into bed, you're just friendly" (Henderson, 1997: 71). Therefore, for old skool ravers, dancing at raves/dance parties in the mid-1990s, in conjunction with the music and lack of 'pick-up' atmosphere, contributed to a sense of 'the vibe'. When this started to change, particularly with the significant commercial changes in the late-1990s to early-2000s, old skool ravers considered 'the vibe' had been lost.

Freedom, safety and the vibe

CS: Do you feel safe at raves? How does this compare to how
            you feel at other venues?

DJ Delight: Completely. Though as the old-school awareness of the old
            days disappears (where the atmosphere really was 'all for
            one, one for all... togetherness, blah, blah...') I'm quite wary
            of leaving my belongings unguarded. Once upon a time you
            could leave your things (ciggies, drink, wallet etc) and come

back, sometimes hours later, and they wouldn't have been touched. It's true! (email interview, DJ Delight 2004).

DJ Delight's comments accord with the sentiments expressed by old skool ravers. Many considered the 'underground warehouse' rave parties of the 1990s to be social spaces in which they felt safe and free to express themselves, and this enabled 'the vibe' to emerge. For example, in my previous research, based on surveys in 1998-99, "over 98% of interviewees stated that they felt either safe or very safe at rave/dance parties" (Siokou, 2002). This sense of safety was particularly important for women. For example, Claire states that "I've never felt unsafe at a rave I don't think. I don't feel as relaxed in more alcohol orientated venues because pissed people are more unpredictable" (email interview, July 2003).

Furthermore, many claimed that their past involvement in raving had assisted them to 'get out of themselves' by experiencing a momentary loss of self during music-focused social interaction. Many interviewed old skool ravers said that they felt free whilst at raves/dance parties and continued to attend raves because they liked the person they could become at rave/dance parties. For example, in my previous research undertaken in 1998 Ben said: "I talk to everyone and I am very friendly at raves. We're all on the same wave length; I wish it could always be like that" (Siokou, 2002: 14). On the same topic, Simon said that, "The person I am when I'm at a rave is the person I'd always like to be, sociable and friendly, I can't be like that at other places, like work for instance" (Siokou, 2002:14). Thus, the freedom "to be oneself", compared to the restrictions imposed on presentation and behaviour in work and other social settings, contributed to 'the vibe' or collective consciousness experienced by old skool ravers in past rave/dance party forms.

The lack of violence at raves/dance parties was another important contributor to the sense of freedom and safety for old skool ravers. For example, Isabel said:

Seriously, I can only say I've seen a couple of fights at raves/dance parties over the last ten or so years and I especially felt safe going to the warehouse parties back in the day, but now it's not as safe in my opinion (June 2007).

DJ Delight echoes Isabel's view:

> The huge majority of people at these events are friendly. I have only
> ever, in 11 years, seen an amount of fights which I could count on
> both hands. But I tend to go to, or play at, a certain type of "rave". I
> hear occasionally of ugly scenes at events of all genres. But on the
> whole, they are a lot friendlier and well behaved than punters going
> to your average suburban pub or club (email interview, April 2004).

These findings are consistent with those reported in previous research. For example, in his study of Perth ravers during the early-1990s, Moore (1995: 209) noted that "[ravers] regard raves as relatively safe environments in which to be 'drug-fucked', they are free to focus fully on self-expression and the achievement of communitas". The above quotations reveal that feelings of freedom and safety contributed to the creation of a social space in which 'the vibe' could be experienced by old skool ravers when attending raves/dance parties in the mid-1990s.

Décor and lighting

Décor, including lighting, decorations, smoke machines and market stalls, also contribute to creating a sense of collective identity and 'the vibe' at raves/dance parties. The décor at raves/dance parties during the mid-1990s was usually futurist or child-like and contributed to the creation of a carnival atmosphere. Raves usually featured a range of visual and audio stimuli including overhead projectors screening cartoons and patterned images, colourful lasers, smoke machines, amusement park rides such as Ferris wheels (only at large raves), jumping castles, market stalls (selling a range of items from sunglasses to t-shirts and crystals), and glow-in-the-dark ornaments and signs. Vivienne recalls that "they used to take such pride in decorations back then [mid-1990s raves] … Like the whole places were decorated" (June, 2006). DJ Slick also states that "[a Melbourne rave company] where very good at creating a fantasy with there décor" (email interview, June 2003).

Party drug use and the vibe

> The drugs diminished clubbers' sense of fear, insecurity and self-consciousness to the point where they were able to socialise with each other in ways that matched their aspirations as to how their social relations should feel (Jackson, 2004: 173-174).

For old skool ravers, the effects of party drugs interacted with music, dancing, the crowd and feelings of safety to help achieve the positive vibe formed at raves/dance parties during the mid-1990s. For example, during the 1990s, raves/dance parties were perceived as avenues for play and to escape from reality (i.e., to 'lose it') with party drugs assisting in this process. Arianne described ravers as 'happy'. She attributed this to the fact that "they probably used to take drugs" which contributed to a 'community' feeling. As shown in Chapter 7, party drugs (most notably ecstasy) were perceived as facilitating play and raves were an avenue to escape from reality or 'lose it'. Interviewees from my earlier research (Siokou, 2002) often made comments such as: "a rave is like another world, much like a childhood fantasy" or "a fun, colourful dream" where they "could forget about everything" and "escape from the real world".

Views of 'the vibe' among rave/dance party organisers and DJs

During my fieldwork and previous research I interviewed influential people in the Melbourne rave/dance party scene, including organisers and DJs. In their professional roles, one of their tasks was to ensure that the 'punters' would enjoy the dance event and therefore return to the venue or future dance events. Most of them stressed the importance of creating and maintaining 'the vibe' at raves/dance parties. For example, DJ Delight said about 'the vibe':

> It is probably high on the list of what attracts people to it in the first place. It's something that you can experience anywhere though. Not just at raves. But it definitely is a huge part of what keeps people attracted to it (email interview, April 2004).

Furthermore, old skool raver views about the decline of the vibe were consistent with those expressed by long-term Melbourne rave/dance party organisers and DJs. For example, a Melbourne-based interviewee who organised raves/dance parties and DJ'd for 15 years said that "I don't think […] that the vibe is as positive, it is a little bit darker" (Tristan, September 2006). When asked whether he felt the vibe at contemporary raves, DJ Dare said, "Yes I do, [but] probably more so when I started almost 10 years ago, lately its been lacking slightly" (email interview, June 2003).

Rave/dance party organisers have also commercially exploited nostalgia for past rave forms. The description of the Retro dance party given in Chapter 1, shows how rave/dance party companies promote and market nostalgia. For example, the Retro flyer promises a "night of old skool flava", an "original retro rave-up" and a "ravers paradise!" In his qualitative study of the Canadian rave scene, Wilson (2006) came across similar marketing techniques. He concluded that raves had become "a business that exploits glorified and nostalgic images in order to 'sell' the dance party to youth" (Wilson, 2006: 158-59). Rave/dance party organisers were not the only organisations to profit from the marketing of nostalgia. Wilson drew on literature on nostalgia in sport (see Ingham *et al*, 1987; Nauright and White, 1996) which explores the motives of those who privately benefit from the use of nostalgia in advertising and marketing campaigns to promote sports teams in ways that benefit the commercial interests of a few. For example, Ingham *et al* suggested that a past that (perhaps) never existed can be used "not only to promote a sense of 'we' that does not structurally exist, but blurs the distinction between private profit and public good" (1987: 453).

No vibe? Fieldwork in 2006-07

Many of the accounts of the 1990s rave vibe given above contrast sharply with views of 'the vibe', or lack of it, expressed during fieldwork in 2006-07. The six elements described above – the music, dancing, crowd, décor and lighting, party drug use, and feelings of freedom and safety – had changed for old skool ravers. During ethnographic fieldwork for this thesis, it quickly became apparent that many old skool ravers believed that 'the vibe' and special atmosphere of rave/dance parties had been lost. They claimed that attending raves/dance parties was no longer special

and the intensity of the experience had diminished. The main reasons for the loss of 'the vibe' for old skool ravers were: changes in the crowd, dancing styles, forms of drug use, décor and lighting, and no longer feeling free and safe.

As we saw in Chapter 6, old skool ravers negatively characterised some attendees at raves/dance parties they attended in 2006-07. They often labelled and stigmatised those perceived as 'outsiders' and therefore not part of the 'rave crowd'. These outsiders included muzzas, beefcakes, teeny-boppers and junkies, who had "ruined the vibe" at raves/dance parties. Changes in the crowd were also seen as negatively affecting freedom and safety for women, which was covered in Chapter 6 with Vivienne and Isabel recounting stories of assault. Moreover, discussing changes in rave/dance party crowds over the last few years, Kylie said: "I've noticed crowds of people there who are not ravers or are just plain scummy. It doesn't seem as friendly either" (email interview, January 2004).

Furthermore, the increased blending of club and rave crowds was generally viewed negatively by old skool ravers. Clubbers were viewed as ruining 'the vibe' because they were perceived as attending for superficial reasons, such as 'picking up' sexual partners, rather than for 'purist' reasons such as the love of the music. For example, Glen described the differences between rave/dance party and club crowds:

> Raves have a totally different atmosphere to clubs. [I]t's a lot friendlier and forgiving. Night clubs have [a] different crowd with conflicting and different views as well as a different dress sense (email interview, February 2003).

Changes in party drug use – such as the greater variety in the types of available drugs (see Chapter 7) and the increasing use of alcohol in combination with traditional party drugs such as ecstasy and speed – also detracted from the vibe potential in the eyes of old skool ravers. Furthermore, newer rave and club drugs such as K, G and ice produced different effects when combined with ecstasy and/or speed. For example, old skool ravers believed that ecstasy was more dangerous when combined with G due to heightened overdose risk. G and ice were also described as 'darker' and 'nastier' than ecstasy and speed or as 'gutter drugs' (see Chapter 4), and were

often associated with dependence and potential overdose. For example, when I asked Natalie what party drugs she thought people were using in the late-1990s, she replied:

> I'd say it was more speed, as opposed to ice and it was also pills and K was out a bit more around then as well. G wasn't. I mean it was still being used, but it was nowhere near as well known as it is now, so therefore we didn't really have the problem back then of younger people taking it and not knowing how to take it safely or what exactly it is. Because I think a lot of the killer of it is new people coming into the scene and taking it and just being told it's liquid ecstasy and going, "Wow, that's cheap" and then having it and having no idea what it is or what it does to your body or how to take it and you sort of see the results of overdosing, which is a very thin line between getting high and overdosing … Not only just G, if they just use G very few people have ever overdosed. It's generally when you mix G with other drugs, and of course everyone does. Always drinking with it as well, like it being used as a date rape drug, because it's a clear liquid (May, 2007).

Moreover during my doctoral fieldwork, old skool ravers did not want to get 'too messy' or 'too [drug] fucked' when they were out, particularly when attending commercial clubs and rave/dance parties held in mainstream venues. These venues did not provide the right kinds of setting to facilitate the 'escape from reality' so desired by old skool ravers.

Another element that diminished the vibe for old skool ravers was changes in the décor and lighting. As described earlier, the décor at 1990s raves was detailed, creative and elaborate, sometimes taking artists days to complete. By contrast, in the mid-2000s, the décor had become more minimalist with global companies often reproducing their own branding and logos. For example, companies such as Slinky, Godskitchen and Ministry of Sound each have corporate logos which they display at

events. Isabel says, "I can't believe we saw a laser show at the last dance party spelling V for Vodafone" (June, 2006). The change to more minimalist décor may be partly due to changes in venue. Moving away from warehouses and unlicensed venues into nightclubs placed some restrictions on decorations. For example, the walls of abandoned warehouses could be spray-painted but this was impossible in licensed clubs. Furthermore, the cost-cutting and profit maximisation associated with the commodification of raves contributed to the décor becoming more minimalist.

During the fieldwork period, old skool ravers would regularly seek to relive their embodied experiences of past raves. For example, at an old skool rave/dance party in August 2006, Vivienne raised my hand on the dance floor and started screaming. In doing this, she was attempting (albeit unsuccessfully) to re-create the atmosphere she had felt at past raves. However, such attempts were rarely successful and old skool ravers often left current raves/dance parties complaining that there was 'no vibe' and that 'they are not as good compared to back in the day'. Old skool ravers considered the vast majority of raves/dance parties held in 2006-07 to be lacking in 'the vibe' which often made them feel nostalgic about the mid-1990s raves they attended.

"I used to be a raver": Nostalgia, mourning and identity

Many old skool ravers considered themselves to be participants in an alternative youth subculture rather than being part of the mainstream; however, by the time of my fieldwork in 2006-07, this self-identification had changed and statements such as "I used to be a raver" were common. This is a local example of a more widespread trend across Western dance scenes in which former participants "seldom use the word 'rave' today largely because the scene has declined or changed so dramatically" (Anderson and Kavanaugh, 2007: 501). Even though they continue to attend clubs and other dance venues, old skool ravers do not identify with the current dance scene when creating personal or group identities. They blame commercialisation and the consequent influx of 'normal' (i.e., 'mainstream') people, as described in Chapter 6, for 'ruining' the dance scene. The arrival of these 'dirty clubbers' led, in their view, to a perceived loss of friendliness, increased interest in 'picking up' (initiating casual sexual encounters), the use of large amounts of party drugs and alcohol with little concern for safety, and little interest in dance music.

Furthermore, 'dirty clubbers' did not identify with the earlier rave ethos, identity markers including clothes and accessories, and associated norms and behaviours.

What should be made of these representations of current raves and their comparison with past ones? Clearly, a central theme was a deeply-felt nostalgia, even a mourning, for a past golden era of raves that, in the eyes of Vivienne, Chloe, Jones and their friends, was special but which no longer existed. Old skool ravers could recount numerous stories of previous raves (to both fellow old skool ravers as well as to people outside the scene). Vivienne described attending earlier raves as the "best time of my life" (May 2007); Arianne said that, "I'm glad I went to raves and experienced it" (June 2007); and Victoria lamented how much money she has spent over the years 'partying' but comforted herself with fond memories (March 2007). Although sounding unduly harsh on paper, the commentary on Robbie's perceived decline (presented in the case study in Chapter 1) – from 'coolest' raver to overweight 'retard' – is also part of this nostalgic discourse. Another example is when Isabel sent Vivienne the following message during a night of fieldwork: "Macca is here and he has turned into a mini Robbie – what has the rave become!" (November 2006). It is worth noting that such nostalgia is not limited to members of the rave scene but is also a feature of the emotional ties to other youth subcultures such as punks and hippies (see Medhurst, 1998; Huxley, 1998).

As shown previously, those who attended the mid-1990s raves and dance parties often described themselves as old skool ravers who shared a sense of community. This sense of community was sustained by the six elements described above. The loss of the vibe and communal atmosphere at raves/dance parties amounted to old skool ravers harbouring a nostalgia for past raves forms. As Wilson (2005: 36) noted "[N]ostalgia may give us a key to the gate connecting the lessons of the past and the needs of the present".

A recurring theme throughout my fieldwork was a sense of nostalgia and mourning for past rave forms, as the following examples from my fieldnotes demonstrate.

Frank: Where are you going?
CS: We're thinking of Tunnel?

Frank:	I remember when you used to have to wear a suit and tie to get in.
CS:	Is it any good now?
Frank:	It's young kids at the front and gangsters and strippers at the back.
CS	[In a sarcastic voice] Oh great (Fieldnotes, Feburary 2006).

On another night of fieldwork, the following conversation took place at a dance party held in the city centre:

Mary:	I don't know many people here tonight, it's not like back in the day when I used to know everybody at Super club and at the dock [rave] parties.
CS:	I used to love the docks too.
Mary:	Tonight's all right, I'd still call this a rave.
CS:	Yeah Massive parties still have more of a rave feel, they're not as commercial as Glam parties.
Mary:	Didn't you use to work for [rave company]?
CS:	Yeah I did some work for them a few years ago.
Mary	I'm here with my cousin, another 'super chick' [a popular term for women who went to Super nightclub] (Fieldnotes, February 2006).

As a result of the commercialisation of raves/dance parties, and the arrival of clubbers such as the 'muzzas' described in Chapter 6, old skool ravers felt alienated from the rave/dance scene and mourned the loss of their 'raver' identities. We can see that for them, nostalgia for past rave and other dance events is important in shaping their contemporary identities. Davis (1977, 1979) and Wilson (2005) argued that the primary purpose of nostalgia is to maintain continuity of identity. Wilson (2005: 8) wrote that:

> In these postmodern times, when so many threats and obstacles to constructing and maintaining a coherent, consistent self abound, remembering, recalling, reminiscing, and the corollary emotional experience of nostalgia may facilitate the kind of coherence,

consistency, and sense of identity that each person so desperately needs […] Individually and collectively, the past is remembered and, in this act of recall, it is often *re*-created. My position is that whether nostalgia's claims about previous times are true or accurate is not as important as *why* and *how* those nostalgic claims emerge. What meaning is being constructed in the retelling? What purpose is being served – individually, collectively, politically, economically?

For old skool ravers, alienated from the current dance scene, nostalgia provided an avenue through which they could re-establish continuity of identity and a sense of connection to a past cultural form. Despite their similarities to disliked attendees such as 'muzzas' (as we saw in Chapter 6), the old skool ravers felt that they no longer had anything in common with, or control over, the types of people attending dance parties. According to Aden, discourses of nostalgia emerge when individuals try "to regain some control over their lives in an uncertain time" (Aden, 1995, cited in Wilson, 2005: 34) and provide a means of temporal escape. Aden considered nostalgic communication as providing individuals with a way of symbolically escaping cultural conditions that they consider depressing and/or disorientating. This communication allows individuals to move through time, and situate themselves in a sanctuary of meaning, a place where the feel safe from oppressive cultural conditions (Aden, 1995, cited in Wilson, 2005: 34). Furthermore, nostalgia "always occurs in the context of present fears, discontents, anxieties, or uncertainties even though those may not be in the forefront of the person's awareness" (Davis, 1977: 420). "Nostalgia is one of the means – or better, one of the more recently accessible psychological lenses – we employ in the never ending work of constructing, maintaining and reconstructing our identities" (Davis, 1979: 31). For old skool ravers, the present anxieties and uncertainties about muzzas, and the commercial changes in the rave/dance party scene more broadly (as shown throughout this thesis), led to the nostalgic recreation of their identities.

In conclusion, my research supports the observation made by Davis in *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (1979) and reproduced earlier – that nostalgia facilitates continuity of identity. As Davis posited, people (in this case, the old skool

ravers) decide, in the present, how to remember their past and, by undertaking this process, they imbue their past with meaning that has evolved over time and is relevant to their present situation. Wilson (2005: 35) paraphrased Davis (1979) to argue that:

> …[p]ermeating all these dimensions […] is [nostalgia's] powerful benchmarking potential – its capacity to locate in memory an earlier version of self with which to measure […] some current conditions of the self. For nostalgia to restore identity, the individual engages in selective memory and actively reconstructs former selves, while reconceptualizing and perhaps re-evaluating both past and present selves. Thus, memory, the actual recall of the pasts and nostalgia, the emotional component of remembering and longing are instrumental in one's quest to know who one is.

Nostalgia is an emotional longing for the past. It may be experienced collectively, as is the case for old skool ravers, who shared memories of past rave events and used this as a strategy for bonding (Davis, 1979: 36). For example, in Chapter 5, the conversation about the 'Every Picture Tells a Story 98' rave sticker enabled Vivienne, Isabel and Andrew to reminisce over past raves. Michael (the youngest at 23 years and a non-old skool raver) was excluded from the conversation and repeatedly told how he missed out on all the 'good raves'.

Old skool ravers considered that many of the positive aspects and the special qualities of raves had been lost. They claimed that 'raves are dead' and that 'there is no vibe' when comparing contemporary and previous raves/dance parties. They also felt that they had lost their rave identity because raves did not exist any more in their eyes. Old skool ravers claimed that they no longer identified with current dance parties in a way that was meaningful for the creation of their personal or group identities. This shift is highlighted when Isabel claimed that, "I'm not a raver anymore, but I used to be a raver" (June, 2007).

Moreover, old skool ravers' nostalgic memories of an underground, pre-commercialised rave scene were constructed on the basis of rave participation from

the mid-1990s onwards, when raves had already begun their rapid evolution from underground to commercial events. Although the ideal memories of old skool ravers may be idealised, they illustrate how nostalgia helps to re-construct the past. It is also worth noting that the articulation of nostalgic memories is not confined to old skool ravers. For example, Guy (aged 22, too young to be an old skool raver) said:

> I worry because the club scene isn't as good as it used to be. Like the venues have changed, the music's changed and the crowd's changed now from how it was before. So I've given up on clubbing because I just think that there's nothing good here anymore […] I mean when you go to clubs that are on every week, you see the same crowd and then six, 12 months later they're a new crowd and it ruins the fun. It's not like it was before (interview, May 2007).

Smith (1979: 202) argued that nostalgic reconstructions of the past can offer "the illusory hope of escape from social conflict into an idyllic past that never was, and can never be". For old skool ravers, their nostalgia is tied to their realisation that they are getting older and moving away from the rave/dance party scene; eventually they will stop going altogether. Perhaps they are nostalgic for their youth as much as for the raves, even though many were only in their mid- to late-20s during fieldwork.

Corporate use of nostalgia

Nostalgia for the 'ideal' rave form was exploited by rave/dance party companies. Analyses of the role of nostalgia in sport (e.g., Ingham *et al*, 1987; Nauright and White, 1996) have focused on how commercial interests may benefit from the use of nostalgia in the promotion of sporting teams through advertising and marketing. For example, Ingham *et al* (1987: 453) suggested that a past that may never have existed can be used "not only to promote a sense of 'we' that does not structurally exist, but blurs the distinction between private profit and public good". Likewise, in Chapter 1, in describing the Retro party flyer, I showed how rave/dance party companies use nostalgia to promote and market their events. Another flyer advertised a New Year's Eve after-party as 'Betterdayze', which could be read either as evoking nostalgic images of the past or looking towards a brighter future. With respect to the Canadian

rave scene, Wilson (2006: 158–59) documented a similar marketing technique, which "exploits glorified and nostalgic images in order to 'sell' the dance party to youth".

So far, I have tried to show how the commercial changes in the Melbourne rave/dance party scene were negatively interpreted by old skool ravers, who expressed a strongly-felt nostalgia for past rave forms as part of their critique of the present. However, the nostalgia narrative contains another element; old skool ravers were also making claims to superiority – that is, to the possession of subcultural capital.

Subcultural capital

The following discussion of "subcultural capital" draws primarily on Thornton's *Club Cultures* (1995), which presents the findings of her ethnographic study of club cultures in Britain during the late-1980s to early-1990s. Drawing on the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, particularly his book *Distinction* (1984), Thornton coined the term "subcultural capital". As defined in Chapter 1, the notion of "subcultural capital", derives from Bourdieu's definition of "cultural capital". Subcultural capital refers to knowledge of crucial cultural distinctions within a specific "social field" such as the rave/dance party scene – in other words, knowledge of what is 'hip' or 'cool'. Subcultural capital bestows status on its owner and can be 'objectified' in the form of fashionable haircuts or 'embodied' in the form of being 'in the know' – such as using current slang terms and "looking as if you were born to perform the latest dance moves" (Thornton, 1995: 12). It puts a premium on the 'second nature' of knowledge: "Nothing depletes [subcultural] capital more than the sight of someone trying too hard" (Thornton, 1995: 12). Thornton explored three crucial distinctions: the authentic versus the phoney, the 'hip' versus the 'mainstream', and the 'underground' versus 'the media'. Thornton used subcultural capital to analyse the distinctions made by 'cool' youth, noting, in particular, their criticism of the 'mainstream' against which they measure their alternative cultural worth.

In her analysis, Thornton acknowledged that subcultural capital may not translate into economic capital as easily as cultural capital, although access to some occupations or income can be improved as result of 'hipness'. For example, DJs, club organisers and fashion designers all derive incomes from their subcultural capital. Importantly, Thornton recognised that within club cultures, people occupying these positions often enjoy considerable respect because of their subcultural capital and their role in creating and defining it (Thornton, 2005:12).

Thornton's analysis is useful on two levels. First, she showed how hierarchies and distinctions often riddle dance music cultures, even though they claim they are egalitarian. Second, she demonstrated how subcultural capital is highly valued and sought after because it confers the respect of peers. Adopting Thornton's framework, my interviewees' commentaries on perceived rave/dance party "outsiders" (e.g., muzzas, beefcakes and teeny-boppers), their nostalgia for past rave forms and claims to an 'authentic' rave identity can be interpreted as ways of claiming subcultural capital. Thornton's argument can be via an exploration of how class background and ethnicity intersect and shape young people's subcultural capital (see Chapter 6).

'Techno royalty': Subcultural capital and 'authentic' rave identity

At the time of my fieldwork, old skool ravers no longer had a prominent rave identity; this identity had been relegated to the past tense: "I used to be a raver". They did not identify with contemporary dance parties in a way that was meaningful to their personal or group identities.

In Chapter 6, I showed how old skool ravers defined their perceived "authentic" past rave identities in opposition to the perceived "mainstream". In their view, commercialisation was responsible for the blending of rave and club cultures and the subsequent arrival of muzzas and teeny-boppers, and they constructed their own identities in opposition to these inauthentic "outsiders". In his study of an alternative rock culture, Moore (2005: 233) noted:

> When music and style they [i.e., subcultural insiders] believe to be
> "underground" is commercialized and becomes available to a mass

market, they experience a sense of alienation because they no longer own or control the culture they have produced and their expressions of rebellion are now consumed by the "mainstream" audience they define themselves against. By definition, subcultural capital is a scarce commodity that can only belong to a minority [...] When their subculture is commercialized and exposed to the mass market, insiders experience nothing less than a loss of identity because their sense of themselves depends on an opposition to "the mainstream".

The old skool ravers' negative interpretations of muzzas and teeny boppers can be read as claims to subcultural capital, through the possession of an authentic rave identity. For example, in Chapter 6, Chloe referred to herself as 'techno royalty'. This claim to an authentic identity was based on her participation in an idealised and now defunct golden era, which is inaccessible to 'young kids today'. Furthermore, these claims to authentic identity and membership of an underground, pre-commercialised rave scene were being made on the basis of rave participation from the mid-1990s onwards, when raves had already begun their rapid evolution from underground to commercial events (Siokou and Moore, 2008).

In order to reclaim the perceived loss of their identity, old skool ravers asserted their superiority over outsiders by claiming that they had attended raves for the 'purest' of reasons, such as an appreciation of rave music and culture. They distinguished and distanced themselves from muzzas by claiming that 'they knew about it first' and did not attend in order to 'pick up'. Echoing Moore's views, subcultural capital can also be defended or even augmented by claiming to have "been there and done that" before the 'masses' caught on (2005: 235).

Although the analytical use of the term 'mainstream' in subcultural studies has been heavily criticised (e.g., Thornton, 1995: 93; see also Hodkinson, 2002; Muggleton, 2000; Muggleton and Weinzierl, 2003; Redhead, 1997), in Moore's view (noted above) young people continue to employ the notion in their own categorisations.

As a result of the arrival of 'dirty clubbers' (e.g., muzzas), old skool ravers felt alienated from the rave/dance scene and mourned the loss of their 'raver' identities. However, old skool ravers did not generally use the word 'mainstream' in their everyday language. Rather, they spoke of 'commercialisation', 'commercial clubs' and 'normal' or 'straight' (i.e., non-drug using) people. For old skool ravers, the commercialisation of raves/dance parties and the perceived focus on profit allowed 'normal people' to enter, and subsequently 'ruin', their scene. In other words, clubs were viewed as mainstream or commercial, which then attracted the 'normal' people who were not affiliated with the 'subcultural' rave style and practices.

It is clear that for old skool ravers, nostalgia for past raves and other dance events was an important element in the formation of their contemporary identities (Davis, 1977, 1979; Wilson, 2005). Many old skool ravers blamed commercialisation and the mainstreaming of rave culture for its perceived demise. Frank and Weiland (1997) argued that 1960s subcultures were discredited when they became perceived as too commercial and focused on consumer projects. They argued that the "countercultural resistance of the 1960s was severely limited as a result of its kinship with consumerism" (Frank and Weiland, 1997, cited in Moore, 2005: 233-234).

Some old skool ravers, such as DJ Delight, liken the rave/dance party scene to other music scenes that came before them. They argued that the arrival of mass marketing and commercialisation was unavoidable:

> The rave thing is just like the rock'n'roll thing was. Just like the psychedelic era was. Just like the hippy era was ... There will be more phenomenons and they will go from a pure thing to a polluted and mainstream abomination as has the rave scene. Don't get me wrong: there are good elements to the rave scene, where it came from and the evolution it has gone through. Being part of it, sometimes as an outsider but mostly as a central figure, has given me more knowledge (than your average paying punter) of the workings of it: I've seen and heard a lot of very saddening things. When I hear/see these things, it pushes me away from it ... I am for peace, love, unity and respect: PLUR is what the "ravers" call it ...

that's all fine but, really, it's in short demand, the reality of it is that for the most part, it's gotten lost and swallowed by big business and a lot of disrespectful and ignorant punters (email interview, April 2004).

Thornton suggested that:

> In a post-industrial world where consumers are incited to individualize themselves and where the operations of power seem to favor classification and segregation, it is hard to regard difference as *necessarily* progressive […] Today, it is easier to see each cultural difference as a potential distinction, a suggestion of superiority, an assertion of hierarchy, a possible alibi for subordination (Thornton, 1996: 209),

Thornton's observations regarding distinction and a 'suggestion of superiority' were played out by old skool ravers during fieldwork. For example, Chloe referred to herself as 'techno royalty' to 'show off' her superiority. Moreover, this hierarchy was often employed when old skool ravers felt threatened and sought to distinguish themselves from "outsiders" such as muzzas.

Subcultural capital and the move to clubs

Another issue related to subcultural capital is the move of raves/dance parties to licensed clubs, which often employ door policies and dress codes for patrons. Thornton (1995: 22, 24) argued that:

> Through the use of flyers, listings, telephone lines and flyposting, club organizers aim to deliver a particular crowd to a specified venue on a given night. To a large degree then, club crowds come pre-sorted and pre-selected. The door policies which sometimes restrict entry are simply a last measure. If access to information about the club and taste in music fail to segregate the crowd, the

bouncers will ensure the semi-private nature of these public spaces
by refusing admission to 'those who don't belong'.

She argued that this "institutional state of affairs" is an explanation for the "oft-celebrated experience of social harmony, the thrill of belonging afforded by clubs". In Thornton's view, the "gatekeeping practices which assemble, construct and limit the crowd" at clubs are "undoubtedly a problematic part of their appeal". Drawing attention to the broader social structures that influence clubs, she went on to argue that "discriminatory admission policies are actually recommended by many local governments as a means of crowd control" (Thornton, 1995: 24).

In the context of the Melbourne rave/dance party scene, the move to clubs meant that old skool ravers became subject to the gatekeeping practices, (such as door policies) of clubs. This move also helped to institutionalise subcultural capital. At previous semi-commercial raves in the mid-1990s, different levels of subcultural capital were apparent. For example, DJs, organisers and well-connected others often wore VIP or staff necklaces and enjoyed the privileges of free entry, bypassing queues and access to backstage areas. However, by the mid-2000s, there were entire VIP sections at dance parties that often cost up to four times the price of a standard ticket. Only those who enjoyed subcultural capital, or those willing to pay for it, could access these sectioned-off areas. For example, prior to my fieldwork, I often wore a VIP necklace at many raves/dance parties because I was employed by a rave company at the time. At mid-1990s raves, this was not considered significant by fellow ravers, however, by the mid-2000s, I was often asked by other patrons how I had obtained this valuable commodity.

The changes described in the previous section led many old skool ravers to claim that the rave scene they had once known had disappeared, to be replaced by ignorant, 'sleazy', clubbing crowds. Nevertheless, as Wilson (2006: 119-120) noted with respect to the Canadian rave scene:

The apparent transition during the nineties and beyond – from welcoming rave community to bad attitude dance club – was not nearly as complete as a few ravers suggested. That is to say, rave

developed into a hybrid and complex scene – not just a scene that was exclusively bad or clubby (2006: 119). In fact, the extent to which rave was perceived as being a cohesive and supporting community appeared to be related to the amount of experience that a raver had in the community, if we remember the waning of raver idealism.

In this chapter, I explored the elements constituting the rave vibe and how this special atmosphere was viewed by old skool ravers. The four changes brought about by commercialisation – in the location, marketing and size of events; the composition of attendees; drug-related practice and 'the vibe' or atmosphere – created a sense of nostalgia and even of mourning for past rave forms. While these expressions of nostalgia and mourning were, no doubt, heartfelt, they can also be read as claims to subcultural capital and to the possession of an authentic rave identity which they were claiming through a rewriting of history. This authentic identity was based on participation in an idealised and now defunct golden era, which was inaccessible to 'young kids today'. Furthermore, these claims to authentic identity and membership of an underground, pre-commercialised rave scene were being made on the basis of rave participation from the mid-1990s onwards, when raves had already begun their rapid evolution from underground to commercial events.

Raves/dance parties played an important role in the lives of old skool ravers and it is likely that their fond memories and rave stories will continue to play an important role in the creation of personal and group identities. In the next and final chapter, I review the major arguments of the thesis before concluding with reflections on the implications of my analysis for understanding changes in party drug use in the rave/dance party and club setting.

Chapter 9
Conclusion

The ethnographic analysis offered in this thesis revealed that Melbourne's rave/dance party and club scenes are constituted by complex and changing forms of party drug use and associated social relations and cultural practices. Focusing on old skool ravers, and examining raves/dance parties from the mid-1990s to 2006-07, the analysis explored the changes wrought by commercialisation in a range of areas, including: the locations of raves/dance parties, their marketing and size, the composition of attendees, and forms of party drug use. In this concluding chapter, I review the major findings and arguments of the thesis and their contribution to existing theoretical approaches to normalisation and subcultural capital. I then outline more general conclusions regarding the implications of my analysis for understanding changes in party drug use in rave/dance party and club settings by suggesting possible areas for further research.

Throughout the thesis, I have paid attention to the complex social contexts and cultural meanings of party drug use. This kind of work is important because, as discussed in Chapter 1, the dominant Australian approaches to the study of party drug use have been epidemiological and medical; while these approaches provide important information on the prevalence, patterns and harm associated with party drug use, they ignore the cultural meanings and social contexts of party drug use. As a consequence, these studies tend to represent party drug users as an essentialised category. By contrast, this thesis is positioned within the body of ethnographic and qualitative work on drug use that has emerged since the 1990s (e.g., Bourgois, 1995; Dwyer 2009; Gourley, 2004; Green and Moore, 2009; Maher, 1997; Moore, 1993, 1995; Pennay and Moore, 2010; Slavin 2004a, 2004b).

My review of the literature from drug studies and sociology indicates that our understanding of the social and cultural aspects of party drug use at raves/dance parties remains limited. Drawing on the normalisation debate as a theoretical starting point, and in particular on Measham and Brain's (2005) identification of a new "culture of intoxication" embracing both legal and illicit drugs, this thesis offers a

new perspective by detailing the commercial changes in the Melbourne rave/dance party scene and focusing on the way these changes were interpreted by old skool ravers in relation to their social identities and forms of party drug use. Two key points emerged from my review of the literature. First, the impact of commercialisation on drug use and drinking is influenced by the context in which drug use and drinking takes place and is mediated by socio-demographic characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity and social class (Measham and Brain, 2005). Second, there are few qualitative studies that examine commercialisation and identity formation in relation to party drug use within the rave/dance party scene in Australia and internationally. More generally, the drug field has produced only limited research on raves and dance parties; researchers studying the sociology of youth have explored raves and dance parties but have been less interested in changing forms of party drug use and the associated problems. This thesis has attempted to address this gap in knowledge by producing an in-depth qualitative analysis that revealed how the commercialisation and popularisation of the Melbourne rave/dance party scene affected the identities and party drug use of a group of long-term attendees – the old skool ravers. My work was informed by the concepts of "subcultural capital" and "nostalgia" which have not been combined in the same analytical frame in the literature on raves/dance parties and clubs to date.

There have also been few qualitative Australian studies that examine the commercialisation of the rave/dance party scene in relation to party drug use. My findings provide a better understanding of party drug use and related harm at raves/dance parties and clubs by demonstrating how party drug use is bound up with identity and social context.

My ethnographic study positioned me as both an insider and outsider to the old skool ravers. As an insider, I had already gained the trust of my participants and was intimately aware of the wider contexts of their lives, of which raves/dance parties were just one aspect; this provided me with a unique longitudinal perspective on changes in rave identities and culture. Knowing many of my research friends for many years, I saw them pass through different life stages and experiences. As an 'insider', I could also understand the complexities and subtleties of certain relationships and conversations which would have been difficult to discern for an

'outsider' or somebody new to the scene. For instance, having background knowledge of changes in personal relationships and past events meant I had a more comprehensive understanding of people's lives. It also meant I was able to gain access to old skool ravers' extended networks. My personal history and previous research also provided valuable connections to a variety of people in the Melbourne club and dance party scene, including organisers, DJs, bar staff, bouncers, promoters and participants. I was also an outsider, because I had attended university, studied sociology and then 'returned' to my rave participation with a new critical perspective on familiar and taken-for-granted practices and contexts.

The main characteristics of old skool ravers and their drug histories and patterns were described in Chapter 4. I showed that most of my core group of 12 research friends had been attending raves since the mid-1990s, were aged in their mid- to late-twenties and lived in the outer western and northern suburbs of Melbourne. All but one had completed secondary school, two were engaged in tertiary study and part-time work, and the remainder worked full-time in the trade and service industries (including one man who worked as a 'drug dealer'). Most were from Southern European backgrounds, were single and had no children. They lived in their own homes, shared housing or parental homes. At the time of the fieldwork, the most accessible and commonly used drugs among my research friends were alcohol, tobacco, ice, speed and pills. In Chapter 4 I specifically addressed the subjective experiences and meanings of drug use for old skool ravers, as well as highlighting the typical physical and social contexts of party drug use, including why, how and when they were used, the benefits associated with this use, and the general patterns of harms they experienced. I established that the stimulant properties of many party drugs were seen as functional because they provided energy for all-night dancing and a sense of social connectedness. The synergy between the music, lighting and drug use heightened this sense of connectedness and enabled the participants to interact comfortably, even with strangers. They claimed that party drug use within the raving/clubbing context gave them an avenue to escape everyday stresses and the 'real' world, albeit for a short period of time. My discussion of Amanda and Adam assisted in revealing some of the understandings of party drug use amongst old skool ravers: for example, how they contrasted 'recreational' drug users and drug use with 'junkies' and 'addiction'. Chapter 4 also detailed some of the health problems that

were experienced by most old skool ravers – such as 'come downs', sleeping difficulties, anxiety and depression – with most participants managing to restrict their use to weekends over the ten-year period covered by my personal involvement, previous research and doctoral research in the rave/dance party scene. In Chapter 5, I examined how the changes in location, marketing and size of raves/dance parties were viewed by old skool ravers. They believed that the relocation of raves/dance parties to mainstream venues such as clubs and sporting and entertainment complexes had dramatically altered the scene. The commercial marketing of raves/dance parties on television and commercial radio, which accompanied the move to larger locations and events, was also viewed negatively. The increasing size of raves/dances parties – from several hundred to several thousand patrons (and sometimes more) – was, to quote Chloe, identified as the point when the scene started to go 'pear-shaped'. In the eyes of old skool ravers, the venues, marketing and advertising to such large audiences had attracted the 'wrong' type of people to dance events.

Raves/dance parties have been the focus of sensationalised mass media reports as was shown in Chapter 5. My ethnographic account showed how old skool ravers' opinions and responses to media coverage varied. Most agreed that the mass media sensationalised and exaggerated drug use in their reporting on raves/dance parties; however, some old skool ravers criticised and dismissed mass media reporting entirely, while others considered the mass media to be accurately reporting on drug use at raves/dance parties. As shown in Chapter 5, Dillon (2003) argued that "contrary to media reports the vast majority of party [drug] users do not experience significant negative consequences. Party drug users tend to use recreationally, do not experience severe problems, attend treatment services or come into contact with law enforcement". My ethnographic findings support Dillon's claim.

Chapter 6 continued my examination of the changes to the rave/dance party scene brought by commercialisation by focusing on the changing composition of those attending raves/dance parties. Two key issues were identified in this chapter: first, how old skool ravers perceived the changing profile of rave/dance party attendees; and second, how these perceived changes affected old skool ravers. Old skool ravers negatively classified those new to the scene as 'outsiders', such as muzzas, beefcakes

and teeny-boppers. As a result of the arrival of 'dirty clubbers' such as muzzas, the old skool ravers who participated in my research felt alienated from the dance scene. They often described themselves and others who had attended the mid-1990s raves and dance parties as old skool ravers who shared a sense of community and "subculture". This sense of community/subculture was sustained by friendliness, unity of purpose (seeking 'the vibe'), the use of drugs to enhance the rave experience, feelings of safety and the freedom to express oneself (Siokou, 2002). Many of my research friends considered themselves to be participants in an alternative youth subculture rather than being part of the 'mainstream'. Even though they continued to attend clubs and other dance venues at the time of my fieldwork, old skool ravers no longer identified with the current dance scene when creating personal or group identities. They blamed commercialisation and the consequent influx of 'normal' (i.e., mainstream) people for 'ruining' the dance scene. The arrival of these 'dirty clubbers' led, in their view, to a perceived loss of friendliness, increased interest in 'picking up' (initiating casual sexual encounters), the use of large amounts of party drugs and alcohol with little concern for safety, and little interest in dance music. Furthermore, dirty clubbers did not identify with the earlier rave ethos, identity markers including clothes and accessories, and associated norms and behaviours (e.g., such as those relating to drug use).

The importance and relevance of ethnicity within current dance party contexts was examined via my analysis of the old skool raver response to muzzas. I had not specifically intended to focus on ethnicity in my study, but my findings highlighted that ethnic stereotypes are produced and deployed within the Melbourne rave/dance party scene. This finding also opens up a new research direction, raising questions about how ethnicity impacts on social relations at these events and on forms of party drug use, an issue that has received little attention in the literature. I have demonstrated how old skool ravers made claims to the possession of "subcultural capital" by employing ethnicity, drug use and other aspects of style and behaviour in their negative labelling of muzzas. They used nostalgia to mount a critique of the situation and in doing so claimed subcultural capital for themselves. I hope to have stimulated interest in this area for future research, which might consider how cross-cultural perspectives may generate insights into ethnicity and party drug use. In what ways do ethnic background and the performance of ethnic identity shape the use of

party drugs? Such analyses can further illuminate the cultural contexts and social worlds of party drug use.

The thesis also argues that the construction of identity is central to youthful drug use and that the normalisation or 'mainstreaming' of party drug use in the Melbourne rave/dance party scene has led to changes in the way these drugs are used. In order to support this argument, Chapter 7 focused on the changes in party drug use practices associated with the increasing commercialisation of raves/dance parties. There were eight trends that emerged in the transition from the 1990s rave scene to the raves/dance parties and clubs at the time of fieldwork in 2006-07. The eight trends in party drug use outlined in the chapter were: (1) the extent of party drug use; (2) the way that party drug purchases are managed; (3) the variety of party drugs available: (4) the purity of available drug; (5) party drug prices; (6) the branding of ecstasy; (7) the concurrent use of alcohol and party drugs; and (8) drug-related demeanour and conduct. These changes were then examined in relation to two main changes in policing practices: the introduction of sniffer dogs, and roadside testing via the 'drug bus'. I showed how old skool ravers adopted various risk management strategies in order to minimise the possibility of detection by police. My analysis of responses to policing drew attention to old skool ravers acting in multiple ways to evade policing. For example, sniffer dogs appear to have changed the practices of some old skool ravers, but not in the way that Victoria Police had anticipated. Common changes included consuming their party drugs before large raves/dance parties and hiding them more carefully, with few changes to party drug use practices at clubs. The use of sniffer dogs appeared to succeed only in creating feelings of fear and resentment towards the police.

In relation to drug-driving, I showed how the majority of old skool ravers drove under the influence of party drugs. This was a practice most of them preferred to avoid, mainly because of the fear and stigma associated with being caught, but which they engaged in regularly because of a lack of viable alternatives. There was no public transport available to the outer suburbs late at night and taxis were expensive. Many women felt 'safe' if they brought their car as it provided a secure way of getting home. There were also several practices in which old skool ravers engaged in that aimed to lower the risk of being caught drug-driving. Some avoided driving in

the city and surrounding suburbs, choosing instead to drive in and around the outer suburbs, because it was considered less risky. Others deliberately stayed out for extended periods, until the middle of the following day, often consuming even more drugs, to avoid getting caught; they did this because booze/drug buses were thought to be on the roads during the night and early hours of the morning. Other preferred to drink alcohol because the stigma associated with being arrested for drug-driving was considered to be greater than that associated with drink-driving (even though they thought driving on speed was safer than alcohol). Some took the risk of driving whilst under the influence of party drugs and hoped they would not get caught. Importantly, it was also revealed that old skool ravers did not always act in ways to avoid or minimise policing risk but, instead, at various times, actively engaged in risk – taking the chance that they would not be caught.

In Chapter 8, I discussed the elusive rave 'vibe', which, for old skool ravers, was made up of a combination of elements: music, dancing, the crowd, décor and lighting, drug use and feeling free and safe. The implications for identity formation were then examined. I showed how the commercial changes in the Melbourne rave/dance party scene were negatively interpreted by old skool ravers, who expressed a strongly-felt nostalgia for past rave forms as part of their critique of the present situation. However, the nostalgia narrative contains another element; old skool ravers were also making claims to superiority – that is, to the possession of subcultural capital and to the possession of an 'authentic' rave identity which they were claiming through a re-writing of history. Furthermore, these claims to authentic identity and membership of an underground, pre-commercialised rave scene were being made on the basis of rave participation from the mid-1990s onwards, when raves had already begun their rapid evolution from underground to commercial events. Moreover, I suggested that the process of nostalgia is accelerating in our increasingly postmodern world, where changes occur so rapidly. I also showed that whilst old skool ravers shared this nostalgia for past rave forms, their behaviour as individuals differed and was shaped by many factors within and outside the scene.

Implications of thesis findings and avenues for further research

The significance of the research undertaken in the thesis extends beyond an academic interest in the ethnography of the rave and dance party scene. By exploring the individual, social and cultural aspects of party drug use within the Melbourne rave/dance party scene, a better understanding of party drug use and the problems associated with it is developed. In turn, these findings inform interventions aimed at reducing harm amongst rave/dance party and club attendees. Specifically the thesis indicated that policing methods of drug and alcohol buses and sniffer dogs at large events should consider unintended consequences of changing, but not deterring drug use or drug driving practices, and be supplemented by an increased focus on planning and education issues such as promoting safe and affordable public transport options to outer suburbs among at risk groups. Following international trends, much Australian research has been medical and epidemiological in approach, and has ignored the cultural and social contexts of party drug use analysed in this thesis. As a consequence, previous studies tend to represent 'party drug users' as an essentialised category. This thesis challenges such representations by showing the individual differences within a group of long-term party drug users who attend raves/dance parties in Melbourne, Australia.

The key findings presented here show that the four changes brought about by commercialisation – in the location, marketing and size of events; the composition of attendees; drug-related practice and 'the vibe' or atmosphere – created a sense of nostalgia and even of mourning for past rave forms. While these expressions of nostalgia and mourning were, no doubt, heartfelt, they can also be read as claims to subcultural capital and to the possession of an authentic rave identity which they were claiming through a rewriting of history. This authentic identity was based on participation in an idealised and now defunct golden era, which was inaccessible to 'young kids today'. Furthermore, these claims to authentic identity and membership of an underground, pre-commercialised rave scene were being made on the basis of rave participation from the mid-1990s onwards, when raves had already begun their rapid evolution from underground to commercial events.

The research reported in this thesis is also significant because it builds conceptual and empirical links between two previously distinct literatures – the drug-specific literature on party drug use, and the sociological and cultural-studies literature on raves, dance parties, clubs and youth. More specifically, I have built on the existing work on subcultural capital by showing how ethnicity is relevant to the use of party drugs within the Melbourne rave/dance party scene. My findings highlighted that ethnic stereotypes are produced and deployed within the Melbourne rave/dance party scene. This finding raises questions about how ethnicity impacts on social relations at these events and on forms of party drug use, an issue that has received little attention in the literature. I have demonstrated how old skool ravers made claims to the possession of subcultural capital by employing ethnicity, drug use and other aspects of style and behaviour in their negative labelling of muzzas. It was then shown how they used nostalgia to mount a critique of the situation and in doing so claimed subcultural capital for themselves.

Drawing on the normalisation debate, and in particular on Measham and Brain's (2005) identification of a new "culture of intoxication" embracing both legal and illicit drugs, this thesis has offered a new perspective by detailing the commercial changes in the Melbourne rave/dance party scene and focusing on the way these changes were interpreted by 'old skool ravers' in relation to their social identities and forms of party drug use. The thesis has built on the "normalisation debate" by showing how the construction of identity is central to youthful drug use and that the "normalisation" or "mainstreaming" of party drugs in the Melbourne rave/dance party scene has led to changes in the way these drugs are used.

In doing so, the thesis has contributed to theoretical debates regarding the sociology and ethnography of drug use, provided findings and recommendations with direct application to current policing and harm minimisation policies in Australia, and indicated useful lines of future research, specifically the need for high quality research into the way in which ethnicity shapes drug use patterns.

The outcomes of my work suggest some potentially fruitful avenues for future research to expand our understanding of party drug use in the context of raves/dance parties and clubs. Through my ethnography, I revealed the importance of ethnicity

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within the current dance party and club scene in Melbourne. Further research could specifically examine the role of ethnicity in shaping party drug use amongst young people. For instance: (1) How does ethnic background and ethnic identity shape the behaviour of young people and their use of 'party drugs'? (2) How does ethnicity impact on the risks and adverse effects of party drug use? (3) How can cross-cultural perspectives generate insights into party drug use that will benefit public health and assist in reducing the social and financial costs of drug use in Australia?

The concurrent use of alcohol and party drug use amongst young people at dance parties and clubs is another area requiring further investigation, particularly because the risks and harmful effects are exacerbated when alcohol and party drugs are used concurrently. I am mindful that this thesis was limited by the scope of the analysis which examined old skool ravers and their views in relation to alcohol and party drug use. A future study might examine younger party drug and alcohol users who entered the rave/dance party scene during the 2000s and therefore did not experience the warehouse raves of the 1990s.

By exploring the changes that the scene has undergone in the last 10 years, it is clear that alcohol now has a place within the rave/dance party scene. The move of raves/dance parties into licensed clubs has led to increased use of alcohol in combination with party drugs. Alcohol has appeared to 'win over' the party drug using crowd. My data showed that the changes in party drug use for old skool ravers fitted into broader commercial changes to dance parties, and that alcohol was now regularly used concurrently with party drugs. Having a longitudinal perspective has also showed how the broader commercial changes affected the drug taking practices of a group of long term drug users. This poses new questions for researchers, health care educators, providers and policy makers, who will need to address concurrent alcohol and party drug use at Melbourne clubs and rave/dance parties and review the drug and alcohol information they provide to young people.

At present, little is known about how young people perceive and experience these risks and ethnographic research will make possible an 'insider' perspective that previous quantitative studies lacked. Furthering our understanding of patterns of youth drinking and drug-taking is also vital if the social costs of drug use are to be

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reduced, including indirect costs to society, notably loss of productivity, health-related costs and destructive impacts on families.

Concerns have been expressed about the role of alcohol in relation to gambling (see Barnes *et al,* 1999; Baron and Dickerson, 1999); however, little attention has been paid to the role of illicit drugs and gambling or concurrent alcohol and drug use and gambling. Future studies could examine party drug use (notably the use of stimulants such as ice and speed) and gambling at 'pokie' or gaming venues, particularly 24-hour venues such as Melbourne's Crown Casino. Some old skool ravers and several people from the wider subset of 60 (including one dealer) often gambled whilst using party drugs and alcohol, particularly when they were unable to sleep in the early hours of the morning or were attempting to avoid booze bus activity (in Melbourne, most suburban gaming venues are open until 5am). Moreover, because of the central location of the casino, they sometimes purchased drugs from their dealers at the venue.

Comparative ethnographic studies on party drug use, both national and international, would be beneficial and would further enhance our understanding of party drug use. Such studies can yield important insights about context and the social networks of young people that are not captured in survey research. As Cartmel (2003: 100) noted, comparative studies on youth can "challenge 'common sense' assumptions about youth as a problem" and should aim to construct new theoretical ideas or build on existing theories. For example, the Melbourne-based study reported in this thesis showed that old skool ravers preferred ecstasy, speed and alcohol whereas Green's ethnographic research on 'scenesters' in Perth showed a high prevalence of use of dexamphetamine (a pharmaceutical stimulant) in conjunction with party drugs and alcohol, a finding also supported by the wider NHMRC project's epidemiological research component (Jenkinson, 2010). In addition, Green and Moore (2009) showed that within Australia, WA has distinctly higher prescription rates for dexamphetamine than any other Australian jurisdiction and that the use of diverted dexamphetamine was prevalent and integrated into local drug practices. Green and Moore argue that this may be linked to the supply context for dexamphetamine in WA. This illustrates the diversity in local drug practice across Australian

jurisdictions, a finding that has important implications for the development of appropriate public health responses.

International comparative studies would also be beneficial. For instance, European studies have revealed differences in drug preference according to country and region. For example, Hans Knutagard has argued that: "Ecstacy [sic], for example, is used in 'rave' culture mostly in north-western Europe, while cocaine and heroin are the 'new' drugs in east European countries" (Knutagard, 1996: 38). Another interesting study could compare affluent party drug users in club and dance party settings to working-class party drug users and explore how variables such as socio-economic background, gender and ethnicity influence party drug use. For example, Perrone (2009), in her ethnographic study of New York 'club kids', showed that the relatively wealthy and well-educated 'club kids' she observed used their economic, social and human capital to avoid the criminal justice system and medical interventions, unlike their less wealthy peers. These advantages allowed this group of club kids to maintain productive lives and enter into adulthood without significant risk of long-term harm from their club/drug careers, thus maintaining and reproducing their elite status (Perrone, 2009).

Finally, it is important to recognise that research should not only be about studying local drug-using practices and contexts, and responding to them through interventions, but also about acknowledging that local contexts are dynamic and can change rapidly. This thesis revealed that the Melbourne rave/dance party scene has, in little more than a decade, undergone many changes and documenting these changes in contexts and cultures is important. This thesis has shown the importance of nostalgia in providing continuity of identity for old skool ravers, particularly with the changing contexts of raves/dance parties. This finding raises interesting questions for other youth music scenes and it would be useful to explore if the 'sped up' version of nostalgia operating for old skool ravers is applicable to other youth music scenes in Australia.

Concluding thoughts

The analysis in this thesis was stimulated by my long-term involvement and passion for the rave/dance party and club scene in Melbourne. The quantitative approaches that dominate in Australian drug research tend to preclude considerations of process and change in practices and social contexts, which are often dynamic in nature. In contrast, in this thesis, I privilege an emic account of dance parties and clubs. Influenced by theoretical frameworks drawn from sociology and anthropology, in my examination of the everyday lives of old skool ravers I stressed the importance of understanding the social and cultural dimensions of their practice and directed attention to the importance of identity and the relevance of nostalgia, subcultural capital and ethnicity in relation to patterns of drug use and participation in rave/dance events.

In this thesis, I described the ways in which old skool ravers interpreted the commercial changes that occurred in the Melbourne rave/dance party scene between 1996 and 2006. My ethnographic method and insider status were invaluable in understanding the changing party drug use of old skool ravers. They provided me with a unique longitudinal perspective on changes in party drug use, rave identities and culture. I showed that old skool ravers' identities were multi-faceted, situationally-produced and subject to change over time. I posited that nostalgia was used to facilitate a continuity of identity for old skool ravers and allowed them to claim subcultural capital for themselves.

These findings remind us, as Dwyer (2009: 263) has argued

> that the meanings of drug use do not derive solely from either the pharmacological properties of drugs or from inherent, stable characteristics of those who use them. They are also socially constructed through ongoing interaction and negotiation in particular localised contexts.

Moreover, my findings suggest that drug scenes cannot be understood without consideration of the local contexts, because these change over time. "If public health

and policy interventions are to resonate effectively with those to whom they are directed, local drug-using scenes need to be understood on their own terms rather than through the etic categories of policy makers, health workers and researchers" (Dwyer, 2009: 263-4). For instance, given that drug-driving policing strategies in Melbourne appeared to have little impact on the risk-taking choices of rave/dance party attendees in this study, due to the perceived lack of safe public transport options, more attention might be paid by policy makers in providing alternative, safe, public transport options for at-risk groups in the early hours of the morning. Where such transport options do exist, these might be improved through targeted public information campaigns and enrolling dance and rave event organisers to encourage their use.

Studies that focus solely on the negative aspects of party drug use, while important, tend to reinforce depictions of party drug users as young naïve victims and do not do justice to the complexities of party drug use. Therefore, literature focusing on trends and harms effectively essentialises party drug users, and much of the information regarding social practices is lost because these processes are localised to social contexts. To redress this, this thesis provides a qualitative study of party drug use within the commercialised Melbourne rave/dance party and club scene, focusing on changes in the scene and what it has meant for party drug use and the identities of participants.

Ethnographic studies can inform policy making by providing insights into the changing practices constituting drug use. My findings in relation to sniffer dogs and drug buses raise challenges to the efficacy of policing interventions, which are based on the flawed assumption that party drug users will always react to such interventions in risk-averse ways. Moreover, as shown in Chapter 5, if harm reduction measures are to be seen as credible they should resonate with the target population. The DanceWize example illustrates that identity is central to young people's perceptions of their own party drug use, and that their 'tastes' and experience with certain drugs, and the way they are used, can also been seen as creating subcultural distinctions. The link between identity and harm minimisation is evident in the preference of old skool ravers for consuming drugs in a group as a social activity which reaffirms their group identity.

In conclusion, this thesis explored the use of party drugs by old skool ravers at rave/dance parties and clubs in Melbourne, Australia. The social and cultural meanings constituted through party drug use are often overlooked in Australian drug research. All research on drug use provides us with partial knowledge but, if we are to expand our current understanding, it is necessary to go beyond epidemiology and medical approaches. Ethnography, with its focus on everyday lived experience, can shed light on party drug users' understandings and practices, including their responses to changes in dance party and club environments. By comparison, epidemiological research and quantitative snap-shots are unable to provide such detailed information. Ethnographic accounts add the voices of party drug users to the more dominant voices of the mass media, policy advisors, health care professionals and government campaigns against party drug use.

The research described in this thesis showed that the commercial changes in the rave/dance party and club scenes that occurred from the mid 1990s to 2006-07 shaped party drug use and identity formation among old skool ravers. By exploring these changes and providing insight into the subjectivities of old skool ravers, the thesis has demonstrated the value of ethnographic methodologies in adding to our understanding of party drug use and drug users, and in shaping more effective harm minimisation strategies.

Commercialisation of the rave/dance party scene affected the group identity of old skool ravers by creating the conditions in which nostalgia becomes a means of providing continuity of their identity. It led to changes in their party drug use patterns – from 'subcultural' to 'mainstream' – and, as shown above, these resulted in changes in the culture of raves/dance parties, which has implications for the design of harm reduction strategies.

I conclude with some quotations from old skool ravers. Vivienne describes attending mid-1990s raves as the "best time of my life", Arianne said that, "I'm glad I went to raves and experienced it" and Victoria lamented how much money she spent over the years "partying" but comforts herself with fond memories. Raves/dance parties played an important role in the lives of my old skool raver research friends, and it is

likely that their fond memories and rave stories will continue to play an important role in the ongoing creation of personal and group identities.

Afterword

Today, in June 2010, over three years since the end of my fieldwork, Arianne and Tyrone no longer use party drugs, and (since getting married) Arianne no longer goes clubbing or raving. Isabel, Simon, Seb, Michael and Vivienne have used party drugs on only a handful of special occasions during the past year. During their irregular visits to clubs (less than monthly), they tend to drink alcohol rather than use party drugs. I lost touch with Adam but in 2009, Simon told me that he had "returned to Turkey with only $100 in his back pocket". Jones and Charlize, his non-drug using wife, separated and Jones continues to go clubbing regularly; cocaine is now his drug of choice, accompanied by alcohol. Ben also continues to go clubbing regularly and uses G whilst drinking; he recently complained that "there are no good pills in Melbourne anymore". Amanda continues to date a drug dealer and smokes ice at least weekly, as well as continuing to use medication to stop her from 'craving' heroin. She rarely goes to clubs or raves/dance parties. Everyone except for Vivienne (who is studying at university) is currently employed.

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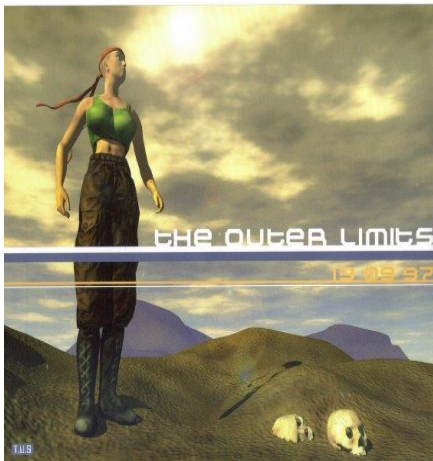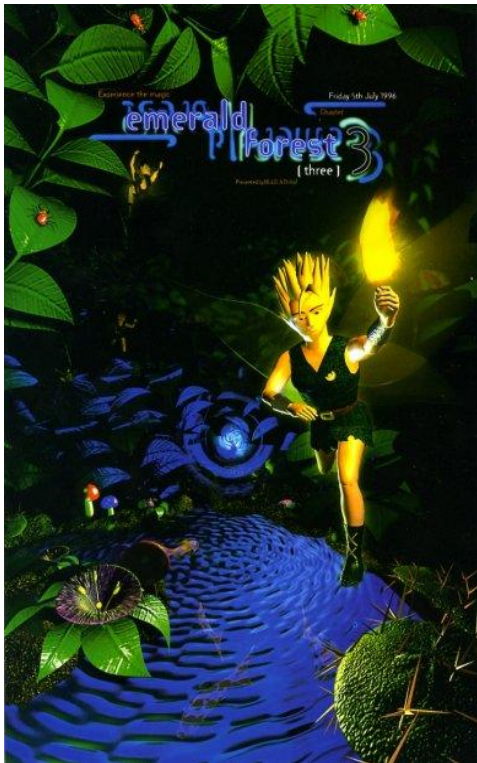
Appendices

Appendix 1: Every Picture Tells A Story and Pleazure flyers from 1994-1999
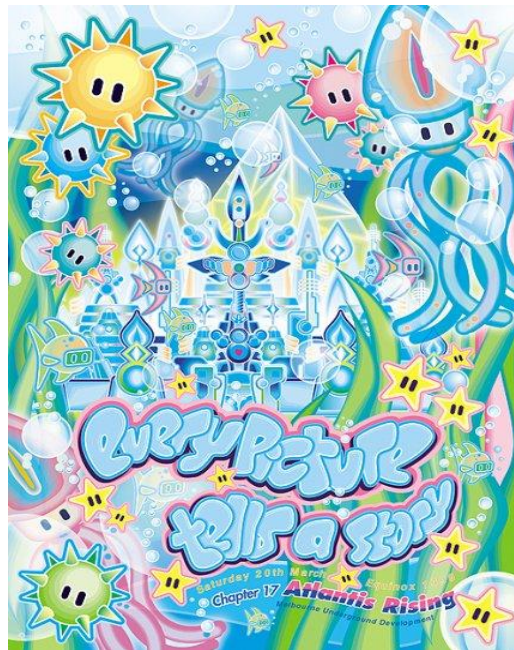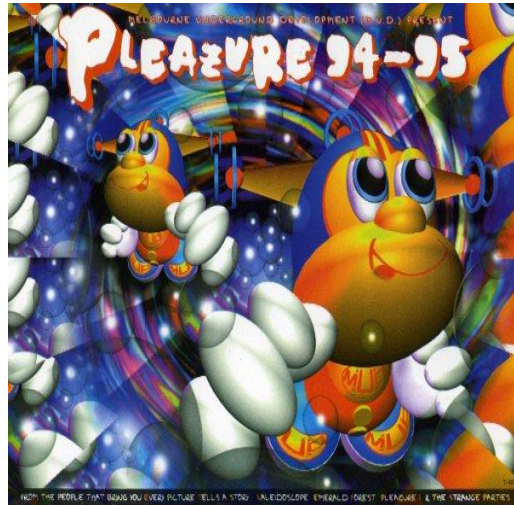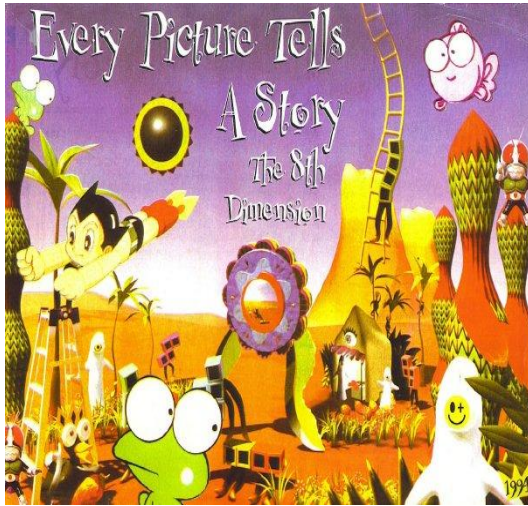
Appendix 2: Mid to late 1990s flyers (which were often new age, futurist, fantasy or cartoon inspired)

Appendix 3: Flyers from the time of the fieldwork 2006

The Two Tribes flyer in 2006 was also marketed as a CD cover.