

School of Media, Creative Arts & Social Inquiry

Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an identity constant beyond youth

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Doctor of Philosophy
of
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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 acknowledgment has been made.

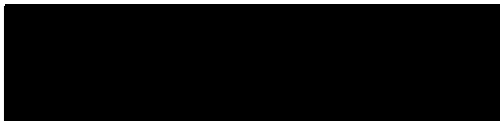
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The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) – updated March 2014.

The proposed research study received human research ethics approval from the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00262):

Project Number 5251 Approval Number RDHU-17-15.

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A solid black rectangular box redacting the signature of the author.

Date:

23rd March 2022

We acknowledge that Curtin University works across hundreds of traditional lands and custodial groups in Australia, and with First Nations people around the globe. We wish to pay our deepest respects to their ancestors and members of their communities, past, present, and to their emerging leaders. Our passion and commitment to work with all Australians and peoples from across the world, including our First Nations peoples are at the core of the work we do, reflective of our institutions' values and commitment to our role as leaders in the Reconciliation space in Australia.

Goth - Just a Phase?

Goth Subculture as an Identity
Constant Beyond Youth

Emma L. Baird


A black and white photograph of a large, ruined Gothic cathedral. The structure is composed of dark stone and features multiple levels of arched windows and several prominent spires. The building is situated on a hillside, with a small town visible in the distance to the left. The sky is filled with large, dramatic clouds, creating a somber and atmospheric setting. The foreground shows some dry grass and a path leading towards the ruins.

Image overleaf: Whitby Abbey, during Whitby Goth Weekend 2015

Photograph by the author

Contents

Abstract: Just a phase? Goth subculture as an identity constant beyond youth	13
Acknowledgements	14
Chapter 1 : Introduction	17
Introduction.....	17
Research Topic: Background	17
Research objectives	18
Research Questions.....	18
Key Findings.....	19
Notes on Terminology	19
Images and Photography.....	21
List of Abbreviations.....	23
Overview of Thesis Chapters	24
Chapter 2 : Research Methodology.....	29
Ethics Approval.....	29
Online Presence and Project Identity.....	29
Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth	30
Survey Instruments	36
Survey Response Rate and Audience	37
Data Gathering: Interviews	39
Data Gathering: Fieldwork Observations and Locations	42
Data Gathering Approaches: Rationale	43
Limitations	45
Data Analysis Methodology.....	48
Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).....	48
Qualitative Data.....	49
Quantitative Data	50

Chapter 3 : Literature Review: Theoretical and Critical Context.....	55
Theoretical and Critical Context: Overview	55
Subculture: Hebdige	56
Subcultural Theory: Hodkinson	65
Theorising Goth	72
Contemporary Gothness as a new Gothic Mode	75
McCracken: Little Cultures and Plenitude	80
Theoretical Conclusion: Socio-aesthetic framework.....	94
Chapter 4 : Examining the Nature of Goth Identity.....	99
What is Goth?.....	101
Who is Goth - the Research Cohort.....	101
Gender	103
Where are they from?	104
Australian Cohort.....	105
What is Goth: Aesthetic Markers	106
What is Goth Music?.....	117
Goth Demeanour, Attitude and Archetypes	121
Creating the Goth 'Little world'	134
Chapter 5 : Discussion: Goth, Just a Phase?.....	143
Goth: more than just a phase.....	145
How would you describe Goth identity?.....	148
Belonging: Community Online and Off.....	162
Goth and Social Stigma	166
Goth as Pejorative: Moral Panic and Subcultural Theory.....	171
Living Gothic	175
Goth Appearance.....	176
Goth Pride: I am a Goth	179

Nostalgia and Generational Change	184
Goth Commerce and Couture: New Gothic Mode?	192
Goth Continuity	198
Elder Goths	199
The influence of Goth	217
Not Just a Phase: Conclusion.....	218
Chapter 6 : Australian Goth	223
Australian Goth	224
Background: Australian Goth Music & Clubs.....	224
Critical Background: Australian Goth	229
Employment.....	230
Little Worlds: Lived Experiences of Australian Goths	238
Climate and Geography	242
Describing Australian Goth	249
Inter-Generational Goth	251
Virtual Sociality and Scene.....	257
Isolation	264
Australian Goth as Part of Global Goth Culture	265
Australian Goth: Conclusion.....	272
Chapter 7 Beyond Youth.....	275
Research Conclusions.....	275
Goth as an Identity Constant.....	276
Goth Beyond Youth	277
Elder Goths	278
Goth – the new Generations	282
Reflections on the research.....	282
Conclusion	284

Chapter 8 Appendices	287
Appendix 1: Survey Instruments.....	288
Appendix 2: Interview Information Sheet	289
Chapter 9 Bibliography	293

Table of Figures

Figure 1 Goth Just a Phase postcard, left: front, right: back, author 2015.	33
Figure 2 Goth Just a Phase Business Card, left: front, right: back, author 2015.	33
Figure 3 Herzog's Nosferatu 1979: plague scene	79
Figure 4 Melbourne Goth & Victorian Picnic, 2017: various Goth appearance types.....	87
Figure 5 International and Australian Cohort: Survey Participant Age Ranges	103
Figure 6 Survey Respondent Location Map - by Region (resident)	104
Figure 7 Australian Survey Respondent Location Map - by State (resident) [n=414]	105
Figure 8 Australian Bureau of Statistics: Overall Australian Population Data by State 2015.....	106
Figure 9 Female Goth at Whitby Goth Weekend, 2015 (Photograph by the author)	116
Figure 10 International and Australian Survey Questions 5 and 6: Goth Aesthetics	125
Figure 11 Survey Response: Goth Aesthetic Types.....	126
Figure 12 Goth [stereo] Types: M Balanck, 2010.....	132
Figure 13 NME article by Andy Gill, November 3 rd 1980.	139
Figure 14 Goth identity is just a phase – Australian and International Cohorts	145
Figure 15 Combined Cohort Data: Goth Identity is just a phase	146
Figure 16 AQ21 & IQ13: How would you describe Goth identity? Text analysis.....	150
Figure 17 Whitby during Whitby Goth Weekend 2015 (Photograph by the author).....	165
Figure 18 Sophie Lancaster Memorial Bench in Whitby (Photograph by the author)	170
Figure 19 AQ48 & IQ41: Goth is used as a term of insult by Outsiders.....	172
Figure 20 AQ49 & IQ42: Goth is used as a term of insult by other Goths	173
Figure 21 AQ41 & IQ33: Describe how your family feels towards Goth	174
Figure 22 AQ45 & IQ38 - You can wear anything and still be a Goth	176
Figure 23 AQ28 & IQ20 - I describe myself as a Goth	180
Figure 24 Young Goths, Perth 1990 (used with permission)	185
Figure 25 Goth Music Meme 2020, https://www.facebook.com/iancurtisishungry	189
Figure 26 Phaze Clothing Mail Order Catalogue Advertisement NME 1988	190
Figure 27 Edgar Allan Poe Accessories.....	193
Figure 28 Whitby Goth Weekend, Market 2015.....	194
Figure 29 Be the Goth Queen you wanted to be when you were 12 by Joana Shino (2015).	200
Figure 30: AQ31 & IQ23 - You are never too old to be a Goth	201
Figure 31 Whitby Goth Weekend Football match and crowd	203
Figure 32: AQ7 & AQ51 - Expression of Goth Identity.....	205

Figure 33: IQ7 & IQ37 - Expression of Goth Identity	206
Figure 34 Fields of the Nephilim, Live, Whitby Goth Weekend 2015 (Photograph by the author)	208
Figure 35 Australian and International Survey Responses: Events	214
Figure 36 Assorted Western Australian Goth Club and Retail Flyers (author's collection)	226
Figure 37 AQ43/IQ35: Which of the following best describes your employment	231
Figure 38 AQ16: In Australia Goth is regarded as just a phase.....	241
Figure 39 AQ12 Australian Climate & AQ13 Australian Geography	243
Figure 40 AQ10 & AQ33 Australian Goth Subculture - Comparison to European Goth.....	265
Figure 41: AQ35 Goth is a global community & AQ38 Australian Goth Community.....	268
Figure 42: AQ37 Australian Goth Population & AQ46 Goth are socially welcoming to outsiders ..	269
Figure 43 Whitby Goth Weekend Participants 2015 (photograph by the author).....	279

List of Tables

Table 1 Table of Abbreviations and Coding	23
Table 2 Data Gathering: Survey Response Volumes.....	38
Table 3 Data Gathering: Interview Volumes	40
Table 4 International and Australian Cohort: Survey Participant Demographic Details	102
Table 5 Survey Responses: Gender	103
Table 6 Respondent Data by Location: International and Australian cohorts	105
Table 7 List of Goth Aesthetic characteristics AQ7/IQ7	110
Table 8 AQ7/IQ7: Top Twenty Responses by Cohort: Goth Aesthetics.....	111
Table 9 IQ5 and AQ5: Goth Industrial 'Type'; by Gender and cohort.....	127
Table 11 Goth Terms: Australian Survey Question 15 and International Survey Question 26	151
Table 10 AQ15 and IQ26 Goth Terms: Top 20 Survey Responses	152
Table 12 AQ26 & IQ18 – Goth Consumerism at events.....	215

Abstract: Just a phase? Goth subculture as an identity constant beyond youth

In this thesis I argue that Goth is a mature, complex global phenomenon. Extant literature has characterised Goth as a subculture based on music and self-fashioning preferences. In the over forty years since Goth emerged, there has been insufficient ethnographic examination of Goth, particularly in the Australian context, to corroborate theoretical positions.

Beyond positing Goth is not a phase, the primary objective of this thesis is to examine the authentic nature of Goth identity, verified by insider dialogue. The title question is used to quantify the characteristics of Goth identity, underpinned by the questions: *is Goth just a phase, what is Goth, and what is the nature of Gothness*. I argue Goth has out-grown early characterisations of subculture and I aim to reposition discourse on Goth towards the language of culture. I propose Goth should be considered a socio-aesthetic framework around which identity is intentionally formed, maintained and evolved through lived cultural experience. To test this theoretical framework, I investigate the nature of Goth identity and how it is sustained beyond youth.

Phenomenological-ethnographic methods are used to reveal the core tenets of the Goth socio-aesthetic framework and map its 40-year evolution from subculture to culture. Data is derived from surveys, interviews, fieldwork and observations from inside the Goth community. Iterative questions interrogate the Goth phenomena to build a composite understanding of how it is regarded by older generations of Goths and its significance beyond youth. Self-identified Goth voices reveal authentic experiences of being Goth and Gothness, evidencing the practices and perceptions of Goth individuality, spectacularity and community.

I assert in this thesis that Goth can be regarded as a little culture which exists within three simultaneous states of being: outsiderhood, belonging and constancy. I argue that for Goth participants these non-linear states can be observed in a continuously fluctuating ratio. My findings suggest the fluid socio-aesthetic framework of Goth exists simultaneously within and outside the mainstream, influencing and being influenced by changes in societal norms and modes of interaction.

I argue correlations in data between geographically diverse communities evidences Goth as a global culture. As the largest study of its kind to date, this research builds new knowledge on Goth in Australia and evidences Goth as a global collective identity construct built on distinct, highly codified aesthetic preferences and behaviours.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to all the wonderful people who completed my (long!) surveys and interviews. I am grateful to those who chatted online, met me for interviews from Whitby to Vancouver, waited under the clocks in Melbourne, on the steps to Dada's, and in a storm in Brisbane – without your generosity and support this research would not exist.

To all the Goth artists, musicians, poets, bands, academics, festival organisers, managers, DJs, Bloggers, Vloggers, door-bitches, bar-staff, designers, chefs, tattooists, writers, counsellors, readers, stylists, teachers, stall-holders, activists, dancers, archivists...keep doing your thing, it is important and we love it.

Thank you to Curtin University, particularly Rachel Robertson and Peter Beilharz my research supervisors, I am grateful for your support and patience.

Most of all to Pully, you are my world. Thank you for everything.



Introduction

Image overleaf: Whitby Abbey, during Whitby Goth Weekend 2015

Photograph by the author

Chapter 1 : INTRODUCTION

Part of the fun is making people guess whether you are Goth or not.

It used to be said a true Goth would not admit to being a Goth.

[ASP302 AQ50¹ Age 45]

Introduction

This chapter introduces the research topic and provides an overview of the thesis structure, establishing the research questions and approaches utilised throughout the research. The objectives of the research are described, outlining the primary themes of the thesis. This includes a baseline definition of Goth and begins to define the inter-relationships within Goth. This information provides a background to the research presented in the thesis. This chapter introduces the concept of socio-aesthetics as developed throughout this thesis as a new mechanism for considering subcultural identity, in particular the little culture of Goth.

Research Topic: Background

I have been actively engaged in the Goth scene since I was about thirteen, and it was around that time when I first heard the expression 'Goth is just a phase'. For some people, I am sure it is, yet as I will present there is a strong body of evidence to suggest the phenomenon of Goth, either considered as an identity, an aesthetic, or as a musical genre, is not a phase. This intentionally provocative and contentious phrase anchored survey and interview questions throughout my research.

To date, research into Goth culture has centred on small-scale ethnographic studies and non-ethnographic theoretical research interpreting historical data to posit psycho-social interpretations of spectacular Goth style. This thesis presents a theory of socio-aesthetics to Goth identity which positions Goth as a socio-aesthetic framework for living; a whole-of-life structure upon which phases of identity and aesthetic expression can be fashioned.

¹ Q50 I have said I am not a Goth to avoid judgement/pigeonholing

To contribute to the development of new knowledge, this study investigated Goth from a phenomenological-ethnographic perspective to examine if Goth identity is regarded as just a phase, or if it remains a valued identity construct beyond youth. I describe and discuss Goth – and Goths – from within the subculture, drawing on empirical survey and interview data to explore why Goth identity is not just a phase. By combining both phenomenological and ethnographic research methods I illustrate the indelible relationship between the social and aesthetic elements of Goth identity.

Along with describing the nature of Goth identity, qualitative data provides a unique insight into Australian perceptions of Goth and how it interacts with the global Goth community. Within this paradigm, I argue that Goths negotiate life meaning directly related to being Goth, through bespoke social behaviours and aesthetic attributes. In this Goths are not passive recipients of ready-made culture or peer trends; Goths are active in influencing evolving Goth culture to allow for generational change.

Research objectives

Through this research, I aim to build on existing literature, add scope and finer definition to the study of the Goth phenomenon. Beyond seeking to substantiate that Goth is not a phase; the primary objective of this thesis is to investigate the authentic nature of Goth identity, verified by insider discourse from Australian and International cohorts.

In particular, I investigate the nature of Goth identity for long-term participants. I aim to identify why and how Goth identity is sustained beyond youth for long-term participants and what are the social and stylistic factors which contribute to this longevity.

I aim to extend the discourse on Goth beyond early characterisations of subculture towards Goth being regarded as a culture in little.

Research Questions

The contentious, frequently-posed question 'Is Goth just a phase?' serves as the anchor around which this study is devised. The reflexive answer for long-term Goths is 'No! Goth is not a phase!' This in-scene convention informs the research and generates the following points of investigation.

- ▶ If Goth is not just a phase, what is the nature and significance of Goth identity for long-term participants?

- ▶ What are the characteristics of Gothness?
- ▶ How is the phenomenon of Goth identity best described in academic literature?

Key Findings

Ethnographic data reveals internationally consistent social behaviours and aesthetic signifiers of Goth identity, as well as divergent and niche local customs. Data demonstrate online sociality is of particular significance in communicating, preserving, and reinventing these Goth characteristics, particularly in Australia. Data thus shows expression of Goth characteristics is fluid and widely variable yet aesthetically stable and that participants modulate Gothness through different life stages to enable long-term constancy.

Ethnographic data presented here demonstrate the nature of long-term Goth identity and how in the 40+ years since it emerged, Goth has transitioned from a subculture to a global phenomenon. Goth now exists across a complex socio-aesthetic spectrum, replete with discrete notions of Gothness, as an authentic global culture or 'little culture'. As a result of my findings, I propose Goth transitions to being expressed in academic discourse as a culture, a socio-aesthetic framework around which identity is intentionally formed, maintained, and developed.

Notes on Terminology

I retained the term subculture in the title of this research as Goth is currently regarded as a subculture and its study sits within the field of "Subcultural studies" in academic literature. Consideration was also given to how the study would be initially identified by key terms on social media and subsequently circulated by participants. As the term remains in common use, subculture ensured the surveys would be quickly recognised by the target audience as well as academic literature studies. Notes on terminology were provided to participants to ensure clarity.

As a participant researcher, clarity and shared understanding of subcultural terminology were critical for undertaking interviews, surveys and fieldwork. Fieldwork effectiveness was dependent upon the use of shared language and a regulated form of dialectic shorthand to explore deeper themes within the culture without protracted explanation. When the survey instruments for the project were published, the preamble (below) was provided to give context to the study. It provides a clear articulation of 'Goth' within the study, with various (and variable) definitions.

Throughout this research, I have chosen to use the term 'Goth' as the least contentious, most efficient way of identifying the subculture and its broad subgenres.

In the context of this study, Goth is inclusive of all subsets of the Goth subculture e.g. Goth-Industrial. As an insider-researcher (long-term Goth participant), I have chosen not to provide specific definitions for the numerous sub-streams or participant groups within the broad spectrum of what is widely accepted as Goth culture, and given the targeted cohort of participants in this survey already have an affiliation with and an understanding of the Goth subculture.²

At interviews, preliminary exchanges often settled on preferred terminology (such as Goth, Gothic, Goff, Post-Punk, Punk-Gothique, Positive Punk, alternative, Death-rocker, etc.). Within these exploratory conversations bands, music, hairstyles, shoes, or other aesthetic attributes of the scene were used to determine boundaries of experience and definition. These conversations, while brief, provided great insight into the different views on the terms ascribed to the subculture and the value applied to them.

Wherever possible, clarifying definitions, alternatives, or explanatory text is provided to describe why a particular term has been favoured over another. Most apparent among these is the term Goth, either capitalised or not. In the interests of consistency, I have chosen to capitalise Goth throughout this study to signify both individuals and the subculture as a broader entity. I have not altered spelling where participants did not capitalise their comments or used scene argot to describe Goth attributes and behaviours. Similarly, when referring to notions of the gothic or Gothic Mode/ 19th century Gothic Revivalists, literary genres, filmic traditions, or architectural styles, there is a distinction of context provided disambiguating Goth from Gothic/gothic.

For this research, the Oxford English Dictionary (Draft Addition, 1993 no. 3) definition of Goth has been employed, as provided below. I acknowledge this definition has implicit limitations and omissions, however suggest it represents a sound foundation on which to base the broadest possible definition of the culture.

GOTH

3. Often with lower-case initial.

a. A style of rock music, and the youth culture associated with this, deriving originally from Punk, and characterized by the dramatically stark appearance of its performers and followers, reminiscent of the protagonists of (esp. cinematic) gothic fantasy, and by mystical or apocalyptic lyrics. Cf. Gothic adj. and n. Additions.

b. A performer or fan of this music, or anyone who adopts a similar appearance, typically through the use of dark eye make-up and pale skin colouring, dark clothes, and bulky metallic jewellery.

²Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth Australian and International Surveys May 2015

c. attrib. and Comb., esp. as Goth-Punk, Goth-rock.

Source: Oxford English Dictionary Online ([OED Online](#))

While perfunctory, this is an accurate description of the visual elements of Goth culture, yet none of the features identified are unique to Goth nor do they reflect the aesthetic complexities present in the culture. This definition also provides an immediate point of contention in defining Goth as a 'youth culture'; this assertion will be challenged throughout and evidence provided to suggest Goth has moved beyond youth.

Images and Photography

As part of the fieldwork, photography was utilised to capture the visual nature of Goth culture in a range of social, public and private settings. All photographs used in this thesis were taken by me, (except for an image of the author, credited to the photographer) and I obtained permission from sitters where necessary. Some images illustrate large public group settings such as live concerts, picnics and festivals where express permission of all attendees was not practicable. Where possible all participants have been contacted regarding images or permissions have been sought through social media and private messaging.

Each chapter is preceded by a descriptive image. The images provide an insight into the visual scope of Goth, providing a snapshot of Goth culture as well as celebrating the diverse settings and contexts in which Goth thrives. Indicative of the aesthetic preoccupations of the culture, the images are presented in black and white, using contrast, texture and tone to convey Goth demeanour.

LIST OF IMAGES			
Image Number	Image Title	Artist	Description and Relevance
IMG1	Title Page	Emma Baird	Whitby Abbey: iconic symbol of the Gothic aesthetic and visual motif for this study.
IMG2	Whitby Abbey, UK	Emma Baird	Image captured during the Whitby Goth Weekend 2015.
IMG3	Research Methodology M'era Luna Festival, Germany	Emma Baird	Photograph of in-crowd performers at M'era Luna Festival, Germany 2017.
IMG4	Theoretical and Critical Context Whitby Abbey, UK	Emma Baird	Photographed during Whitby Goth Weekend 2015, symbolic of the historic connections of Goth with the Gothic style and historic gothic genre.
IMG5	Examining Goth Photograph of the author, c. 1992	Julie Blyth	Photograph of the author as a young Goth at Art School.
IMG6	Just a Phase?	Emma Baird	Photograph of the crowd during The Sisters of Mercy in concert at the Camden Roundhouse, London, 2017. A significant proportion of the audience were long-term Goths in the mid/latter stages of life.
IMG7	Australian Goth	Emma Baird	Image of Australian Goths at the Melbourne Goth and Victorian Picnic, 2017.
IMG9	Beyond Youth	Emma Baird	'Elder' Goth couple walking down a cobbled street in Whitby at the close of the Whitby Goth Weekend 2015.
IMG10	Appendices	Emma Baird	Images of Goth shoes from the author's collection. Shoes form an integral part of Goth aesthetics and are a crucial accessory.
IMG11	Bibliography	Emma Baird/various	Composite image of ephemera from the author's collection, including club flyers, programmes, concert posters etc.

List of Abbreviations

Throughout this thesis quotations from survey and interview participants are used to illustrate and expand on areas of investigation, allowing authentic Goth voices to be represented. All response data has been de-identified with participants assigned a participation number preceded by a contextual prefix. These are outlined below to aid the readability of the data presented in the text.

Table 1 Table of Abbreviations and Coding

SYMBOL KEY: DATA CODIFICATION		
Code Prefix	Explanation	Notes
ASP	Australian Survey Participant	Followed by unique identifier/gender/age. e.g. ASPF108, 42 = Australian Survey Participant Female ID#108 Age 42
ISP	International Survey Participant	Followed by unique identifier/gender/age. e.g. ISPM108, 42 = International Survey Participant Male ID#108 Age 42
IP	Interview Participant	Followed by a unique identifier
ARP/Anon	Anonymous Research Participant	Participant withheld identifying information
AQ	Australian (Survey) Question	Followed by question number
IQ	International (Survey) Question	Followed by question number
PD	Private Discussion	Discussion with the author, privacy requested
OD	Online Discussion	Followed by date and web address where available
ELB	Researcher initials	Interview Transcript reference
n=	Number of complete responses	Survey response volumes

Note: Survey responses/participant quotes retain original syntax; age and gender are not always specified.

Overview of Thesis Chapters

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides a background to the field research presented in this thesis, as well as an overview of important definitions and key terminology. The objectives of the research are described, outlining the primary themes of the thesis. It introduces the research topic and provides an overview of the thesis structure, establishing the research questions, study foci, and approaches utilised throughout the research.

Chapter 2: Research Methodology

This chapter describes the parameters of the research, the data gathering methods used and the data analysis approach. It provides an overview of the ethnographic approaches employed in this study and the modes of analysis of interview and survey data. It provides a rationale for the modes of investigation used and approaches taken.

Chapter 3: Theoretical and Critical Context

This chapter examines the theoretical perspectives utilised in this research through an examination of the literature. Important authors identified as providing significant insight into Goth as well as subcultures more generally. I examine the study of Goth as a global phenomenon, a genre of music as well as an aesthetic or stylistic mode in relevant fields of theoretical discourse.

Chapter 4: Examining the Nature of Goth Identity

This chapter presents the initial discussion on Goth identity, examining the nature of Goth identity by posing the preliminary question *What is Goth?* A foundation of the scope of Goth is provided from which the remaining chapters expand to describe the nature of long term Goth identity. Informed by ethnographic data I provide a summation of the social aspects of Goth as a collective identity and how its genesis in othered communities helped cement its reputation for nurturing difference and creating safe spaces for belonging. This chapter introduces the concept of socio-aesthetics as developed throughout this thesis as a mechanism for considering (adult) Goth identity in the little culture of Goth.

Chapter 5: Just a Phase?

This chapter represents the main summary of findings; the contentious phrase *just a phase* serves as the rhetorical anchor around which my study was devised. As the central argument of this thesis, this chapter examines the complex social and aesthetic networks of Goth culture as experienced by life-long Goths. Using data from surveys, interviews and observations this chapter

outlines the core facets of Goth culture which enable it to function as an identity. This chapter cites ethnographic data in the context of academic discourse to argue the case for Goth as a socio-aesthetic framework. Reflections on notions of Gothness and how Goths view 'just a phase' inform content throughout, building on the discussion presented in previous chapters.

Chapter 6: Australian Goth

This chapter examines the emergence and endurance of Goth subcultural identity in the Australian context. The focus is on the under-researched area of Australian experiences in the Goth subculture and the unique critical context of Australian Gothic phenomena. Comparison is drawn with international data to define universal Goth phenomena, including aspects of sociality, aesthetics and behaviour patterns observed in Goth settings. Issues and features particular to Australian Goth are also identified and idiosyncratic characteristics are explored.

Chapter 7: Beyond Youth

In this concluding chapter, I briefly summarise the findings of this study and consider future avenues for research. I demonstrate the concept of socio-aesthetics has the capacity to be applied to other [sub]cultural groups in the study of niche communities of belonging.



Research Methodology

Image overleaf: M'era Luna Festival, Germany 2017

Photograph by the author

Chapter 2 : RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

It's always good to be part of something that society frowns on.

[ASP64 age 43 AQ52³]

This chapter describes the parameters of the research, the data gathering methods used, and the data analysis approach. It provides an overview of the ethnographic approaches employed in this study and the modes of analysis of interview and survey outcomes. These methods have provided a rich source of information that is used to formulate research findings and to establish the context in which Goth remains relevant to/for participants.

Ethics Approval

This study was approved by the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee: Project Number 5251 Approval Number RDHU-17-15. Surveys were conducted online only; each survey was prefaced with details of this Ethics clearance, contact information, and an overview of the research project.

All interview participants were provided with a *Research Participant Information Sheet* (see Appendix 2) detailing the research objectives, anonymity, and data security provisions. This included details of the above Ethics clearance and contact information was also included.

Online Presence and Project Identity

The Goth subculture incorporates a varied spectrum of activity and expressions of culture in virtual and real-world situations. It is also a culture very aware and protective of its cultural capital. To appropriately respond to this breadth of subcultural experience it was essential this research reflected that complexity and provided authentic avenues for involvement in the study. I was initially concerned whether I would be able to reach the target audience for the project. Secondly, I aimed to ensure that there were adequate and appropriate mechanisms to articulate the scope of the research to attract sufficient participants. Initial fieldwork then comprised extensive in-culture participation, reading, and online observation, as was my existing practice. As a participant researcher, my immersion in the culture played an essential role in establishing trust

³ AQ52 The taboo nature and 'outsiderhood' of the Goth scene is attractive

and forging additional connections within the Goth subculture to effectively realise my aims for the study.

Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth

The website - www.isgothjustaphase.com - was established to support research activities in March 2015. The site was the foundation page through which access to surveys and other events was subsequently hosted. The website established the parameters of the research and the terminology conventions adopted. The website was a vital initial tool in the progress of my study as it allowed potential participants to familiarise themselves with my history, research approach, in-scene knowledge, and authenticity.

Naming the study formed an important early consideration of the research; by harnessing the 'just a phase' expression I sought to address, question, and challenge a phrase commonly used to dismiss Goth identity. Whether Goth is 'just a phase' remains one of the most frequently debated topics in Goth social media and online forums; while the broader aim of the research was to examine the nature of long-term Goth identity, the familiar phrase just a phase provides a launching point for discussions.

The expression is often followed by the rejoinder, "They'll grow out of it". The expression is a frequent thread in online Goth discussions as well as being regularly used by concerned parents when Goth identity traits are first encountered. This research studies the significance Goth culture holds for participants through an examination of the nature and characteristics of long-term Goth identity.

With just a phase, 'What is Goth?' remains one of the most contested notions in the culture. Every aspect of Goth has been debated at some time, with everything from Pastel Goth to glitter-encrusted Doc Martens open for discussion. This fertile debate and continual evaluation/intellectualisation of Goth aesthetics, argot, culture, and commodities was a strong impetus to investigate and better understand *being Goth*.

I chose to use this in-culture reference to demonstrate several factors, including that the research was being undertaken by a genuine insider to the culture with personal awareness and wariness of this expression. The overt use of *Just a Phase* as the research title sought to reclaim the idiom for the Goth community and dispel some of its more damaging connotations. By using the expression I also employed the widespread in-culture Goth trait of irony, dark humour, and self-effacement; it

is common for Goths to make self-deprecating jokes about their 'Goth Phase' even when extended over several decades.

Most significantly, just a phase was chosen as a means of reflecting societal dismissal of the culture and ultimately to challenge it by raising awareness of the undercurrent of suspicion often directed at Goth identity.

The research was widely promoted through social media using Goth networks (both terrestrial and online) to situate the study authentically within the culture. The site underpinned survey activities throughout the data gathering period and encouraged dialogue with participants via email, social media, and messaging on linked social media accounts (Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, Reddit, etc.).

I used online platforms to establish connections with key influencers and forums to test research questions, pilot informal mini-surveys to gauge interest in particular survey themes. The 'Goth Phase' Facebook identity (later transitioned to my name, post-surveys) informed potential participants of the study and established authentic social linkages within the culture at events. Social media alerts were used to progressively stimulate awareness in particular cohorts (Australian or International) utilising a variety of contact mechanisms to promote the research to targeted audiences.

My Gothness represents an equally vital component of the research: my connectivity within Goth culture and the importance of Gothness in my life experiences is the primary catalyst for this research. My legitimate long-standing association with the Goth community predated the research and gave the study authenticity as well as providing important connections and perspectives on the topic. This knowledge has brought depth to my in-culture interactions and discussions and has inexorably permitted greater access to the varied spectrum of the Goth universe than would be available to a non-insider researcher. As outlined in the Limitations section below, one of the challenges of conducting insider research was to mitigate inherent insider bias. Transparent, rigorous data collection and analysis mechanisms were used throughout with reference to broader fields of research and literature where relevant.

Recruitment of survey and interview participants via social media and online platforms proved invaluable, as forum regulars can in the main be characterised as the target demographic for the study. Access to this cohort, coupled with a mutually implicit understanding of the social etiquette of the culture, enabled this relationship to evolve into a valuable academic resource in the context of this study.

Visual Identity

As well as the name of the study, it was important to establish an appropriate in-culture visual identity for the project. With visual characteristics so prominent in the culture, visual components were an indispensable device used to stimulate discussion, document activity in the scene, and demonstrate the aesthetic spectrum of the Goth community. This was explicitly acknowledged on the project website from the outset in an autoethnographic piece accompanied by an image of the researcher from c. 1992:

Goth is an unashamedly visual subculture. The visual impact of Goth identity remains one of the core characteristics which attracted me (and many others) to the scene and which generates curiosity.

<https://isgothjustaphase.com/2015/05/16/goth-a-very-visual-subculture/>

Although an Australian-based study, Whitby Abbey was chosen as the graphic representation of the project due to its long-standing recognition as a site of trans-local Goth cultural significance (Mercer, 1996 p 134). Whitby signifies a location of Goth identity in a range of ways; as the inspiration for the site of the classic gothic novel *Dracula*, as the iconic location for the Whitby Goth Weekend, as well as a site of enduring gothic architecture, geographic isolation, and sombre natural beauty (Spooner, 2006 p. 175). These factors allowed the image to effectively represent the project locally, whilst communicating relevance and aesthetic appeal to a broad international audience.

The website also incorporated publications of subcultural ephemera collected since the mid-1980s such as flyers from early Goth clubs I attended as a teenager, as well as candid, documentary-style photography with accompanying short essays. These visual elements were linked further with social media platforms to generate interest and encourage participation.⁴ Publication of writings with an, at times, nostalgic view of the Goth scene in Australia proved prudent, generating discussion and interest around research themes with participants who may initially have been hesitant to participate.

⁴ See: <https://isgothjustaphase.com/2015/06/06/back-in-the-day-perth-goth-club-scene-1989-1998/>

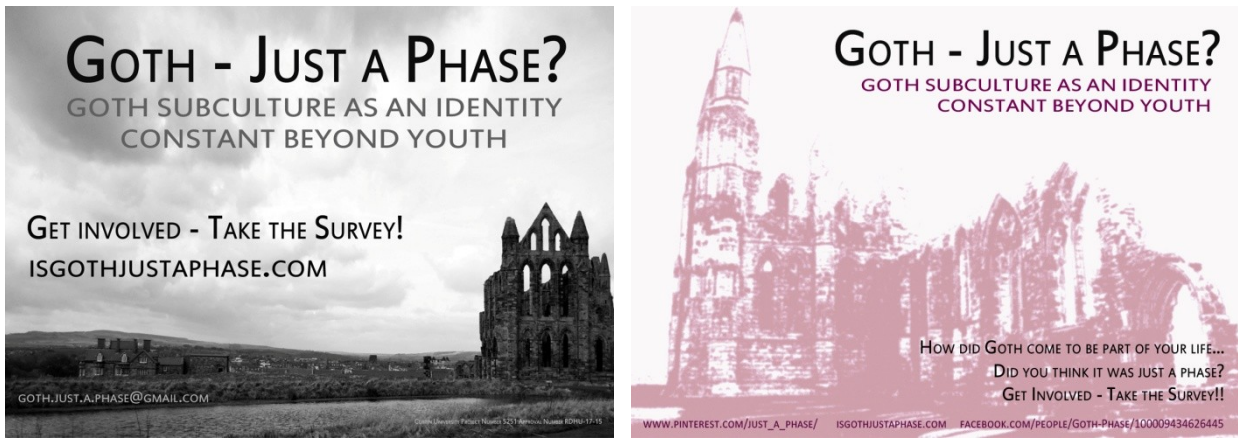


Figure 1 Goth Just a Phase postcard, left: front, right: back, author 2015.



Figure 2 Goth Just a Phase Business Card, left: front, right: back, author 2015.

The postcards and business cards (Figures 1 and 2) were distributed to retail outlets whose businesses intersect with the Goth community across Australia and internationally. These outlets included record, clothing and shoe stores, nightclub/bar venues, tattoo locations as well as at several unique (art, etc.) retailers whose clientele include older Goths. Included on the reverse of the business card was a QR-code to enable interested participants to directly access the survey via a smartphone, thereby improving survey uptake.

Demographic Considerations: Goth Identity and Youth

Defining 'youth' for this study was a complex consideration. In recent years 'youth' has become mired in the changing nature of aging in the 21st Century shifting the parameters of aging beyond teenage engagement (Bennett & Hodkinson, 2012 p. 1). Different disciplines have sought to delimit the boundaries of youth through their particular lens, be it sociology, psychology,

economics, education, medicine, or law, all fields in which a finite definition of youth holds specific significance and potential consequences.

Accounting for the diversity of regions and different community backgrounds of respondents, the definition of youth for this project was first drawn from the United Nations definition which states: "The UN, for statistical consistency across regions, defines 'youth', as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years" ([United Nations](#), 2017 *What do we mean by Youth?*).

For statistical analysis, all participants over the age of 25 were considered to be 'beyond youth' with older participants unclassified beyond that age. It is reasonable to assume that participants in this study over the age of 25 were able to independently exercise personal agency in their aesthetic and social choices. I argue that 25 years of age, while no longer in the first flush of youth, for most western societies no longer constitutes an age at which the pleasures of youth have entirely passed.

Target Audience

Survey instruments were designed to target those who believed Goth continued to hold importance to them after sustained engagement with the scene, and beyond the early expressions of the culture common in teenage years and early adulthood, often described as the rebellion of youth (Bennett & Hodkinson, 2012 p. 4).

During February-March 2015 the online survey instruments were developed and promoted on Facebook, online forums, and other media platforms. I ensured the intention and academic purpose of my research were clear, that there was no commercial endorsement for the study, and that it would not be used for enterprise or marketing purposes. During the initial survey period, a short, ten-question survey was trialed to gauge community interest and engagement with the topic. This was conducted in conjunction with a broad range of online discussions with Goths in diverse geographic locations about the aims of the research, the scope of forthcoming long-form surveys, and the overall intentions of the project. These interactions proved extremely valuable and productive, generating a high level of interest in the study as well as providing a solid understanding of current online trends, behaviours and key discussion platforms. Following the pilot of short surveys and online discussion, a long-form survey was developed for each of the defined research locales (Australia and International).

The main round of survey activity launched on World Goth Day, May 22nd, 2015, and concluded on August 15th 2015. A short supplementary survey designed to capture condensed feedback about music was carried out in August 2015.

It was important in the early stages of data-gathering that the objectives of the research were clear to exclude, or at least dissuade, younger participants from responding to the call for research participants. The research was outlined clearly on the project website, and reiterated and clarified in feedback from interested participants, including from several younger Goths or children of Goths, whose entire lived experience had been informed by Gothness. To assist with this, short essays pieces outside the experiential scope of younger Goths were published on the project website. These nostalgic pieces, as well as the surveys, focused on behaviours of mature adults in the Goth scene and recorded long-term experiences of Gothness. These were shared via other online platforms, such as Reddit and Facebook. Essays recalled experiences of the Goth scene during particular periods, such as the 1980s-1990s, and highlighted autoethnographic content as well as short local histories of Goth areas and clubs. In response to correspondence, efforts were made to emphasise the primary focus of the research as being long-term Goth participants and how that association has evolved over time.

These pre-survey online interactions influenced how the project progressed and defined 'beyond youth' and shifted how the measure of youth was applied. A conscious effort was made to limit references to school, teen experiences, or other transitional activities such as starting university, first jobs, etc. Instead, the emphasis was placed on the longevity of association with Goth throughout and the socio-cultural activities of older participants. I sought to balance such experiences of younger generations, with input from very long-standing older Goths. As such no age limit was placed on survey participation and the survey tool did not prohibit younger respondents from participating; this was a conscious survey design decision.

The project subsequently attracted attention from participants of various ages and life stages. The vast majority of participants were older (over forty), long-term Goths, yet many participants were in their late twenties or thirties. In this age group, a measure of over ten years in the culture was used to define long-term participation in particular contributions from second-generation Goths, as the Goth children of Goth parents were considered important inclusions.

Survey Instruments

Online survey instruments were the primary data source for this research, using the *Survey Monkey* platform. Surveys were designed for participants from two distinct self-identifying cohorts: Australian and International long-term Goths. Developed to be a single iteration data-gathering mechanism, the Australian Survey was 55 questions and the International Survey had 47 questions using multiple-choice and 7-option Likert scaled responses. Survey length was consciously extensive, seeking the highest possible data-load from a single application without alteration of the questionnaire. Surveys were conducted in English only.

Questions were designed to provide a breadth of information around key investigative themes while allowing flexibility of answers. Free-text response sections were included to implicitly invite and encourage participants to provide personalised responses to survey questions. Throughout the long-form surveys, this built up a dialogue with participants within the survey structure, creating a deep virtual interview. By adding the free-text option to the main surveys, in total over 371000 words in free-text response data were generated. These free-text responses represent a unique data-set; the volunteered information is extensive and provides insight into previously unquantifiable experiences of Gothness and the nature of Goth identity. These responses were thematically analysed, by question and by individual content, with excerpts utilised throughout this thesis.

The final question of the survey invited participants to submit any additional information or text they wished to contribute to the study; a large number of participants added personal commentary in this question. At the end of each survey, information was provided for participants who were keen to attend interviews or chat online/in private should they wish to contribute further. This contact point was fruitful in establishing hundreds of online contacts and discussion points.

Highly personal experiential information from interviews and online discussion includes data that illustrates Goth from a multitude of perspectives, including unanticipated viewpoints and thematic angles, such as religious and spiritual considerations of Goth identity, in different social settings. A central component of this research, this rich data affords a unique insight into the distinct social and aesthetic mechanisms which generate, maintain, and continue Goth identity.

Survey positioning and data sources were primarily located through identification of existing Goth networks including real world and online communication channels, and applying survey

instruments in such a way as to connect with the target cohort (Kempson, 2015 p. 1083). As part of this, the overall length of the final surveys was designed to deter out-of-cohort responders, in effect forcing a resolute commitment from respondents and encouraging a dedication of time to the project. The intention of this was also to restrict overall data volumes and to partially safeguard against or at least discourage frivolous responses; in this the survey design was successful.

The survey instruments intended to draw out authentic data from genuinely engaged and interested participants, with detailed answers across a spectrum of criteria related to the Goth subculture. The surveys were designed to establish a sense of ownership in the outcomes from the surveyed cohorts. To support this, participants were provided with contextual descriptions of the research, its author, and its intent.

Survey Response Rate and Audience

The promotion of the surveys was successful, reaching a wide audience of long-term Goths from 43 countries⁵. The scale of this study and subsequent quality data volume is the largest of its kind to date, and the first large-scale study of the Australian Goth community. Response and completion rates were high, with only a small proportion of respondents submitting incomplete questionnaires. The vast proportion of respondents completed all questions as well as provided sometimes extensive additional information in free-text sections of the surveys. This is noted throughout, with the response word count for free-text questions provided where relevant. Participants provided a rich dataset that represents the culture through the prism of its participants using numeric and written responses to examine the nature of long-term Goth identity.

⁵ International Survey Question Number 3: What is your city or country of residence? Response countries n=42 International + n=1 Australia

Table 2 Data Gathering: Survey Response Volumes

SURVEY RESPONSE VOLUMES					
Pilot/Short-form Surveys					
Survey Title	Administered	Cohort Location	Question volume	Format	Responses
Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an identity constant beyond youth. 10 Quick Questions	2015: May	Unspecified	10	Short-form Survey 1	309
Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an identity constant beyond youth. Mini Survey 1: Music and Media	2015: August	Unspecified	8	Short-form Survey 2	25
Primary Long-form Surveys					
Survey Title	Administered	Cohort Location	Question volume	Format	Responses
Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an identity constant beyond youth. International Audience	2015: May	International Cohort	47	Long-form Survey 1	1241
	2015: October-November	International Cohort	55	Long-form Survey 1	91
Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an identity constant beyond youth. Australian Audience Only	2015: May	Australian Cohort Only	47	Long-form Survey 2	364
	2015: December	Australian Cohort Only	55	Long-form Survey 2	51
Total responses					2081

The initial predicted response rate of around 100 participants for each of the two cohorts, which seemed conservative, yet proportionate when proposed in November 2014, was vastly exceeded. At the close of the main survey round (August 15th, 2015) the total return rate of complete survey responses for the long-form surveys was 1745 respondents with a high proportion of respondents completing all questions (not only required questions) including supplying textual answers within the body of the surveys. The total response rate of over 2000 participants includes qualitative data generated through online discussion forums, interviews, email, and participant-generated contact points as well as through short-form and mini-surveys.

While the volume of data alone does not ensure a quality research outcome, it indicates genuine interest in the research themes and demonstrates community willingness to participate in this

academic study. The high volume of quality data generated by the research exposed lines of enquiry which enabled an evaluation of the subculture across a broader geographic and demographic spectrum. The richness of data generated by survey instruments necessitated a re-evaluation of research objectives to cover a wider and more comprehensive examination of the Goth subculture.

For example, the high volume dataset from North American respondents, (originally identified as being outside the scope of this study and unlikely to draw participants) delivered invaluable insight into alternate perceptions of the Goth subculture and represents a unique opportunity for cultural comparison between Australian, European and North American Goth communities. Expansion in the scope of the study afforded a greater diversity of material to be considered within the project from which to draw findings.

Data Gathering: Interviews

After online surveys, interviews were employed to source further qualitative participant content. Survey data was supported by a limited number of interviews, which provided expansive personal narratives, complementing the more structured framework of the survey data. The three mutually supporting themes of outsiderhood, belonging, and constancy shaped interview conversations. Interviews emphasised the phenomenon of Goth, individual experiences within the culture, and experiential recollections of identity formation or expression over time in particular locations.

Table 3 Data Gathering: Interview Volumes

Date of Interview/s	Place Country & City	Participant code/s	Interview Format	Recording Type	Duration
29-Jan-2016	Brisbane, Australia	BPM402	Face to Face	Audio Recording + notes	> 1 hour
29-Jan-2016	Brisbane, Australia	BPM501	Face to Face	Audio Recording + notes	> 1 hour
31-Jan-2016	Brisbane, Australia	BPF301	Online/Skype	Written text	> 1 hour
29-Jan-2016	Brisbane, Australia	BPF601	Face to Face	Private interview, limited notes	< 1 hour
12-Feb-2016	Melbourne, Australia	MPF107 MPM109	Face to Face	Audio Recording + notes	> 1 hour
12-Feb-2016	Melbourne, Australia	MPF105 MPM106	Face to Face	Audio Recording + notes	1 hour
1-Mar-2016	Melbourne, Australia	MPF108	Face to Face	Audio Recording + notes	1 hour
10-Mar-2016	Melbourne, Australia	MPF104	Face to Face	Audio Recording + notes	1 hour
10-Mar-2016	Melbourne, Australia	MPM100	Face to Face	Private interview, limited notes	Multiple Sessions
10-Oct-2015	Vancouver, Canada	CVPF014	Face to Face	Private interview, limited notes	Multiple Sessions
24-Mar-2016	Perth, Australia	PPM011	Face to Face	[FAILED AUDIO - Notes only]	1 hour
25-Mar-2016	Perth, Australia	PPM012	Face to Face	Audio Recording + notes	1 hour
26-Mar-2016	Perth, Australia	PPM013	Face to Face	Audio Recording + notes	> 1 hour
26-Mar-2016	United States of America	USAPM10014	Online/Skype	Audio Recording + notes Written text	Multiple Sessions
24-Apr-2016	United States of America	USAPM10015	Online/Skype	Audio Recording + notes	Multiple Sessions
24-Apr-2016	United States of America	USAPF10018	Online/Skype	Audio Recording + notes	1 hour
22-May-2016	United States of America	USAPM10013	Online/Skype	Written text	1 hour
24-Oct-2015	United Kingdom, Whitby	UKWPF01 UKWPM02	Face to Face	Audio Recording + notes	1 hour
30-Oct-2016	United Kingdom, Whitby	UKWPF03 UKWPM04	Face to Face	Audio Recording + notes	1 hour
30-Oct-2016	United Kingdom, Whitby	UKWPF05 UKWPM06	Face to Face	Audio Recording + notes	1 hour
Number of Interviews 20					
Online Exchanges and Interviews					
27-May-2015	Primarily USA, Various	USAPV1001	REDDIT	Written text	Multiple Sessions
2015-2019 Various	Various	IPV2020	Facebook Chat	Written text	Multiple Sessions
2017-2019 Various	Various	IPV2030	Chat [etc]	Written text	Multiple Sessions
2015-2020 Various	Various	Private	Private communication	Notes only	Multiple Sessions

Interviews with overseas participants (in person) primarily occurred in October 2015 followed by extensive online contact and follow-up. Interviews for Australian participants were undertaken in January – June 2016, with in-person interviews conducted in Melbourne, Perth, and Brisbane.

Information sheets were provided to all interview participants, describing the context of the research and the anticipated scope of interview sessions. Online social media, imagery, and other resources were utilised where appropriate to facilitate contact with participants and initiate dialogue. By request online surveys were reopened for the duration of interviews, to accommodate additional data-gathering as part of this phase of the study.

Interviews were structured using ethnographic principles whereby interactions remain informal and conversational, reflecting survey topics. The resultant data is authentic self-identified Goth experiences exploring the nature of long-term Goth identity, notions of belonging within the context of the Goth, its aesthetics, and idiosyncratic insider/outsider approach to collective identity (Hodkinson 2005, Brill, 2008). These semi-structured interviews were time-limited to (around) one hour, with a few interviews extending over ninety minutes when particularly requested by the interviewee. I used flexible, open-ended questions during interviews which were designed to further explore survey themes and expand on the lived experiences within the Goth culture (Silverman, 2000 p. 60).

When scheduling interviews, participants were encouraged to identify a meeting point or interview location with which they were familiar to increase engagement and prompt a sense of security with the interview process. Wherever possible interviews were conducted in semi-private public locations (e.g. restaurants, cafés, and libraries), where interviews could be conducted without interruption, and where possible these locations were close to participants' homes or workplaces to minimise inconvenience. There were exceptions to this where interviews were conducted online via Skype (with or without video), via text messaging, and in small informal groups where notes (only) were recorded. Additionally, some respondents preferred not to be recorded and therefore reliance on field notes was crucial.

I used an interview guide-sheet to ensure exchanges remained relevant to the research topic and did not become too long. Stating the intentions and expected time-length of the interviews ensured most contributors were engaged and active participants from the outset of the process, conscious of time limitations. Parallel and iterative questioning, rephrasing, and re-directing questions were used to elicit more considered responses around the survey themes, generating

valuable and complex answers. For accuracy and practicality, and when agreed, interviews were recorded using a smartphone, with audio data transferred to a secure server as soon as practical following the interview. Audio files were transcribed, coded, and de-identified to produce a verbatim record of the interaction.

No video or other photographic recording of participants was used, primarily to protect anonymity and to maintain a more natural conversation flow. Where respondents volunteered information outside the limitations of the research (especially when of a personal or self-identifying nature) recordings were paused, and/or omitted from the data. As a result, analysis of survey and interview responses is restricted to pertinent discussions around the predetermined research areas.

Data Gathering: Fieldwork Observations and Locations

Immersion in the Goth subculture has been essential to this study; my role as a participant researcher has allowed a degree of understanding and social familiarity which has afforded intimate access to the culture and its participants. In addition to semi-structured interviews, I used informal interaction approaches, such as online chat, email exchanges, and forum participation. Field notes were also taken during interviews to further record responses and impressions. Underpinning these approaches was participation and observation at regular Goth events such as nightclub nights, gigs, festivals, picnics, and social gatherings, followed by reflective writing and notation.

Each of these events was supported by on and offline material and promotion, much of which is in-scene generated or outside traditional mainstream media. Scene-generated online resources and forums, Facebook (and other sites) as well as events and social networks are therefore a source of direct input from the Goth community as well as being a site of Goth cultural expression (Hodkinson, 2002 p. 176).

Fieldnotes

Fieldnotes were taken throughout the data-gathering phase, utilising guidelines as developed by Chiseri-Strater and Sunstein (1997). Fieldnotes record brief impressions of locations in two notebook volumes used throughout the research, accompanied by ephemera and incidental photography. Fieldnotes were primarily made up of jottings and personal reflection or before interviews or events, with further observational notations recorded post-interactions. These notes were particularly important while travelling, sometimes taking time in-situ (seated observation in

pubs, etc.) or as reflective notations following site immersion, interviews, or event participation. Notes capture pertinent ideas, participant quotes as well as provide a vehicle to reflect on impressions following observations at Goth events, such as Whitby Goth Weekend, indicating overall impressions, sensory information, responses to personal safety, emotional responses, and some analysis of behaviour.

Fieldnotes support the research methodology by recording and emphasising the emotional, psychological, and sensory experiences in Goth communities. In particular, I used field notes to capture the emotional impact of events and the feelings generated/expressed by interviewees and Goths as an adjunct to verbatim text. This often included memories such as reflections on my first Goth concert experience, as discussed with interview participants, providing a source of initial reaction and comparison.

Fieldnotes played an important role in identifying recurrent and emergent themes following interactions with the Goth community, for example following a series of significant gigs and the subsequent online discussion, the increasing importance of nostalgia in Goth became prominent. Nostalgia as a facet of both belonging and constancy in the Goth community was explored in interviews and via forum discussions to determine if this was a result of the age of the bands touring, the aging Goth population, and younger members seeking belonging or a compounding of these factors. This experience was vital to the research process, as through the course of discussions it became clear many younger participants also held nostalgic yearnings for an earlier time – one in which they did not participate.

Continuous fieldwork was undertaken as a participant researcher throughout my study during which a total of 57 Goth events were attended ranging from small private occasions to large-scale festivals. Observations, recorded interviews and non-recorded informal conversations were conducted in nightclubs, bars, festivals, gigs, cafes, and music stores (etc.). These diverse locations represent the field in which this research was conducted as well as the 'home ground' for Goth identity. Internationally fieldwork was carried out in New Zealand, the UK, Canada, Germany, Belgium, and France. Researching at these locations, at major events, and sites of intense cultural activity offered opportunities to explore distinct and distinguishable characteristics of Gothness.

Data Gathering Approaches: Rationale

I used the multi-method ethnographic approach described above to best engage with Goth communities in diverse geographic locations. The ethnographic approach is sympathetic to Goth's

social habits and allows for a humanist evaluation of the value Goths place on aesthetic expression. The parallel measures of the survey, interview, and direct dialogue provide the foundation data gathering mechanisms for this research, with each component contributing unique opportunities for insight into the Goth culture and its participants.

The survey instruments and interview processes were designed to elicit both depth and breadth of discussion, using communication styles, channels, and approaches familiar to Goths (Rossi et al 2013, p. 221). Extensive notes were taken throughout the data gathering and analysis phases, particularly during the survey process, using iterative reflection to refine the best interview or other approaches still required.

As an Australian-based study, the unique perspectives of Australian Goths needed to be captured through a dedicated survey, specific to that cohort. Previous studies of Goth have not examined Australian Goth experiences, particularly in comparison to international Goth expression.

The prevalence of natural in-culture self-reflection and online/social media commentary observed was identified as a uniquely useful characteristic of the community. It is common for Goths to objectively reflect upon their shared aesthetics, often drawing on and self-consciously referencing the Victorian gothic revivalist tradition of melding the melodramatic with the scientific to intellectually explore characteristics and patterns of behaviour (Gelder & Weaver 2007, p. 2).

While this is an affectation perpetuated by Goths, corollaries do exist between contemporary Goth culture and the earlier Victorian era Gothic fiction genre with their common themes of morbidity, isolation, anachronism, and opulence (Mighall, 1999 p. 71).

It was critical to this study that participating Goths felt a connection with the research outcomes regardless of location or other demographic considerations. The survey data makes up the primary empirical source for this study and therefore had to be engaging; interviews were planned to be limited to a small selection of participants to complement survey information. Within the verified data pool, responses demonstrate the trans-national character of the Goth, and the geographic and demographic diversity of the culture, providing a unique resource for ongoing research.

Negotiating appropriate terminology was a significant preparatory activity for this study. Particular attention was paid to the use of terminology, language, and aesthetic presentation; the word Goth was used throughout, as discussed above, and colloquialisms, such as 'back in the day', were used to encapsulate earlier life stages during which Goth identity was formed. Similarly, terminology such as 'Goth scene' was used throughout data-gathering to indicate local Goth culture rather

than more academic descriptors. Thus the use of terminology, language, and descriptors used in the study consciously reflects observed online discussion, expanding on common thematic preoccupations of the Goth scene, and translating that loose discourse to an academic style. Goth terms - such as 'scene' - also proved functional as academic descriptors. Post-subcultural theory has positioned scene as a potential replacement for subculture and importantly contributes to shifting dialogue away from the now outdated subculture narrative (Hesmondhalgh, 2005 p. 27).

Limitations

While this research is significant due to its scope, unique cohort study, and new empirical data, it is important to acknowledge its limitations.

Cohort and Language

To reflect the social conditions of the culture and authentically represent Goth across its aesthetic spectrum it was essential to obtain data from controlled cohorts. In the earliest stages of the research it was therefore determined survey, interview, and online interactions were to be conducted in English only. Emphasis was placed on securing participants English-speaking participants (the USA, Commonwealth countries, Western Europe, etc.) where practicable. Respondent cooperation was therefore of profound importance to ensure the target cohort of those self-identifying as long-term Goths were reached. This decision was made cognisant of the potential for limitation it could place on the research responses, given the high volume of Goth culture activity in Europe, particularly Germany.

To achieve broadly applicable, representative responses data gathering was therefore reliant on respondent cooperation, especially if the surveys were not in their home language (Glaser, in Gideon, 2012). While many responses were subsequently received, particularly from Dutch and German participants, it is acknowledged that the limitation of the English language curtailed the overall volume of responses from German participants.

Electing to limit research interaction to English clarified the scope of research and enabled online interactions to be appropriately established and managed without third-party translations or software. Additionally, this approach ensured the primary mediums for online interactions used consistent terminology, language, and communication styles. Further, this limitation was necessary to limit the number of interviews undertaken to make the project manageable. Future research may address this limitation, perhaps seeking to survey Goths and document subcultural experiences specific to participants of non-English speaking backgrounds.

Restriction of data gathering activities

The logistic and financial constraints of the project meant it was not possible to travel to all sites of Goth subcultural significance. In particular, the decision was made early in the research to omit the United States of America from the travel schedule due to logistical complications. Additionally, American Goths were most active in online media and therefore were able to be reached without a physical interview.

Fieldwork in the form of observation, event participation, and some interviews were conducted in as many sites as practicable and the International survey was opened to include participants from any location. Interview participants were sought in the sites of significant Goth relevance i.e. London, Whitby, and Australian Capital Cities, with interview volumes being consciously restricted.

Bias of interviewees and interviewer: insider researcher.

As discussed throughout, this research considers the personal experiences of Goth identity from the perspective of participants. As an insider-researcher (Goth) there is an inherent positive bias towards the research subject and emphases placed on research themes which may be apparent in the subsequent data analysis. These biases may be considered a significant limitation, however, it is the opinions and perspectives of Goth subculture participants which are central to this work and therefore hold intrinsic importance. To balance these biases, continual reference to subcultural discourse and broader literature relevant to subcultural identity informs and where necessary redirects discussion throughout.

Distinctions of gender, race, and/or sexuality in the Goth subculture.

The majority of survey respondents from both International and Australian cohorts were female (64.56%, 71.26% respectively); this disproportional representation was unforeseen. The Goth population is diverse, yet as research participants self-identified this bias is an accepted element of the findings.

Though raised as possible avenues of enquiry, this research omitted the aspects of race and sexuality in the Goth culture due to concerns around diluting the importance of these topics as standalone fields of research. Sexual orientation, while an imperative research concern for comparable subcultural studies, could not be appropriately addressed within the constraints of this project.

Similarly, while a significant distinction of Australian cultural diversity, the express examination of Aboriginality in the Goth culture was not investigated in this study. I acknowledge the importance

of Aboriginality in Australian culture and as a significant area of much-needed research. Such research requires particular expertise, contacts and experience, with which the author is not equipped.

Data Analysis Methodology

The Goth culture for many participants is intrinsically linked to social meaning-making within the contexts of socialisation, communities of belonging, and aesthetic proclivities. Utilisation of data analysis methods which account for this wide range of themes meant using different approaches for text-based content and quantitative data. Data gathered through the various mechanisms described above has been interrogated using ethnographic approaches and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. The traditional ethnographic approach of survey and interview practice is complemented by a Phenomenological perspective.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

The research methods collate personal recollections of Goth personal experiences through survey questions as well as through conversational interview, and close observation. Through this approach the networks and practices of Goth identity – the socio-aesthetic framework – is revealed. Smith and Osborn define Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as:

Phenomenological in that it involves detailed examination of the participant's life world; it attempts to explore personal experience and is concerned with an individual's personal perception or account of an object or event, as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself.

IPA provided a method of observing Goths from a research perspective that was simultaneously within and outside the immediate context of the study. Objectivity was able to be achieved by thematically banding participant responses within pre-determined themes of the study. By using a phenomenological approach to analyse and source data, I have posed Goth as a global phenomenon - an open-ended spectrum based on a foundation of expected traits. In so doing I have enabled participants to define the nature of long-term Goth identity by identifying those traits and thereby clarifying the boundaries of the Goth life-world. Crucially IPA situates the researcher within the ethnographic study, identifying the insider role of the researcher as part of a symbiotic research relationship where each perspective is essential to deriving outcomes (Paley, 2016 p. 121). Biases are accepted as being present, in that the researcher, like the research participant, offers up a distinct view of the world which is rooted in the familiarities of the phenomenon under investigation.

The dual roles of the researcher and participants are considered, thus reflecting Goth identity from a range of perspectives and at varying points in time (Finlay 2014, p. 123). This approach ensures both the researcher's and research participants' views are incorporated in findings. Critical

observations can be made of the data, crucially, without losing the empathic perspective and vital personal connections to the data (Smith & Osborn 2015 p. 66).

This description is in accord with the concept of plenitude described by McCracken as discussed further throughout, offering as it does the notion of subcultures existing as 'little cultures' or life-worlds replete within their own microcosm of societal norms (McCracken 1997, p. 25). Goth and Gothic share cultural space within the mainstream as well as within the subculture, necessitating a nuanced understanding of the differing emphases of each. The phenomenological approach, mirroring the notion of plenitude, provides us a protected intellectual space in which to explore these simultaneously parallel, interconnected, and disparate ideas. This methodology allowed findings to emerge from the data, resulting in an indicative representation of perspectives, further supported by quantitative measures. IPA provides an appropriate framework for exploring Goth, revealing both the wide socio-aesthetic traits of the culture as a whole and intimate, individual perspectives within the Goth community.

Qualitative Data

All free-text questions (and additional information sections) garnered a very strong response from participants, with contributions from some participants running into hundreds of words for each question. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used to interpret this textual survey data as well as the semi-structured interviews conducted for this study. Data segmentation and/or annotation of qualitative responses according to research themes enabled contextual analysis to be applied to otherwise unstructured content. Several questions resulted in tens of thousands of words in response, and consideration was given to adequately represent the effort involved in this response. For this reason, extensive example responses have been included throughout this thesis. Through coding it became apparent the quality, scope and volume of the data generated by the free-text questions far exceeds the purview of this thesis and has potential to inform research beyond it.

Analysis of interview and text data was undertaken in consecutive deep readings of text-based survey responses, interviews, and reflection on fieldnotes /observations. Interviews were transcribed soon after recording; thematic analysis was immediately undertaken and notes made relating to preliminary observations on the interactions, the locale, or the participant responses recorded. These notes were brief and provided points of reference and first impressions. Through the consistent application of thematic diagnostics, significant content from long-format interview

data was extracted, enabling critical insights to be articulated in the research. This approach also increased familiarity with the interview records and ensured each was read through several times.

Interview data were regarded as intensive case studies to illustrate fateful moments, less evident in the primarily quantitative survey data, as well as a source of personal reflection on survey themes (Giddens 1991, p. 420). Data were manually analysed using thematic coding to identify points of comparison and correlation between respondents using a phenomenological approach to enable experiential content to unpick subcultural identity at a more personalised level, identifying convergent or disparate experiences in different Goth sites (Smith, Flowers & Larkin 2009, p. 28). Key Goth life experiences such as initial instances of hearing Goth music or making personal identity connections with Goth aesthetics, first attendance at gigs, nightclubbing, and events were able to be extracted in interview formats, providing coherent, structured reflections on profound 'fateful moments'.

Text-based responses further revealed patterns of significance from aesthetic, social, and personal perspectives and provided comparison points between geographic locales. In free-text answers, respondents gave extensive recollections of their personal experiences as Goths, reflecting on their social and aesthetic interactions with the central characteristics and conventions of the culture. Data collected through this avenue were vital to this study in that it represented how participants were able to respond freely within the rigidity of the survey framework whilst reflecting on the themes of the study. While valuable, it is not practicable to reflect on every response entered in this format in this context; future avenues of investigation however are evident in the data.

Quantitative Data

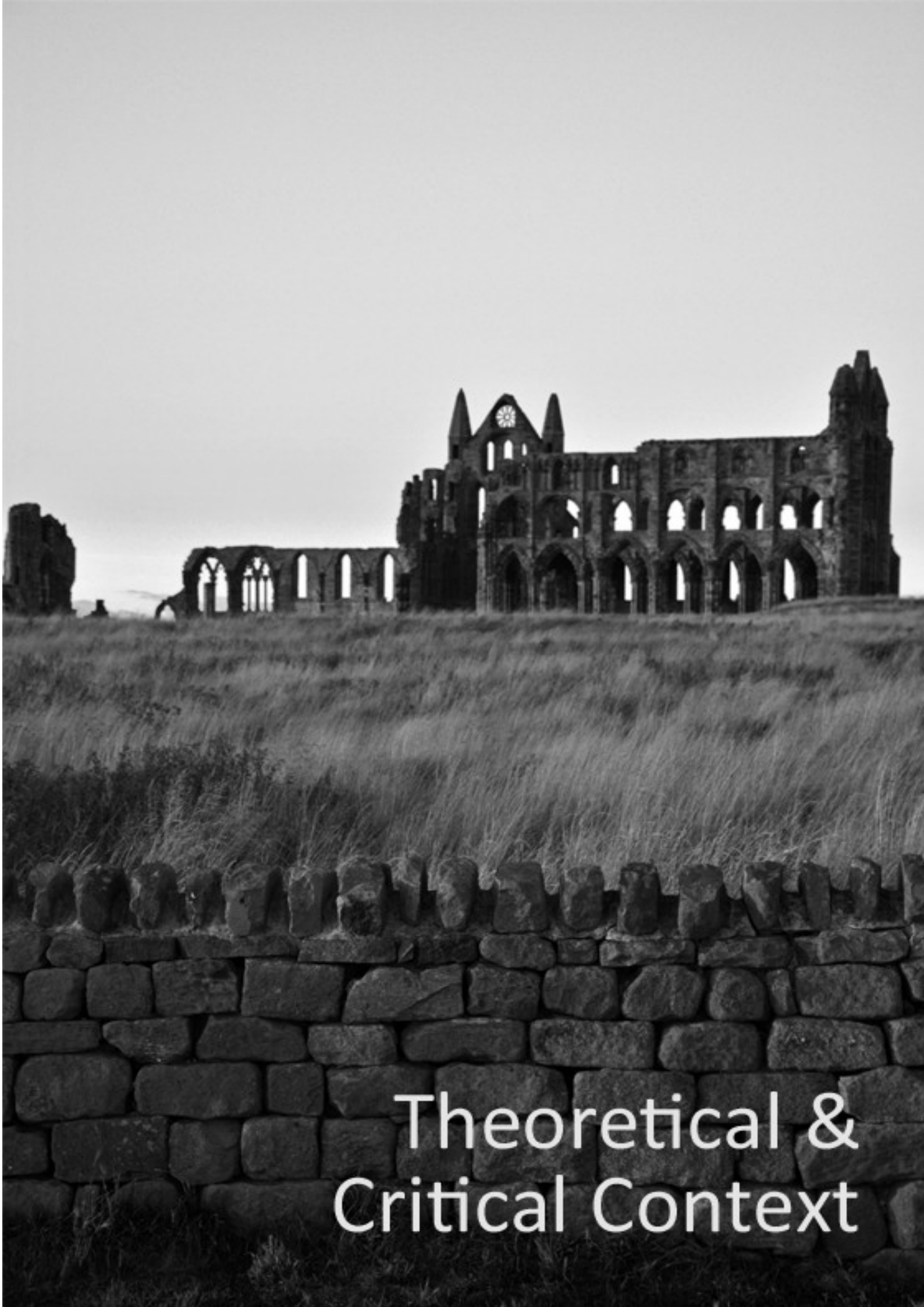
As discussed above, the volume and scope of survey responses required a multi-method analytical approach to tackle the density and richness of the data. Raw statistical analysis of survey responses provided a base understanding of the data, dividing responses between Australian and International cohorts, then by question, theme, and collation of free-text responses.

The software SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) allowed for large volumes of quantitative data to be effectively managed and results objectively collated. Questions were grouped by theme and to demonstrate fluctuations in Goth identity over time, comparing data relating to early Goth identity and mature Goth identity. Research themes reflect the concepts of fluidity, multiplicity (or plenitude) and temporality proposed by Bennett as being necessary test

factors for a post-subcultural study (Bennett 2011 p. 503). This information was further supported and correlated with the qualitative survey responses, identifying response patterns, anomalies, and exemplars.

Through this blend of semi-formal ethnographic interview techniques and phenomenological data examination described above, a deep reading of lived experiences within the Goth subculture is afforded. By connecting the analytical and theoretical premises of plenitude, post-subcultural context and phenomenological analysis, I built a solid methodological framework through which I could examine both quantitative and qualitative data, including highly personal experiences of Goth. The investigative model described above facilitated a collation of subcultural experiences at an individual and collective level, drawing on participant interviews as case studies to quantify the diversity of Goth social practices, values, and aesthetics.

In the next chapter I examine the theoretical and critical context of Goth identity, reviewing scholarly literature and contextual elements which inform study of Goth culture. I suggest Goth exists in a plenitude of manifestations as it intersects with high culture ideas of the Gothic in art, literature and architecture as well as the 'low 'culture of the everyday. I explore the theoretical positions relating to how Goth is communicated through music as well as notions of style, aesthetics, identity, and domestic expression.



Theoretical & Critical Context

Image overleaf: Whitby Abbey, during Whitby Goth Weekend 2015

Photograph by the author

Chapter 3 : LITERATURE REVIEW: THEORETICAL AND CRITICAL CONTEXT

...everyone has an opinion on 'What is Goth Identity'.

[ISP808 IQ13⁶]

Theoretical and Critical Context: Overview

In this chapter, I examine scholarly views on subcultural identity and subcultural development, and consider the factors which define Goth as an identity construct. This study has primarily been shaped by the theoretical contexts of subcultural and post-subcultural theory, situated in the field of sociology and cultural studies. In this chapter I consider the constructs concerning Goth and Gothness, reviewing the theoretical foundations and ethnographic methods in which subculture is observed. These approaches are correlated with the lived experience of Goth identity established in the data.

This chapter considers the dialogue between insider subcultural practitioners and subcultural theorists and their differing views on the substance of style. I discuss the language and perspectives used to describe subcultures, particularly Goth. I employ Dick Hebdige's sociological methodology with its keen awareness of aesthetics and the hypothesis that meaning is intrinsically present in coded self-styling (Hebdige 1979). Central in this is Hebdige's conception of bricolage, itself borrowed from Levi-Strauss, in subcultures and the crucial role this aesthetic layering plays in the constancy of Goth style. I connect this to Grant McCracken's concept of plenitude and little cultures to articulate the multi-layered nature of contemporary global Goth identity and the community of belonging Goth socio-aesthetics generate.

I examine the sociological concepts established by The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) and Dick Hebdige et al. and their reading of otherness and outsiderhood in little cultures. This is followed by the later examination of CCCS works on subculture by Paul Hodkinson, Isabella van Elferen and Jon Garland and Andy Bennett. These theorisations on the post-subcultural turn are examined in relation to mature Goth culture and the notions of urban tribalism. I refer to the work of Kerry Acker, Joshua Gunn, Micah L. Issitt, and Derek Sweet, who provide insider perspectives on American Goth, as well Gabriele Eckart, and Agnes Jasper who give additional insight into German, and Dutch Goth scenes, respectively.

⁶ IQ13 How would you describe Goth identity

I consider the perspectives on Goth style offered by Natasha Scharf, Lauren Goodlad, and Michael Bibby et al with reflection on Jon Garland's views on Goth identity which examine the aesthetic foundations of belonging. From this position, I propose that youth and subculture have ceased to hold primacy as Goth descriptors. I explore notions of youth, spectacularity, and constancy and how Goth has outgrown the academic, if not colloquial, terminology of 'subculture'.

In the Australian context, I discuss Ken Gelder's examination of belonging and the influence of the Gothic Mode. The correlations between subcultures, music, and style are considered and I consider the tangential relationship between the literary/artistic 'Gothic mode' and Gothness. In this, I describe how Hebdige's notion of bricolage permits Goth a form of by-proxy cultural gravitas. I argue that Hebdige, therefore, remains a vital source in the discussion of style and the socio-aesthetic mechanics of Goth culture.

Subculture is a term associated with Goth and as explored in the following continues to retain some relevance; what I propose is that the Goth phenomenon is now more complex and requires additional nuanced terms of reference and theorisation. I apply the concept of plenitude to Goth and argue that Goth's consistent yet continually evolving aesthetic characteristics align with Grant McCracken's characterisation of Goth as a "little world or little culture" (McCracken 1997, p. 25). Thus I position Goth as a holistic life-mode that supports a spectrum of identity expressions within a defined socio-aesthetic universe. I propose Goth can be theorised as a socio-aesthetic framework around which identity is constructed and continuously evolves as a distinct cultural universe existing within a plenitude of customs, geographies, and individual experiences.

Subculture: Hebdige

For forty years Goth identity, style and music have emerged as areas of academic interest, perhaps as a result of its continuity as much as its spectacularity. In that time scholarly language applied to Goth (and Goths) has utilised a variety of terms ranging from the intimate, such as personal style, to the more philosophical phenomenon. Goth is typically characterised in mainstream and scholarly literature as a subculture, in accordance with the Oxford English Dictionary Online definition:

SUBCULTURE

2. An identifiable subgroup within a society or group of people, esp. one characterised by beliefs or interests at variance with those of the larger group; the distinctive ideas, practices, or way of life of such a subgroup.

Source: Oxford English Dictionary Online ([OED Online](#))

This definition implies a position on the margins of mainstream/popular culture, at the boundaries of deviance and taste, and with social norms in conflict with or at least inconsistent with 'normal' lifestyles. In the following I argue Goth does not neatly conform to this model. Goth is now able to be examined across generations of participants. As such academic attention must shift towards an examination of Goth which re-evaluates subculture to study distinct Goth aesthetics and undertake a reconsideration of the meaning of its style. Existing alternative taxonomies such as scene, tribe, crowd, and style, as conceptualised by Hebdige in his landmark work *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (Hebdige 1979), are explored. My thesis integrates theoretical perspectives with ethnographic insights on the lived experience of Gothness to draw these two methods closer. Further to this I set out alternative theoretical perspectives in order to bring scope to discourse on Goth, repositioning it within the concepts of plenitude and little culture as proposed by Grant McCracken.

Since the earliest of analysis of 'youth' cultures an apparent need to align participants with a paternal hegemony of good/bad, deviant/conformist, cultural/subcultural has persisted. Such an approach implies a moral position, identifying the larger, presumably more successful tropes of culture as occupying the 'correct' social spaces and attitudes. The Chicago School (Blumer 1969) first developed the terminology subculture, through its study of criminal gangs in economically depressed regions, and subculture still carries with it a remnant undertone of that criminal foundation (Hammersley, 1989 p. 30). The term was subsequently adopted and adapted by the CCCS, including in the seminal works of Dick Hebdige, principally investigating music-based youth cultures. Sociologists employed the language of subculture to describe new 'youth' groups and emergent ethos or style collectives from hippies to punks. Hebdige is a vital resource, as his work at the CCCS positioned subculture as expressing diversity rather than outright deviance, instead placing emphasis on style, aesthetic attributes, and the distinction of difference from mainstream society, (Gelder 2007, p. 93). As noted by Hebdige in his opening remarks of *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, the terminology of subculture is inbuilt with manifold meanings and interpretations, often applied by outsiders looking in from a position of moral and socio-economic authority (Hebdige 1979 p. 4). Hebdige affirms the notion of self-agency in subcultural difference, investigating how style is controlled by the individual and the empowerment this offers participants.

Regular shifts in language in academic literature over the last forty years reflect Goth's tricky position from subculture to a long-standing, global, little culture with its own self-regulating

aesthetic practices (McCracken 1997, p. 25). In Hebdige's context, the classification of subculture is reliant upon the identification of a suite of characteristics of personal style, which when observed iteratively within a community, form a discrete visual language that communicates belonging and shared socio-aesthetic values (Hebdige 1979 p. 64). Detailing the confronting style of subcultures, Hebdige theorised the meaning of common expressions and behavioural characteristics, noting that these often incorporated a bricolage of high culture references and relics (such as royal motifs) as well as low-culture motifs such as safety pins and ragged clothing. By identifying these groups as micro-communities and identifying the significance of style in their social vocabulary, Hebdige began to shift sociological discourse away from the language of deviancy.

Hebdige observes the social context and community of belonging alongside individual spectacularity, emphasising the interconnectivity of private and social selves (Hebdige 1979 p. 101). Goth has evolved since the 1970s into a sophisticated social network of deliberate aesthetic styling; by examining Goth aesthetics beyond the 'basic black' it can be authentically evaluated. The uniqueness of each individual is a performative negotiation, that is to say Gothness is first expressed by the individual then acknowledged by external, social, sources. This acknowledgment provides validation and in so doing perpetuates aesthetic stereotypes particular to Goth communities. While each Goth represents unique Gothness, this conception of identity is contingent on the socio-aesthetic context. Therefore Goth identity exists at two levels; as the individual and as a broader social or collective identity. The intensity of Gothness consequently alters dependent on the individual's role or engagement with the community.

The role of aesthetics is integral to this: as noted by David Lenson, Goths externalise art, refocusing individual introspection towards spectacular attire, in a wordless commentary on the human life/death condition (Lenson in Goodlad and Bibby et al 2007, p. 399). Goth appearance is deliberately derivative: it is performative and confronting to non-participants, yet much of the communication of Goth style remains largely imperceptible to the outsider, creating clandestine meaning. Goths dress as if adjusting the world around them through personal artistic expression. Black clothes become the template through which private, less conspicuous stories are woven and Goth cultural substance is constructed (Demers, 2010 p. 139). Discourse on Goth, uninformed by lived experience, risks misrepresenting Goth aesthetic signifiers or failing to recognise inauthentic Goth artefacts: Goths do all wear black – but not all who wear black are Goths (Lenson in Goodlad and Bibby et al 2007, p. 402).

Of all 'Goth stuff' the predominance of black clothing is its most well-known and easily identified characteristic. The reinvention of entire historical styles (Victorian, Medieval, etc.) extends appropriation beyond a single object or motif and overlays an entire suite of aesthetic choices, replete with literary references, artistic, social and ethical conventions (Roberts et al 2014 p. 182). Goth is distinguished by a very specific aesthetic palette which encompasses life-constructs; these aesthetic attributes are vital to Goth identity and are saturated with symbolic meaning. These attributes have been cultivated to infuse each feature of the culture with implied heritage, collectively resulting in a culture that demonstrates an uneasy dichotomy of belonging within and remaining outside established conventions (Lamerichs 2014 p. 117).

Hebdige approached subcultural phenomena through a post-war lens of class-based analysis where adolescent aesthetic and social expressions were attributed to reactions against social disempowerment and dissatisfaction (Stratton, 1984 p. 10). Studies of ethnic minorities, criminal gangs, and Rockers and Mods in the 1950s and 1960s established the notion of deviant subcultures, where youth were engaged in risky behaviours warranting study. Similarly, the Chicago School emphasised the balance of hegemonic/deviance in adolescent social groups, ascribing the term as a means of highlighting an abiding – and seemingly unacceptable – deviation from the mainstream (Blackman 2014 p. 497).

Hebdige distinctly isolated style or more specifically spectacular personal appearance and its inherent significance as being at the core of subcultural life (Hebdige 1979 p. 7). Describing Punks as 'aesthetic terrorists', he encapsulated the influence of the movement and the inherent fear Punk generated in traditional British society. Of its time, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* provides a vital baseline observation of the changing power relationships between young people adult identity, and the broader society in 1970s Britain. It explores expressions of identity through visual language and how disenfranchised youth used their difference as a source of empowerment, demanding generational change. Punk can be regarded as having achieved this, drastically shifting the aesthetic, social, and musical tastes of Britain during this time. Hebdige keenly observed this, and in so doing reshaped scholarly language and formed the foundation of 'subcultural studies' and the scholarly effort to evidence emerging divergent social practices (Hebdige 1979). His vocabulary of youth culture and subculture developed as a way of contextualising and identifying the unprecedented behaviours of primarily young people whose appearance distinguished them from mainstream culture.

Goth continues to draw on its primarily British Punk foundations; consequently, Hebdige's theorisations, methods, and insights remain valid reference points. The spontaneous eruption of Punk, coupled with its rejection of visual conservatism fundamentally altered taste across a generation. Hebdige and other scholars of the time recognised the importance of this shift and believed it reflected broader social and economic struggles of the period. Hebdige interpreted this rising in the language of dread, viewing the desolation of 'working-class youth' as without hope, angry, and expressing their anger through style (Hebdige 1979, p. 63). Punk remains the quintessential othered youth culture whose image and social attitude influenced, and continues to influence, generations of young people.

Punk has become a hallmark of 20th Century Britishness, with Union Flags emblazoned with *Sex Pistols* imagery common on souvenirs (Adams 2008, p. 473). However contrary to Hebdige's position that subcultures are eventually normalised and absorbed into mainstream fashion once their aesthetic features become familiar, Goth has retained just enough weirdness, maturing into something other than a subculture (Hebdige 2014 p. 37). Goth has nevertheless persisted: not as easily assimilated or as commercially saleable as Punk, Goth stubbornly refused to die off as an alternative style mode and cultural influence.

Hebdige's observations of subculture include discussion of notions of closure and aesthetic fixity, linking the urgency and oppositional nature of Punk to reactions of social exclusion, disconnection and anti-authoritarianism (Hebdige 1979, p. 126). These observations mark the chronological origins of Goth and the emergence of its sombre and more resolved significations of style. Like Punk, Goth exists in a state of evolving assemblage. - Yet, unlike Punk, Goth maintains a solid aesthetic foundation and recognisable palette of black clothing. Generations of Goths have maintained this organic, yet stable Goth identity, forming new boundaries within the culture over time. That these characteristics are correlated with belonging by participants, not only in the early stages of initial Goth appeal but also for sustaining active interest over time, is significant.

Goth emerged at a point where underground music scenes were finding lasting social spaces in which young people could connect. Initially, through convenience of location, Goth nightclubs became aligned with similar groups, forging close connections with other fringe communities, whose sexuality, music, or aesthetics also rendered them 'outsiders' to mainstream culture (Gornostaeva 2012, p. 172) . The community which formed around early sites of Goth subculture⁷

⁷E.g. UK nightclub locations in Camden, Leeds, Manchester, Australian sites including Northbridge in Perth and Newtown and Kings Cross in Sydney, Fortitude Valley in Brisbane and Inner-West Melbourne.

included members of the BDSM scene, sex clubs, and the gay nightclub scene as well as drag acts famous for extravagant makeup and a seemingly fearless approach to individual identity. Although co-located, these groups were not musically aligned but a shared taste for provocative, performative dress ensured the communities informed each others' aesthetic traits. Social co-habiting also encouraged tolerance and dialogue between the communities, establishing a strong relationship with other 'alien groups' whose profound struggles for societal acceptance were shared and championed in the Goth community (Garland et al, 2015 p. 1067). The Industrial music scene, itself too small to sustain regular nightclubs alone, became the prime ally of Goth culture, leading to significant cross-over between the clientele and music, grafting a more masculine branch of Goth identity.

For many Goths, association with 'subculture' is long-term, informing semi-stable stylistic, musical, and personal choices beyond immediate peer groups outside mainstream fashion. Several scholars have argued that it is Goth's niche outsider relationship with style which provides a source of identity for participants as they transition into adult life, beyond the initial phase of social differentiation experienced in youth (Jenks [2] p. 43, Tait 1993 p. 46, Gelder 2007 p. 110). Goth is continually evolving, yet it has retained a distinct, highly stylised image which cannot be attributed to generational rebellion or merely shock-value performative identity. By identifying the 'Goth look' as spectacular, scholars may inherently fetishise it, mark it out as separate and other from 'normal' identity tropes, thereby implying that Goth is somehow unhealthy, which given the death-like make-up is perhaps understandable. There is no implicit moral peril in crimped hair and bold make-up, nor immediate jeopardy from wearing heavy boots and black clothing, however Goth style must be recognised as a considered aesthetic choice and for some these choices are challenging. Perhaps it is this very conscious act of non-standard, anti-fashion aesthetic consumption which provokes and challenges non-participants.

Goth Style and Bricolage

The 'aesthetic terrorism' which Hebdige described as the calling card of Punk subculture was tamed through the glamorous 1980s, emerging in part as the suburban, sorrowful romanticism of Goth. Yet Goth retained an edge in its aesthetic palette which echoed Punk, and pastiched much of the sensationalised imagery of the Glam 1970s, over-the-top 1980s and later the stark heroin-chic of the 1990s. The risky and rebellious undertone of Goth lies in its purposefully macabre imagery and individual appearance which seem to be at the very edge of life (Mccarthy 2001, p. 156). Goth is undemanding of the general public, its music receives little air-play on mainstream

radio and the arty if sombre clothing of the culture is best characterised as melodramatic nostalgia. However shock remains with aesthetic motifs of death, vampirism and decadence coupled with excessive melancholia, superseding the shock value so prominent in Punk, giving Goth gravity and familiarity (Lokash 2007 p. 27).

Punk continues to have a close relationship with Goth, providing a model of identity formed around common music tastes, styles and politics which sit outside the mainstream (Adams 2008 p. 480). How scholars regarded the 'art' of Punk appearance and music, therefore, continues to influence literature on Goth culture, despite the vast differences in message and participant engagement. Hebdige's early observations of Punks emphasised the collective rejection of overarching social hegemony, describing stylistic expressions of youth subcultures within a Marxist framework where young people were rising up in demand of social change against the prevailing morals of the 1970s-80s culture (Hebdige, D. 1979, p. 63).

Unlike the antecedent Punk movement, Goths actively embrace sophisticated evolution in their aesthetic canon, which sets it apart from both pop culture and other subcultures. There is a growing library of in-scene literature and archive of Goth style, writers such as Mick Mercer, Andi Harriman, Catherine Spooner and Natasha Scharf document the music and aesthetic evolution of Goth. Goth publications maintain a strong audience in the community and are commonly sold at festivals, clothing, record stores and niche shops. Goths consequently demonstrate a strong in-scene interest in the evolution of their culture and actively invest in maintaining established or 'Trad' Goth customs.

As a phenomenon spanning generations of participants, Goth does not hold a single point of reference for its stylistic palette – the blackness of the Goth wardrobe reflects instead a complex accumulation of references all of which convey meaning, significance, and coded messages of taste, belonging, and outsiderhood (Roberts 2015 p. 201). Without Hebdige's introduction of the language of aesthetics to the study of these groups, the symbolism of subcultural aesthetics, and visual communication in dress, Gothness was in jeopardy of being dismissed in scholarly argument as just a phase. Hebdige thus provides substantial scholarly consideration to style and provides the foundation for observing meaning in aesthetics as well as demonstrating the capacity for empowerment offered by coded dress in othered groups. In the context of Goth, I believe Hebdige remains an important voice; of particular relevance, I suggest, is his discussion on bricolage. The nature of Goth identity and Gothness is intrinsically linked to a curated accumulation of stylistic references and social display of artefacts.

Gavin Baddley identifies the accumulation of artefacts from past eras as a critical aspect of Goth, which again draws Hebdige's early writings on subcultures into a contemporary context (Baddeley, 2006 p. 16). Timely in their attentions, Hebdige's observations on identity mark a point of evolution for subculture analysis, developing from loosely defined groups to relatively stable, aesthetically alternative pockets of culture. Since Hebdige's initial examinations of youth cultures in the 1970s, radical changes have occurred in Western society: the social, economic, and moral forces which disempowered young people are now less acutely felt and personal freedoms have been greatly expanded. The role of aesthetics, and specifically the notion of bricolage, has been increasingly explored and considered alongside the conventional factors of subculture, such as class, agency, religion, or ethnicity (Regev 2013 p. 133).

Ongoing rigorous dialogue between Hebdige and contemporary scholars (Hodkinson, Baddeley, Bennett etc.) has resulted in compound theoretical positions on subcultures, with clear fields of focus. Hebdige himself has 'contemporized' his views on subculture, accounting for the increasing pace of 'plasticity of social identity' in the 21st Century and the seemingly ubiquitous proliferation of personal identity choices publicly displayed online (Hebdige 2015 p. 33). Goth participants seek difference and originality through continuous, conscious bricolage of unique found object combinations in their appearance and effects. Drawing on literature in the Gothic and Romantic modes of the 18th - 19th centuries, Goths re-imagine, or more accurately re-image, these periods for the 21st century (Scharf 2011 p. 79).

This subcultural style is rich with symbolism beyond spectacularity, serving to convey the collective aesthetic substance of the wider social group. McCracken characterises stylistically consistent groups as 'little cultures' - which I will argue better differentiates the multi-generational complexity of Goth.

The bricolage of aesthetic markers in Goth often implies heritage, historical context, and conveys informed participation. Early participants sought out and created their own suite of Goth imagery building on the shock tactics of the Punk era and effete New Romantic drama, adding layers of image, sound, and mood as the culture matured (Spracklen & Spracklen 2018, p. 102). Thus Goths reassign meaning and apply a cultural overlay of intensified 'dark' aesthetics to long-standing imagery, texts, and fine art, claiming them within the gothic oeuvre. In particular, Victorian-era imagery was proficiently incorporated. Found objects may possess some inherent Goth stylistic value such as religious iconography, or may be 'Gothed up' to convert them to a more Goth aesthetic (add a bat, paint it black, invert the cross...). In so doing the definitions of beauty are re-

set within the Goth idiom, transforming understanding of what can constitute beauty and applying a new Goth cultural significance to once-taboo motifs.

For the Goth subculture, bricolage can be seen to create contextual references based on specific subcultural capital with the widespread appropriation of objects and styles normally external to the culture used to engender causal authenticity, for example, in the use of goggles within the Goth context to signify affiliation with either the Cyber-Goth or Steampunk subgenres. Consistent re-use over time establishes such tropes as being Goth, often with additional layered sets of aesthetic signifiers to create the desired look. By engaging in bricolage practices that emphasise unique Goth attributes, the aesthetic foundations of the culture are amplified as well as extended, Items such as kitsch vampire capes, Victorian boots, and fishnets become symbolic Goth artefacts rather than an occasional aesthetic flirtation. Similar examples can be seen with a range of clothing items and their alignment to derivatives of Goth style. The inclusion of kitsch, such as childish plush toy-backpacks may at first seem an unlikely accessory in a Goth nightclub, yet once established Goth design elements were added (backpacks in the shape of a bat, a skull or coffin or bat motif covered handbags) they fast became a staple of the Goth aesthetic code. Irrespective of origin, a cohesive, identifiable pattern of Goth artefacts and identity remains recognisable to participants despite this continuous admission of new design elements and appropriated fashions. The consistency with which Goths apply these subcultural artefacts provides the framework through which a shared understanding of Gothness and contemporary bricolage can be attained.

Similarly, the use of particular signifiers can communicate nuances that are not apparent to the non-participant, yet subtly convey distinct interests and styles within the culture. Footwear is a particularly coded form of appearance which articulates taste, commitment, and social context. The appropriation of Victorian-style capes, corsets, and boots, for instance, is an unequivocal bricolage of historical fashion to articulate difference and belonging within the Goth culture, more particularly Victorian Goth.

The use of particular items of clothing to articulate the taste framework of Goth style is ubiquitous in the culture, and online debate on what constitutes Goth attire and examples of Goth/not Goth style inundate social media. Survey participants expressed awareness of perceived boundaries of appearance and of the need (pressure?) to maintain Goth aesthetics indicated in the quotes below:

Although the word goth tends to bring to mind people wearing long black clothing, with facial piercings and extreme hair dos, I believe you can express your identity as a goth in more ways than with your appearance.

[ASP42 Age 23 AQ45⁸]

I've always had really long hair.....Now at 50, it's grown it's own grey streaks on either sideJust as I always knew it would. Kind of a fashion statement on it's own. I don't color [sic] it....

[ISP06 Age 50 Q7⁹]

Hebdige's unique approach to the study of subcultures still provides a functional model for contemporary study. Articulation of the complex interrelationships of stylistic identifiers and the codification of dress and his grasp of the inherent meaning in the layered stylistic choices of subcultural identity continue to resonate.

Subcultural Theory: Hodkinson

In his early work Hodkinson builds on the foundations of subcultural and post-subcultural studies and provides a valuable discussion on Goth as legitimate area of academic investigation. Hodkinson provides a re-working of Subcultural Theory, in which the scholarly constructs are broken down and re-contextualised to allow for the maturation of Goth over several generations. In his discussions, Hodkinson identifies common Goth signifiers which remain present today as the definitive characteristics which set Goth apart from mainstream youth culture and communicate its sartorial standards to participants (Hodkinson 2002 p. 41). Hodkinson also offers new takes on subcultural theory including, retaining style as a key descriptor alongside subculture in contemporary academic discourse.

For Goth, the term *subculture* therefore retains value as a colloquial identifier of otherness, yet the socio-economic foundations of this term complicate its continued use in academic discourse. In the decades since Goth emerged, researchers have sought more suitable models through which to investigate and define the constancy of the culture. Subcultural Theory and later Post-Subcultural Theory have been applied to the culture, often at the expense of ethnographic, lived-experience driven research. Paul Hodkinson provides a key entry for Goth in academic discourse, utilising both survey and insider-researcher insight to establish a critical position on Goth as a legitimate cultural phenomenon worthy of rigorous discourse. Importantly, in the first significant study of its kind into Goth identity in *Goth: Identity, Style and Subculture*, Hodkinson also advances the theoretical underpinning of subcultural research through a detailed examination of Goth as a mode of image-based identity, furthering positions proposed by Hebdige (Hodkinson 2002).

8 AQ38 You can wear anything and still be a Goth.

9 IQ7. At your most involved, "back in the day", how did you express your Goth identity

Following a Marxist position of aesthetics as described by Hodkinson after Hebdige, this mode of subcultural discourse reflects how 'youth' cultures have evolved from rebellious, Punk foundations into manifold yet consistent communities comprising several generations of participants (Hodkinson 2012, p. 20). Hodkinson applies the neo-Marxist observations of Hebdige and the Birmingham School to his discussion on Goth. Hodkinson suggests the CCCS conception of subculture fulfilling a niche cultural need due to economic deficiency and youthful aspiration is unfounded in the case of Goth (Hodkinson, 2002 p. 13). He notes the working-class emphasis of early subcultural theory fails to adequately articulate the complexity of contemporary Goth culture and enterprise and reveals an assumed struggle between 'parent' (mainstream) culture and 'deviant' subcultures resultant from low social status to be a flawed premise (Hodkinson 2002 p. 10). The more intimate approach of post-subcultural theory affords some freedom from the measures of class, ethnicity etc. favoured by the early Birmingham School researchers, instead focussing on the affect and everyday lives of participants (Bennett 2011 p. 493). In his 2002 book *Goth Identity, Style and Subculture* Hodkinson subsequently provides a subtle 'reworking' of both the Chicago and Birmingham approaches, proffering a modified theoretical approach that favours rethinking key aspects of each of these (Hodkinson 2002 p. 29). Drawing on David Muggleton's postmodern critique of Hebdige, which concludes that Goth can be characterised as aesthetic play, Hodkinson positions Goth as a subculture entrenched in consumerism, and subcultural consumption (Hodkinson 2002, p. 38). Hodkinson suggests Goth style can still be characterised as a consumerist enterprise, with Goth music, fashion, and events constituting a distinct non-mainstream variant of fashion (Hodkinson 2002 p, 30). Hodkinson's emphasis sees value placed on individuality, acknowledging the boundaries of the 'Goth look' have never been absolute, nor defined by a total rejection of consumer culture and instead rest on the value of its composite parts (Hodkinson 2002 p. 29).

As a result of my data collection and analysis, I argue that aesthetic play is a valuable component of building significance and substance of Goth identity, however it is not the end goal of the culture. Goth is not simply dressing up; it is a socio-aesthetic mechanism that generates belonging and meaning in the everyday for participants. While both Muggleton and Hodkinson support this concept, they place emphasis on the initial acts of consumption in order to fit in and find community. Survey respondents consistently emphasise the ongoing value and importance of Goth as a life practice, sense of identity and individual authenticity. I argue that characterising such activities as play diminishes its significance.

Hodkinson examines this vital nature of style and aesthetics in Goth, through the perspectives of a small stable cohort of UK-based Goths, using this group to classify visual identifiers which realise 'true' expressions of Goth identity. Originally conducted in October 1997, Hodkinson's observations utilising the Whitby Goth Weekend as a longitudinal research comparator remain valid in any contemporary investigation of the subculture, describing the advancement of social habits and methods of finding belonging within the subculture (Hodkinson 2002 p. 92-3). Hodkinson identifies the crucial relationship between the gradual evolution of the Goth style and its longevity. He notes how exposure to variances in Gothness shapes its progression and generates tacit approval of new ways of being Goth in social settings and online. These observations provide an invaluable resource for current research, detailing core tenets of Goth at a point in time when it was undergoing a significant change from local, DIY style towards a trans-national online culture.

Of the terminological suggestions, scene, crowd, tribe, and lifestyle have all emerged alongside, if not altogether supplanting, subculture. Where scene or crowd may be apt to describe a small, distinct or local grouping of Goths within the broader culture, it lacks the significance of the wider term. Crowd has been perpetuated by many studies with a focus on the psychology of adolescent belonging and the apparent 'deviant' nature of particular social groupings or 'peer crowds' (Sussman et al. 2007). As argued by Martin, a perception of crowds has been applied to youth groupings in the UK, notably 'Chavs', to explain and describe belonging to a 'bad crowd' (Martin 2009 p. 125).

As used by Hodkinson, style is perhaps the most accessible 'umbrella' descriptor to apply to Goth, as it allows for diverse interpretations. Style can be a 'distinctive manner of expression' incorporating dress, music, design, written content as well as the less tangible meaning-making pursuits of philosophy and taste. The Goth aesthetic spectrum evolved to incorporate a spectrum of high and low cultural signifiers to communicate Goth identity over successive generations and cumulative iterations of the culture. As with Punk, music forms an essential component of Goth, yet it is the visual aspects that often take primacy in descriptions of the culture. Goth as style provides a source of entry for non-participant readers who can readily identify overt 'Goth styles' using the paradigms of design, fashion, or music in comparison to mainstream choices, to construct a perfunctory understanding of other elements of the culture. Depiction of Goth as a style emphasises the elements which are most readily evident such as visual spectacularity, unconventional personal design, or music that sits clearly outside the 'Top 10'. However, in so

doing, this approach deflects attention from the less explicit more ephemeral aspects of the culture and the social networks which support these stylistic considerations.

Compelling arguments have also been made by Grant McCracken, Andy Bennett, Keith Kahn-Harris and others, for a more nuanced post-subcultural approach to Goth studies. As discussed by Blackman, post-subculturalists suggest a move away from the notions of rebellion and oppression, instead placing academic weight on the study of how young individuals find agency and empowerment through the application of self-fashioning (othering) and social association (belonging) (Blackman 2014 p. 505). This theoretical position provides a persuasive outlook and exploration of 'subcultures' in which antiquated notions of deviance have faded, and analytical dialogue has matured into a more inclusive discourse.

Post Subcultural Turn: Tribes and Neo-Tribes

Alternatives to subculture began to emerge in the late 1990s with tribes finding traction as a contender to replace subculture to describe 'youth' groups. Maffesoli's classification of subcultures as a form of neo-tribe correlates aesthetic participation with a primal need for social validation procured by 'periodic bursts of energy' (Maffesoli 1996 p. 12). Andy Bennett's examination of the *Post Subcultural Turn (Ten Years on)* provides a vital assessment of the notion of tribes, shifting discourse on subcultures and Goth towards the anthropological language of neo-tribes, categorising the social groups as compared to models of social/biological proximity. Bennett argues in favour of a post-subcultural dialogue where youthful sociality is central to sociological explanations of 'youth' subcultures.

The codification of Goth identity ensures members of the culture can remain simultaneously an outsider and within the culture without transgressing the social rules of either state. It is socio-aesthetic demarcation such as this that led to Maffesoli terming this a tribal boundary, with subculture in the 1990s forming urban neo-tribes (Maffesoli 1996).

The appeal of this concept centres on the assertion that subculture is an outmoded way of describing social interaction in the new fluid modernity of the borderless online world (Bennett 1999 p. 600). Using Maffesoli's concept of *Tribus* Andy Bennett (like Jon Garland) describes this as sociality, the public, yet intimate coming together of participants within the fluid social context of youthful socialisation, stylistic experimentation, and shared musical interests (Bennett 1999, p. 600). The position held by Bennett whereby subculture gives way to post-subcultural tribe purports to offer a 'new theoretical framework for the study of the cultural relationship between

youth, music, and style' and fixes the scholarly gaze on the collective construction of identity within a social context (Bennett 1999, p. 614).

I support Bennett's contention that subculture has become a sociological 'catch-all' term; however, the characterisation of Goth as a modern, urban tribe however remains contentious (Bennett 1999, p. 599). Goth does not align with Cohen's early depiction of chaotic, marginalised criminal gangs and communities of economic necessity (Cohen 2011/1972, p. 203). Moreover Goth is too global, too well funded with its own boutiques, bespoke festivals and niche support enterprises, and too consistent to be confined to the micro-sites of a tribe. As noted by Roberts, the idea of tribes seems most applicable to subcultural groups whose connections are based on economic circumstances, dictated by taste, youth, and unfolding experience (Roberts 2015, p. 1099). Hodkinson too challenges the characterisation of Goth as a tribal phenomenon, citing its complexity and trans-national character as anti-tribal constructs.

Hodkinson explores the language of neo-tribes to articulate the intricacies of Goth culture, nonetheless retaining subcultural theory as his preferred approach. Interrogating this position in later works, Hodkinson develops his arguments around the longevity of Goth subcultural affiliation, citing evidence of a more visceral connection to the substance within the style over time (Hodkinson 2013 p. 14). This view affords consideration of the multiplicity of aesthetic factors and experiences of belonging through aesthetic and social connection, alongside more traditional subcultural dialogic themes of rebellion against hegemony and wilful deviance. Hodkinson interprets the aesthetic traits of the subculture from early the 2000s to the present; in 2013 he catalogued consistencies and variations in Goth culture more than a decade on from his original study of UK Goths (Hodkinson 2013). In re-examining the aesthetic foundations of the culture he provides a comparison between mature, present and emergent Goth aesthetic. He describes how the sophistication and plasticity of Goth aesthetics creates distinction. This insight to Goth aesthetic modes of sociality is based on decades of community evolution and in-scene participation by the researcher.

Hodkinson provides a new reading of subcultural theory as it relates specifically to the Goth subculture, recognising the significance of the integration of select customs, historical and pop-culture references within the culture which underpin its authenticity and longevity (Hodkinson, 2002 p. 9). Through this discourse, it is significant that Hodkinson, along with Bennett, Baddeley, Scharf, and Goodlad, all continue to place significance on style to describe the Goth using the idioms of fashion to categorise the artefacts of Goth aesthetics and music (see Hodkinson 2011, Bennett 1999, and Baddeley 2015). This echoes Hebdige's position on bricolage and the value of

cultural appropriation in 'new' micro-cultures. Baddeley, however, shifts discussion on Goth towards the post-subcultural position, citing the visual elements of Goth identity under the 'tribal' umbrella. Baddeley's post subcultural view exposes vital criteria for analytic consideration, focussing on fixity, fluidity, and temporality within micro-cultures.

The Goth scene is globally connected and dispersed across a wide range of geographical environments, yet it is not fragmented. Goth aesthetics are consistently applied irrespective of location, giving the culture a stable spectrum of expression at the individual and collective levels. Local expressions of Goth style present as new motifs or features, rather than guarded, isolated tribal outcrops. As discussed in the following chapter, these influences may then go on to become broadly accepted motifs of Goth or may remain localised behaviours. For example, the introduction of the Cyber-Goth sub-genre brought with it the remnants of Victorian aesthetics melded with emerging Steampunk ideas in an ardent bricolage of Goth elements within the context of an imagined future. Though Cyber-Goth is now very much a minority in the scene (0.6% - 1.4% of survey respondents identified as being Cyber-Goth¹⁰), the futuristic elements expressed at its height of popularity in the mid-1990s have remained influential, yet in minority. For example it is still common to see at least one club attendee wearing cyber goggles, or associated 1990s influenced attire at gigs. There is an argument that such occurrences of in-culture sub-scenes are the collective culture of tribes of Goth, rather than Goth itself being a tribal culture. That is each sub-group within Goth is the tribe within the wider Goth culture: the Hippy Goth tribe, Cyber Goths tribe, Industrial Goth tribe, Lolita Goth tribe... etc.

Therefore, while some music-based youth social groups neatly fit the tribe model, I argue the longevity, aesthetic constancy and structural fixity of Goth – despite its continual evolution – excludes it from this particular post-subcultural turn. Like McCracken, I support the conception of Goth as a global culture in little, a style of life phenomenon motivated by a consistent aesthetic model.

The apparent consistency of Goth aesthetic expression, which when remotely observed may appear simply escapist, is in fact a considered, heavily curated expression of self and collective identity. It is this ongoing conscious negotiation of personal style inlaid with in-scene meaning and symbolic references which has prevented Goth being fully absorbed into mainstream pop culture. It can be argued that this is consistent with postmodernist ideas of subculture proposed by

¹⁰ (IQ5 and AQ5 Choosing from the list below - with which of the Goth aesthetics do you most identify (choose most appropriate or provide your own answer. Response: International n=1332, Australian n=428)

Hebdige and therefore precludes 'tribal' analysis. The characterisation of neo-tribes as informal, almost accidental groupings of enthusiasts drawn passively to 'lifestyle cultures' is similarly problematic for Goth identity, permeated as it is with active aesthetic choices (Maffesoli 1996 p. 77, 182). The Goth culture is in practice more closely associated with the conceptualisation of a scene, rather than a tribe, with participants actively seeking communion within the Goth community over extended periods.

Theorists such as Dave Muggleton who embrace Post-subcultural thought promote the significance of self-agency within a collective as being the vital element of differentiation (Muggleton, 2003 p. 90). The transitory nature required of the post-subculturalist position is undone by the constancy of Goth identity and the fundamentally stable aesthetic canon which defines the culture. This does not adequately account for the vast diversity *within* Goth; participants can retain 'Goth status' (or Gothness) whilst simultaneously experimenting with diverse styles and friendship groups. Such social and aesthetic practices also substantiate Goth as an identity that exceeds tribal relationships or short-lived social encounters. Through these deliberate actions, Goth culture is suffused with substance, including generations of social practices which subvert traditional understandings of gender, beauty, art, and social convention. As Hodkinson suggests, the concentration of analysis on the musical and sartorial expression of subculture risks overlooking the less visible, perhaps more complex, aspects of Goth rooted in private and public social interaction, shared tastes, and moral outlooks (Hodkinson 2002). Bennett's contention that 'individuals continually move between different sites of collective expression and reconstruct themselves accordingly' seemingly reflects this, however, for long-term Goths it is the consistency of Goth identity which defines it, contradicting this concept of osmotic tribal boundaries (Bennett 1999 p. 606).

The application of tribe to Goth has an appeal in the academic context, conceptually connecting notions of the ancient and the primal, conjuring a style that defies time and denounces the temporary, whilst somehow holding future relevance. It recognises the social aspects of the culture, and hints at the prospect of continual renewal and redefinition over time, simultaneously acknowledging and rejecting lines of social divisions experienced in youth subcultures. Yet Goth is not contained; it does not exist within a vacuum of its own stylistic making. It influences and is influenced by mainstream music and fashion. Rather than sitting outside of society, it sits within. The 'tribal' theoretical approach is contradicted by the ongoing lived experiences of Goth culture which is both fixed and fluid, having within it variations that afford participants a range of self-expression without breaching the core tenets of Goth aesthetic canon. Most crucial though is

Goths' constancy for participants at all stages of life. Neo-tribes, it is argued, encompass a non-iterative, almost anti-personal level of interaction, divorced from 'normal' material exchanges and based primarily on the physical and philosophical characteristics of a niche group. This diminishes the powerful commercial capacity of Goth culture and its ability to be socially self-sustaining and stylistically frugal. Hesmondhalgh contends subculture overestimates the fixity of 'youth groups' arguing the experimentations of youth are short-lived and without quantifiable structure (Hesmondhalgh 2005, p. 24). In opposition to this, I argue that it is precisely the socio-aesthetic fixity, or constancy of Goth's cultural substance which has cemented its position as a culture, rather than a subculture. Further, I argue this status acquits Goth of the treatment of *Tribus*, as it fails to conform to the strictures of that term.

Goth is established as a culture, an identifiable 'type', distinct from inwardly reflective tribal structures. It is sufficiently resilient to admit renewed versions of itself, yet maintains a core thread of aesthetic certainty which stitches together its distinct cultural universe (McCracken p. 24). This diversity has deepened the overall cultural scope of Goth, not weakened it or broken it down into smaller subsequent tribes. The communities of aesthetic-minded subcultural adherents described by McCracken in *Plenitude Culture by Commotion* are complex, above all legitimate expressions of communal belonging and substance. It is this idea of subcultural identity which resonates with participant responses in this study.

Theorising Goth

Goth represents the macabre, undesirable, and wretched for their moment of collective beauty; in this way the aesthetic parameters of Goth are consciously crafted to construct a distinct appearance distinguishable from 'fashion trends'. This is perhaps a key achievement of Goth culture: it intersects between accepted mainstream beauty paradigms and the ugliness of the undesired and creates a space in which anyone can choose to be beautiful. As apparent in Hodkinson's 1997 Whitby-based study of UK Goth identity. It becomes a lived example of the literary concept of Gothic Mode – a way of 'doing' Gothic things – reflecting established aesthetics and demonstrating them in social settings.

There remains in both contemporary academic and media discourse an inclination towards the language of rebellion, or social dissonance; these are periodically employed to describe 'underground' customs of spectacular subcultures, which in fact may be better described as taste built on bohemian musical or alternative aesthetic bases (Bennett in White, 2012 p. 102). Bennett provides invaluable sources for navigating translocal subcultures and identity in post-subcultural

terms, in particular in his discussions around community and shared life-long experiences through music (Bennett 2005, p. 77).

It is insider researchers, such as Hodkinson (2002, 2012, 2015, 2016b), who have brought an informed and nuanced understanding of Goth to academia and whose works have incrementally shown the progression of Goth aesthetics and culture over time. Hodkinson illustrates the manner and importance of media, consumption, and the generation of distinct cultural capital as integral Goth characteristics – entirely independent of socio-economic status or affluence.

The concept of individuality is undoubtedly significant within Goth aesthetic canon; while Goths emulate icons of the music world (Siouxsie Sioux, Andrew Eldritch) yet they also express wholly unique interpretations of Goth style and cultural subsets. Goths curate artefacts that constantly negotiate the boundary between Goth style and mainstream consumerism, actively rejecting particular elements of 'pop culture', allowing new items which conform to 'true' Goth style to be absorbed into Goth canon (Scharf 2011, p. 140). In so doing Goth culture actively engages in mass consumerism, sometimes in a manner invisible to conventional consumerist measures.

As reported by survey and interview responses, Punk-influenced DIY and thrifty second-hand shopping remains a prominent feature of the culture, supplementing the influx of new and costly Goth items available online. This is an important distinction, as Goth does not comfortably inhabit a binary consumerist or attitudinal context, but rather derives its constancy, influence, and cultural substance through the accumulation of physical cultural capital in conjunction with music taste (Garland et al 2012 p. 268). Description of the culture is therefore difficult without situating Goth within a consumer context; Goth identity is intrinsically linked to the application and avid appropriation of very specific, culturally relevant things. Importantly, these things (or experiences, music etc.) are generally not fashionable or on trend, rather they are influenced by traditional, anecdotal customs within the Goth culture.

Goth does hold some commercial influence, which occasionally sees what Hodkinson describes as the 'spectacular specifics' of its visual language emulated by high end brands as darkly risqué mainstream trends (Hodkinson 2012, p. 555). Recent trends by mainstream brands such as Marks and Spencer, H&M, saw Goth style on trend. Goth style was unexpectedly reflected in the fitness industry where 'Health Goth' made a brief appearance in online trends in 2016-17. This captures the difficulty of characterising Goth as purely a form of subcultural difference and supports Hodkinson's position that ethnography plays a vital role in decoding the significance of the culture beyond its visual spectacularity. As such this subcultural perspective forms only the starting point

for understanding Goth, rather than providing contemporary context from which to dissect its present form. McCracken further expands discourse on subcultures (or niche enthusiast groups) to consider the multilayered reality of contemporary culture from a plenitude of simultaneous, coincidental or correlated, perspectives. Applying the measures of culture to clarify the extent to which Goth has evolved beyond sub into a little culture, as per McCracken, offers rich opportunities for new perspectives (McCracken 1997, p. 25).

Herein lies the paradox of Goth culture. Once it spills into mainstream consumerism, becoming 'trendy', it subverts the mechanism through which it can be sustained, with aesthetics on the periphery of fashion, holding a counter-culture credo which deplures mass popularity. Goth exists as a plenitude of expressions, yet it exists within further classifications such as religiosity, ethnicity, sexuality, and gender. As with other elements of identity, Goth modulates in different contexts, allowing for a spectrum of Goth to exist even for the individual participant. This can be observed at large-scale bespoke Goth events such as Wave Gotik Treffen (WGT), where expressions of 'peak Goth' appearance are on show, as well as in micro-occurrences such as everyday record-stores where local or regional expressions of Goth are prevalent. Both are equally Goth, yet the spectacularity of Goth identity may be vastly different. Therefore Goth identity becomes a socio-aesthetic construction through which Goths negotiate the complexities of subjectivity and retain aesthetic consistency.

The scholarly works of these researchers provide points of correlation and comparative models of investigation into Goth during and beyond youth (Bennett and Hodkinson 2012, eds. Goodlad and Bibby 2007). It is the works of ethnographers, insider participant-researchers and sometimes musicologists who have advanced Goths' associations with 'Subcultural Theory' towards 'Post Subcultural Theory' over the decades since Hebdige's seminal work. As early as 1985, Stratton identified the 'socio-cultural idiosyncrasies' of subcultures as holding value for longevity, citing their associated commodification as the very source of continued affiliation (Stratton, 1985 p. 194).

The work of Paul Hodkinson (2002, 2005, 2011, 2015, etc.) and Andy Bennett (1999, 2005, 2011, 2012, etc.), with those of Gavin Baddeley (2002, 2010, 2015), Michael Bibby (2007), Jon Garland (2010, 2012, 2014, 2016), Lauren Goodlad (2007), Martin Roach (2015), and Gordon Tait (1993, 1999) et al, further inform the contemporary discourse. Further complementing this position is the work of Grant McCracken, whose discussions on plenitude shift fundamental understandings of how subcultures create, evolve, and mediate their image in the contemporary setting of media

saturation and hyper self-awareness. This renewed discourse increasingly focuses on Goth as a cultural phenomenon, actively investigating Goth from diverse academic (and non-academic) perspectives rather than an ardent reaction to social status. Goth has been examined by both academics and journalists as a music genre with musical and lyrical analysis the central focus (see Mercer, Stratton etc.). It has also been investigated as a performative fashion influence or a new incarnation of the artistic Gothic Mode (see Scharf, Spooner, Brill, Baddeley, Gelder etc.). Each of these has developed new perspectives on the origins, meanings and cultural parallels of the Goth phenomenon.

Contemporary Gothness as a new Gothic Mode

Goths can be observed online negotiating the idea of the gothic, with the traditionally co-reliant aspects of the Gothic Mode - beauty and horror - clearly present in contemporary expressions of Goth. Through what could be variously described as aesthetic play, tribal display or bona fide expressions of culture, contemporary Gothness has resulted in a new manifestation of the Gothic Mode. Like the original Gothic Mode, Goth practices a refraction of elements of bygone eras, re-purposing, and reinventing historic aesthetics for contemporary application. The emergence of sharing social/aesthetic experiences online as well as traditional communal experiences of 'getting Gothed up' serve as powerful accounts of Goth behaviours which have been perpetuated through future generations. Goth culture and Gothness is rich with appropriated visual layers which reference everything ranging from French Bohemians to British Victorian funereal garb, to mechanised cyber-warriors.

To the outside observer, the ostensibly stable aesthetic palette of the Goth subculture does not, perhaps, communicate individualist expression, nor articulate an especially sophisticated spectrum of collective identity. Cerulo explores the *Social Construction of Reality* theory, defining the condition of collective identity achieved through subcultural identity as 'we-ness': a collective demonstration of attributes from which to share social perspectives (Cerulo, 1997 p. 386). Self-esteem is understood to be generated through belonging within a subculture, as well as through the related concept of "mattering" within a distinct socio-cultural context, that is, seeking out social networks which scaffold identity (Moran 2017, p. 389). In research discussions, Goths in fact describe a strong feeling of individualism realised when wearing Goth clothing. It is through identifying motifs rather than complete looks that crucial distinguishing factors of Gothness emerge are linked with preceding art movements etc.

The use of religious iconography in Goth appearance is key; traditional Roman Catholic rosary beads, icons, crosses are counterbalanced by the Jewish Star of David, Satanic or inverted crosses, Mexican Death skulls, the crown of thorns, Viking motifs, halo crowns, pagan animal totems, and other symbolic relics. Few of these icons are adopted for their traditional religious values; rather they are viewed as items of beauty, possibly shock-value, and unspecified spirituality. The curated accumulation of anachronistic clutter forms armour for participants; it shields them from pressure to conform to passing fashions and communicates distaste for popular culture trends whilst simultaneously broadcasting belonging. This aspect of Goth attire is striking and to the outsider may cause offence or concern. Goths embrace this contradiction, challenging aesthetic norms through an extensive accrual of dissimilar cultural markers to form a consolidated Goth style (Sweet, 2009 p. 249).

The emphasis on accumulating and repurposing established imagery to continually refresh the past to suit contemporary conditions means Goth style is actually well controlled within its own aesthetic framework. Social media has assisted Goths to connect, reinforcing old ideas of Goth/Gothic and allowing for the emergence of previously unheard opinions on Gothness. This new Goth paradigm has prompted a re-evaluation of previous understandings of gothic and the Gothic Mode in parallel with emerging understandings of contemporary Goth culture (Thomas, 2016 p. 3).

Long term participants offer insight into how Goth image is maintained allowing for experimentation and how this both elicits and requires dedication to the expected modes of appearance in Goth social settings. Participant comments signal a disruption of long-established Goth tropes, with younger Goths voicing a strong understanding of the foundations of Goth style, and exploring new limits of the culture including the scholarly language used to describe it.

I don't think [Goth] fashion is as fluid as people think. Trends do come and go but along the way you get people who pick up on a look they like and mostly stick with it, making variations and modifications along the way.

Like when Gothic Lolita was big. You don't see it anywhere near as often as you used to but for some people it's their mainstay. As for me, I'm stuck in the 90s...

[Online Comment - Reddit Discussion- 26 07 2015]

Maybe there is something deeply spiritual about what makes a person a Goth. You see the beauty in things. We see and hear the echoes of the past.

[PPM013, Age 40+]

Goth culture's emulation of the artistic Gothic Mode is expressed in a variety of social and aesthetic practices, from personal attire, to artistic endeavours to favouring the traditional writers of the Gothic literary period. These practices suggest Goth can be considered as a cultural

phenomenon within the context of the Gothic Mode, a dark expression of anti-beauty muddled with Punk-inspired ideas of alternative identity, visual spectacularity, and non-conformity. The most exaggerated expression of high-Goth is seen in its appropriation of Victorian attire, mimicking the spectacularly elaborate mourning practices of that era. Outsiderhood is generated by this unconventional stylistic mode which perpetuates dark in-culture constancy instead of mainstream conformity and fashionability (Scharf 2014, p. 191). The stable thematic spectrum of Goth aesthetics is the foundation of both its sense of belonging and its constancy; no Goth idea is ever lost, no style irrelevant and the seasonality of mainstream fashion is of negligible influence. This thereby creates a safe aesthetic microcosm for members.

Goths have intensified this by modifying Victorian mourning garb to suit more modern applications with the addition of modern fabrics, PVC, and Punk-inspired accessories and juxtaposed imagery. The addition of Victorian post-mortem photography into Goth jewellery and home wares is a particular motif for which there is little appetite in mainstream pop culture and which exemplifies Goth's overt bricolage of the macabre (Scharf 2014 p. 188). By this means Goth culture canonises the macabre, it embraces extremes of human emotion, with an emphasis on the sombre and maudlin albeit with tongue-in-cheek self-awareness.

It is such acceptance – or the affectation of the acceptance – of death which sets Goth apart, testing established social norms of Westernised society, where death is to be avoided, masked, and fought off (Furek 2008 p. 39, 60). This aesthetic divergence illustrates a core characteristic of Goth culture and its struggle with pop culture. Whereas the prevailing social mores demand adherence to health and longevity, Goth represents a spectre-like echo of generations past when transient health, death, and mourning were commonplace. The overall 'dark mood' of Goth can be viewed as a challenge to prevailing conventions, most particularly contributing to tensions with religious groups and those eager not to encourage morose behaviours (Latham 2014 p. 281). For much of conventional society, this preoccupation with the maudlin is confronting and frightening, representing an unsettling of accepted modern values in such a way as to discomfort outsiders and exclude 'normal' interactions with the Goth community.

Goth has standardised this discomfiture as homogenised black fabrics and other affectations, with melancholic logos, motifs, make-up applications, to broadcast a multi-layered Goth aesthetic blueprint that can be negotiated, altered, and transformed to suit diverse social and cultural settings. As described by a research participant below, death is considered an integral part of the Goth aesthetic:

I think it's a view on life that sets us apart, we see beauty in the shadows, we live life by accepting death as a positive thing. It includes a huge array of artistic types, a variety of music, and a bunch of clothing styles, which are all "goth".

[Online Discussion – Facebook – 02 02 2016]

Nostalgia for particular trends/appearance types (e.g. crimped hair), a song, or even an item of clothing incrementally increases perceived social connectedness and feelings of camaraderie. Goth embodies this deathlike image through its religious/iconographic/literary bricolage of make-up and clothing (etc.) and is further exploited in its musical styles.

Hebdige proposed that alongside bricolage, the utilisation of dread forms a useful cultural commodity. Dread forms a key feature of the Gothic Literary Mode, horror themes are often overlaid with motifs of psychological and mental distress, foreboding and the other (Gelder 2007, p. 44). Hebdige argues that dread is used by subcultures (including Goth) to cultivate an oppositional, intimidating demeanour and communicate an abject lack of enjoyment (Thompson 2013, p. 13). In Goth aesthetics, recognition of death and decay are omnipresent and integral to the overall beauty paradigm. Gothic style thus spectacularises the everyday, rewriting the rules of mainstream consumerism through its distinct aesthetic code and symbolic use of imagery.

I suggest that where Hebdige sees dread, Goths see a dark beauty replete with 'gallows humour' recognition of the fragility of life and the terminal nature of existence. I propose that in Goth there is a nuanced pragmatism; Goths embrace dread, not to threaten, rather to ward off the threat in the face of impending gloom. This is balanced by excessively indulgent appearance which grasps for every era at once in an anachronistic display of awareness of its fragile temporality. In Werner Herzog's *Nosferatu* (1979) a plague scene depicts town-folk responding to their impending demise with an elaborate banquet, all in their finest and with crimped hair, overrun by rats and disease. As an allegory of Goth aesthetics, it is powerful and reminiscent of the *Danse Macabre*, a comparable idiom of allegorical dread.



Figure 3 Herzog's *Nosferatu* 1979: plague scene

This and similar theatrical gothic imagery has viscerally informed Goth culture; the atmosphere, subject matter, costumes, and demeanour all continue to serve as templates for Goth aesthetics. Goth aesthetics incorporate not only artistic tastes but also personal design, styles of music, clothing, personal objects, and everyday ways of living, all of which define subculture over time (Venkatesh & Meamber 2008 p. 46). Goth subculture is distinguished by its capacity for subtlety, ambiguity, gender plasticity, and musical diversity. Such complexity necessitates a nuanced examination of the elements which define Goth identity for participants. In analysing Goth, the social function of bricolage is most crucial in Hebdige's observations on the style of subcultures. The function of Goth aesthetics in this conceptual transition from style to culture is vital; once identified, these aesthetic markers, however transient, provide the base mechanisms of Goth identity from which long term Gothness can be maintained and/or measured. The spectacularity Goths adopt is in reaction, but not rebellion, to the otherwise fraught experiences of the everyday. Hebdige's bricolage, therefore, remains an essential reference in the discussion of Goth.

Hebdige's positioning of style and bricolage at the centre of subcultural discourse is invaluable; these concepts remain key elements in the study of now mature Goth culture and its aesthetics.. His depiction of the conscious creation of new styles from largely existing materials, motifs, and objects to create communities of belonging and a shared visual language exemplifies Goth aesthetic intentions (Hebdige 2012 p. 401). Consequently, I regard Hebdige's work as a theoretical touchstone in the investigation of Goth identity. His longitudinal reflections on contemporary subcultures continue to inform and shape discourse on micro-communities, from Punk in the

1970s through to the plenitude of online identity observed in the 21st Century (Hebdige 2014 p. 33). The social theory produced by Hebdige altered how social commentators view subculture, emphasising the functions of self-agency, stylistic language, and status.

McCracken: Little Cultures and Plenitude

In describing the 'types' of subcultures, McCracken (like Hebdige and Hodkinson) emphasises the importance of difference within subcultures, describing how participants transgress and subvert broader societal contexts to form distinct social worlds. In the diversity of youth cultures described – hippies, Punks, Goths, B-boys – McCracken details the crucial factor of constancy in the physical and ethnographic traits of these groups and how constancy (or at least consistency) is the derivation source of labels and therefore signification of affiliation with particular subcultures.

Like Hodkinson, McCracken identifies the role online communications play in the acceleration of consumerism and diversity in the subcultural landscape, describing the potential for cultural richness to be realised through new social platforms. Plenitude tolerates a profusion of styles and types, simultaneously sustaining and breaking down cultural boundaries to create a sublime commotion (McCracken, 1997 p. 103). This commotion describes the current iterations of the Goth culture, with its manifold sub-genres and seemingly tangential stylistic influences as well as its age spectrum from teenagers to those in their 60s and beyond. McCracken explores the social and philosophical significance of subcultural identity for the development of sophisticated collective values and how the complexity of this framework belies the apparent simplicity of broadcasting a particular spectacular aesthetic.

As observed by McCracken:

...the culture of commotion is doing something more than simply throwing off variety. It is generating deeper cultural types, each its own reckoning of the world, each an entire culture in little, carrying its own view of the world. If the surface difference is impressive, this deeper difference is simply breathtaking.

(McCracken 1997 p. 23)

That subcultural labels can be equated with cultural types is significant; like Hodkinson, McCracken recognises that the aesthetic exterior of subcultural groups correlates with a deeper, more profound cultural phenomenon closely aligned to self-agency and moral outlook (Hodkinson 2016, p. 631).

McCracken describes this as plenitude; an ethnographic/anthropological/sociological descriptor which embraces the plurality of contemporary social networks. Plenitude encompasses Hebdige's model of bricolage as a factor within plenitude; in so doing it provides a holistic schema through which we can look upon subcultures (scenes/tribes/little cultures/species etc.) anew and fully observe the complexities of the phenomena.

The sociological perceptions of Goth subculture offered by McCracken and Hodkinson (and others) provide a reading which recognises and further questions the breadth of 'subculture' as a concept and provides new avenues through which to analyse Goth identity. For McCracken subcultures include inclusiveness and optimism often overlooked in preceding theoretical texts, embracing the vast opportunities for self-design presented by subcultures as evidence of societal complexity and growth. Of his works, this thesis is principally informed by *Plenitude, Culture by Commotion*, which positions examination of societies – subcultures, alternative identities, and the social self – within their distinct universe of belonging: little culture rather than subculture (McCracken 1997 p. 25). McCracken goes so far as to suggest that Goths be viewed as a differentiated *species* within his cultural landscape; a description which simultaneously embeds Goths within broader social history and sets it apart (McCracken 1997 p. 131). In *Plenitude* themes explored by Hebdige and later Hodkinson are examined from a non-participant perspective: McCracken describes the multilayered, simultaneous emergence of micro-cultures in Post-war Westernised society and presents this emergence as a holistic, inter-woven cultural structure.

McCracken notes that the rigidity of subcultural theory has served to constrict discourse, rather than navigate it towards contemporary attitudes, by being tied to increasingly redundant concepts of rebellion and social reaction (McCracken, 1997 p. 100). The plenitude McCracken describes indicates contemporary cultures existing as mirrors of the lived experience of being Goth; it reflects the experience of maintaining simultaneous relationships across sometimes conflicting aspects of life.

The concept of plenitude provides an overarching paradigm through to better understand the continually evolving ecology of contemporary Goth (and subcultures generally) without diminishing any of its constituent parts (McCracken, 1997 p. 19). Contemporaneously, Welsch describes a form of socially informed artistic pluralisation, 'aestheticization', describing the inter-relationships of social groupings along aesthetic lines, prescient of contemporary online global social connectivity (Welsch, 1997 p. 4). This description adds further depth to McCracken's plenitude, identifying the sensory importance of aesthetic experiences in micro-cultures and how these interactions iteratively reinforce collective aesthetic judgements (Welsch, 1997 p. 10).

Welsch and McCracken identify how the pressure to formulate 'correct' or resolved aesthetic choices in distinct cultural universes is mitigated by almost constant exposure to selective feedback from peers via online and interpersonal interactions, creating a microcosm of experience only intermittently influenced from outside the subculture (Welsch 1997 p. 10, McCracken 1997 p. 87). Over time these observations have proven to be increasingly relevant, with the increased use of social media and online connectivity.

Through placing high value on stylistic signifiers, Goth moves further from conventional subcultural foci such as class or race, and applies increasing value to aesthetic principles, ostensibly releasing participants from the normative peer pressures of mainstream (youth) culture. Belonging is thus achieved through the suspension of conventional tethers of societal acceptance, replacing them with the self-ascribed measures of spectacular characteristics and aesthetic expression. These characteristics may be expressed through numerous signifiers: musical styles and lyrical content, hair, make-up, clothing/sartorial choices, tattoos, piercings... Suspending the rules of the dominant culture enables new 'normals' to be created and the frontiers of taste, beauty, sexuality, physicality, art, and personal expression to be continually shifted towards an expanded collective notion of self (McCracken 1997, p. 81).

This continuous fusion of aesthetic and social factors sustains its longevity. Goth creates a universe in which to constantly expand, contract, react and reinvent itself. The commotion of modern life is embodied, distilled in youthful subcultures, and McCracken argues that Goth represents perhaps the most complex and sophisticated of these groups (McCracken 1997 p. 86). In the context of this research McCracken's non-insider observations correlate with perspectives on subculture as described by interview and survey participants: it reflects the constancy and the constant change – the commotion – of Goth culture across the decades. Crucially, in subsequent works McCracken recognises the confluence of culture and commodification, illuminating the role consumerism plays in youth culture, no matter how alternative, as participants seek to express their cultural connectivity. (This is discussed in further detail in Chapter 5.)

McCracken's characterisation of little cultures (or little worlds) frees participants to move freely within a spectrum of socio-aesthetic identity signifiers. The notion of phase loses potency, supplanted by recognition of the changing pressures, foci, and relationships experienced across a lifetime, which free participants to pursue uniqueness as and when possible (McCracken 1997 p. 80). Inevitably, existing within or on the extremities of mainstream society, Goth culture has

carved out a mode of being which enables difference within its cultural spectrum, whilst preserving the core tenets of its aesthetics through iteration.

After McCracken, I situate Goth as a little culture, highlighting the mutually supporting characteristics of its social context and its aesthetics, collectively termed socio-aesthetics, meaning structure in which Goth identity, beauty, and belonging find substance and longevity (Schmidt in Michelsen & Tygstrup 2015, p. 38). The culmination of my review and analysis of the literature outlined above, this concept reflects both the complexity of the theoretical discourse within the field of subculture scholarship as well as the mature, multifaceted nature of the Goth culture. Goth culture can be observed as a global phenomenon, with thousands of participants engaging in highly specialised social and aesthetic practices, displaying the tastes, physical attributes and styles of the culture. Goth identity is defined and derived from the ritualistic repetition of these practices, with each aesthetic element forming the basis of particular sub-groups of Gothness and social habits of identity expression (Jenkins 2014, p. 136).

Reading Goth as a little culture rather than a subculture serves to minimise bias inherent in earlier sociological theory, and repositions Goth as a mature community of conscious practitioners. The application of sub to culture in contemporary discourse diminishes Goth, denying it a full and creative analysis. Goth is given legitimacy as a little culture; it is afforded authority, restoring value and simultaneously releasing it from the constraints of 'youth subculture', which it has long since outgrown. McCracken signifies a shift in the understanding of the mechanisms of youth subcultures, expanding understanding towards *culture* to encompass an ageless spectrum of socio-aesthetic choices. McCracken's assertion that subcultures present holistic modes of belonging, existing as little cultures rather than subcultures, promotes a more wide-ranging examination of such groups and a less rigid adherence to subcultural theory.

Lived Plenitude (Living Gothic)

Fundamental to my thesis is the notion that Goth culture facilitates change within its community whilst simultaneously reflecting an outwardly constant image of itself to non-participants. This may be as straightforward as favouring black clothing, or it may be complex and highly nuanced social conventions of dance and music or increasingly online/virtual expressions of Goth unseen by mainstream observers. Engaging in specialised customs of pattern-recognition (dress, dance, expression etc.) within the microcosm of Goth, participants are able to recognise social and aesthetic cues in order to establish peer-groups, friendships circles and spheres of influence and experience (Schulze in Michelsen & Tygstrup 2015, p. 172). Importantly, these spheres of socio-

aesthetic influence are increasingly virtual, enabling ever larger communities of connoisseurs to inspire, influence and manipulate the evolution of Goth cultural patterns and practices (Schulze in Michelsen & Tygstrup 2015, 179). And yet Goth remains a relatively small, familiarised version of the bizarre, a controlled little world in which the forms and styles remain familiar, and constant to their participants. Ambiguity and uncertainty is experienced by those outside the culture, not those within. For participants, Goth retains a strong social and aesthetic presence, it is clear in its narrative and perceived reality: Goth culture creates a little world in which the mainstream outside is obscured from both directions. Goth culture has evolved itself out of the subcultural frame, creating instead its own critical context in which it is both a cultural minority and a vibrant cultural influence. To term it a post-subcultural culture is not too extreme, though perhaps semantically awkward. Nevertheless, that Goth is now very much in a post-subculture mode is apparent.

I therefore argue for recognising Goth as a culture - in little. Goth provides stability to participants, a 'continuous renegotiation' of what Goth identity is, enabling participants to find identity constancy through evolving phases of participation and ageing. This has at its basis the concept of plenitude: while the visual impression of Goth identity may be constant, it exists in a state of continuous change, as a living spectrum of continuous reinterpretation (McCracken, 1997 p. 22). I propose it is this variation and continual transformation which allows Goth identity to persist, evolving and asserting new meaning within a layered expression of its 'known' identity trope.

The Goth spectrum incorporates the plenitude of difference of contemporary society, whilst harking back to the artistic and literary traditions which first utilised Gothic themes. Goth has developed constantly and cohesively for over forty years, with a strong suite of cultural capital and behaviours formed around its complex community of belonging. Stylistic facets of the culture help define its social networks and meaning structures to participants (McCracken 1997, p. 25). In *The Gothic and the Everyday* Lorna Piatti-Farnell and Maria Beville provide a rich contemporary conception of *the Living Gothic*:

...a living culture in its own right, through its intersections with the everyday, and with the communication and expression of shared experience.

(Piatti-Farnell & Beville 2014, p. 1-2)

Encompassing a wide spectrum of gothic including the everyday lived experience of being Goth as well as historically recorded influences, this definition sheds important light on previously unexplored elements of Goth influence. Piatti-Farnell and Beville recognise Goth personal

expression as both a symbolic reaction to mainstream trends and as a steadfast desire to maintain particular aesthetic and artistic frameworks (Piatti-Farnell & Beville 2014, p. 11). The consistency of the subculture can be seen to sustain a social value system into adulthood, intact with a discrete yet wide-ranging suite of aesthetic signifiers, defining for participants a consistent source for 'ways of being' within a geographically diverse community. For many participants, these elements remain relatively consistent throughout different life stages, constructing a reliable mode of visual communication within the culture.

Overt exterior expressions of culture – including spectacular aesthetics – define Goth to those outside the culture and provide a form of visual shorthand with which to identify participants. This aspect of subcultural identity is critical, as it provides non-participants with a visual, social, and linguistic framework in which to categorise, label, and identify subcultures without intimate insider experience. Sartorial expression of Goth aesthetics simultaneously broadcasts to other Goths culturally coded information, providing indicators of taste, style, social connections, musical preferences, etc. Goth culture exists, at once, in the present and past tense.

Events serve as sites of promotion for new themes and appropriated or out-of-culture goods and styles into the Goth aesthetic spectrum. Importantly these additions to the Goth aesthetic vocabulary often demonstrate humour and a sophisticated understanding of the overt spectacularity of Goth, as well as reflecting the sundry spending habits of participants – from charity shop DIY to high-end fashion. For example, Goths have embraced a gradual inclusion of Steampunk accoutrements due to inherent historic references and general availability as Halloween costumes. The Mexican Calavera (sugar skull) has been adopted by Goths due to its morbid associations, as have Halloween decorations, religious candles, and iconography, etc. These now form staples of Goth accessories and as kitsch household decor. In contrast glow-sticks often present at Goth gigs and clubs allude to Cyber, rave, and drug culture and serve as overt, sometimes ironic, visual demonstrations of excitement. Such acts of appropriation can be seen to signify personal meaning to participants, often being interpreted ironically or over time coming to exemplify creative characteristics of the culture.

Goth identity pre-dates internet socialisation; in the period of analogue connection, Goths often experienced Gothness as an isolated, individual expression of identity. Reiteration of styles in virtual locations, in turn, generates cultural memory, with initial participants acting as aesthetic interpreters in establishing new motifs or widespread behaviours in the scene (Scharf, 2011 p. 130). Online perpetuation of Goth style has thus enshrined the core tenets of the culture,

providing tangible individual bonds to previous generations of Goth alongside new Goth styles without physical sites of Goth identity.

The element of constancy is intrinsic to understanding how Goths – and other spectacular subcultural groups – find meaning and relevance in the visually overt expressions of their culture. It is conceivable that without the internet the Goth culture may have died away, its musical ingenuity spent by the 1990s, and any understanding of cultural consistency lost to isolated pockets of subcultural expression. The nebulous social platforms of the internet have in part provided a launching point from which satellite incarnations of the culture have spawned, each with their idiosyncrasies and histories.

Much of the difficulty around describing the Goth phenomenon revolves around its co-reliant states of constancy and evolution and the seemingly opposing forces of nostalgic reflection and emerging 'newness' that define its social and aesthetic characteristics. Goth transgresses the boundaries of theory just as it does the boundaries of fashion and style, and here a theoretical distinction emerges between style and aesthetics. Style may be transitory, ephemeral, and adopted for a particular function – to shock, provoke, rebel or communicate membership – but aesthetics become constant individual choices, more consciously considered, fitting within a prescribed pattern and order to reflect a long-standing commitment to an identity trope.

In practice, Goth is comprised of a multiplicity of differences and expressions in a range of vastly different contexts. It is not stagnant and has comparable trend sequences to mainstream culture, drawing on self-reference and appropriation from outside the culture to reposition it for each generation. Such changes in the Goth scene create strong connections between members as they grow and learn the boundaries of their identity through exposure to the culture. Goth has evolved to incorporate such a variety of aesthetic expressions that it can support not only local interests but also large-scale commercial enterprises (such as the M'era Luna Festival in Germany catering for 25000+ attendees each year). There is no desire to be 'trendy' in the conventional sense, yet through the artful accumulation of 'correct' items and archetypes, there is strong conformity to established understandings of what 'trendy' means to Goths.

Consistent Goth archetypes are part of the structure of the Goth community, with a spectrum of predictable signifiers from plain black clothes to an array of permanent with body modifications (tattoos, piercings) and elaborate stereotypes. I observed Goth communities in person in the UK, Canada, Europe, and Australia, participating in Goth events ranging from large festivals to intimate

private social settings, as well as almost constant online engagement. In each location familiar social patterns were observed as 'normal' for Goth settings; groups of Goth 'types' and even distinct typical personalities could be observed replicated in diverse geographic locations despite language differences, socio-economic circumstances, and venues. As illustrated in Figure 4 even within close friendship groups different Goth 'types' are common and form part of the social display of Goth identity.



Figure 4 Melbourne Goth & Victorian Picnic, 2017: various Goth appearance types

This crucial part of being Goth means participants are fluent in a language that cannot be immediately taught or transferred; it is a learned way of being which informs all facets of personality and continues to be 'read' even if/when participation wanes. An important element of culture, Goths have developed this language from a primarily aesthetic foundation, with argot forming around particular aspects of Gothness and Goth artefacts. To do so Goth culture has embraced new modes of being Goth, methods of communication, and ways in which to share, acquire and absorb bricolage aesthetic artefacts (Bernal 2016, p. 80). This is not unconscious mirroring of established Goth appearance; each generation reinterprets the 'Goth look' with acute self-awareness and comprehension of the breadth of Goth style (Piatti-Farnell, L & Brien, D 2015 p. 5). As highlighted in the quotation below, Goth does evolve and embrace change:

I am 37, and have been part of the goth scene for nearly 20 years. I would say that I actually were "goth" before even knowing the word, simply because this whole fascination with all things dark and gloomy, the black clothing, it all happened naturally and before I got aware that there were others like me. ...

What I love to this day about the goth scene is the variety of interests and looks, yet all somehow connected. Horror, rock music, electronic music, fetish kink, dark humour, great drinking buddies and parties, great gigs, great fans...

And it's alive and evolving, it's not stagnating like so many other subcultures. Over the twenty years I have been in the scene, so many looks and trends have come and gone, it's fascinating. Yet the people always stay the same at heart, great friends... they just look different every couple of years.

[Online Comment – Reddit – 03 09 2013]

In this Goth is the very essence of plenitude; it does not only accommodate difference and accumulation of ideas, it actively encourages it within its own cultural idiom (McCracken 1997 p. 112). As evidenced by survey and interview responses, in social settings the experience of deciphering substance in the style of other Goths becomes 'the connecting tissue', the subcultural glue which creates lasting bonds and enables longevity of association (Ferrell et al., 2008 p. 198). As an insider to the culture I was able to decode and interpret these sub-groups, cliques, shared fandoms, and music tastes using this engagement to introduce varied contemporary Goth voices to my research, an essential quality of Goth I found lacking in much scholarly discourse. Such increased scholarly engagement within the culture has improved the language used to describe Goth identity and revealed intimate details of being Goth once overlooked from critical discussion. Understanding the complexity of Goth style, then, is vital to understanding Goth as a phenomenon, a socio-aesthetic mode, and as an identity.

Clothing forms the basis of connection for participants. Band t-shirts are a common example of Goth social shorthand. For outsider researchers one band t-shirt may look much the same as another, may have confronting logos or words on them. However, to the insider these artefacts form an immediate and deeply relevant narrative on the wearer. Is the band more heavy metal, is the band gloomy Trad Goth, is it an Industrial/EBM crossover, or crucially, does that band t-shirt seem out of place – does it *not fit in* – in Goth social circles. To the outsider a *Black Sabbath* or *AC/DC* t-shirt may seem at home among a sea of *Skinny Puppy*, *The Sisters of Mercy*, *Ministry*, *All About Eve*, *Diamanda Galas*, *Fields of the Nephilim*, and *London After Midnight* t-shirts, yet to Goths, the differences in these examples is manifold. In a nightclub setting, this is important; it signifies authentic belonging and broadcasts tastes, it may signal there is an outsider – benign or in extreme examples an outsider intent on harm – in an otherwise safe Goth space.

This information can be deduced in seconds from one article of clothing. When pieced together with each other aspect of dress a complex list of Goth traits can be tallied and adjudged to provide immediate social understanding. Does a person have dyed hair, hair extensions/dreadlocks/crimped hair, do they have tattoos, heavy make-up, do their clothes look

mediæval or do they look punk, what shoes are they wearing. An enormous amount of information ranging from music taste, sexual preferences, probable social status, and longevity in the scene can be transmitted instantaneously. These considerations build up an impression which communicates the depth of Goth engagement of an individual and their probable position on the spectrum of Goth aesthetics as well as their position in the social hierarchy of the community.

Like all communities, there are cliques and distinct behaviours which mark out individuals as notable. The phenomenon of 'über Goths' exists in all Goth communities – those whose appearance is at the far extreme of Goth identity. These participants tend to be highly engaged in the Goth social scene, opting for elaborate make-up, headwear, clothing, and footwear, with each element carefully curated and chosen for its Goth credentials. Demonstrating the fine line between authentic Goth imagery and exaggerated pageantry, such participants also risk being labelled as elitists or try-hard.

Critically, it is the aesthetic elements of Goth that form the foundation upon which the *culture* has developed. Goth has evolved into an integrated and cohesive identity construct around which social relations are curated. It is how Goths define themselves and how the subculture is defined by outsiders and it is inextricably linked to the aesthetics which form its 'spectacular' representations. The concept of social itself has dramatically shifted since the conceptualisation of subcultures in the 1970s: 'social' interactions no longer require local knowledge or personal connections, much less an understanding of individual standings or notions of class. Internet interactions and virtual social bonding now arguably hold equivalent weight, with the daily habit of online interaction superseding the infrequent in-person interactions. Such changes demand a renewed method for investigating and classifying non-mainstream cultures, youth or otherwise.

Like other insider-researchers, it has become clear to me that traditional/existing sociological terminology is no longer adequate. The phrase 'youth subculture' itself now seems fundamentally unsuitable, with many subcultures first observed in the early 20th century still extant today (such as Rasta, Surfers and Motorcycle groups). In addition to the 'youth' element being outmoded, the 'sub' of subculture implies such membership groups and participants exist as a sub-class of society, undeserving of scholarly consideration beyond novelty (Bessant 1991 p. 10, Blackman 2005 p. 3). Reflecting this view, I have elected to eliminate the 'sub' from subculture from here on in my findings, favouring instead more apposite terminology - culture. My thesis title retains subculture to indicate the principal intent and field of study of the research, and it acknowledges the variety of terms participants use to describe Goth, as detailed in the introduction. Goth also presently

remains commonly recognised as a subculture in academic taxonomy and journalistic fields, however, the role of socially accessible media and a more interactive academe is beginning to shift how Goth is framed in literature, how it is discussed and what terms we most associate with it. Thus, it is my position that the study of Goth can no longer be situated in the field of youth studies, nor within the scope of 'subculture'; rather it has attained through its plenitude, longevity, and constancy the condition of culture replete with its own identity framework.

As argued above, Goth culture is well placed to disrupt theoretical surety, transgressing the definitions of 'youthful' rebellion as defined by CCCS as well as the tribal conceptions favoured by post-subcultural theorists. The emphasis on stylistic significance described by CCCS, Hebdige's bricolage, and cultural substance as described by Hodkinson is certainly evidenced in Goth.

Goth exists in a state of political, economic, and social neutrality, not rebelling nor seeking to improve economic conditions or subvert hegemonic political idioms; Goth is reacting. Goth inhabits an aesthetic space that traverses these conditions, enabling social connectedness outside the traditional metrics of status. I argue that Goth is a personal reaction to societal pressures and remains an insider expression; the nuanced language of Goth can only be read or more fully explained from within the culture.

As put forward by Hodkinson, the concept of cultural substance with its requisite indicative criteria is a valid process of broad subcultural identification, providing a rubric for evaluating aesthetically-driven communities of belonging. Hodkinson connects the application of distinct Goth clothing (etc) as a meaning-laden form of social armour, all of which is knowingly utilised by participants to create communities of belonging. Participant responses for this study corroborate Hodkinson's views, with many responses illustrating the forethought required to 'get Gothed up' and acquire appropriate Goth trappings. Intended for the study of groups, the criteria laid out by Hodkinson is however open to interpretation at an individual participant level and implies a process of meritorious admission to the Goth subculture which is inaccurate. A participant's social status within the culture may be impacted by 'correct' attire – just as in mainstream cliques – however, engagement with Goth is entirely due to individual motivation. Individual accounts of Gothness, therefore, represent a valuable resource in untangling the social and stylistic spectrum of the culture. The complexity of Goth identity with its manifold aesthetic and social expressions requires a mode of examination that accounts for its historic duration as well as its translocal effect.

Accordingly, I present findings in this study which build on Hodkinson's work, sourcing input from a broader range of research participants to detail Goth's global cultural expressions. I discuss how the evolution of alternative beauty archetypes in Goth have influenced wider society and transcended sub to become culture (Welsch 1997 p. 5). As indicated above, Bennett's post-subcultural theory supports concepts of fluidity, multiplicity, and temporality which are fitting in the case of Goth where all three elements are well documented, suggesting a satisfactory bridge between subcultural and post-subcultural theory (Bennett 2011 p. 503). The common, static, aesthetic features of Goth so oft-quoted in the literature conventionally describe the culture in terms of a fixed style range and easily identifiable music canon. Extant literature suggests Goth aesthetic elements hold tight to established ideals of beauty, visual spectacularity, and music, while the social impetus drives forward new understandings of the form those aesthetics will take. This is contestable, as supported by Goths themselves whose continual discourse and re-evaluation of what is Goth informs much of this thesis. Goth aesthetics are far from fixed and have in the last five years alone demonstrated capacity for wild variation and change, now inclusive of once unimaginable elements (such as Pastel Goth). For the Goth culture, the co-reliant contexts of the social and the aesthetic form the two constant strands which define the culture and around which all else is constructed.

With large numbers of Goths now well beyond the age-ceiling of youth, it is apparent there is a deeper significance of the culture than an attraction to spectacular sartorial choices. Displaying long-term consistency across a broad spectrum of stylistic influences, Goth goes beyond scene with translocal expressions and longevity. The subcultural space Goth carves out is more keenly aligned to notions of lifestyle, yet this too is terminologically inadequate to capture the global phenomenon of Goth. Its aesthetic motifs influence pop culture and strong social networks ensure Goth is a sophisticated framework around which to construct ideas of self, style, and community.

Goth style takes many forms and has led to the emergence of Goth sub-genres, described variously as scenes, tribes, neo-tribes, etc., evolving with each new generation of participants to incorporate fresh influences and re-imagined stereotypes. There is perhaps a valid argument supporting the various sub-subcultures within Goth to be considered in the language of the neo-tribe – Victorian Goth to Industrial through to Gothic Lolita – reflect tribes of a culture in little, mimicking the relationship of Goth to broader mainstream popular culture. The correlation of these transitions to different life stages is also significant; where the rigours of all-night dancing in the Industrial scene may be achievable as a young participant, the physical and professional

realities of adulthood may necessitate a transition to a less vigorous aesthetic sub-genre within the Goth spectrum.

As will be discussed in the following chapters, the relationships Goth culture formed (and continues to form) with similarly othered groups is significant. This is particularly so in the Australian context where alternative music populations were small in the early 1980s and venues were difficult to secure for niche musicians and DJs. Survey and interview data presented in the following chapters show that Goths find a true sense of belonging, community, and authentic identity through being Goth for extended periods. Association with Goth style/identity brings a sense of closure for participants; Goth communities create a clandestine world in which sociality, personality, and sexuality (etc.) can be safely explored with visual spectacularity and music interests serving as a universal passport.

Having Goths and punks come together, we have always been together, when I was around.

There was no punk club/Goth club they were always the same – and it had been that way for a few years before I came along. They were definitely very comfortable together. I don't know if there were any other clubs for the Goths to go to.

There were a lot of gay people in the Goth scene too, because they liked the music, or they liked the look, or they got along with the people, so there was a cross over, but it wasn't one and the same, just a few of them would love coming to the clubs.

I remember when I was bar-keeping, Hellfire here, I was a bar tender for it – so the Goths would come in to see what it was all about.

MPF104, Melbourne Interview Participant

Alliances ensured many 'othered' communities were able to stage events safely and with a degree of financial security, affording patrons a social environment in which transgressive or extravagant appearance and alternative lifestyles were accepted. As a club promoter I have experience working with other members of the Goth community in developing Goth nights with nightclub owners and managers. Important relationships could be established with club owners and organisers who valued Goths' 'low-aggro' nature despite their reputation as low-spend clientele.

Yeah when we ran the gigs in the back room here... you know I was talking to the bouncers and they were in shock – they were like we love you guys! There is never any trouble!

PPM012, Perth Interview Participant

Yeah. The one positive thing that has come from it if you can say that. Back in the bad old days, back in the day the bouncers at clubs loved us all. We never caused trouble, running a Goth club is a dream for a bouncer, because the worst you will get is someone who gets wildly drunk, and pass out. That was it.

BPM402, Brisbane Interview Participant

This perception of the culture was well established by the 1990s in Perth, and offered a 'trade-off' to local proprietors. Goth nights could be successfully run on the off nights of major venues, when

proprietors were otherwise not earning: it was accepted the bar would not turn a considerable profit, however the cost of security for the night was lower and the overall risk of anti-social behaviour was low.

This early 'otherness' afforded an understanding of difference to be embedded as a fundamental aspect of Goth culture, contributing to open expressions of androgyny, overt sexuality, and gender fluidity becoming common in Goth identity and aesthetics (Brill 2008, p. 61). Similarly, some aspects of visual spectacularity once regarded as extreme style by Hebdige et al have mellowed in the broader social consciousness to be seen more as quirky, eccentric, or simply creative expressions of identity (Adams 2008, p. 479). Vibrantly coloured hair is no longer remarkable, make-up in pop culture can be as bizarre and confronting as Goth make-up, and the clothing, once seen as extravagant and challenging, is increasingly regarded as a facet of 21st-century mainstream culture (Bruzzi & Gibson Church 2013 p. 43).

The styles of music, and associated social customs at clubs, events, festivals, etc., represent the foundation around which Goth identity, and therefore Gothness, is constructed. In-scene taste is inherited by new members through observation, direct communication, and social settings, as well as increasingly through online platforms which facilitate highly self-reflective practices and social gate-keeping within the community. Survey and interview data demonstrates Goth has evolved into a global cultural space in which those who already feel outside mainstream society can fit in, belong and flourish beyond the experimental phases of youth.

As described by two Australian survey participants, attraction to Goth can be summarised as:

Music, clothing, freedom of expression and acceptance by others in the scene

ASP082 AQ6¹¹ Age 37

I liked the music - it's what I found first, and then fell in love with the fashion. It felt like a scene and a group of people that I fit in with.

ASP329 AQ6¹² Age 27

Gothness is not defined by appearance alone; it is acquired, developed, and nurtured over extended periods during which the nuances of the culture are understood and its worth generated for participants. Gothness can therefore be described as the sum of the socio-aesthetic elements of Goth culture expressed as individual and collective Goth identity. I propose the global reach of Goth communities means that Goth subculture is more established, less radical, less sub than it

11 AQ6 Describe why you chose Goth and what attracted you to your particular style

12 AQ6 Describe why you chose Goth and what attracted you to your particular style

once was. Goth has evolved to be a more complex culture, yet has retained strong non-mainstream aesthetic boundaries, which as discussed in the following chapters, often feature deathly themes and macabre motifs.

Theoretical Conclusion: Socio-aesthetic framework

As this chapter has argued, the theorisation of Goth identity and/or its broader culture necessitates a re-conception of both the idea of subcultures and aesthetically-prominent communities of belonging. I claim Goth can be theorised as a socio-aesthetic framework around which identity is constructed and continuously evolves, a distinct cultural universe existing within a plenitude of customs, geographies, and individual experiences.

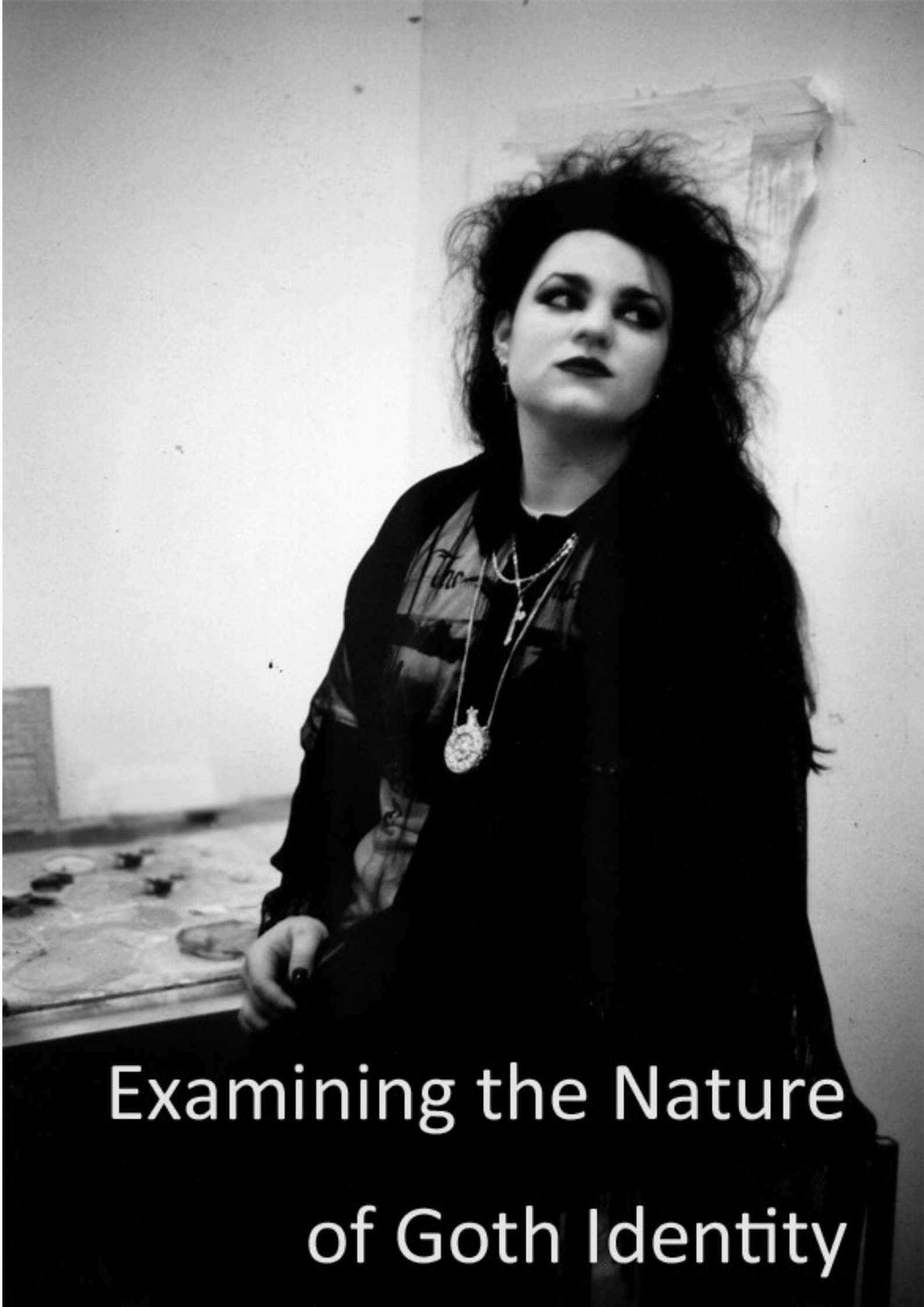
The social, musical, and visual aspects of Goth are so strong, so essential to participants that they must be acknowledged as core factors of Goth identity and the Goth community. Goth exists at the nexus of aesthetics and community: it is the product of the seamless integration of aesthetic concepts and belonging in a niche social environment.

A more intimate 'cultural framework' than that theorised by Geert Hofstede, I suggest the Goth socio-aesthetic framework governs the individual and collective identity traits of Goth (Hofstede 1990, p. 300). These traits encompass the spectrum of aesthetic values described in the data, longevity of participation, shared social principles, attitudinal positions, and inclusive ethos of Goth. Providing the mechanisms whereby participants cultivate Gothness, the longevity of association develops lifestyle behaviours and structures interpersonal relations within distinct Goth contexts. That is, within an established chronology, Goth is the manner and circumstance in which identity is experienced and expressed, with particular places holding unique significance connected to discrete cultural activities (Feldman-Barrett 2018 p. 5). It is not the 'sub' part of subculture which sustains Gothness so much as it is the culture part.

Here I aim to reposition the discourse on Goth, presenting it as a large-scale, global, collective identity construct built on distinct, highly codified preferences and behaviours. I shift the discourse on Goth towards the language of culture, regarding contemporary Goth as a mature, complex global phenomenon, having out-grown early characterisations of subculture, and the inherent perceptions of Goth as small-scale, loosely-linked communities of 'quirky' youth. I propose that the fluid Goth socio-aesthetic framework exists simultaneously within and outside the mainstream, influencing and being influenced by changes in societal norms and modes of interaction. Data presented here show commonalities between geographically diverse Goth communities, which I argue demonstrates Goth has achieved the status of global culture. Extending Goth research to

more fully incorporate the post-subcultural view, my proposed socio-aesthetic reading of Goth identity, emphasises the influence long-term Goth association has on individuals and the Goth community.

This theory could be applied to other such cultures: the hip-hop subculture shares similar characteristic features, such as aesthetic/musical difference, defined modes of social interaction and customs of sociability which can be explicated across locations. The changing world makes it necessary to move on from while building upon the early sociological studies from CCCS (and others) in the examination of contemporary niche cultures.



Examining the Nature of Goth Identity

Image overleaf: Photograph of the author, c. 1992

Photograph by Julie Blyth

Chapter 4 : EXAMINING THE NATURE OF GOTH IDENTITY

It is otherness, a love of the music, the darker aspects of life combined with a lust for life and fun, it is a sense of belonging

[ISP357 Age, 43 Q13¹³]

In this chapter I examine the nature of Goth identity and established tropes of the culture. Informed by research findings I provide a synopsis of the social origins of Goth collective identity and how its foundation in othered communities helped cement its reputation for nurturing difference and creating safe spaces for belonging.

Participant data is introduced, providing a demographic portrait of the research cohort. The data provides an introduction to the Goth phenomenon, authentically describing the visual and behavioural traits to which 'Goth' is attached and how participants differently express these attributes at different life stages.

I describe the function of physical appearance, Goth motifs, and experimentation, and the importance artefacts hold in maintaining Goth identity across generations of participants. Through an examination of these aesthetic markers and social practices, I identify the core parameters of Goth and establish the concept of Gothness to illustrate motivations behind 'types' of Goths and their 'spectacular' stylistic choices. Among the characteristics described, music is identified as a catalyst for Goth connection and a prime source of long-term Goth identity, sociality, and aesthetic preference. To contextualise Goth identity, I provide a brief introductory reading of Goth music, describing the genesis of the music genre and its central role in the social constancy of Goth aesthetics.

The invisible elements of Goth are discussed: the emotional significance of Goth attitude, what it means to be Goth and to live in the gothic mode. I examine how it feels to belong in the culture and the value placed on its various characteristics. As demonstrated by the findings, the strong social bonds developed in Goth communities are shown to be of life-long significance, establishing lasting modes of social interaction and communal identity.

I argue that Goth is empowering, that the sense of community it affords members is valued above mainstream homogeneity, and that the niche interests of Goth provide a social currency that aids

¹³ IQ13How would you describe Goth identity

interpersonal relationships, supports personal ethos development, and promotes acceptance and inclusion. Goth is therefore complex, existing as a constantly evolving and self-reflecting community, each member bringing diverse influences and expressions of Gothness, new visual attributes as well as emerging notions of the Goth self.

Through the descriptions and data in this chapter, I propose Gothness is a source of psychological strength for participants and that the social settings of the culture obviate pressures of conventional mainstream gender roles, beauty ideals, and lifestyle expectations. *Being Goth* permits participants to assert their personhood within a community where uniqueness is understood and appreciated; in turn, this engenders group empowerment which reinforces specific aesthetic and social choices (Moore, 2018, p. 47). Notions of Gothness are established through description, contextualising Goth as a well-established music-based culture, with long-standing communities across the world in a broad range of age groups. Empirical survey and interview data are used to illustrate the socio-aesthetic factors which, for many participants, mean Goth identity is not just a phase and how perceptions of Goth characteristics transition throughout life. I describe the Australian and International cohorts, using quantitative survey data to show correlations and variances between the two.

This approach results a thick description of Goth from insider perspectives and provides a brief historical context for the culture and its associated music. In so doing I provide a foundational understanding of the nature of Goth identity and Gothness, the socio-aesthetic identity conditions which generate meaning and feelings of belonging within the culture.

What is Goth?

The ostensibly simple question of *What is Goth?* provides an appropriate place to start a discussion on the nature of Goth culture, Goth identity, Goths, and the overarching concept of Gothness.

Constructing an answer to this question based on authentic participant views, I assert that Goth exists as an identity framework within three, sometimes concurrent, states of being: outsiderhood, belonging, and constancy. I propose that elements of these states are present in all Goth social and aesthetic traits, providing participants with the requisite foundation for constructing meaningful connections in the Goth community. For long-term participants, for whom Goth is not just a phase, Goth holds greater personal significance than merely a good outfit with accompanying music. Goths communicate Gothness through their whole life mode, the little world of Goth, incrementally inventing what is Goth and harnessing nostalgia to continually secure it to its past (van Elferen, 2011 p. 96).

The Goth subculture has traditionally embraced distinctiveness as a form of ego support within the bounds of its own conformity, applying difference within a relatively rigid spectrum of Gothness. Writing a gig review in *The Times* in 1990, David Sinclair succinctly described Goths as "Pale creatures, their fashion sense located at the point where Punk meets Vamp" (Sinclair, 1990). This accounts for the basic appearance of Goths however it fails to convey the compound nature of Goth identity. The long-term balance between uniqueness and established modes of appearance has however resulted in the emergence of distinct 'types' of Goths or subsets of the genre each displaying codified aesthetic markers. This steady evolution of the Goth species aids analysis and provides an in-culture template through which aesthetic nuances can be better understood and the depth of meaning present in Goth identity appreciated.

Engaging in a subculture, as described by Mitchell and Black, allows participants "to feel more seen, more real, and more internally substantial" (Mitchell & Black, 1995 p. 161). Goth culture is conscious of its use of spectacular visual style, accentuating visual characteristics precisely to be seen and communicate difference. I argue participants utilise the spectacularity and visual uniqueness of Goth as a means of achieving a true sense of self (Spooner, 2005 p. 196).

Who is Goth - the Research Cohort

In this research, the age ranges for the International cohort were 14-69 and for the Australian cohort 15-68, with the average of 35.4 and 38.7 respectively as detailed in Table 4. Participants 25

years of age and under formed 21.55% of the International cohort and 20.53% of the Australian cohort.

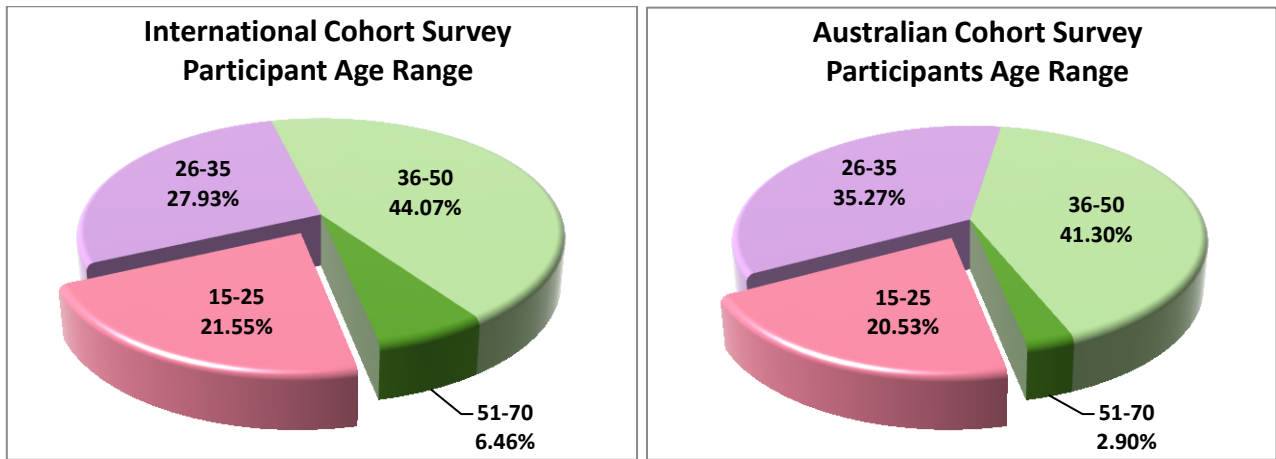
As shown in Figure 5 below, the survey data shows a proportionally higher participation rate for Goths over the age of 25, with those over 36 years of age in the majority. The highest proportion of respondents, in both cohorts, was from the target audience age range of 36-50 years. The average age of participants in this study was beyond the UN definition of 'youth' provided above and indeed represents older Goths with long-standing experience in the culture.

Age is an important consideration in the identification of long-term Goth identity and characteristics. Were these surveys to be repeated with younger Goths *only*, whose experience in the scene is relatively recent and materially different to older Goths, it is probable responses would demonstrate a different alignment of Goth cultural values.

Table 4 International and Australian Cohort: Survey Participant Demographic Details

AQ 1 & 2 AUSTRALIAN COHORT			IQ 1 & 2 INTERNATIONAL COHORT		
AVERAGE TOTAL YEARS GOTH	COHORT AVERAGE AGE	AVERAGE AGE WHEN FIRST GOTH	AVERAGE TOTAL YEARS GOTH	COHORT AVERAGE AGE	AVERAGE AGE WHEN FIRST GOTH
22.998	38.72	15.723	19.7	35.404	15.704
(Question response International n=1334, Australian n=415)					

The average age when first adopting Goth identity is significant, fifteen years of age sits at the cusp of 'youth' leading out of childhood. Awareness, and initial adoption, of Goth identity can crucially be seen to be formed in pre-adulthood when peer-influences are most keenly felt (Feldman-Barrett 2018, p. 4). Scaffolded by peer support, both online and in real life, the coded visual identity of Goth provides a foundation from which youths may safely transition into adulthood, with many preserving Goth traits into later life.



(Question response IQ1 International n=1334, AQ1 Australian n=415)

Figure 5 International and Australian Cohort: Survey Participant Age Ranges

The close correlation between the cohorts' average age, total years in the Goth scene, and average age are also notable.

Gender

When designing the data gathering methods for surveys, no catchment targets were set regarding gender. The question requesting gender information was not compulsory (AQ/IQ4 *What is your gender?*) and transgender/undisclosed options were also provided.

As per Table 5, survey responses show a strong gender bias towards female participants. This bias and the influence it may have on responses have been considered throughout. Where possible additional data has been observed and recorded from online sources where male input is lacking or of additional benefit.

Table 5 Survey Responses: Gender

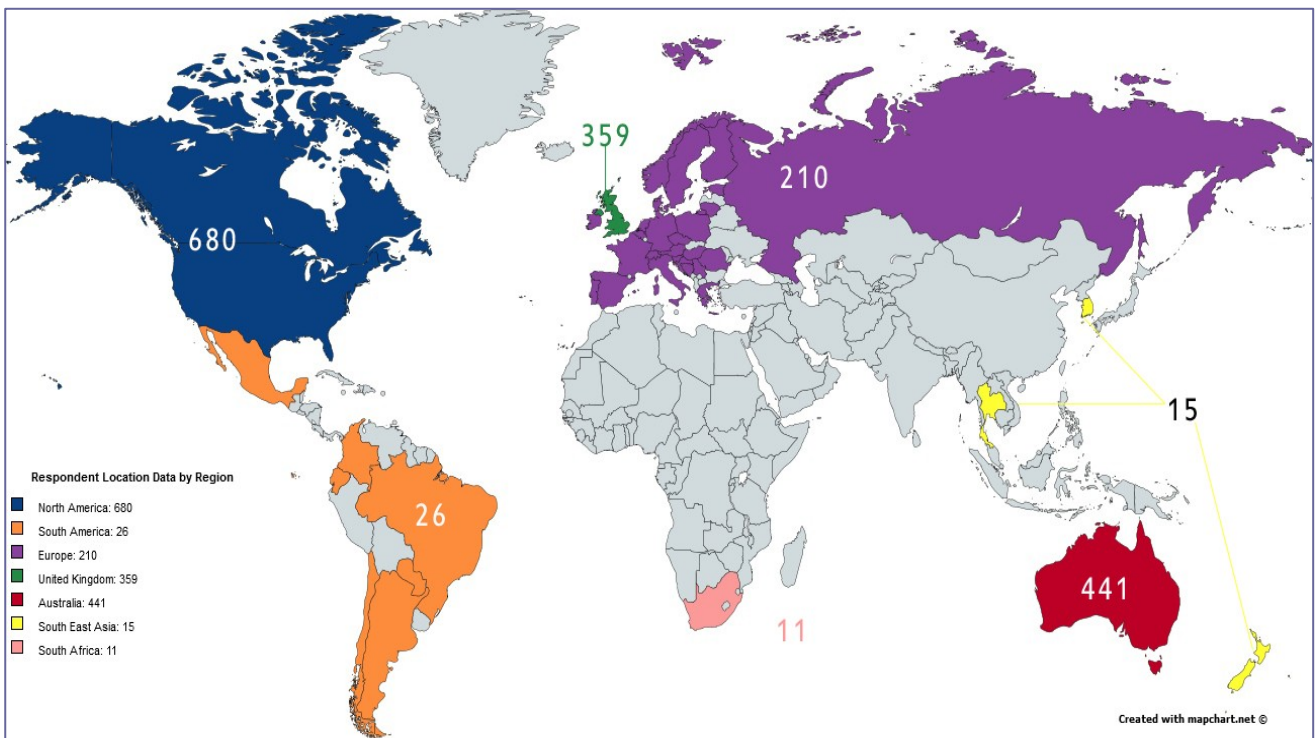
AQ4 : GENDER - AUSTRALIAN COHORT				IQ4 : GENDER - INTERNATIONAL COHORT			
FEMALE	MALE	TRANS-GENDER	UNDISCLOSED	FEMALE	MALE	TRANS-GENDER	UNDISCLOSED
295	108	10	1	860	426	38	8
71.26%	26.09%	2.42%	0.24%	64.56%	31.98%	2.85%	0.60%

[Question response : Australian n=414, International n=1332]

Where are they from?

The diversity of location responses received for the International and Australian surveys conducted for this study are illustrated by Figure 6 and Table 6. The parameters of participation for this research asked Goths to self-identify as being long-term participants open to discussing their experiences of Goth. The population of participating Goths is spread across much of the developed world.

As illustrated in Figure 6, I received 1773 full-data responses from self-identified respondents in 43 countries¹⁴. Some additional partial surveys were received as well as hundreds of interactions online via semi or informal data gathering methods including emails, discussions, phone conversations, and social media.



[n=IQ3 1332, AQ3 441]

Figure 6 Survey Respondent Location Map - by Region (resident)

When broken down into City or Country of origin data as in Table 6, the spread of participants is wide-ranging, with The United States (604), Australia (441), and The United Kingdom (359) the primary countries of origin of respondents.

¹⁴ International Survey Question Number 3: What is your city or country of residence? Response countries n=42 International + n=1 Australia

Table 6 Respondent Data by Location: International and Australian cohorts

Survey responses: IQ/AQ3 What is your city or country of residence?							
Argentina	2	Denmark	3	Malta	1	SE Asia	2
Australia (including ex-pat)	441	Ecuador	1	Mexico	6	Serbia	2
Austria	4	Estonia	1	Netherlands	21	Slovenia	1
Belgium	37	Finland	8	New Zealand	13	South Africa	11
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1	France	4	Norway	4	Spain	7
Brazil	2	Germany	54	Paraguay	3	Sweden	14
Canada	76	Greece	4	Poland	5	Switzerland	5
Chile	3	Hungary	4	Portugal	4	Unclassified/Other	3
Colombia	3	Ireland	9	Puerto Rico	6	United Kingdom	359
Croatia	5	Italy	3	Romania	2	USA	604
Czech Republic	3	Lithuania	3	Russia	1	[n=IQ3 1332, AQ3 441]	

Australian Cohort

When compared to the overall population of these states (Figure 8), respondent volumes broadly correspond to the overall population of the states. When further aligned with climate data, there is a correlation with temperature zones, which is supported by participant responses in the data described in the *Australian Goth* chapter.

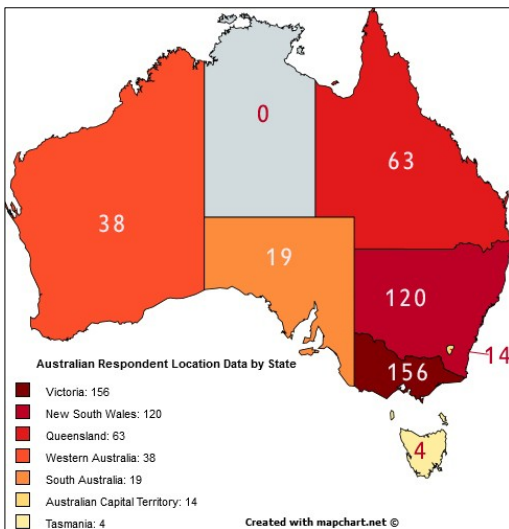


Figure 7 Australian Survey Respondent Location Map - by State (resident) [n=414]

As illustrated in Figure 7 respondent data was received from all states of Australia other than the Northern Territory. Unlike other states, no dedicated online group or forum could be located for

the Northern Territory, though it seems reasonable to assume there are at least a few Goths there, despite the lack of participation in this study.

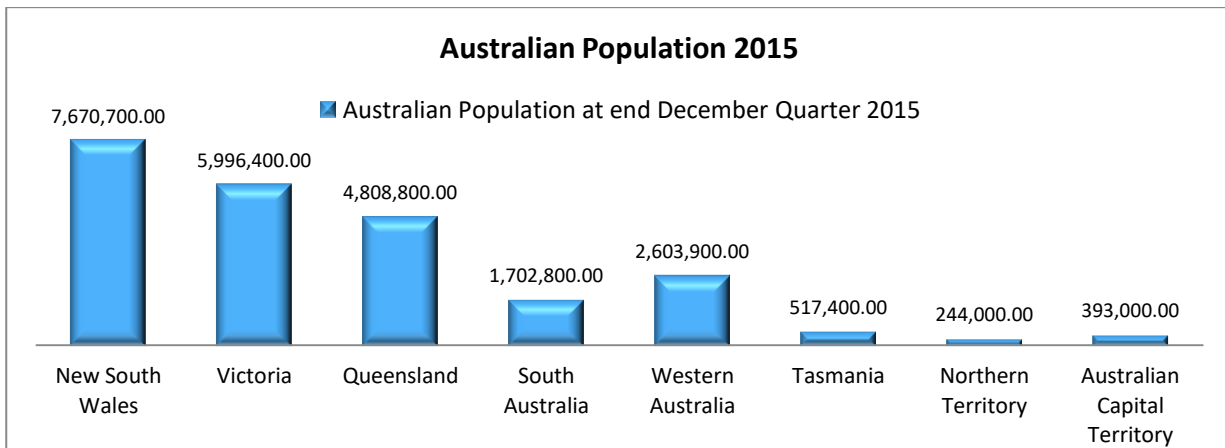


Figure 8 Australian Bureau of Statistics: Overall Australian Population Data by State 2015

What is Goth: Aesthetic Markers

The apparent uniformity of Goth appearance (black hair, pale make-up, black clothes) to external observers forms a kind of social camouflage not unlike the stripes of a zebra, in which the diversity and variation of the culture can be obscured from the inexperienced eye. While this description captures the bare essentials of Goth – and even perhaps how Goths routinely describe themselves – it does little to inform us of what Goth is. Worse still this casual description reduces it down to a caricature of itself and abjectly fails to convey the vast spectrum of Goth style and variability of influences that characterise contemporary Goth (Roberts, Livingstone & Baxter-Wright 2015 p. 208). Yet when asked to define the nuances of Goth, Goths can be evasive emphasising instead its uniqueness and non-conformity.

To the outsider, the Goth 'look' may initially appear as an act of profound attention-seeking. Lenson identifies such 'active aestheticism' as being a defining characteristic of the Goth subculture, ascribing the aesthetic preoccupations of the culture to a very much youth-oriented and adolescent scene. Instead, this research contends that Goth clothing elements are not relics of youth, but a dense symbolic representation of culture, displayed by Goths to exert social authenticity and express camaraderie.

Goth identity is not an accident; participants do not accidentally continue to wear Goth attire, and do not accidentally apply intricate make-up - or as Spooner so aptly describes it "*elaborate maquillage* that is such a signature feature of Goth subcultural appearance." (Spooner, 2011 p.

95). Goths intuitively weigh up the effects and connotations of their identity choices through daily micro-rituals, building a socially formulated codec of aesthetics that binds participants in a little culture of belonging. That this 'look' is seemingly at odds with the mainstream does not necessarily equate to attention-seeking behaviour, it is simply different from the mainstream. Where other subcultures such as Hippies or Skinheads adhere to a social or political ethos, Goth for the most part relies on its spectacular visual representations and aesthetics to express its culture.

The concept of aesthetic identity has been explored by several researchers in the field such as Brill, de Boise and Issitt (among others) whose studies into the subculture contribute to a more nuanced dialogue on Goth as a complex, global social phenomenon (see: Brill 2008, de Boise 2014, Issitt, 2011). Hodkinson addresses the value of aesthetic difference in *Goth* (2002 p. 74), drawing a binary insider/outsider frame around the culture, reiterating notions of difference as central to the Goth identity. In *Goth: undead subculture*, Lenson discusses the emergence of the Goth aesthetic from its progenitor Punk. While acknowledging Goth as an aesthetically-driven culture, this research argues that both the subculture and its participants have evolved to allow a more mature and wholly adult, and importantly conscious approach to Goth identity.

Choice and Camouflage

Dressing up is an important factor for Goth participants, as described by Hodkinson, 'getting Gothed-up with friends' is a central social activity in the Goth culture which endorses and amplifies adherence to particular aesthetics (Hodkinson 2002 p. 93). The social context of these aesthetics is critical: the performative nature of applying Goth garb is vital to maintaining a 'presence' in the scene and for socialisation of new aesthetic elements. Goth fashion is physically complex and made up of many layers of fabrics, textures, adornments, and tones; none of these are accidental. Goth is a constant negotiation of what it is to be outside the mainstream, to project a confident sense of self that cannot be easily unpicked. Goths take up visual and physical space, demanding attention and deflecting ridicule through painstakingly rehearsed and researched creative self-expression (Moore, 2018, p. 91).

For instance, some participants may adopt high-Victorian Goth attire for passive attendance at events like picnics or other social 'promenading', however may choose to wear leather trousers, a band t-shirt, and heavy boots to engage in club-based or gig events where dancing and physical exertion are paramount. Like other social groups, choosing the 'right' outfit can be peer-reviewed prior to leaving for an event, ensuring participants are engaged in a continual reassessment of the

boundaries of what is and is not Goth. Individual application of Goth style then can communicate current interests, yet may fluctuate week to week, day to day, or over years of in-culture engagement, whilst remaining relatively constant.

The significance of decoding Goth taste lies in the social contexts in which the aesthetic signifiers are expressed and how these translate into connectedness. A *Bricolage* of aesthetic elements forms a complex pattern of choices through which Goths communicate membership, signify taste and ascribe in-culture meaning, often directly connected to musical influences. The individual modes of Goth expression are not fixed – yet the overall aesthetic palette of the culture is fixed or constant around common themes and motifs. The aesthetic fixity of Goth ensures participants have a framework around which to build not only identity but daily appearance, which allows for a range of social settings. Goths broadcast their distinct aesthetic mode using this codified visual style which, if desired, can then be further analysed and validated online. For Hodgkinson, it is this stylistic fixity of the Goth culture which exempts it from the post-subcultural turn towards the language of tribe, and yet considerable change can be seen in the culture over time (Robards and Bennett 2011 p. 305).

Clothing and Style

The Goth subculture has experienced incremental change since its 1979 emergence. Most noticeable, however, has been the enormous expansion in clothing and footwear retail ventures specifically servicing the Goth community.

Goth sociality initially developed around its music, with the social environment of record stores, clubs, gigs, pubs, and festivals the primary sites for forging connections in the Goth scene and socialising with like-minded individuals. The bands, music, and personalities emergent from the earliest cohesive recognition of the 'Gothic Rock' scene have provided evolving archetypes for Goth identity and helped define its aesthetic parameters. Some Goths identify with specific characteristics or link distinct stylistic elements to particular locations, bands, or individuals. Other aesthetic elements are more nebulous and difficult to trace to a common ancestor or aesthetic. Reflection on the circumstances which sustained these differences as well as the fundamental elements which continue to define their importance within the Goth canon is essential as it provides a lexicon through which we can interpret Goth longevity.

The spectrum of aesthetics within the Goth subculture has been a reasonably stable phenomenon since its inception. The evolution of new sub-groupings and styles are in addition to the

'traditional' or Trad Goth look, which has been retained as the central feature of the culture. For those with long-established associations to the scene, the ability to now cheaply purchase items once dreamily sketched in the back of schoolbooks has drastically broadened access to Goth as well as the aesthetic choices within it. Online retail coupled with social media platforms has broadcast new niche aspects of Goth appearance injecting new options for the expression of Goth identity. The emergence of strongly branded Goth clothing (see brands such as Kill Star, Demonica, Hot Topic, Alchemy Gothic) has resulted in a suite of commonly seen Goth items, which while conforming to the Goth aesthetic fail to convey a sense of legitimacy or 'street cred'. Conversely, for those who favour the traditional, less commercial 'store bought' Goth aesthetics seeing the once-obscure, clandestine subculture you grew up in exposed and marketed as a legitimate and commercially viable fashion statement can be perplexing.

As described by van Elferen, the uniqueness of Goth clothing affords participants an “explicit expression of being 'different' from the society that they do not feel at home in” whilst maintaining otherwise 'normal' life patterns (van Elferen 2011 p. 93). Actively choosing othering empowers Goths to broadcast a highly curated expression of identity, controlling or at least exerting agency over their appearance. Over time these expressions can be seen to have evolved into a group of Goth identity tropes, transitioning in accord with life stage changes and altered daily routines (Muggleton 2000 p. 58). Goths are therefore able to carry Goth identity through life by periodically adjusting their aesthetic settings from a 'play book' of Gothness. These aesthetic expressions allow Goths to engage in othering of their circumstances, escaping everyday ordinariness to experience, for example, a created, romanticised historical era through sartorial choices, or to enjoy high-energy dance- both experiences of belonging derived through distinct socio-aesthetic choices (Passos, In Ermida 2015 p. 232).

To measure the value and prevalence of Goth aesthetic characteristics, survey question A/IQ7 asked: *At your most involved, 'back in the day', how did you express your Goth identity? (choose all characteristics that apply or provide your own answer)*. Survey participants were presented with a list of 48 quantifiable Goth aesthetics as listed in Table 7, primarily relating to clothing choices, in-culture accessories, and an escalating spectrum of make-up and hair ornamentations. The 'other' response enabled participants to add information more suitable to their circumstances in a free-text field. This question is mirrored later in the survey (AQ51 and IQ37) to measure changes in Goth expression over time. Table 8 shows the top twenty responses to this question for both cohorts.

Table 7 List of Goth Aesthetic characteristics AQ7/IQ7

Black clothing	Band T-shirts	Iconographic T-shirts (e.g. crosses, skulls, symbols)	Bondage trousers	Suits, Corporate Clothing	Extreme Goth Make-up (e.g. full face painting, zombie)	Pale make-up	Black lipstick
Black nail polish	Silver jewellery	Studs, buckles, spikes	Hair extensions	Dreadlocks/ Falls	Extreme hair (e.g. Mohawk, spikes)	Crimping or "big hair"	Dyed hair - extreme colours
Dyed hair - black	Dyed hair - non-extreme	Extreme facial styling (e.g. shaved eyebrows, vampire teeth)	Tattoos	Piercings (e.g. ear, nose, eyebrow)	Body Modifications	Tu-tus	Torn tights
Fishnet tights	Leather Jackets	Trench Coats/Frock Coats	Doc Marten Boots	Platform Boots	Victorian Style Boots	Motorcycle Boots	Winklepickers
Corsets	Fishnet tops	Full Victorian/Medieval Style Dress	Ruffled shirts/ Pirate Shirts	Flour/Dust	Velvet	PVC	Leather
Goth accoutrements (e.g. bat-bags, hats, fishnet gloves, capes)	Extreme accoutrements (e.g. gas masks, wings, contact lenses)	Music (e.g. listen to mostly Goth)	Music (e.g. follow bands, gigs)	Events (festivals, shows)	Goth interior design, house/room	Car	Other (please specify)

Black clothing was identified by both cohorts as the most prominent characteristic of Goth aesthetics, reflecting the archetypal black-clad image of goths the world over. The nature of this black clothing is further revealed in the remaining responses, with the nuances of Goth accoutrements such as fishnets and capes, velvet and embellished fabrics present. Music is the second essential characteristic identified by both cohorts, confirming its deep importance to the culture and the global influence it holds.

Characteristics not traditionally present in mainstream fashion, for example, fishnets, black dyed hair, trench coats, and frock coats, are commonplace Goth items. Both cohorts identified silver jewellery as a key characteristic of Goth appearance, a feature that distinguishes the culture from the mainstream (Spooner 2006, p. 145).

Table 8 AQ7/IQ7: Top Twenty Responses by Cohort: Goth Aesthetics

AQ7 and IQ7: At your most involved, "back in the day", how did you express your Goth identity? (choose all characteristics that apply or provide your own answer)						
AUSTRALIAN COHORT				INTERNATIONAL COHORT		
	Characteristic	Responses	Percentage of Response Cohort	Characteristic	Responses	Percentage of Response Cohort
1	Black clothing	398	95.67%	Black clothing	1283	96.24%
2	Music (e.g. listen to mostly Goth)	334	80.2%	Music (e.g. listen to mostly Goth)	1148	86.12%
3	Silver jewellery	308	74.03%	Silver jewellery	999	74.94%
4	Black nail polish	296	74.67%	Music (e.g. follow bands, gigs)	975	73.14%
5	Dyed hair - black	282	67.78%	Goth interior design, house/room	861	64.59%
6	Music (e.g. follow bands, gigs)	269	64.66%	Black nail polish	830	62.26%
7	Studs, buckles, spikes	266	63.94%	Band T-shirts	783	58.73%
8	Doc Marten Boots	264	63.46%	Doc Marten Boots	782	58.66%
9	Fishnet tights	262	62.98%	Goth accoutrements (e.g. bat-bags, hats, fishnet gloves, capes)	758	56.90%
10	Pale make-up	257	61.77%	Piercings (e.g. ear, nose, eyebrow)	754	56.56%
11	Piercings (e.g. ear, nose, eyebrow)	257	61.77%	Leather Jackets	754	56.56%
12	Corsets	246	59.13%	Tattoos	735	55.13%
13	Goth accoutrements (e.g. bat-bags, hats, fishnet gloves, capes)	242	58.17%	Events (festivals, shows)	689	51.68%
14	Band T-shirts	234	56.25%	Corsets	679	50.93%
15	Velvet	231	55.52%	Dyed hair - black	676	50.71%
16	Goth interior design, house/room	229	55.04%	Velvet	664	49.81%
17	Trench Coats/Frock Coats	228	54.80%	Leather	649	48.68%
18	Fishnet tops	221	53.12%	Studs, buckles, spikes	643	48.23%
19	Dyed hair - extreme colours	213	51.20%	Iconographic T-shirts (e.g. crosses, skulls, symbols)	641	48.08%
20	Events (festivals, shows)	212	50.96%	Pale make-up	639	47.93%

[Question response International n=1333, Australian n=416]

Silver is typically regarded as a lesser metal than gold, holding a lower status in mainstream fashion where gold communicates, wealth, opulence, and sunny warmth. For Goths, silver artefacts embody otherness by offering a clear aesthetic alternative to traditional gold. Silver is traditionally associated with moonlight and night, as well as an intrinsic element of the vampire legend. These unconventional attributes, coupled with its affordability have ensured silver remains a vital addition to Goth appearance and home wares.

Other Definitions

The 'other' option allowed participants to personally define Goth characteristics not provided on the pre-populated list. In the 4262 words of the 'other' responses, homewares feature as a common theme, with participants noting decor has transitioned from posters and club flyers (etc.) to more commercially generic yet Goth-friendly items such as black cats, bats, spiders, and raven accessories. Many participants mentioned up-cycling old furniture, antiques and vintage items to add character and Goth chic to their homes. Accessories including sunglasses, walking canes, and various headwear were also identified as significant items particular to expressing Goth identity. Items such as striped parasols, tights and trousers reminiscent of Tim Burton films, toy bats, band pins, and rosary beads were mentioned by several respondents. Many of these artefacts are appropriated from other cultures, periods or from music, film, television, and literature; this assemblage of influence remains an important factor of Goth style.

Goth Footwear

Sarah Thornton describes the intimate understanding of subcultural taste and distinction as possessing subcultural capital, that is, authentic understanding of a non-mainstream community, its behaviours and aesthetics. Belonging is achieved within such communities or scenes by identifying and displaying the 'correct' attributes as well as maintaining relevant relationships within the subculture (Thornton 1995, p. 99). Goth subcultural capital can be exhibited through a variety of types from informal to elaborate self-styling, the expression of which enables a "magical transformation of self" as a curated manifestation of subcultural style, which is easily interpreted by fellow subcultural exponents (Belk 2003 p. 28). Analysis of data gathered as part of this research identified shoes as a particularly evocative element of Goth subcultural capital and identity, mentioned frequently by survey respondents and interview participants as being a fundamental indicator of Goth style.

The role of footwear is an instantly recognisable feature of the Goth culture, and Doc Marten boots appear in the top ten of both lists in Table 8. In the Goth context, the symbolic usefulness of

footwear is powerful; Goth appearance is heavily coded and distinct from conventional fashion and the presence shoes hold is magnified by their distinctiveness and spectacularity (Hockey et al 2014 p. 258). Descriptions of Goth individuals necessarily include details on the style of footwear associated with their overall 'look'. As an item of high culture as well as often monetary value, footwear is one of the primary signifiers of Gothness; a pair of Goth shoes can betray an otherwise 'normal' outfit and expose Goth identity. Moreover, the footwear favoured in the scene is often distinctive, highly styled, and less easily subsumed by mainstream fashion, thereby enabling the quintessentially Goth appearance. This reading of the Goth aesthetic establishes footwear and its inherent meaning as a fundamental facet of the culture, an aesthetic asset held in equivalent esteem to its clothing and make-up, perhaps even in parallel to the music.

Footwear plays a prominent role in expressing the Goth culture, contributing a primary distinctive component to the spectrum of Goth styles; shoes are often one of the first and most significant purchases for young Goths and are instrumental in defining personal style within the Goth spectrum. As identified by Baddeley, the "Nice boots..." ice-breaker phenomenon is common to not only the British but also the Australian and presumably other Goth communities (Baddeley 2010, p. 112). Footwear provides a recognised way of conveying 'membership' to the semi-closed Goth community by articulating particular aesthetic and social preferences (Gilles Marion & Agnes Nairn 2011).

An emphasis on particular footwear is present in some subcultural groups, such as Skinheads (Dr. Martens/Bovver boots), sporting and Hip-Hop cultures (sneakers/athletic shoes)¹⁵, Rockabilly's and Bodgeys (Brothel Creepers), motorcycles groups (boots)¹⁶, and Japanese Cosplay or Harajuku cultures (dolly shoes, Mary Janes, etc.). In all of these groups, shoes assume the role of subcultural capital, where adoption of the 'right' kind of attire can grant access to and achieve belonging in discrete social settings. Goths use shoes to make informed judgements about other Goths, evaluating their in-culture preferences and attachments based on the style of footwear chosen in combination with clothing assemblages (Gillath et al 2012 p. 423).

Footwear choices can carry with it connotations of affluence, however, in the Goth culture, as with leather jackets, it is not uncommon for footwear to be sourced from op-shops or second-hand then personally adorned, embellished, or modified. There is a long tradition of Goths (and other

¹⁵ See: "It's gotta be the shoes": youth, race, and sneaker commercials. Wilson, B.; Sparks, R. *Sociology of Sport Journal* 1996 Vol. 13 No. 4 pp. 398-427

¹⁶ See: *Subcultures of Consumption: An Ethnography of the New Bikers* John W. Schouten and James H. McAlexander *Journal of Consumer Research* Vol. 22, No. 1 (Jun., 1995), pp. 43-61 Oxford University Press

subcultures) painting leather jackets with band logos and icon imagery, so too with shoes.

Similarly, Doc Martens or combat boots may be embellished with painted culture-specific motifs such as bats, skulls or band logos, elaborate laces, or the DIY addition of spikes.

The distinctive footwear favoured by Goths is part of a wardrobe of items, the production of which exists only to cater to the Goth market and its relatively affluent, often older community.

Identifying a ready market, suppliers service, and perhaps even capitalise on, this now middle-aged and financially secure cohort within the Goth subculture whose desire for aesthetically pleasing footwear can now be realised as it could not have been in their youth. Companies are now able to cater to this globally active market via intimate online relationships, delivering bespoke products to a dedicated audience of subcultural adherents. Online commerce and social media have seen a profusion of alternative fashion brands often catering for younger participants in the Goth population, resulting in a diversification – or to some a homogenisation or dilution – of Goth style. This aspect of the culture is itself a result of changing societal values which have seen tolerance and diversity become central tenets of western culture, in concert with the development of new methods of communication and the emergence of global commerce.

Possibly in reaction to this trend, there has been a resurgent online emphasis and interest in 'traditional' Goth traits such as winklepickers and crimping accompanied by a conspicuous effort from within the culture to define and segment identifiable Goth styles.

Goth Hair & Make-Up

In a similar way to shoes, hair and make-up help define Goth style and can be tracked as signifiers of change in aging Goth style as well as to identify shifts in generational Goth identity. The most extreme hair and make-up styles of the early Punk influenced Trad Goth and later Death-Rockers can largely be seen as the core youth-oriented territory of Goth types, though there is great variation within those styles. The heavily teased and crimped hairstyles in these groups are less evident in older generations, however, they do remain.

Historical themes have always been part of the aesthetic expression of Goth; an increasingly common feature is the inclusion of under-explored historic and iconic imagery. The following Melbourne interview extract highlights the idea of a variety of influences now more commonly observed in Goth aesthetics.

MPF107: Goth is so hard to specify. Coz like – no matter how many branches there are they still don't cover that much!

What I am really interested in is the kind of vampy 1920s and Egyptian 1920s revival. That is the most beautiful thing to me!

It is not really a subgenre of Goth – and I feel like it should be.

It influenced so many things, especially the whole Egyptian thing.

ELB: Yes, the make up – early flappers and the really extensive eye make-up

MPF107: Exactly – long lashes, sad eyes, dark lips, dolly faces

It is so beautiful, I love it. I think that is SO Goth. The whole flapper movement was so rebellious and very punk for its time – first women in western culture to cut their hair off, first women to wear dresses above the knee!

That was scandalous!

ELB: So that is part of the appeal?

MPF107: Yeah – it is like old-school punk! Ye OLDE olde!

Melbourne, March 1st 2016

The notion of Punk as an attitude is prominent in these comments, suggesting broadened conceptions of Punk emerging in Goth spectacularity and wider *Bricolage* of subversive historical references. The intensity of the make-up and appearance are intrinsically linked to personal and evolving Goth iconography, whether it draws on historic styles such as Flappers, or traditional Vampire-influenced Avant-garde Punk.

For those who embrace spectacular appearance, social occasions such as Goth Weekends, clubs, gigs, festivals and picnics (etc.) present an ideal opportunity to don extravagant attire and visually express Goth identity. This performative act of demonstrating Gothness attracts interest from social and romantic partners, broadcasts cultural awareness, and replicates conditions for experimentation creating a cycle of Goth expression, social competition, and consumption (Hodkinson 2002, p. 93). This cycle describes the socio-aesthetic framework which generates Goth identity, defines Gothness, and perpetuates its distinct features to both insider participants and outside observers. Designated Goth social spaces provide safe locales at which to experience and importantly display peak Gothness; participants get 'Gothed up' to attend events, exhibiting the most spectacular traits of the culture.



Figure 9 Female Goth at Whitby Goth Weekend, 2015 (Photograph by the author)

The vast number of online conversations dedicated to the question indicates it is easier to define what is not Goth, rather than what actually is. Notably, defining Goth remains a vexed issue not only for academics and journalists looking in but also for those within the culture; the vocabulary around What is Goth often distracts from discourse about what it means to be a Goth. I position the lived experience of insiders at the forefront of this discourse, allowing Goths to explain their customs in their language, retaining various insider and musical references. In so doing this research contributes to broader research on what it is to be an individual within a described collective and the daily lived experience of subcultural identity into adulthood and beyond (Finlay 2014 p. 121).

It was these contemplations that began my study, informed data gathering methods, and structured discussions throughout. Inevitably my collated view of Goth identity will lead insiders to perceived discrepancies in the 'lore' of Goth, challenging positions on subculture as well as potentially revealing unflattering characteristics of Goth life; this is an important aspect of this research as it seeks to generate further reflection on Goth as a complex and varied culture.

What is Goth Music?

Table 8 shows participants identified music as the second most important element of expressing Goth identity. As described above, I am not investigating the Goth sound or its music; research themes have been guided by participants' musical interests as they directly relate to their Goth identity. The music of the culture is consequently considered in this particular context and is not analysed or interpreted in its own right. To understand the Goth phenomenon it is however important to acknowledge the breadth of musical styles associated with Goth identity, associated consumption practices, and the imagery generated by particular musical followings. In the following, I consider the role of music in the Goth culture to better situate its social practices and how the aesthetic choices followers express articulate identity (Regev 2013 p. 56).

It is the bands associated with the Goth scene with their enthusiasm for engaging with highly performative expressions of identity which make possible the construction of a Goth aesthetic palette, from which a multitude of variants has formed. Goth spans many styles of music from 1970s Punk roots, to heavy traditional guitar rock, to classically-inspired folk, to ambient female vocals through to Industrial-edged dance tracks – and many more between. As it developed over the early 1980s the Gothic Rock genre grew rapidly with hundreds of bands emerging, some short-lived, others touring still, all adopting an atmosphere which journalists and fans recognised as Goth (though the bands may not have).

While important, mapping the entirety of the Goth(ic) music genre represents a significant project in itself, one that sits outside the scope of this thesis. In recent years researchers have attempted to describe and capture this breadth within the context of broader world music mapping projects. The *Every Noise at Once* project maps all music genres and captures a small portion of the overall network of artists connected to Goth, with sound bites available online for each band via the site¹⁷. The evolution of visual Goth identity can be viewed in parallel to its musical maturation, with discrete image attributes developing in direct response to particular musical influences, changing expressions of Goth aesthetics and thereby notions of *Gothness*. Additional branches of the Goth musical family tree can be followed out across each extremity, deepening understanding of the variability of the Goth sound independent of its visual aesthetics.

What was clear from the earliest beginnings of Goth music is the notion that it is difficult to definitively describe and increasingly harder to authoritatively delimit. As the Goth sound emerged

¹⁷ See: <http://musicmap.info/> and <http://everynoise.com/engenremap.html>

it garnered several different descriptors before it became simply Goth: it has been known variously as Post-Punk, New Wave, Dark Wave, Dark new-Romantic, Alternative, Proto-Goth, *Grufti*, Gothic Rock, Gothic Punk, *Gotik*, *Schwartz Szene*... The changing nature of Goth music made affixing a name to such a broad spectrum of sounds was difficult, even if there were aesthetic consistencies within the spectrum. Goth artists come from a range of styles who each impart influences on the culture, allowing for participants to move between musical genres whilst maintaining an appropriate Goth appearance. Enduring associations with punk, folk, rock, heavy metal, electronic and classical music ensure the genre holds a particularly complex position in the musical world. Describing the progression of Goth from Punk, Gothic Rock and towards more Industrial sounds, Kwinten Crauwels of *Music Map* highlights many of the key characteristics of the Goth genre and gives an immediate impression of the subculture:

After the heydays of the few early Gothic Rock pioneers, the Gothic movement took their legacy and started creating darker, more melancholic music with haunting synth melodies, drum machines, and Post-Punk guitar riffs. The introvert lyrics were typically about Gothic (romantic) topics.

(Crauwels 2016 <http://musicmap.info>)

Though succinct, this impression of Goth as a definitive music genre is in essence accurate, but it nevertheless hints at the broader expanse of its musical and literary influences. As demonstrated through the *Music Map* and *Every Noise at Once* projects, intersections exist between mainstream pop/rock and Gothic music from a variety of perspectives. Sound, musical approach, band membership, geographic location, and commercial success, for example, all offer unique perspectives from which to explore the spectrum of Goth music and to describe the characteristics which differentiate it from more mainstream musical acts. These perspectives are vital also for illustrating the spectrum of Goth aesthetics, detailing the differing contexts in which Goth music may be experienced and its visual aspects exhibited.

As a starting point for interviews, conversations typically began with a description and comparison of our introductions to Goth – usually via music, citing many bands or identifying a person, band, song, or video which initiated interest in the culture or which summarised particular views of what Goth is. For some, music is unquestionably the key driver of Goth affiliation, with the fashion or visual elements typically a secondary consideration. For these participants demonstrating insider understanding of the music and a keen awareness (particularly tracking down obscure music or exposing new music to friends) generates cultural capital.

Participants described their navigation of Goth culture using examples of key musical influences and bands whose early involvement has sustained an aesthetic influence on the culture over successive generations (Goodlad & Bibby 2007 p. 7). The vast majority of participants recalled exploring the music of the culture alongside its aesthetics – often before engaging with the culture ‘in the flesh’ at clubs or festivals. Goths find meaning in Goth music, perhaps connecting with lyrical content or with dance-oriented tracks, atmosphere, or even the historical associations some bands evoke. For other Goths, particular musical tastes work in direct correlation with visual expressions of identity, whereby particular bands (or groups of bands) form the basis of social relations as well as visual distinctiveness. This may include specific details such as particular band t-shirts, or it may be as ephemeral as leaning towards a particular type of Goth look such as Hippy-Goth or Metal Goth.

Much of the 'pre-learning' of Goth music is now conducted online, with interested participants able to join forums, Facebook groups, chats, and other social media platforms to gain a solid understanding of what is Goth. Significantly for this study, online sociality was not available to the first generation Goths; instead analogue modes of subcultural knowledge acquisition were necessary. Physical social settings – such as bespoke nightclub venues or specialist retail outlets – further enable Goths to identify, locate and connect with the culture directly with the requisite knowledge for entry into this little world already learned. The day-to-day, individual lived experience of being Goth must therefore be considered through its music in conjunction with the social aspects of the culture as experienced through sharing music, attending gigs, clubbing, and so on.

Music with dark atmosphere

Writing on the ascent and demise of the British Punk movement in the late 1970s, Dick Hebdige identified the value Punk culture placed on undesirability – its music is punctuated by spitting, anti-social snarls, and angry rebellion. Hebdige noted how in its music "the perverse and the abnormal were valued intrinsically" resulting in overtly defiant and confronting themes becoming essential to Punk culture (Hebdige 1979, p. 107). Punks sought specifically to shock, to be puerile and of the moment. The first use of Goth or Gothic is still contested; however, it was reportedly first used by music journalists in the UK in 1979 to describe a new post-punk sound that had ancient, guttural qualities, a collection of seemingly like-minded bands which emerged from the dying embers of the Punk movement. Significantly, the term was used to define the sound of these performers, not their 'spectacular' appearance.

Promoters and music journalists during this period repeatedly applied the term Gothic to British post-Punk bands; it was used to describe the sound of *Joy Division* as "dancing music with gothic overtones". The term was shortly after used to describe vastly different releases, whose music nominally echoed *Joy Divisions'* dark atmosphere (Groom, 2012 p. 141). This element of atmosphere was fundamental and was soon accompanied by an eccentric visual palette, which drew further on horror imagery and the excesses of Punk to create the foundation 'Goth look' of androgyny, big hair, and exaggerated make up. It was this British post-Punk scene then which first secured the most consistent conceptualisation of Gothic Rock, with *Sex Gang Children* intentionally adopting the term in 1983 (Scharf, 2014 p. 3). American, German and Nordic scenes echoed these early expressions of the gothic subculture, with Australia following, with its alternative band scenes in Melbourne, Sydney, and Perth producing icons of the culture such as Nick Cave and Rowland S. Howard around this time. American bands as diverse as *The Doors*, *Velvet Underground*, and *Alice Cooper* had all previously attracted attention for their maudlin and death-referencing stage shows and sometimes 'perverse' lyrics, yet these artists remain resolutely outside the Gothic music genre.

The terms Gothic and then Goth began to be more broadly attributed to bands and individuals who during the early 1980s were beginning to produce the sort of music which became known as Gothic Rock. Gothic Rock extended the Punk affiliation with the profane and perverse, drawing on the artistically fantastic rather than socially offensive to create a style referencing Punks' visual foundation while simultaneously contradicting much of its transiency. Early Gothic Rock was overbearing, almost operatic, in its dramatic musical and aesthetic style, flamboyant and pompous with clear vaudevillian influences. The more effete Goths favoured arcane imagery and traditionally structured music with obscure literary-inspired lyrics. Punk/Post-Punk band *The Damned* were the first to articulate a link to a Gothic vampiric styling, with early New Romantic and New Wave artists like Adam Ant and Pete Burns also sporting 18th Century pirate imagery influenced by Hammer-Horror extravagance.

The vampiric influence of *The Damned* and *Bauhaus* and to a lesser extent New Romantic bands inspired the historically-focussed Romantic, Victorian, and Vampire Goth styles, with Trad Goth also drawing on this broad Goth mode. Nick Cave instigated yet another take on Goth sartorial choices, with raw, manic-poet-chic, sporting rail-thin black trousers and ragged shirts with his particular brand of unkempt hair. Other bands such as *The Mission* and *All About Eve* contributed a stylistic palette that favours hippy-esque hues and motifs, incorporating a very earthy, English

Wiccan sensibility. Other bands, such as *Siouxsie and the Banshees*, *The Cure*, *Christian Death*, *The Sisters of Mercy*, and later *Nine Inch Nails*, *Project Pitchfork* presented a personal visual Goth archetype for both the female and male form resulting in Goths imitating the onstage personae of each band.

These dramatic influences were swiftly adopted and taken to stylistic extremes by the fledging Gothic Rock scene. Goth created a dramatic fusion of departing Punk fashions with self-consciously artistic stylings, adding mildly camp, sexually ambiguous (or overt) themes (Baddeley 2002 p. 191). Goth, or more particularly Traditional (Trad) Goth, was soon defined by vampiric erudition infused with horror-themed costuming, on a baseline of Punk simplicity. This newly minted Gothic Rock represented a radical departure from the immediacy of Punk and refashioned spectacular youth culture into the context of a theatrical, more introverted performative identity (Adams, 2008 p. 480).

Goth music's melancholic style further signified deeper cultural preoccupations than the preceding scene. Where Punk was rebelling against the world, Goth was creating its own anachronistic time-capsule. It was the UK band *Bauhaus* who, in August 1979, had most successfully capitalised on the new vampiric chic with the release of their 'dark, atmospheric' single *Bela Lugosi's Dead*, a seminal Gothic Rock track which overtly exploited imagery of *Hammer Horror* films' vampire persona (Carpenter, 2012 p. 29). The imagery employed by *Bauhaus* strongly referenced German expressionist art and Art-Noir filmic traditions with stark lighting, minimalist colour, and deliberately obscure ambiguity, all in sharp contrast to the spontaneous rawness of Punk stage shows. The band's 'gothic' imagery was artier than *The Damned*, yet ingrained with a highly theatrical shock-horror-commercialism that gave pundits an understanding of what contemporary Goth could be.

The Goth musical spectrum was further developed during the 1990s as influences from the Industrial music scene increased and allowed the expansion of the Goth social context into additional club nights and gigs. These foundation elements ensured Goth was established as more than a brief fashion statement accompanied by an enigmatic soundtrack, but instead grew into a genuine culture.

Goth Demeanour, Attitude and Archetypes

Attitude remains an important factor, with Goths using known visual archetypes to convey niche Goth interests and particular expressions of Goth. Aloofness is a common theme, with Goths

frequently labelled as aloof or standoffish due to their confronting attire, yet much like a mask, this outer image often camouflages the genuine inclusiveness of Goth community.

As a neo-punk reworking of *Frankenstein*, there is a considerable argument for the 1975 cult film *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* to be considered a primary source-point for early Goth motifs, with its punk-glam-sex-horror imagery (Kinkade and Katovich 1992, p. 200). Just as important as the normalisation of fishnets, corsets, and dramatic make-up, *Rocky Horror* introduced the 'Don't dream it, be it' socio-aesthetic ethos to audiences. Together with other melodramatic vignettes in the literary gothic mode, the exaggerated camp humour and depictions of sexual diversity and death in the film created a template for everyday weirdness. Gothic became the preferred term for this spectacular weirdness, with participants embracing the idea of Gothness as a lifestyle. The characters of *Rocky Horror* also provided young Goths with a template for public experimentation in the form of live participations at film screenings. These events attracted strange and unusual audiences and Goths became an ardent fanbase of the film, linking screenings with club nights and other social activities.

Goth is now a globally recognised identity trope made up of many localised variants of the culture, as discussed in detail by Natascha Scharf in *Worldwide Gothic*; each site of Goth community develops its own standards, infusing the culture with varied and unique national flavours (Scharf 2011 p. 97). Goth visual attributes are closely linked to music preferences; importantly, this relationship extends to the description of the various sub-genres associated with Goth, and the metonyms or 'types' of Goths which serve as the broadly understood style groupings – or tribes – within the wider culture (Hesmondhalgh 2005, p. 24). The German Goth scene is generally recognised as the largest active Goth community, collectively known as the *Schwarze Szene*. The German scene provides us with a clear exemplar of Hebdige's model of subculture, with the Goth community of belonging empowering young disaffected Germans and 'solving' feelings of displacement through Goth identity (Hebdige 1979 p. 66). In the newly reunified Germany, the community created connections between the youth of the east and west, constructing a safe environment in which to experience the sudden influx of new music and the extremities of late 1980s fashion (van Elferen 2011 p. 93). The scene actively embraced Western ideals and encouraged inclusion, with Leipzig quickly established as the epicentre of the culture in Germany. For German Goths, the scene is a complex mix of Goth appearance and music but more fundamentally represents ideas of cultural expression, freedom of movement, and self-representation.

The *Schwarze Szene* is notable for its extreme visual styling, with Goth style characterised by highly stylised interpretation of Goth aesthetics. The distinct German scene hosts several extremely large annual festivals (25,000+ attendees per festival) which have been running for over 30 years. *Wave Gotik Treffen*, the largest of such festivals, is hosted in Leipzig with live band performances spread throughout the city and accompanied by artistic events such as fashion shows, film screenings, art exhibitions, balls, and markets (Nym & Hoffert 2011 p. 7). This event has helped establish the German Goth scene – more specifically the *Schwarze Szene* – as having a visual palette that includes the most outlandish of Goth styles, often featuring BDSM clothing and high-end historic reproduction couture (Scharf 2011 p. 69). As well as exceptionally elaborate clothing, the German Goth scene is renowned for body modifications, tattoos, extreme make-up, and radical hair fashioning, with intensity beyond other sites of Goth community.

The democratisation of digital music techniques during the early 1990s and the reach of increasingly instantaneous global communication technologies heralded an age of increased production and connectivity across the music industry and its fans. Correspondingly the advent of online Goth identity prompted a fundamental shift in the way the culture shared music, established new aesthetic norms within Goth, discovered new sounds, and promoted artists, resulting in new understandings of what Goth is. It allowed participants to find new confidence in Goth as a global concept and as a legitimate means of expressing identity. These new connection modes also generated new ways of securing income and economic stability within the culture, a trend which has recently gathered pace.

The spectrum of Goth aesthetics or Goth Types provides individuals external to the culture a clear means of identifying Goths, simultaneously communicating discrete in-culture interests to insiders (Nally 2017 p. 3). In designing the surveys for this study, the established 'types' of Goths were quantified through extensive in-scene observation and longitudinal participation with the use of in-culture terminology carefully considered throughout. To improve the likelihood of meaningful survey responses, consideration was given to the words used, their indirect or coded meaning as well as the frequency of use of particular terminology in the culture (such as Trad Goth, ex-Goth, Rivethead). While it remains important to reflect Goth community language norms, consideration of contemporary subcultural theory and literature was equally important in designing the survey instruments.

While difference and otherness is central to the subculture, there is evidence of pervasive forms of conformity within Goth beyond its aesthetic archetypes. As described by Jasper, despite apparent

long-term affiliation with the culture Goths frequently reject the 'label' Goth/Gothic as a form of collective rejection of categorisation (Jasper 2004, p. 91). Such collective refusal of categorisation and embracing otherness, as well as attributing negative dialogue and stigmatisation to the Goth label has perhaps contributed to the negative narrative around Goth. As, too, the use of horror motifs and melancholic imagery, though often imbued with ironic humour, can be confronting to those observing from outside the Goth culture. Examination of the aesthetic aspects from within the culture allows us to better understand the spectrum of Goth and the complex language used to communicate membership. This is tackled in the survey instruments through a range of questions that interrogate how Goths choose their 'look', sociality drivers and if there is any entrenched philosophical impulsion to belong within the outsider community. Expressions of Goth vary greatly, and not every individual response or description of the culture can be accommodated here; it is therefore aggregated data from combinations of questions and textual responses which permit the identification of common components of Goth culture.

An understanding of the broadest groups commonly seen in the Goth community was identified as a vital component for gauging how the cohorts perceived Goth as a global phenomenon. Survey participants were asked to nominate which of the 'Goth aesthetics' they most identified with and why (see Figure 10 below). A foundation question of the survey established insider understanding of Goth terminology and respectfully expressed identity categories (without labelling them as 'types') using language Goths most frequently self-nominated in social media profiles. By isolating these terms, the survey sought to illicit genuine experiences of Goth identity and draw out descriptions of what it is to be Goth and how it can be described or categorised for non-participants. The question was answered by 1332 International (and ex-pat Australian) participants and 428 Australian participants, with extensive free-text responses supporting the quantitative data.

* 5. Choosing from the list below - with which of the Goth aesthetics do you most identify
(choose most appropriate or provide your own answer)

<input type="radio"/> Punk-Goth/Death Rocker	<input type="radio"/> Hippy-Goth	<input type="radio"/> Industrial or Rivethead
<input type="radio"/> Glam Goth	<input type="radio"/> Alternative or Indy Goth	<input type="radio"/> Raver or Techno Goth
<input type="radio"/> Victorian Goth	<input type="radio"/> Rockabilly-Goth	<input type="radio"/> Metal-Goth
<input type="radio"/> Romantic Goth	<input type="radio"/> Cyber-Goth	<input type="radio"/> Perky Goth or Pastel/Bubble Goth
<input type="radio"/> Traditional Goth (Trad)	<input type="radio"/> Steampunk	<input type="radio"/> Ex-Goth
<input type="radio"/> Fetishistic Goth/BDSM	<input type="radio"/> Goth- Industrial	
<input type="radio"/> Other (please specify)		

6. Describe why you chose Goth and what attracted you to your particular style

Figure 10 International and Australian Survey Questions 5 and 6: Goth Aesthetics

In the multiple-choice element of this question, survey participants were asked to identify from a supplied list an aesthetic grouping/Goth type that most accurately reflects their Goth identity. Sub-groupings within Goth have evolved to cater to the diverse primarily leisure and music-related interests of the culture. Observation and discussion with sources online such as Reddit, Facebook, Forums, and chats informed the inclusion choices for this list, with several 'elder Goths' providing initial input into preferred Goth metonyms. Participants took the opportunity to utilise the 'other' category to provide a personal narrative on their socio-aesthetic choices, and why the inclusion of non-conforming preferences is critical in defining Goth identity, collectively and individually.

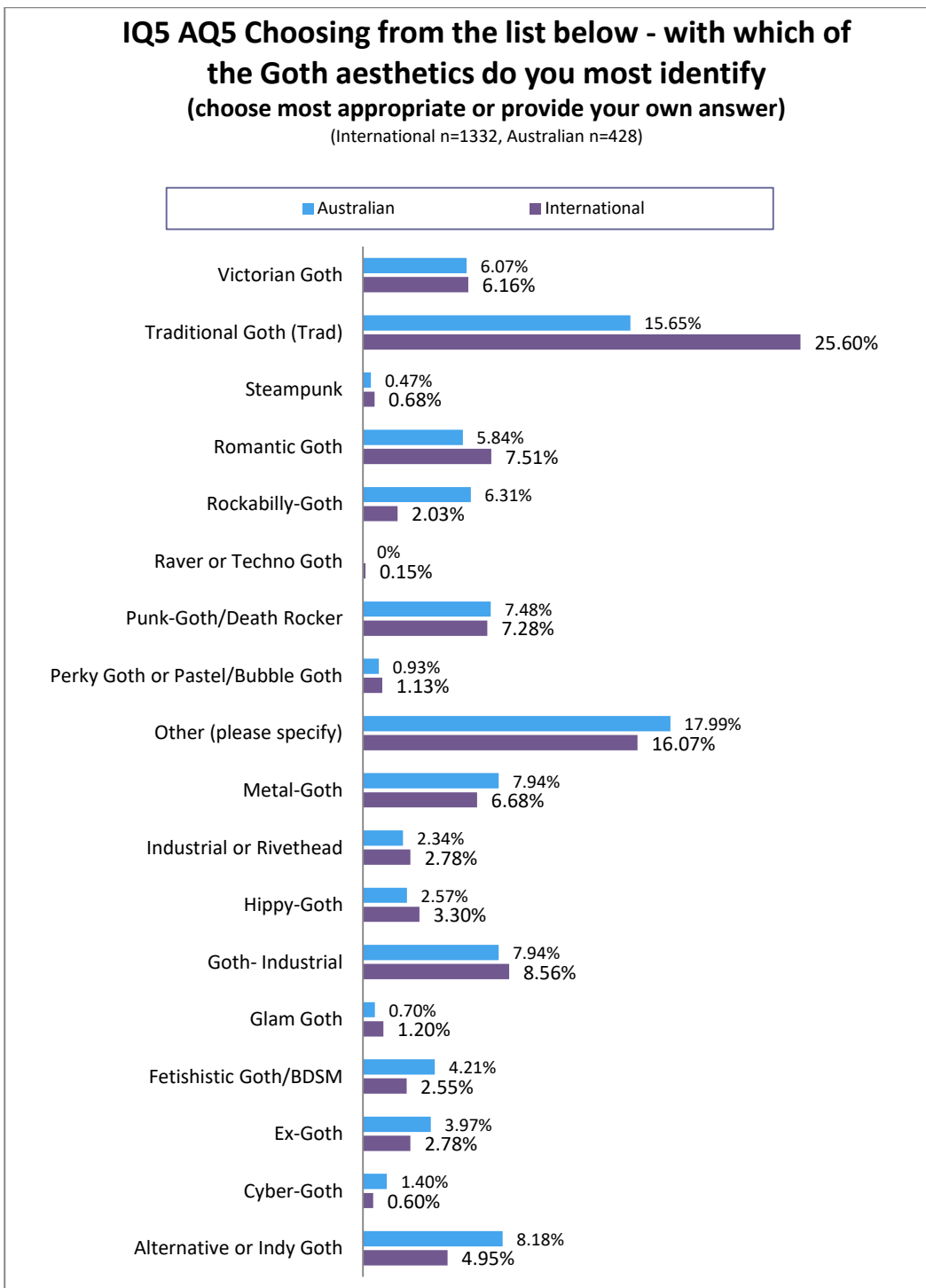


Figure 11 Survey Response: Goth Aesthetic Types

Traditional Goth (Trad) was the most popular response for Question five, (15.65% for Australian and 25.60% for International cohorts), representing the most common and long-standing form of Goth. Trad Goth is generally regarded as the 'original' form of Goth most readily recognised and aesthetically consistent since the 1980s, constructed around Punk and New-Romantic style. Typified by the inclusion of fishnets, leather, lace, and spectacular hair and make-up, the Trad Goth is the foundational archetype of Goth appearance. Seminal Goth bands such as *Siouxsie and*

the Banshees, Bauhaus, and The Damned greatly influence the look and attitude of this style, with nostalgia heavily present in the styling.

Perhaps most interestingly, the Goth-Industrial type, recording 7.94% Australian and 8.56% International participants highlights a perennial conundrum in the Goth culture. A distinction has always been drawn between Goth and Industrial cultures; the Industrial scene is very much its own culture, existing alongside Goth with entirely separate and identifiable traits. Like Goth, Industrial music emerged in the late 1970s/1980s producing a distinct, hyper-masculine, hard-edged sound that incorporated sound-art and musical experimentation at its core (Reed, 2013 p. 121). Music plays a critical role in the evolution of Industrial and Goth-Industrial culture; the more listenable, dance-floor anthems of the Industrial scene came to be night-club classics in many Goth clubs. Unlike Trad Goth, Goth-Industrial tends to favour militaristic, simple pared-back appearance, with emphasis on a sort of post-apocalyptic doom-laden flair which matches its music which is heavily percussion and electronic-based with less melodic prominence. Goth-Industrial has evolved as a hybrid between the two cultures primarily as a result of this shared musical interest. Certain bands have created a bridge between the two cultures with night-club classics like *Headhunter* (by *Front 242*) and various *Nine Inch Nails* songs as common on Goth as Industrial setlists. Industrial is also closely aligned to Cyber and Electro Goth styles, again with music as the primary uniting force. The scenes evolved together with the two 'outsider' cultures unified in the need for safe spaces in which to enjoy music, socialise and express new stylistic modes. These shared club/social environments have developed a strong bond between the two groups which has enabled large-scale festivals such as *Infest* and *M'era Luna* to attract over to 25000 attendees with a shared passion for Goth and Industrial music.

Table 9 IQ5 and AQ5: Goth Industrial 'Type'; by Gender and cohort

Goth-Industrial - Australian Participants		Goth-Industrial - International Participants	
Female	18	Female	81
Male	25	Male	65
Transgender	1	Transgender	4

The Industrial scene is often perceived as a masculine culture made up of primarily male participants; the music is heavy and the aesthetics tend towards less traditionally feminine aesthetics such as trench coats, combat clothing, and boots, etc. Of the 1760 participants who

responded to this question, 194 identified as either Goth-Industrial or Rivethead (Industrial), of which the majority of respondents in the International cohort identified as female. The smaller, Australian cohort did tend towards male respondents.

The presence of transgender respondents for this question is also significant as the Goth-Industrial/Industrial scene has a long and active history of supporting and promoting LGBTQI+ and gender diversity. From the point of survey design, transgender inclusiveness was a consideration for this study and the trans/no gender option was included in all surveys. Industrial music became unlikely advocates for LGBTQI+ artists with Yetta Howard describing industrial as "politically palpable sonic aesthetics of antiassimilationist sexual expression" (Howard, 2017 p 35). Artists such as Claus Larsen of *Leæther Strip* and *Klutæ*, as well as bands such as *Front 242*, *Revolting Cocks*, *Thrill Kill Kult*, and *Coil* all contribute to the richness of diversity displayed in Industrial culture. American record company *Wax Trax!*, once described as "the marketplace for the disenfranchised", played a central role in establishing and promoting Industrial music, often supporting acts from the fringes of underground communities. Artists such as Genesis P-Orridge forged new ground for gender diverse performers in the Industrial scene, notably through the *Pandrogeny Project*, an artistic/musical collaboration explicitly exploring gender through art and music (Reed, 2013 p. 142). Such extreme, transgressive artistic expressions have fuelled diversity in the Industrial scene, increasing the profile of queer and diverse performers and increasing acceptance in the culture.

The important social and musical crossovers afforded by the alliance of Goth and Industrial cultures are a vital aspect in maintaining interest and participation in the alternative music scene. Other alternative scenes which interact with Goth are evident in the results. While attracting only a tiny proportion of participants to this study (0.47% Australian and 0.68% International), the Steampunk sub-genre shares similar characteristics with Goth, Industrial as well as the Cosplay scene. More mainstream musical connection points such as metal (7.94% Australian and 6.68% International) and Alternative/Indy (8.18% Australian and 4.95% International) provide additional branching-out points for Goth audiences. The relationship between these groups warrants future study.

Victorian Goth attracted around 6% of respondents (6.07% for Australian respondents and 6.16% for the International cohort), reflecting the persistent interest in historical aesthetics in contemporary Goth appearance. Representing arguably the most spectacular of the Goth attire, this form of dress is most often reported in the media during events such as the Whitby and Wave

Gothic Treffen, used to illustrate 'high Gothic' culture. The Victorian era is an easy favourite – with its penchant for maudlin garb and a social and artistic era that is permeated with a fascination for the macabre, scientific experimentation, and sexual titillation. Goths may adore Victorian garments, however, the Victorian Goth aesthetic does not correlate with 'recreationist' (Renaissance Fair) or Cosplay-style subcultures where participants seek to authentically re-live ancient customs or engage in a performative act of embodying a particular character. Victorian Goth instead interprets select features of the Victorian era through contemporary means; corsets are often constructed of man-made materials such as latex and synthetic laces rather than traditional silks and wool, for instance. Long flowing dresses and frock coats are supplemented with modern Goth jewellery, artful make-up, and hairstyling; the overall image is Victorian-inspired, yet is entirely of its age.

Bricolage of this type is a vital aspect of the Goth aesthetic: Goths do not (necessarily) seek to reproduce historically accurate dress, and inspiration can be sought and appropriated from any period to be re-imagined in a darker, gothic-infused light. The free-text element of this question introduced several new terms to the Goth aesthetic vocabulary, including many styles which reflect this eclectic accumulation of historic influences. Some of the new Goth aesthetics identified by participants included: 1920s Goth, Avant Goth, Rural Goth, Ethereal Goth, Biker-Metal Goth, 1950s/Pin-up Goth, and Gypsy Goth. Others referred back to terms used at the emergence of the Goth phenomenon including New Romantic, New Waver, Post-Punk-Goth, and Electro Goth.

As evidenced by the responses, when provided with an extensive list of Goth sub-genres from which to choose an identity mode, participants were often unwilling to commit to a single type. Interestingly, of those utilising the 'other' option, a large proportion of respondents repeated terms available in the main list. Many respondents also opted to define their identity/style in a conglomeration of terms or added 'all of the above', such as:

I don't like to place myself in a box, I love deathrock, vampire goth, industrial, tradgoth

ISP128 IQ6 Age 49

Additional types were suggested, Corporate Goth (or Corp Goth) is a notable omission which seventeen International and three Australian participants identified as lacking from the main list. Corp Goth can be characterised as a muted sartorial adaption of traditional Goth apparel, amended for work purposes. Favoured by those in more conventional employment, and often by more senior members of the community, Corp Goth brings tailored flair with dark inspiration to

'ordinary' office clothing. Historic influences are common, with 1920s pinstriped tailoring commonly paired with Victorian accoutrements and occasional hints of punk/Trad Goth influence. A practical and perhaps necessary adaptation, this style offers participants the opportunity to display distinctive Goth style without jeopardising employment. Unlike many other Goth styles, this is a purely aesthetic trait without particular musical connections.

There is a wide variation in Goth styles, broadly categorised in Figure 11, each markedly different from one another and possessing their discrete aesthetic signifiers. As illustrated in the free-text participant quotes below, the identification of particular aesthetic markers aids the classification of Goth types for older participants and serves to delineate age differences in the culture. Participants used both aesthetic and musical influences to define Goth archetypes in this question, confirming parallels between music styles, creativity, and personal aesthetics.

I like the goth music. Music was very important influence then became interested in Goth fashion. I am attracted to Trad-goth. And Victorian goth. I like the Creativity and uniqueness of the style. The style is feminine -Victorian goth. And i like the Elegance of Victorian and medieval goth

[ISP170 Age 45]

I started as a sex pistols punk in '77. Became hardcore thru 1984 [various types, Mohawk, death rock, etc.] became trad goth and then a variety of types like vampire/club goth, Wicca/pagan goth, back to Deathrock/trad hybrid, am now more pagan, hippy, trad.

[ISP562 Age 53]

The majority of long time goths are naturally and strongly attracted to the romantic and macabre. That part is not so much a choice, it's just who you are. This is often isolating and confusing. So when I discovered a subculture that meshed with my interests, I felt I had found my tribe. It's very rewarding to have a baseline of interests and strong commonalities. Since my teens (I'm 41 now), I've had a social network of like-spirited people to exchange thoughts, art, poetry, music, movies, romance and life. A lot of these things are obscure, so having a multi-generational subculture really enriched my quality of life and self understanding. Lastly, I really enjoy the edgy but non-violent aspect of the subculture. I never have to worry about looking over my shoulder or some guy trying to prove how tough he is when I'm at a goth event.

[ISP430 Age 41]

Saying I "chose" Goth feels completely inaccurate - though I certainly DID have to choose to express it, as it goes against cultural norms. I didn't "choose" Goth; I AM Goth. It's in my body, and in my soul. The aesthetic is my preference, as anyone else's preference is theirs - it's a matter of personal taste. I feel more ME when I dress in Goth. It's beautiful, sensual, alluring, and infinitely attractive to me.

[ISP492 Age 41]

The sentiments expressed in the responses above are indicative of many of the responses from survey participants regarding Goth appearance types. Although the concept of the Goth 'look' is well established in the mainstream with many examples in popular culture (Abby in *NCIS* or Lydia in *Beetlejuice*, for example), for many in the culture the idea of a single definitive type of Goth is

objectionable. Notably, many of the free-text responses demonstrate high levels of self-awareness and evidence of intellectualisation of the aesthetic choices of the culture.

The co-dependent aspects of music and sociality form the foundation of the culture, helps outline its aesthetic groups with each stratified with a distinctive aesthetic social code, and provide a mechanism for Goths of all ages to develop social connections. Conveying musical taste differences across the spectrum of Goth, from Metal-Goth to Cyber Goth and everything in-between, these types afford participants opportunities to diversify their aesthetic palette, whilst maintaining 'authentic' Goth identity at different life stages. Michel Maffesoli, and Andy Bennett after him, characterised such sub-subcultures as tribes and neo-tribalism.

Reminiscent of visual codes used by motorcycle groups or street gangs where 'colors' [sic] play a vital role in defining membership, in the Goth context visual attributes are linked to a defined music-based taste signifier, with particular traits acting as codified declarations of allegiance (Barker 2017 p. 673). Types of Goths are linked to genres of music, enabling participants to adjust their appearance to better suit special occasions.

It is possible to describe Goth exponents in relation to their favoured sartorial 'type' through footwear and clothing choices. These subculture-specific types allow insiders to the culture to decode more complex personal tastes and decipher attributes relating to musical or other culturally relevant preferences (Huq 2006 p. 5). While these stylistic signifiers do not inhibit interactions with individuals external to the subculture and indeed may have no discernible cultural significance outside Goth, the adoption of particular styles within the scene acts as a source of identification and connection between participants. Style choices carry with them self-scrutiny as well as socially-imposed value judgements, resulting in regular online discussions around 'whether this is Goth or not' and how a particular image conveys authentic Goth attributes or not (Dodd et al 2000 p. 43).

All generations of Goths actively monitor changes in the culture. In 2010 Graphic Designer Megan Balanck produced an illustration to chart the evolution of emerging and established Goth types, an image which has become a staple of Goth sites and discussion groups [Figure 12 [Goth \[stereo\] Types](#)¹⁸].

¹⁸ <http://www.blackwaterfall.com/viewall.php>



Figure 12 Goth [stereo] Types: M Balanck, 2010

While these descriptors are presented as a light-hearted somewhat self-deprecating view of the Goth culture, the use and acceptance of the 'Goth Types' labelling system holds credibility in the scene. Balanck describes the work:

Of course, every Goth is unique, with his or her own style of dress, music taste and aesthetic sensibilities. This is why I have called these illustrations Goth [stereo]Types, as this most accurately describes what I have presented here: a stereotype, or archetype, of different Goths recognised in the Gothic spectrum.

Megan Balanck, 2020 <http://www.blackwaterfall.com/>

Regarded as broadly fair and commonly shared in the Goth community, the illustration was taken into consideration when preparing questionnaires and many of the 'types' listed in the illustration are reflected in the final list used for survey question 6. Some types such as J-Goth and other more recent additions such as Faerie Goth were consciously omitted due to the targeted survey cohort, however, the 'other' option was provided for respondents to articulate their particular style. Particular 'types' reflect interests that intersect with other subcultures – like Steampunk and Rockabilly – and others retain essentially Goth aesthetic markers.

The subculture is known for its bold make-up style for both male and female Goths: heavy eyeliner on a dense, pale foundation with dark lipstick with unconventional flourishes evocative of the powdered courts of previous centuries. This pale make-up is offset by extravagantly coiffured hairstyles, often black but more commonly in recent years in a variety of increasingly unconventional colours and vibrant combinations, often crimped and/or teased into tall spikes or unkempt nests. Clothing is equally exaggerated, ranging from ragged Punk-inspired ensembles featuring fishnet and leather through to elegant Victoriana, replete with corsets, crinolines, frock coats, and elaborate accessories. Appropriation of religious paraphernalia is common, though Goth is very much a secular culture characterised best as being open-minded and inclusive of difference. Goths recognise the different 'types' of Goth as being an important aspect of maintaining and broadening the stylistic preferences of the scene,

MPM106: And you have the Rockabilly thing too influencing.

ELB: Yes.

MPM106: and that 1950s film, horror thing

MPF105: and if you think about all the subcultures we were talking about – the sub-subcultures, there is one for just about everything! You have your Perky Goths, Mopey Goths, Gothabillys, Punks... one for everything.

[MPM106 Age 53 and MPF105 Age 52]

These elements help us construct the Goth image, yet it is how and why individuals identify within this visual scope and transition between the various styles across the course of life that is of most interest and significance.

A consequence of the focus on the bold make-up and morbid themes of Goth dress has established a dialogue that emphasises the otherness of the culture and has in some instances characterised Goth(s) as a threat to social equilibrium or socially taboo. For some participants this is an intrinsic element of attraction, establishing new attitudes toward the self with which to visually challenge the social status quo and broadcasting a defiant alternative public identity.

Often though, it is the belonging Goth culture affords participants which sustain individual association and further diversify Goth cultures' aesthetic tropes.

By remaining unfixed to an ultimate version of the genre, Goth has presented audiences and critics alike with a moving target and perhaps avoided the fate of the more short-lived Punk movement by constant reinvention. It was, then, from the outset, a complex and contradictory subculture imbued with layers of self-fashioned identity, style, and unprecedented affectation. Writing in 1991, Mick Mercer noted "Goths are instantly recognisable now in a way in a way they weren't when it was simply post-Punk." (Mercer 1991 p. 7) This is a salient point and one which bridges the notional gap between fledgling music style and stable culture. In terms of stylistic ambition, Goth stands apart in its manifest adoption of aesthetic diversity. This complexity has perhaps obscured from outside analysts its significance as an identity framework. Its capacity to evolve is the very essence of Goth constancy; it shifts with its participants as they move through different life stages and successfully responds to changing stimuli, organically maintaining a 'true Goth' foundation while simultaneously absorbing new interpretations.

Diverse, location-specific examples of Goth style exist across the world, with Goths finding inspiration from local customs and absorbing them into the culture to create meaningful connections, bold new looks, and local context (Baddeley 2010 p. 112). Recognising distinct features as symbolising musical taste truncates traditional perfunctory social interactions and brings Goth closer via visual communication only; it visually expresses safety, saying 'we like the same things, we might get on, we share cultural values'. In a scene of limited numbers and discrete tastes, broadcasting these tacit aesthetic judgements greatly aids social and potentially romantic interactions, establishing a level of shared perception, expediting personal connections.

Creating the Goth 'Little world'

As illustrated above, expressions of Goth identity are intrinsically linked to the musical styles of the culture, with music functioning as the primary mode of social connection and communal experiences. The assorted sub-genres and in-culture metonyms employed by Goths to describe and explain the spectrum of Goth subcultural identity will be illustrated progressively throughout using examples in the language proffered by research participants alongside observation.

The most overt aspect of the Goth phenomenon is perhaps the arresting visual aspects of the culture, its sartorial spectacularity, and flair for eccentric, darkly-inclined, anachronous aesthetics which inhabit the outskirts of fashion (Scharf, 2014 p. 8). In *The Art of Gothic* Scharf importantly

examines the manifold influences on/of Goth as well as the varied aesthetic outputs of the culture from fashion to graphic design to music.

Goth culture embraces death, or the symbols of death, as pseudo-religious relics, literally pinning them to their sleeves as if in a conscious reminder to all those who doubt it. Goths draw heavily on the imagery and atmosphere created in the Gothic works of Horace Walpole, Edgar Allen Poe, Baudelaire, Lord Byron, Bram Stoker, Mary Shelley as well as 20th century writers Daphne du Maurier, Anne Rice, Stephen King, and Stephenie Meyer, taking on vampires, ravens, black cats, bats and otherworldly creatures as mascots to the culture. Death has become an intrinsic element not only of Goth music, though it is widely reflected in both the lyrics and sombre tones of many artists, but also as an aesthetic motif. Their forms are present in jewellery and fabrics, on furniture, and on tattoos. Skulls are common motifs, often bricolage versions of the Mexican Calavera. Glorifying in the macabre extends further into the philosophical attitude of the culture; it is open to new forms of beauty, sometimes the bizarre, sometimes the ethereal, yet almost always other from mainstream culture. As discussed throughout, Goth's visual presentation has remained relatively stable throughout its history, with a strong reliance on heavy make-up and black clothing to signify Gothness. Interestingly, this ease with death has not waned as Goths have grown older, and inevitably closer to death. As discussed later a strong response in the data (Figures 35 & 36) shows long-term Goths continue to favour clothing with skull motifs etc as well as traditional band logo t-shirts.

These elements of Goth fashion speak to the culture's adherence to outsiderhood and accepting outsiderhood as a form of Goth constancy. As noted by Hodkinson, the consistent use of corsets to at once convey Gothness and in part obscure the consequences of ageing points further to adherence to Goth tenets (Hodkinson 2012 p. 140). Older Goths could conceivably forego the rigours of corsetry in favour of comfort, and yet choose not to. Unlike Hodkinson, however, I do not characterise Goth as enacting a 'continuation of youthful approaches to life', but view Goth as an integral part of identity, inseparable from other facets of personality (Hodkinson 2011, p. 135). Goth is part of who you are, it is a constant criterion of identity through which outward appearance and community are communicated, either loudly and with vigour or through subtle social cues and ornamentation.

A consistent characteristic that sets Goths outside the mainstream is an affection (and affectation) for a sort of Bohemian decay. The inclusion of other-worldly motifs to convey nuanced expressions of Goth often rely on a surprisingly expansive range of aesthetics or site-specific environments.

Particular Goth sites emphasise different features of the culture and offer up different commercial opportunities or social interaction points. Festivals in Whitby, for instance, have a distinct emphasis on Vampire culture due to its historic associations with Dracula, whereas Camden reflects urban, less esoteric expressions of the culture. Other sites in cities including Leipzig, Vancouver, Leeds, and Melbourne recur in the data as sites of particular clubs, bands, scenes, or events and represent sites visited throughout the data gathering phase of this research. Interview and survey participants described 'pilgrimages' to Goth sites such as these as being central to understanding and fully experiencing what it is to be part of the Goth community. This desire for authentic Goth experiences was iterated across generations of the culture irrespective of geographic location, with localised versions of travelling to connect within the culture proffered by a broad range of respondents.

The spaces Goths construct within home environments and in the shared public spaces Goths inhabit are devised within the Goth mode, ensuring meaningful experiences can be comfortably created and sociality is constrained within pre-determined parameters (Tygstrup in Michelsen & Tygstrup 2015, p. 51). Goths described the significance of 'Goth places' emphasising their strong sense of connection to particular places with highly developed Goth scenes, an awareness of Goth predecessors, and the cultural weight of certain places:

I walked into a Goth club in Camden, I was working in a Goth pub [name of pub] in Camden. And it was a great pub – I learned how to make "Snakebite & Black" and fell in love with Snakebite and black. And then someone said, well come on, you're here, you have to go to a Goth club.... And you know, you don't have to drag me by the little finger!

I felt – oh god – it would have been about 14 years ago, and I felt blessed to be around the people that started it all. Even if they were not there anymore, this is the city! This is the country! This is where [Goth] originated! And I am lucky to be here.

[Interview Participant MPF104]

As described in Chapter One, Camden in London was chosen as a site of investigation for this study due to its long association with alternative lifestyles and associated artistic modes, music venues, and commerce. The phenomenon of Goth subcultural constancy in London has in part been enabled by the unique 'action arena' of the Camden strip, running from Chalk Farm tube station in the North, southerly towards the centre of London (Gornostaeva 2016, p. 173). Gornostaeva describes how the once subversive cultural capital of the varied subcultures in the area are now assimilated, giving Camden its creative edge whilst simultaneously promoting continuation: "Cultural products once associated with marginality, youth, and rebellion have gradually been institutionalized, as fans have aged without renouncing their tastes." (Gornostaeva 2016, p. 173).

Camden provides an environment in which this cultural capital generates legitimate economic production both within and external to the culture. Camden represents an example of urban subcultural tourism, where Goths visit to obtain cultural capital, but also where non-Goths can observe the culture as a form of contemporary curiosity. The correlation between the two activities is itself twofold, with Goths also visiting Camden to be seen, in a performative act of self-actualisation, fitting within Goth culture as participant and observer.

As with other subcultures, each aesthetic element plays a vital role in defining the Goth community of belonging, yet perhaps unique among long-term subcultures, Goth has also fostered the emergence of types or sub-genres. As noted by Reed, musical subcultures are intrinsically linked to the aesthetic aspects typical to the culture; pleasure is derived by participants' 'association and ongoing experimentation with the tenets of the culture (Reed 2013 p. 139). Through these aesthetic expressions of self, Goth constructs a recognisable means of conveying 'membership' within the semi-closed style community and articulates particular identities and social preferences which visually reject mainstream sensibilities. A distinction is consequently realised within the spectrum of Goth identity through selective emphasis of particular aesthetic facets. I designed my surveys mindful of this complexity, constructing complementary questions which captured both qualitative and quantitative data on Goth aesthetics. This approach aimed to identify and interrogate the core characteristics which underpin the longevity of Goth identity, using numeric results supported by analysis of textual participant contributions. By asking participants to reflect on the manifold nature of Goth, including its stylistic variances, this research seeks to open broader debate around the concepts of a single Goth aesthetic and instead position the subculture as an identity, and as described by McCracken, as existing within its own "distinct cultural universe" (McCracken 1997).

Goth is not a utopian culture immune from internal stylistic squabbles and self-censorship. The social pressure to conform for young people in the Goth Subculture is as observable as in any other adolescent social group searching for belonging and social connection (Dodd et al 2000 p. 42). Style choices carry with them self-scrutiny as well as socially-imposed value judgements, resulting in regular online discussions around 'whether this is Goth or not' and how a particular image conveys authentic Goth attributes (or not).¹⁹ Historically, Goths have actively rejected being labelled Goth, in part as a marker of individuality but also as well a way of subverting categorisation. Goth aesthetics are subversive, anti-establishment, and outside the accepted

¹⁹ For example, see the blog: <http://actuallyyesthisgoth.tumblr.com/>

boundaries of normative culture. Goths' concerns around categorisation can be in part attributed to a collective uneasiness of being othered, a reality which has been borne out in academic and unbalanced media attention (see Wright 2000, Duterte 2003 et al, Larkin 2007, Bowes et al 2015).

Goths are strange and unusual, they are the outsiders and they are misfits. Overall Goth aesthetics are explicit and conscious assertions of difference. In parallel to this, Goths appear equally concerned not to be neatly categorised in such a way that 'the mainstream' can readily absorb or commodify the culture. Pop culture commentary has ascribed a narrative of shame to Goth, insidiously othering participants, crucially not due to evidence of criminality but based on aesthetic and social choices. As illustrated in the image below (Figure 13), bands releasing new Goth music, such as Bauhaus in 1980, received scathing reviews and their followers - the early Goths – were described by the press in hostile and derogatory terms²⁰. This form of reporting became common for a number of years, with new even Goth-ish sounding bands quickly labelled and their fans swiftly ridiculed in leading pop-culture publications of the day.

Contemporary industry press published comparable articles for other new bands (such as Fields of the Nephilim, The Sisters of Mercy, and The Cult) in which the Goth sound and look was similarly identified as the emergent successor to Punk. Harshly reviewing not only the music but also using dismissive language to describe their fans resulted in Goths feeling othered in the music press and established a pattern of hostile dialogue. Such articles contributed to Goth being considered a peculiar culture in its early days and conceivably motivated the development of increasingly elaborate Goth visual language, much of which is unknown outside the Goth community. Over time many of these differences have evolved into distinct patterns of identity or Goth types.

The correlation between long-term Goth identity (individual and collective) and the role of otherness in Goth communities provides insight into perceptions of difference and how elective physical difference can be viewed as a positive. For this study, distinctive aspects of the culture are examined within particular settings: online behaviours, the club environment, festivals, parties as well as the more commercial sites relating to the fashion, music, and entertainment industries.

²⁰ The article by Andy Gill was first published in the *New Musical Express* (NME) November 3rd 1980 and recently re-published on <https://post-punk.com/bauhaus-in-the-flat-field>.



Figure 13 NME article by Andy Gill, November 3rd 1980.

Within these contexts, there are clear 'types' of Goths reflecting the discrete interests of those situations, and identified tribal affinity predicated on stylistic variation in-keeping with a particular context (e.g. club, band concert) or specifically expressed for an occasion (e.g. festival, community picnic) (Bennett, 2000 p. 50). Survey questions addressed this directly, as well as provided space for participants to include free-text input.

In distinguishing these traditional styles as well as emergent Goth sub-genres (such as Pastel and Nu-Goth), there has been an implicit segmentation of the Goth population, reflecting attitudes based either on longevity within the scene ('I was here first – I am a Trad Goth') or on particular aesthetic cohorts ('I am a Pastel Goth') (Moor 2005 p. 230). While these distinctions are rarely hostile, the language sometimes employed in online discussions is suggestive of social prejudice

and can be perceived as hierarchical. The shoes – be they Victorian boots, winklepickers, Dr. Martens, chunky Goth platforms, or military boots – provide Goths with an immediate visual indicator of belonging, a succinct way of demonstrating subcultural affiliation, acting as a "...efficacious vehicle for personal transformation" into those preferred style metonyms (Sherlock 2014 p. 27). For these reasons, I regarded footwear as a critical inclusion in the survey instrument, specifically identifying footwear types in a number of the survey questions relating to the transition of Goth identity from youthful to adult participant. I sought input from within the culture on the language Goths use to describe themselves, their culture, and various aesthetic expressions of Goth identity: how do Goths navigate the conflicting ambitions of being different and belonging.

In the following chapter I use data collected to examine these concepts in further detail. I break down how long-term Goths engage with the culture over time and if their mode of engagements have modified in different life stages. I explore how participants regard the Goth community and its stylistic spectrum, how it is variously described by the research cohort and its significance for participants.



Just a Phase?

Image overleaf: The Sisters of Mercy Concert, London, 2017

Photograph by the author

Chapter 5 : **DISCUSSION: GOTH, JUST A PHASE?**

Goth is in my head, not in my appearance or clothing

[ISP037 Age 55 IQ7²¹]

My hypothesis is that the Goth phenomenon persists as a little culture, built around a socio-aesthetic framework. I argue that for Goths this exists within three simultaneous states of being: outsiderhood, belonging, and constancy. In this chapter, I use data collected to describe how these non-linear states can be observed in a continuously fluctuating ratio, as part of the lived experience of being Goth. I argue it is this flexibility that has enabled Goth (and the Gothic) to continue to hold contemporary significance and societal worth for long-term participants.

The twin constituents of Goth, its aesthetic and social framework, are analysed to provide insight into the considerations, anxieties, and fulfilments of being a Goth. The analysis places particular attention on the temporality of the culture, correlating notions of fluidity and the manifold expressions of the culture which make up its whole. Accordingly, I argue the data demonstrate the distinct cultural universe of Goth functions inside mainstream culture following 'normal life patterns' and simultaneously as an outsider culture, collectively removed from dominant behavioural norms (McCracken 1997 p. 35).

I examine the social and aesthetic attributes which make up these phenomena and secure Goth as an outsider community, enable belonging, and create continuity of Goth identity. I argue the coherence of Goth has solidified traits of the culture into defined practices, which in turn challenge the scope of the culture (McCracken 1997, p. 25). I present evidence to support the claim that constancy in the Goth little culture signifies its diachronic diversity – its emergent diversity over time – as a cumulative result of ongoing and continuous, synchronic evolution of its many cultural indicators (McCracken 1997 p. 25). This evolution is examined through empirical surveys and interview data reflecting the lived experience of long-term participants. This examination considers the basis of life-long Gothness and the mechanisms required to generate Goth identity, artefacts, and the social environments conducive to Goth belonging.

Through a performative act of outsiderhood, the demeanour of Goth remains constant for engaged participants; *Gothness* is stable and continuous, tethered to community traditions

21 IQ7. At your most involved, "back in the day", how did you express your Goth identity [free text]

emergent over the forty years of Goth phenomena. Yet this stability is built on non-conformance and as such it produces sometimes unexpected and paradoxical expansion of existing Goth tropes.

That Goth is not just a phase is a central contention of my thesis. Constancy describes the continuum of belonging within Goth and how social infrastructure enables long-term engagement. In broader media, Goth is often stigmatised as being just a phase, a derogatory view built on preconceptions of youthful rebellion and its post-punk aesthetics. It appears this perception is misplaced for many Goths and that the Goth population has significantly matured over the last forty years. Goth identity can no longer be characterised by a single Goth look or dismissed as adolescent exuberance. I acknowledge that there is a cohort for whom Goth was a phase, but this group was not the focus of my research.

Using respondent data I reveal how Goths experience periods of separation from the culture, yet retain a sense of Gothness. I reveal participants' perceptions of Goth and Gothness: what it is to be Goth, fleetingly or over extended periods, what Gothness is and how participants feel about Goth spectacularity. As indicated in the quotation above for participants whose outward Goth appearance is less spectacular, Goth is in their head, a conceptual phenomenon that retains value beyond outward style.

Through this approach, this chapter defines what it is to be a Goth, what the elements of Gothness are and how living Gothic perpetuates the culture.

It's not a phase. I find that offensive.

I would describe Goth identity as a central part of who I am...

[ISP170 Age 45 IQ1322]

Goth: more than just a phase

As described above, the contentious phrase just a phase serves as the rhetorical anchor around which my study was devised. In the following sections, an examination of the diverse nature of Goth identity and the motivations for long-term participation in Goth culture is presented. The title question was used in several ways to draw out perceptions on the nature of Gothness, the Gothic, what it is to be Goth, what it means, how Goth can be described, how Goths view the culture themselves, and how it is perceived by others. I demonstrate how Goth culture generates perceptions of outsiderhood from pop culture and explore how outsiderhood is not always viewed in a negative emotional light within the culture.

Questions AQ 15²³, 16²⁴, and 20²⁵ and IQ 12²⁶ and 26²⁷ directly addressed the phrase *Just a Phase* and individual perceptions of Goth identity. The data in Figure 14 demonstrates Goths from both cohorts emphatically reject the notion that Goth is *just a phase*, an unsurprising result given I targeted longer term Goths as participants

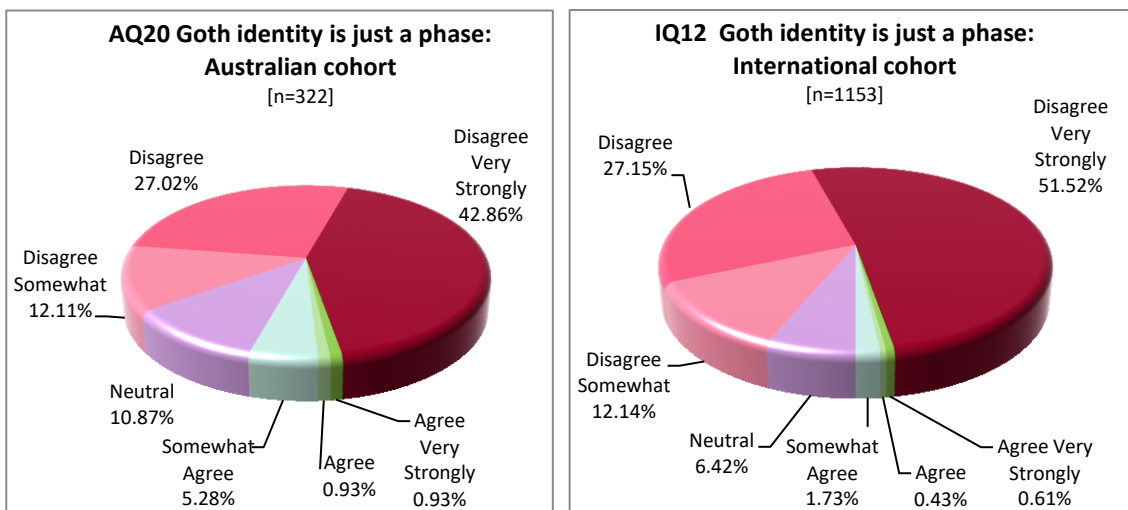


Figure 14 Goth identity is just a phase – Australian and International Cohorts

22How would you describe Goth identity

23 A15. From the list below, choose three (3) terms you most associate with Goth

24 A16. In Australia Goth is regarded as *just a phase*

25 A20. Goth identity is just a phase

26 I2. Goth identity is just a phase

27 I26. From the list below, choose three (3) terms you most associate with Goth

The consistency between the cohorts is significant and indicates a level of consensus in the long term Goth community. When cohort data are combined in Figure 15 it can be observed that 88.89% of total respondents disagreed with the phrase *Goth is just a phase*. Interestingly, only 7.39% of total respondents held neutral views, which appears to show the impact of the phrase.

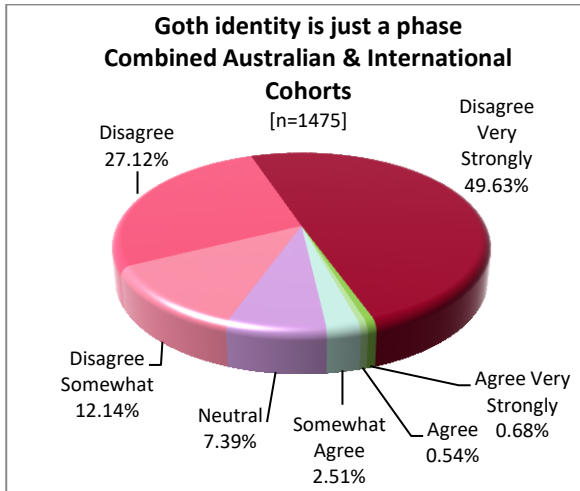


Figure 15 Combined Cohort Data: Goth Identity is just a phase

Examining Goth identity from a variety of positions, the remaining survey questions build a composite view of the culture and provide a true reading of Goth from an insider perspective.

A small percentage of participants in both cohorts positively identified Goth as a phase. For some participants, Goth may certainly be an intermittent phase through which they explore and express a wide spectrum of personality traits and aesthetic variations before settling on an authentic identity mode. Those who dip in and out of Goth in phases may be disparaged as 'Weekend warriors', seemingly lacking genuine understanding of Goth, adopting the Goth style unaware of its cultural substance (Hodkinson 2002, p. 31). However intermittent participants can be characterised as displaying the most varied versions of being Goth, as they transition through various styles of dress, music, and social scenes; this is a positive force within the scene and offers many opportunities for cross-pollination of subcultures and social groups.

These reflections inform content throughout to quantify the characteristics of Goth identity and to investigate the nature of Goth continuity. The tenor of being Goth is rooted in personal ideologies of identity and community; for some this means Goth transcends material expression and is elevated to a state of mind, philosophical conviction, or even genetic predisposition (Jasper 2004, p. 195). Survey questions received sometimes contradictory and complex responses, exemplifying the diversity of views within the global Goth community. In parallel to this, the significance of transference of socio-aesthetic values between generations of Goths is explored, with particular

regard to emergent online social modes. The longevity of the culture means there is an intentional community of original Goths and emerging second and third-generation Goth communities made up of younger members. These younger generations tackle notions of tradition and established ideal types of Goth identity, negotiating ways of being as yet untested by Goth socio-aesthetic conventions (Spracklen 2018, p. 128).

Goth sensibilities experienced increased attention following several recent classic gothic literature anniversaries (120th anniversary of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, 200th anniversary of Shelley's *Frankenstein*, 250th anniversary of Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*) as well as Goth musical milestones (40 years of The Cure, Siouxsie and the Banshees, The Sisters of Mercy, etc.). The Whitby Goth Weekend also recently celebrated its 21st annual event, marking a significant moment for the culture in the UK and stimulating reflective consideration of both the event and Goth as a whole. Several media outlets subsequently published articles on the endurance of Goth, many of which utilised its just a phase to ironically highlight the longevity of the culture rather than its temporality (Kale, 2020). The aging of the Goth population itself has become a prominent feature of media discussion and is a fruitful area of research with sociologists and art critics alike dissecting its resolute turn towards the dark (Scharf, 2018). Importantly, Goth is increasingly characterised as a collective identity movement (socio-aesthetic framework) not only a distinct appearance.

These milestones brought the longevity of Goth into sharper focus and offered opportunities for reflection on its emerging cultural legacy. Triggering nostalgic accounts of Goth style, Goths recount early experiences in the scene and give witness to the first wave of Goth in the 1980s. Looking back on their longevity in the scene, survey participants described how they or their family members initially dismissed Goth as just a phase.

They thought it was just a phase originally - 30+ years later, I think they are quite proud!

[ISP219 Age 46 IQ33²⁸]

They say I need to grow up, and that I look creepy. They've never understood it, and think it should have been a phase, but that I refuse to grow out of it.

[ISP68 Age 52 IQ33²⁹]

Goth identity can be 'a phase' for a variety of reasons, music, rebelling, making a statement, etc, or for me; it's a love of literature, Victoriana, costume... Yes I still wear black and long flowing skirts or dresses (as normal day wear... I don't even own a pair of jeans) and my home is full of unusual old furniture, crosses, etc

[ASP041 Age 54 AQ21³⁰]

28 IQ33 Describe how your family feels towards Goth? [free text]

29 IQ33 Describe how your family feels towards Goth? [free text]

For some, it may be a phase. But many people have followed Goth aesthetic and music for over 30 years now. It is a subculture that just keeps on giving - I find the fashions are timeless, especially compared to the quick turnover rubbish which is sold these days. There are many different kinds of music that could be called Goth, but there is still much creativity in this field, and it flourishes as a definitive genre.

[ASP016 Age 50 AQ20³¹]

a sensibility that is a Venn diagram of interests (interest in death, horror in all forms, Victoriana, etc) that when paired with a personal preference in style (mostly black clothes, etc) express something in your personality, so it can change and fade overtime, but it's in you, you don't get a choice.

[ISP965 Age 43 IQ13³²]

You can immediately tell if someone is just living "a goth phase" or if it is running through his veins.

[ISP959 Age 45 IQ13³³]

Before I started to learn about Goth, I always assumed it was a phase. Now I'm starting to understand that it's more of a lifestyle, but not in the sense where it completely defines you. It's only one aspect of yourself.

[Online Comment - Reddit - 26 07 2015]

How would you describe Goth identity?

As noted above, there is a strong consensus in the long term Goth community that Goth is not a phase. I contend that Goths attend the culture with a spectrum of agreed aesthetic parameters, yet they are also adept at expanding and transgressing these barriers to stimulate necessary change. Examination of the spectrum of Goth aesthetics through the eyes of participants reveals the foundation components which define Goth identity and give it consistency.

The central objective of this thesis is to generate discourse on the authentic nature of Goth identity underpinned by insider dialogue. To accomplish this, surveys posed a series of parallel questions to each of the two cohorts (Australian and International) to generate views on what is Goth. By asking Goths to describe the culture my survey exposes contradictions and complexities in Goth identity, articulating how perceptions of individuality, spectacularity and community have evolved over the forty years of Goth. Through these responses, a clearer understanding of Goth social and aesthetic practices is revealed, in addition to building a composite vocabulary of Goth culture.

This section chiefly references survey questions [AQ21 and IQ13] *How would you describe Goth identity?* I considered this question to be a crucial line of inquiry and the source of unprecedented

30 AQ21 How would you describe Goth identity? [free text]

31 AQ20 Goth identity is just a phase? [free text]

32 IQ13 How would you describe Goth identity [free text]

33 IQ13 How would you describe Goth identity [free text]

discussion. This free-text question generated a substantial data-set of 31,307 words in response from 1245 respondents. These responses typify the *Is this Goth?* topics common online, where Goths at all life stages contribute to an ongoing discourse on the boundaries of the culture and the elements which constitute its core values (Regev 2013 p. 128). Free-text responses provide insight into how participants want Goth to be recorded in academic literature. This method of inquiry promotes intersubjectivity by encouraging participants to articulate the sometimes unspoken aspects of Gothness.

Describing Gothness remains a vexed issue; Goths are well-informed, and a highly self-aware group whose social conventions shun rigid classification and evade definitive labelling. No single definitive Goth exists; instead, there are a plenitude of expressions of Goth each feeding, retorting, and informing the other. Hodkinson described Goth as generating genuine cultural substance through its custom-made styles of dress and music, yet Goth is not entirely isolated from the trends of pop culture, instead, it influences and draws on it constantly. As one Australian respondent astutely remarked in response to AQ21 *How would you describe Goth identity:*

Look, even Paul Hodkinson managed to dodge that one

[ASP120 Age 48]

In *Goth. Identity, Style, and Subculture* (Hodkinson, 2002) Hodkinson adopted an approach in which questionnaire volumes were low and the interview participant range was narrow, centred on attendance at Whitby Goth Weekend. I sought a significantly broader participant pool from which observations on transnational scene practices can be drawn (Regev 2013 p. 95). McCracken explores the substance of subcultural identity in this light, describing how the complexity of Goth culture belies the apparent simplicity of spectacular aesthetics.

As observed by McCracken:

...the culture of commotion is doing something more than simply throwing off variety. It is generating deeper cultural types, each its own reckoning of the world, each an entire culture in little, carrying its own view of the world. If the surface difference is impressive, this deeper difference is simply breathtaking.

McCracken 1997 p. 23

This view is reflected in the Australian participant quoted below. The comments echo notions of complexity expressed by McCracken and articulate the plenitude of simultaneous motivations, meaning-making, and appearance traits present in everyday Goth practices:

My friends and I have been struggling for an answer to this ourselves for years because we've all been asked a million times, "So, what is goth all about then?" And we still don't know. Something is goth, because goths like it. Goth is at once pretentious and irreverent, cynical and hopeful, dark, spooky and light-hearted and fun.

It's historical and futuristic, beautiful and twisted, rebellious and seeking community and togetherness, sex and death. It's a place to be fucked-up and a place to be really whole and understood. It's artifice and honesty. It is what it is. And it is what it is because goths made it that way.

[ASP411 Age 42 AQ21]

As with many of the survey questions set for both cohorts in identical format, the resultant answers are remarkably consistent. As in the example above, respondents expressed genuine difficulty in succinctly describing Goth, and recounted having tried over time to formulate a satisfactory response. Various premises emerged from the answers to this question and represent significant observations. Data were coded thematically, identifying commonly used words and phrases to illustrate an overall synopsis of terms applied by Goths to describe the culture (Figure 16).

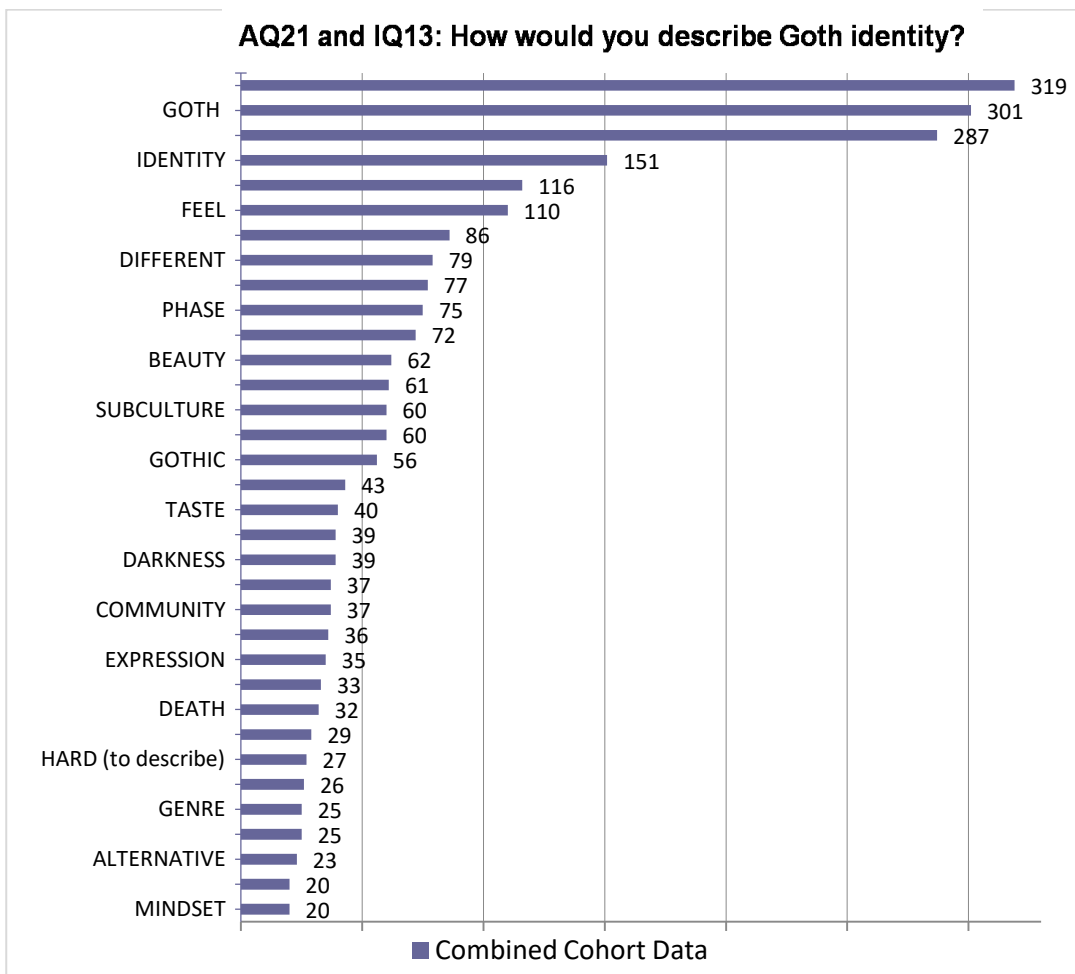


Figure 16 AQ21 & IQ13: How would you describe Goth identity? Text analysis

Apparent in the data is that Goths themselves question the nature of being Goth in an attempt to either describe it to outsiders or themselves.

The significance of traditional gothic themes of 'dark' or 'darkness' in Goth identity, such as morbid motifs, gloominess, the macabre, and the presence of death formed a common narrative for both cohorts, as illustrated in Figure 16.

Table 10 Goth Terms: Australian Survey Question 15 and International Survey Question 26

AQ15/IQ26: From the list below, choose three (3) terms you most associate with Goth:				
Intellectual	Serious	Scene	Way of being	Identity
Happy	Superficial	Anti-social	Personality	Subculture
Culture	Misunderstood	Pretentious	Legitimate	Violent
Dark	Rebellious	History	State of mind	Introverted
Lifestyle	Deep	Image	Music	Aggressive
Ironic	Fad	Melodramatic	Atmosphere	Home
Attitude	Sexy	Social	Aesthetic	Comfortable
Morbid	Just a Phase	Deviant	Friendly	Mainstream
Fashion / Style	Dead	Exciting	Pacifist/peaceful	Other

As illustrated in Table 11, questions AQ15 and IQ26 asked survey participants to choose only three terms from 45 options as per Table 10 to describe Goth.

Table 10 (overleaf) shows the top twenty responses to this question and provides a keen insight into how Goths view their culture. As outlined above, the choices align almost identically to the free-text responses provided the question: *How would you describe Goth identity?*

An emphatic first choice in both cohorts, 'music' remains the connective thread of Goth culture. Ephemeral concepts also feature in the top twenty with deep and comfortable as well as misunderstood appearing, which is perhaps less tangible than sexy or music. Within this top twenty, other terms convey some of the more nuanced characteristics: identity, atmosphere, sex appeal, social value, and bookishness, all of which contribute important attributes to the culture. From this list, it could be argued that the most acceptable definition of Goth is: a Music Subculture with dark fashion/style and aesthetics. In the voluntary, free-text element of survey responses longevity and pride in Goth identity – and persistence – is a prevailing theme.

Table 11 AQ15 and IQ26 Goth Terms: Top 20 Survey Responses

AQ15 AUSTRALIAN COHORT		IQ26 INTERNATIONAL COHORT		
1	Music	10.43%	Music	13.28%
2	Dark	9.08%	Dark	9.79%
3	Fashion / Style	7.49%	Subculture	6.58%
4	Aesthetic	6.99%	Aesthetic	6.40%
5	Lifestyle	6.79%	Way of being	5.92%
6	Way of being	5.99%	Fashion / Style	5.36%
7	Subculture	4.69%	State of mind	5.30%
8	Culture	4.19%	Lifestyle	4.85%
9	Identity	4.19%	Intellectual	4.79%
10	Misunderstood	3.89%	Culture	3.69%
11	Sexy	3.69%	Misunderstood	3.13%
12	Intellectual	3.39%	Identity	2.80%
13	State of mind	3.09%	Sexy	2.56%
14	Personality	2.59%	Atmosphere	2.47%
15	Friendly	1.80%	Friendly	2.08%
16	Social	1.80%	Comfortable	1.88%
17	Comfortable	1.70%	Personality	1.76%
18	Pretentious	1.60%	Morbid	1.70%
19	Atmosphere	1.50%	Deep	1.49%
20	Pacifist/peaceful	1.50%	Social	1.19%
(Question response International n=1331, Australian n=417)				

The terms music, dark, morbid, introverted, melodramatic, subculture, scene, deviant, peaceful, and fashion/style were selected as the terms commonly attributed to Goth in general media and academic discourse. More contentious expressions or terms that are predominantly found in academic discourse rather than natural in-culture discussion were excluded from the list (such as tribal paradigm, stylistic subversion, hegemony, etc. (Hodkinson 2002 p. 133)). Other terms – such as elitist which is sometimes used ironically within Goth culture and is prevalent in online Goth jokes/memes – were excluded as on balance their inclusion could have been a distraction rather than adding to the discussion (See: [Goth memes](#)).

Notions of aestheticism also feature prominently with 'aesthetic' occupying the fourth position for both cohorts. The term aesthetic is applied to Goth by participants as well as by those outside the culture looking in. Encompassing broad, artistically founded ideas, aesthetics can be applied to all aspects of Goth life, from home decor to clothing and personal styling. I have accordingly used

aesthetic throughout this thesis to capture the overall visual or expressive elements of Goth culture.

Subculture rated higher than Culture in both cohorts, reflecting the long-established idiom of Goth subcultural identity. The global uniformity of these responses in a sense contradicts Goths' affection for retaining the subculture tag. I propose the extent of Goths expansion and its global recognition means Goth is arguably more established, less radical, less sub than it once was.

The intrinsically anachronistic nature of the Goth style and its generational span prompts Goths to consider how it has changed from 'back in the day' as well as how historic influences shape the culture. In so doing Goths describe creating a world that discards 'false' congeniality and the 20th century fascination for standardised modes of beauty, gender, and social behaviour (Furek 2008, p. 113). In free-text Goths expressed that beauty is understood differently within the culture, with dark beauty being central to Goth ethos. Dark beauty/darkness was often mentioned in conjunction with dark humour, creativity, and an indescribable sense of Gothness – it just *is* – a characteristic Goth stoicism for romanticised existence.

You have to talk the talk and walk the walk, so, it doesn't do to not like the music, art, literature, culture, intelligence, and open mindedness. Just wearing the clothes doesn't butter the biscuit. Aesthetic helps us recognize each other but that isn't it. Goth is creative. Goth is being rather disappointed with the world and showing it but still making the best of it in our own way. Goth is open minded but not amused by the mundane. Goth is beauty, but beauty that is disturbing or painful, because it is. Goth is respectful of the past, but very modern.

[ISP616 Age 41]

1. a social departure from the mainstream 2. an aspect of morbidity, an appreciation for and expression of the macabre 3. embracing darkness (manifest as the color [sic] black or more creatively as dark moods and dark humor) 4. a sense of mystery, madness or the arcane 5. an active pursuit of making these things a part of one's daily life

[ISPO3 Age 28]

Embracing the dark beauty that the mainstream rejects, and bringing it into our everyday life

[ISP996 Age 53]

Goths are people who see, discuss, and remind others that life contains both light and dark and that conformity is not always in our best interest as a society.

[ISP225 Age 52]

A rejection of society's demand to always be positive and perky and outgoing, a rejection of society's taboo against death and the darker aspects of life, a view of the world that sees beauty in the dark and macabre, but not (necessarily) depressed, lonely, or angst-ridden. A different way of looking at the world in a way that feels more natural, comfortable, and , ironically, makes many of us happier than society's fixation on only the "nice" aspects of life.

[ASP171 Age 42]

The answers to this question noticeably reflect the compound, sometimes contradictory nature of Goth and the ongoing dialogue on its constituent characteristics - what Gothness is. The process of

asking respondents to define Goth revealed further complexities within the culture and prompted personal reflections on being Goth over time. Answers show that as Goths move through different life stages the terms they use to define Goth affiliation shift to reflect activity levels and personal identity. Goths sometimes use Goth overtly, acknowledging the label, yet when less socially or aesthetically engaged they may refer to themselves as ex-Goths or Elder Goths. As if to balance the complexities of being too Goth; attentiveness to being pretentious, elitist, or a 'poser' forms another contrary theme, again with open-mindedness and acceptance offered as a control. Goths describe how outlandish dress/behaviours are rationalised as either ironic hyper-expression of Goth culture or simply not Goth at all.

It's a certain aesthetic and musical taste, mixed with a certain outlook on life, a taste for the dark and dramatic, but with a definite sense of irony and humour behind it!

[ISP1273 Age 46]

I can only describe myself - accepting, open-minded, a bit recalcitrant, and oblivious to the opinion of others; somewhat drawn to "the dark side of life".

[ASP256 Age 56]

It's mainly just about what you like and what kind of person you are, I suppose. For me personally, I'm a bit of a dramatic, moody person and the goth subculture helps me embrace the positive side of that. I'm also very silly and over the top, I love to play dress-up, I love dark romance, and I love how post-punk and similar musical genres encompass all that stuff. I'm sure it differs from person to person, though.

[ISP433 Age 23]

Dark; introspective; a bit escapist; pretentious; fun.

[ASP228 Age 32]

For many survey responders the burden of trying to definitively describe Goth resulted in humour, a combination of diverse thoughts, and dense language or reliance on metaphysical concepts to convey the weight of their feeling. Respondents display instinctive self-censorship when asked to define the limits of Goth identity, simultaneously inventorying Goth/not Goth characteristics whilst declaring the culture is largely free from such boundaries. Here a subtle theme-within-a-theme can be observed: several participants note they are not attempting to delimit Gothness at either extreme (not Goth or über Goth) or 'gate-keeping', yet comments provide the means to do just that. These perspectives show the reticence Goths often have about exposing the culture, shying away from definitive answers in favour of passive, speculative musings on the difficulty of convincingly describing Goth.

Ah, this is a question that people have been trying to answer since the dawn (dusk?) of Goth. It's tough to nail down, but for me, it boils down to the music and fashion. A person cannot claim to be a Goth if they don't listen to Goth music and don't dress in Goth attire (though granted, Goth music and attire spans a huge space, from Bauhaus to The Birthday Massacre, from black jeans and a band shirt to deathhawks and corsets). I'm not one for cultural

gatekeeping, either. I'd never say someone wasn't "Goth enough." Either you are or you aren't.

[ISP079 Age 38]

It's just about not taking yourself too seriously, and yes, everything's going to die, but there is some beauty in death and the fragility of life. You know you're going to die – why *not* dress up in an over the top way and dance to cheesy music? Enjoy life while you can! And also I really love some of the music, the Cure has some *great* lyrics. A lot of Goths I know are very against the system, but as they get older they start to either work outside it, our work inside it to make it less crappy.

[ISP717 Age 30]

As described by Jasper, there is certainly a tendency for Goths to protest too much when asked to describe their Goth identity and to revert to a position of staunch individuality and independent personhood (Jasper 2004, p. 94). This affectation is widely observed in the culture and represents one of the primary hurdles for effectively examining it; Goths rebuff being pigeonholed and tend to bristle at the idea of being just like someone else. Yet much of Goth identity is bound up in consistent clothing and appearance choices, bands to follow, and places to meet. The remnants of rebellion in Goth identity occasionally elicit strongly protective responses; by affixing a name to Goth/Goths there is, it seems, an immediate loss of magic.

I'm myself. "Goth" is merely a label others are attaching to me; but I happen to be attracted by things others see as "Goth" (music, books, clothing, ...).

[ISP1154 Age 38]

Just another bloody label to label what others can't understand

[ASP366 Age 36]

I think it is a term that sums up what you like, in the same way that "hippy" or "chav" does! So in essence its a label really for the sort of music, clothes and attitude you are likely to have.

[ISP594 Age 43]

For some, however, the description is straightforward and succinct, stating with clarity that Goth is an inherent characteristic of personality that participants are born with, this was notably a strong area of discussion online and during interviews. Others invoke tribalist language reminiscent of Bennett to describe the more calculated, conscious kinship Goths experience as part of their identity:

it can't be described, there are internal and external elements, there is a need to embrace ideas, art, circumstances that are outside mainstream society but to also find a tribe to belong

[ISP967 Age 45]

Where all sorts of people can come together & feel safe, secure, with no judgement & to feel a part of a tribe.

[ASP055 Age 43]

Meeting with the sublime and the uncanny on a daily basis.

[ISP537 Age 33]

The concept of the 'uncanny' is an interesting conceptual addition as it is so closely linked to the traditional Gothic literature notions of the gothic and the literary style. Reflecting Gelder's integrative observation of the gothic, several participants incorporated references to gothic literature in their responses, reinforcing the connection between ancient gothic and contemporary Goth (Gelder in Goodlad and Bibby 2007, p. 390). It is not an unreasonable association; the aesthetics of Victorian artefacts and horror movies are intrinsic to Trad Goth. However, it is also significant some Goths infer that the uncanny/unknown of the human condition signifies a deeper spirituality of Goth identity. As Gelder observes, Australian connections between Goth and the traditions of gothic literature are reinforced by contemporary artists such as Nick Cave, whose anachronistic lyrics convey a sense of unease and spiritual disquiet. This marks a common thread of connection for many participants, with New Zealand Goths, in particular, sharing comparable cultural experiences and expressions of gothic aesthetic attributes (Kavka et al 2006, p. 40).

It is this diversity of Goth and gothic which makes it uniquely challenging to interrogate, as a recognisable trope. Goth is itinerant, it traverses multiple dynamic and evolving theoretical bases, which have shifted and expanded in line with the culture's own evolution. This 'mobility' of the Goth genre enables it to incorporate influences from all eras of cultural expression and a variety of modes, from architecture to literature and fashion (Jones 2006 p. 93). Participants describe this in various ways utilising the argot of Goth and gothic, subculture and pop culture to expand understanding of what Goth is.

If you're a part of the tribe, you just know. There are some interlopers, but they're just "vanillas" going through an experimental phase. If you're truly Goth, you are for life.

[ISP265 Age 41]

The strength of the Goth Identity is its ability to reinvent itself for each generation. Gothic tastes have been around for centuries, and each decade has a new twist. But at the bones of it; it's the love of the darker, sadder, gloomier, esoteric parts of us society would much rather ignore. We not only embrace it, we put it on parade, laugh at it a little, and accept it all as part of us...

[ISP407 Age 44]

I think Gothic has nothing to do with what you wear, or even what music you listen to, or anything that you can put your finger on. I think it's something inside of you that's darker, more real, passionate, lustful and earthy. I think it's an ability to find beauty in the darker realities of life, and then make something of it. It's embracing Jung's "shadow" and then turning that mirror back on to society. It's something in your heart. At 50 years old I don't do the makeup, the hair, the massive jewellery or anything, any longer. My wardrobe is all black, because that's what I'm comfortable with, and I think I'm aging gracefully into it, but my heart hasn't changed. Goth is just a name. How I feel and what I am was before there was a name. Names have no meaning.

[ISP588 Age 50]

Like a secret passport and something that never leaves. You can put down the day-to-day style but we still know each other when we meet.

[ASP198 Age 37]

You just know, it can't be explained, its more than clothing or a look, a 'true' Goth could stand a fluoro suit and somehow it would still just be there.

[ASP209 Age 45]

Several participants described this unknowable characteristic of Gothness, a subject that was discussed further in interviews and online, with many participants claiming to 'just know' when someone was Goth even if the appearance elements have faded. This concept is widespread among Goths yet is difficult to quantify and near impossible to test. The remnants of Goth aesthetics, faded tattoos or other subtle features may communicate Gothness, as do subtle embellishments like velvet, lace, and particular shoes.

I find goth identity rich and fun but sometimes limiting. I loved it when I didn't have much of an identity of my own; it was like having a pre-packaged set of aesthetics and tastes (and friends) that I could pick and choose from as I liked. The older I grew, though, the more I realised that it was like chucking out half the paints in one's paintbox. These days, if I like the orange floral dress, I wear the orange floral dress - I don't need other goths to recognise me and give me The Nod at the supermarket any more.

[ASP269 Age 35]

Understanding 'The Nod' is a crucial part of the comment above – this participant is revealing the covert in-scene behaviour of subtly, yet meaningfully, acknowledging other Goths in public places and sharing a short, intimate moment of community in the course of everyday life. By relinquishing this tiny ritual the participant places themselves simultaneously inside and outside Gothness, becoming a voyeur to the scene and no longer seeking admission to the semi-closed community. This perceptive concession also demonstrates a reluctance to entirely let go of that insider knowledge and disregard Gothness altogether. In a nightclub or gig environment, the acknowledgement of other unknown Goths is perfunctory and may to outsiders appear aloof. However, in non-Goth environments such acts of subtle support and recognition form a valuable social commodity and can alleviate concerns and anxiety.

Community, Belonging and Acceptance

The universal motivation for social acceptance and finding a like-minded community in Goth was widespread and expressed in many ways. As belonging is achieved through the aesthetics and social behaviours of the Goth culture, the aesthetic, music, and visual elements function as connective tethers binding Goth communities across geographic distances, time, and generations (Jenkins 2014, p.71).

The feeling of belonging to a community of likeminded people where you feel welcome and understood. Revelling in interests others may deem strange and enjoying the ability to unsettle others with your confident presence

[ASP81 Age 28]

That's a little hard to pin down, and my answers are different now than they were when I was younger. Now, I'd say it's a self-identification with the culture, knowing that it is more a community of people who have a love of darker elements in common, and a lot of flexibility within it.

[ISP187 Age 42]

It's a feeling of belonging, Like you had missing pieces and now you found them and you feel complete. It's like a calling that you and a select few can understand.

[ISP1005 Age 43]

I think independently of clothing at a given time of day, year, or life... it has to do with a certain gender fluidity or at least gender performance that connects with either earlier time or alternately-embodied subjectivity (cyber, vampire, etc.). It also has, I think, to do with a focus on dark themes and seeing the underbelly of things, either embracing / embodying or at least appreciating that sort of alterity [sic alternative?].

[ISP932 Age 46]

It's a way to make the world manageable. There is a smaller number of people that you need to associate with. So it is easier and safer. Non goths leave you alone. Also it is fun to dress up.

[ASP030 Age 44]

For some participants, the notion of Goth community is more profound than just its aesthetic traits. Individual expressions of Goth form the cultural mass upon which transnational Goth identity is constructed; patterns and conventions have emerged over time with consistent themes, motifs, and behaviours generating distinct Goth features. Goth culture provides a safe space in which to explore and exhibit aspects of identity such as gender androgyny and fluidity which may in other contexts elicit adverse responses. The fortification Goth identity provides alleviates concerns for some participants for example those experiencing depression, persecution, and gender dysphoria or feeling socially awkward and not fitting in.

There's a critical eye toward mainstream culture, as many of us were bullied for being different. Within the subculture, we find beauty and acceptance in one another and ourselves.

[ISP172 Age 40]

Usually goths aren't homophobic or transphobic. There seem to be more lefty goths and anarchist-ish goths than Tory goths. Living life as an ongoing work of art??? Often open to things beyond the ken of most people. Mopey or perky? As psychologically well balanced as other people. But hotter, slightly more vain (in a good way!).

[ISP1240 Age 43]

Dark clothing, dark aesthetics/makeup/hair and all the subgenres. Dark music and it's subgenres. Literature, film, television. Psychology, morbid fascination, sees the beauty in macabre things/everything. Dark sense of humour, artistic, musical, intellectual (not all Goths are), friendship, understanding, some mental issues (not defined by it) fun, happiness, full exploration of life, learning, discovery, sex, openly sexual liberation, a-political and multi-religious.

[ASP084 Age 30]

I doubt there is such a thing as THE Goth identity. There are so many branches of the Gothic scene by now ... But watching a Doctor Who episode I just came across this quote, which fits nicely: "What is good about sad?" - "It's happy for deep people."

[ISP875 Age 58]

Being able to freely explore gender identity and sexuality without fear of ridicule is a powerful motivator reported in both cohorts. The significance of Goth identity to support those who feel othered, outside the norm, or in some way unable to simply fit in must not be disregarded. Many participants mention mental health, depression, and mood disorders in their responses and many respondents describe finding autonomy, liberty, and contentment in Goth aesthetics. This is significant as it indicates another facet of Goth identity which is often misrepresented in mainstream media: Goths appear to be generally quite content with their social status, rather than angst-filled, even when suffering mental ill-health (Hodkinson 2015). Terms for Goth: Insiders Voices

With Goths themselves grappling with a cogent definition of their culture, it is unsurprising that broader society at times misrepresents Goth in popular media or resorts to clichéd images. Since its emergence, the Goth culture has constantly evolved in a continuous fusion of aesthetic and social factors to sustain its longevity, creating its universe in which to constantly expand, contract, react and reinvent itself. Goth culture does challenge societal rules through non-conformist representations of beauty, exigent aesthetic standards which engage with taboo topics, and dissociation from mainstream music. In Howard Becker's (1963) foundation text *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* he provides an insight into the complexities of outsiderhood, social practices of 'othering', and the perpetuating factors which create outsiderhood itself. In more recent discourse Goth culture has featured in several contexts as the explicit subject of inquiry, all of which have offered new understandings of alternative identity.

Hodkinson argues that the spectacularity of Goth aesthetic expression perpetuates outsiderhood and enables cultural constancy through the creation of strong social bonds and niche modes of interaction (Hodkinson 2002, p. 79). Participant responses, as above, support Hodkinson's position, identifying a perpetual theme in Goth discussion is the underlying desire to be apart from the mainstream yet not vilified for this choice. Observations of this behaviour, paired with survey data indicate the continuing evolution of not only social habits and aesthetic conventions within the culture, but also an evolution of the attitude of the Goth subculture towards itself including diversification in the application of the term 'Goth'.

Goth may be other but it is not deviant in the conventional, criminal sense; in many ways not fitting in, rather than deviance, is the hallmark of Goth identity. Goth, paradoxically, adheres to a reasonably rigid social and aesthetic formula that can be seen replicated worldwide and creates its own mode of conformity. Significantly Goths deliberately accumulate such attributes, pushing

against the mainstream to appear other, however, Goth does not break societal rules, instead, it recreates them within its micro-culture. It is this paradox of fitting in via outsiderhood that will be described in this section. I argue that the otherness applied by subcultural scholars has been embraced by Goths, leveraging being strange and unusual to enhance feelings of individual and collective worth.

The generational breadth of Goth, with its many sub-types and derivatives, means Goth has developed a complex language: aside from delineating the particular types of Goth aesthetic and music, a huge proportion of Goth idiom concerns ephemeral, philosophical attitudes within and towards the culture. Primary among contemporary discussions are variations on: *What is Goth? How do you define Goth? Is [X] Goth?* Regularly raised by younger/newer members of the culture it is telling how unclear answers actually are and how replies to such questions in online forums and chats are met with misleading or impatient "collective eye roll" responses. Notably, while many Goths do seem to hold strong views on what Goth was/is, a habitual avoidance of answering the question is frequently observed.

As outlined above I argue that Goth has now outgrown this terminology in the scholarly context. Yet clearly there is an appetite to retain subculture in colloquial settings as a tonal distinguisher from mainstream, pop culture, reflecting the continuing aspiration for Goth to be considered a clandestine society. It is important then, to understand the implications of this perspective and what those terms mean in the Goth socio-aesthetic context for long-term participants.

This study targeted long-term Goths, yet of these respondents a very small number from both cohorts (0.23% Australian, and 0.67% International) felt Goth had had its time and was 'Dead' as a subcultural force. This observation is pertinent and warrants future study, however, as illustrated below even in these comments there is an element of nostalgia or affection for the grassroots culture that once existed.

In 2015 I have no idea - I do not think goth exists as a unified genre or subculture anymore. It is split into many sub genres and I am not sure there is much that unifies them. I noticed towards the end of my active goth years a change in the people who would describe themselves as goth. It lost its intellectual side and became more associated with a combination of old heavy metal attitudes, obsessions with vampires and the occult, sexual fetish and self centred egoism. Many contemporary goth looks appear more like fancy dress apparel than actual subcultural clothing. Having the correct 'designer' goth clothing is more essential than the music. Contemporary goth now appears to run parallel to mainstream consumerism rather than challenge it. (I said I was miserable earlier!)

[ISP206 Age 43]

non-existent? Then again, I'm an old-school goth, so these people who come along claiming that Marilyn Manson is "goth", or that the movie "the crow" is, frankly they haven't got an effing clue. There are people who listen to particular bands (Sisters, Bauhaus-and-its-

successors, Wolfsheim, Siouxsie), but they also listen to other bands too. Maybe it's a state of mind - a certain cynicism, a slightly nihilistic outlook, a broad-mindedness that will embrace other ideas so long as they aren't destructive, an open-mindedness that is accepting of other people (in the main), perhaps as a result of having existed as a sub-culture themselves.

[ISP112 Age 43]

Participants of different ages utilised the free-text and online contact points to add personal accounts of being Goth, providing individual impressions of the core tenets of Goth as well as describing their understanding of its cultural boundaries and practices. The role of youth is much contested in the field of subcultures resultant from the monumental changes of online communication, increased personal freedoms, and perhaps most notably Gen X's refusal to grow up (Furek 2008, p. 157). Of particular significance in questions with free text options, younger participants frequently related their experiences of being second-generation Goths with Gen X parents.

Most notably, younger participants displayed a strong sense of agency and autonomy within the culture as well as an assumed sense of responsibility, particularly around how the stories of the culture are told online. When compared with personal experiences of older Goths 'growing up' in the culture there is a distinct shift towards self-determination and ownership and an ever-present awareness of Gothness which is absent from older Goths recollections of their 'youth'. This provides a point of experiential comparison and has revealed potential future research themes, warranting deeper analysis and discourse. In all participants, there is a marked awareness of the translocal nature of the culture, driven in part by online interaction, also as a consequence of the wide-ranging ethnicities of Goth bands and performers.

Younger Goths describe their freedom to explore identity traits and of not feeling tied to particular styles, archetypes, or music genres. To insiders, younger participants can be regarded as displaying less rigid adherence to traditional ideas of Goth, such as wearing floral dresses instead of the traditional black. To embrace such ideas and yet still retain a personal sense of Goth identity is revolutionary and perhaps signals a renewed sense of social empowerment and rebellion in younger Goths.

Although the word goth tends to bring to mind people wearing long black clothing, with facial piercings and extreme hair dos, I believe you can express your identity as a goth in more ways than with your appearance.

[ASP42 Age 23 AQ45³⁴]

Some days I feel like wearing a floral dress and guess what, I'm still goth. Goth is a feeling. Plus, my black hair with bangs and facial piercings don't change with my outfit, so I always have some trace of goth.

³⁴ AQ38 You can wear anything and still be a Goth.

[ISP1300 Age 17 IQ6³⁵]

Comments such as these underscore the lasting influence the culture has had on generations of participants, with emerging generations now exploring new limits of Goth and older participants new ways to belong in Goth communities.

Belonging: Community Online and Off

As outlined above, academic literature on Goth culture can generally be divided into participant researcher and 'objective' critical outsider discourse, with scholars on either end of this spectrum providing vital observations of the culture. In the period since the 1990s, post-modernist insider-researchers have given a new voice to subcultures (see Bennett, Scharf, Hodkinson, Brill, etc). Consequently, there has been an increase in the volume of writing about and from within the Goth community.

This writing has in turn influenced the lived experiences of belonging in the Goth community, with Goths becoming active voices in bringing understanding of 'Gothic habitus' to both academic and non-scholarly discourse (Beville 2014, p. 54). As such the perennial question What is Goth is addressed from increasingly diverse perspectives. There has been a marked increase in 'living Gothic' exemplars: Goth-produced online content including vloggers, bloggers, Reddit contributors, and YouTube personalities eager for their perspectives to be integrated into the discourse on Goth (e.g. see: [The Blogging Goth](#), [The Belfry Network](#), [Black Friday](#)). Importantly this change in social behaviour towards online communities has created a powerful archive of Goth material, images, discussions, and 'real-life' experiences of participants.

The clarity of expression used by younger participants and bloggers, coupled with their enthusiasm for greater examination of the culture, highlights significant changes in attitudes to ageing in Goth culture, the commemoration of its practices, and the global nature of Goth identity. Participants' free-text survey responses evidence this, describing how the internet has greatly influenced contemporary expressions of Goth and how social media, in particular, has evolved the way Goths connect as a community, share aesthetics, and bond without physical intimacy:

Ensuring there still is a scene. The internet and Facebook has been key, along with internet radio shows, live events etc

[ISP441 Age, 42 IQ09³⁶]

Though it is more a global community via blogs and online forums. My goth friends are scattered across the world.

35 IQ6 Describe why you chose Goth and what attracted you to your particular style.

36 Describe the primary factors which keep you involved or interested in the Goth scene

[ISP344 Age, 43 Q31³⁷]

I would say it used to be for about 9/10 new people it is just a phase. Now its more like 7/10 thanks to social media bombardment though that may just delay the inevitable. Nowadays its almost as if people have permission to stick around longer than they did in the past (if you get my meaning). Stick around in your local scene long enough, have people on social media and you will see who comes and goes and how they change.

[Online Comment – Reddit Discussion *Just a Phase?* – 26 June 2015]

I was in a bit of a Goth wilderness for many years. Once I had children, my own personal identity kind of disappeared as my world revolved entirely around their happiness and well-being. I went for 20+ years without attending a gig due to a combination of family commitments, my rural location and a lack of awareness. Social media has enabled me to reconnect with the Goth subculture and I have quickly made friends through Facebook and by attending gigs. Now my kids are fantastic teenagers and they totally understand if I need to take a 1000 mile round trip to see Fields of the Nephilim!

[ISP144 Age 48 IQ09³⁸]

Comments relating to no longer being 'in the scene' are also interesting. This does not necessarily translate to not being Goth, participants instead transition away from clubbing or festivals to semi-outsider Gothness, observing yet not participating in consistent social activities. Surveys and interviews identified the importance of gigs and major band tours as a vital source of maintaining an in-person connection with long-term participants. Participants noted the gig itself sometimes holds less importance than the social aspect of catching up with long-term/long-lost friends in the scene and dressing up for the occasion.

I find that for most, including myself, there is a period during which it's very important to dress up, go out, etc., but that as we mature our priorities tend to change. Most of us still enjoy Goth aesthetics, but we no longer feel the need to act it out all the time.

[ISP922 Age 38]

I think it varies from individual to individual. I still love the music, but I'm now an old man (33) with kids. You won't catch me wearing black nail polish anymore, but I still love electro industrial music and Steampunk design.

[ISP1251 Age 33]

The influence of music in generating Goth community cannot be over-estimated, Goth bands, clubs, and concerts remain central to experiencing the depth and range of the culture. Gigs and festivals garner interest from long-term Goths as well as from younger participants seeking to explore the scene for the first time. At many international festivals attended for this study, the enjoyment attendees derived from such events was palpable and reflected in their interactions. Attendees were generally welcoming, ebullient, and wholly engaged in the distinct social habits of the culture.

It was alive, and wild, and scary as fuck. I had no idea what any of it meant, even when I could make out the words, but it felt terrific.

37 I have developed lasting relationships within the Goth subculture

38 Describe the primary factors which keep you involved or interested in the Goth scene

[Nephs - Dawnrazor Fan comment post gig]

I enjoyed Goth media and wore Goth clothes long before I really met anyone else who did. I wasn't trying to be weird, I just felt more comfortable - more daring and sexy, yes, but also bizarrely more natural than ever before. So I guess it has always made me feel... centred? Nowadays, of course, I share a spooky little flat (with rubber bats on the ceiling) with a like-minded man and we read *The Divine Comedy* together before bed and we light incense and drink red wine and listen to the Sisters of Mercy. THAT feels like my 'place'. As to how much of that is about being with the right person and how much is about the aesthetic, I'm not sure, but... a lot of Goth things have a big place in my most profound feelings of happiness.

[ISP637 IQ47³⁹ Age 25]

As described by a participant at the Whitby-based Bram Stoker International Film Festival (BSIFF):

UKWPF01: So we came to the Bram Stoker Festival this week – we have been coming to the formal Whitby Goth Weekend for about 12 years now.

ELB: Did you go to all the events or did you come to enjoy the atmosphere and hang out?

UKWPF01: No, we have always gone to the music. I have realised we used to come for the whole festival – but you know you realise you are getting older and slowing down! You can't handle too much, heavy days with long nights...

Yeah so we actually started going for the music. I really wanted to see All About Eve and I worshipped them and followed them all through the 1980s and the Mission were also playing the following night so I had seen the Mission and All About Eve many, many times, but we wanted to see them.

So we booked a B&B and bought tickets and came here with no real concept of what the festival was going to be like and we had a blast!

It really was like stepping into a different world.

This was at a point when I was working doing corporate stuff...

ELB: So you felt you were getting back to yourself?

UKWPF01: Yeah! And it was just... *people could tell* – and people could, they were coming up to me saying is this your first festival? Which was fine and so friendly and the music was *so good*.

We had just a brilliant time, it was wonderful.

The experience described above illustrates the intensity of emotional involvement participants have with Goth events and particular locations. Whitby has become a milestone in the annual calendar of Goth events and international ambassador site for Goth due primarily to the success and community acceptance of these events. Whitby residents and businesses have adapted to the influx of elaborately dressed folk flocking to the town, providing a welcoming atmosphere for a truly gothic experience (Spracklen & Spracklen 2014 p. 96).

39 IQ47. The Goth subculture gives me a sense of place



Figure 17 Whitby during Whitby Goth Weekend 2015 (Photograph by the author)

Whitby now serves as a cultural hub for Goths, drawing thousands of attendees to the original Whitby Goth Weekend and subsequent new festivals each year. Whitby has become a site of celebration, festivities, and remembrance for Goths and represents an opportunity for non-Goths to enjoy the culture.

Music events provide the social modelling in which to learn and then imitate (or interpret) new styles, scaffolded by the shared experience of social meaning-making. The physical experiences of being in the crowd reinforce ties with the culture and the social habits of the group at large. The online negotiation of Goth spaces has enhanced and further facilitated this aspect of Goth sociality, increasing awareness of events and improving opportunities for meeting. With increased online participation, Goths have found new contexts for Goth community, with blogs, websites, forums, information groups, and image sharing platforms enabling broader discussion of, for, and with Goths.

This is perhaps most acutely felt in Australian Goth communities, once isolated by extreme distance, the Australian Goth scene has transformed, drawing in new ideas from overseas as they occur, and in turn, sharing experiences of Australian Goth in real-time. Online interactions now mitigate the difficulties of geographic distance between Goth communities. A distinct online world has been formed around Goth identity in which physical location is irrelevant (Sweet 2015, p. 248). For Goths who have been part of the scene for decades, this change is significant. Online

communication helps forge friendships and cement ideas around Gothness, socialising and publicising music, products, clothing, and importantly images of Goths from all generations.

Online social media sites provide an excellent vantage point from which to observe thematic concerns within the culture. Forum and Facebook discussions reveal Goths to be deeply engaged in a collective negotiation of past styles, balancing 'trad' Goth style against the unfettered freedoms of contemporary culture as well as if Goth is just a phase. I argue that the addition of the online component to Goth culture has been instrumental in ensuring its longevity and diversity, as well as securing a living archive of the culture. The expansion in Goth presence online and through new festivals is in part an active response to the moral panic and apprehension levelled at the Goth community following the Columbine Massacre as well as the murder of Sophie Lancaster (Baddeley 2010, p. 156, Garland 2011, p. 28). Furthermore, the 'post-Covid' world presents a unique opportunity for future study, exploring Goth culture as it transitions once more from large-scale social events to a primarily online global connectivity and connectedness.

Goth and Social Stigma

As detailed in the following sections, a review of literature on Goth subculture identified striking shifts in the discourse on Goth over the last forty years. Western media responses to the Goth subculture, especially in Australia, the UK, and Germany, can be considered to be predominately neutral, tending toward tolerance (Keltie 2017 p. 30). In Europe, Russia is the contemporary exception to this acceptance. In 2008 *The Moscow Times* reported a proposed legislative document, titled *Government Strategy In The Sphere Of Spiritual And Ethical Education* which attempted to ban Goth and emo music and styles, branding them as "a social danger and a threat to national stability" (<http://old.themoscowtimes.com/sitemap/free/2008/7/article/black-bangs-piercings-raise-eyebrows-in-duma/368995.html>).

Two significant events mark the public chronology of the Goth subculture: First, on April 20th 1999 the massacre of school children at Columbine High School in the United States (Columbine) was wrongly attributed to members of the Goth community. Second, the murder of Sophie Lancaster, who lost her life in the United Kingdom on August 24th 2007 as the result of injuries sustained in a violent attack triggered by her Goth appearance. In order to understand the critical context in which academic discourse on Goth is now situated, the experiences of being Goth in the aftermath of these events and the resultant public reaction of moral panic towards Goth needs to be addressed.

The Columbine Massacre

The Columbine High School Massacre marks a turning point in public sentiment towards Goth culture in the USA, resulting in intensive academic and media attention on both the subculture as subject matter and its participants. On April 20th 1999 in Columbine, Colorado two students attacked classmates, murdering twelve fellow students and one teacher, with more than twenty people injured. The perpetrators, who were erroneously described as 'Goths' in media reports at the time, suicided in front of other students as part of the attack. In the immediate aftermath of Columbine, public understanding of Goth subculture was informed by extant scholarly research, sensationalist reporting, and the few insider researchers contributing to the public dialogue on 'outsider' cultures at the time.

While Columbine is not examined in depth in this text, the resulting public fear and an enduring mistrust of Goth imagery resultant of this event continue to impact how Goths view their culture, particularly in the United States. The tenor of scholarly discourse on Goth, the language used to describe Goth and the thematic foci within that research have been irrevocably shaped by these events (Bloustien 2003, p. ix). In the United States the media tone towards Goth was characterised by a strong message of moral outrage connecting Goth with 'anti-social' and deviant personality types, and directly affiliating the culture with motivations behind the Columbine attack (Garland & Hodkinson 2014 p. 613). The term Goth took on pejorative and unprecedentedly accusatory connotations during this time, with Goths experiencing episodes of intimidation and public fear with a generalised moral panic directed at the culture (Griffiths 2010 p. 407).

A remarkable aspect of the commentary on the Columbine event is the continual use of Goth to identify the perpetrators; that they displayed scant Goth traits and were not part of Goth culture was ignored at the time, with media outlets keen to dehumanise and other those responsible using a familiar model of subcultural deviance (Cullen 2009 p. 94). Media outlets repeatedly referred to "Trench-coat mafia types" derived from the Columbine attackers reputedly Goth appearance, equating it with sociopathic intentions and cementing in the contemporary social consciousness an association between Goth (subcultural appearance) and deviance (Williams 2011 p. 109). Ultra-right-wing American religious groups published inflammatory editorials and websites deriding Goth culture in a dedicated 'anti-Goth campaign' designed to eliminate the "Goth Threat" from American society (Martin 2002 p. 40).

The intense public reaction to Goth appearance following Columbine culminated in the *Blue Springs* project. In 2002 in Blue Springs Missouri Senator Sam Graves sought and gained a \$273,000 grant in federal funding for a Youth Outreach Unit (YOU) to 'combat Goth culture',

premised on perceptions of Goth formulated in the wake of the Columbine massacre. Goth Culture was to be combated and sanitised, with its 'abnormal' behaviours and unconventional appearance, the citizens of Blue Springs were to be saved from the "counter cultures and negative influences facing children" (Furek 2008 p. 45). Demonstrating a profound misunderstanding of Goth culture, the initiative failed to identify or act upon the perceived threat of Goth culture in the area and was subsequently abandoned (Furek 2008 p. 44). Almost half of the funding 'to fight the Goth culture' was returned to the government following limited local appetite for the programme and the absence of a genuine problem.

Survey responses reflect the tensions between Goths and American media, with respondents voluntarily recounting the subtle and overt ways in which the hegemony of American Christian society affects everyday considerations for Goths. These responses are significant in that no religious questions were included in the surveys. The subject of religion within Goth identity was voluntarily raised by participants across a broad range of questions, throughout the surveys and in a variety of ways.

I live in Lincoln, NE. Out scene is very small and often ostracized by the Christian majority.

[ISP1337 IQ48⁴⁰]

I live in the Bible Belt of the United States. If it's not conservative, traditional, and Christian, it's demonized. We're still here, but the goth population isn't as strong as it could be because of that fact.

[ISP303 IQ29⁴¹]

I keep things 'low key' in the office because I work for the church. Nobody so far has found my Gothness and Christianity incompatible with each other.

[ISP373 IQ35⁴²]

Very mixed! I get everything from gushing compliments and photo requests to people threatening me, throwing stuff at me (including stones, glass bottles, etc.), and I was even nearly attacked by a gang of youths (although I managed to run away before they could really hurt me). Some older folk seem to think that I am anti-Christian, so I get preached at quite often (I'm not anti-Christian; I may be a Catholic apostate that is now Neo-Pagan, but I hold no animosity towards Christianity, only the more hypocritical people who claim membership of that religion).

[ISP1021 IQ32⁴³]

Goth was a culture I felt I could freely express and explore my Christianity without fear of judgement and social repercussion.

[ISP1182 IQ47⁴⁴]

I have to tone down my clothes & accessories and hair & makeup when working but that's not so out of the ordinary. I have found it difficult to work for others over the years so I started my

40 IQ48 Do you have any other comments you would like to add about your experiences in the Goth Subculture?[free text]

41 IQ29 There is a strong Goth population where I live [free text]

42 IQ35 Describe how being a Goth has impacted on your career or career choices [free text]

43 IQ32 Reactions to my Goth image/identity are mostly: [free text]

44 IQ47 The Goth subculture gives me a sense of place [free text]

own business but again I don't think that's intrinsically goth or all that odd. In addition to running the business I also make/design the jewelry which I like to give "goth" flair but when it comes to custom pieces I'll make whatever a client requires. So aside from one "Christian" vendor refusing to do business with me once I'd say my being goth has had little to no effect on my work life.

[ISP888 IQ35⁴⁵]

Worked with one person who was a Born Again Christian and thought I was interested in black magic and thought goths sacrificed animals!

[ISP1071 IQ32⁴⁶]

These responses reflect the impact of discrimination. Participants express strong views on how Goths interact with mainstream religion and subsequent reactions to 'any departure from convention' (McCracken 1997 p. 110). The question of religion (not only Christianity) in the Goth subculture is being investigated by researchers in that field (see: Waldron 2005, Wikins 2008, Latham 2014, McDowell 2017).

Sophie Lancaster

In the United Kingdom, the death of Sophie Lancaster brought to media attention the discrimination, victimisation, and threats of violence suffered by members of the Goth subculture resulting from their appearance. Lancaster and her partner were targeted based on their appearance then physically attacked, resulting in Sophie's death on August 24th 2007. In stark contrast to the American experience, the murder of Sophie Lancaster has largely catalysed positive response and legislative change which protects and specifically recognises Goth appearance as a potential trigger for hate crimes (Hall et al 2014, p. 26). In sentencing two of the teenagers for Lancaster's murder, Judge Anthony Russell QC commented that, '....this was a hate crime against these completely harmless people targeted because their appearance was different to yours' (BBC News, 2008). After the attack, The Greater Manchester Police issued a statement supporting the right of individuals to "to express their alternative subculture identity freely" without the fear of hate crime attack (Pocklington 2013: www.lawandreligionuk.com/2013/04/04/).

Survey responses from the UK, Europe, and Australia frequently cited the Lancaster case as being a 'wake-up call' or a moment of profound reflection for Goths who had experienced, witnessed, or feared attack. It was evident from the volume of responses that cited the case that it was a touchstone for Goths; the Lancaster case was subsequently raised with participants during interviews as a reference point for discrimination. Immediately following her murder, the Sophie Lancaster Foundation⁴⁷ was created by Sophie's mother, with her name serving as a reminder to

45IQ35 Describe how being a Goth has impacted on your career or career choices [free text]

46 IQ32 Reactions to my Goth image/identity are mostly: [free text]

47 www.sophielancasterfoundation.com/

"STAMP. OUT. PREJUDICE. HATRED. INTOLERANCE. EVERYWHERE". The Foundation is a supporter of Whitby Goth Weekend, and there is a Memorial Bench to Sophie (pictured below, Figure 18) on the hill overlooking the town, near the iconic whalebone arch.



Figure 18 Sophie Lancaster Memorial Bench in Whitby (Photograph by the author)

Many participants discussed the positive social activism encouraged by the Foundation and how it has allowed the Goth community in the UK to forge a more positive place in the national consciousness and has stimulated acceptance of alternative identity types. For many, the murder of Sophie Lancaster took on a very personal meaning and impacts continue to be felt at an individual level. Goths openly discussed their experiences of bullying and violence against the Goth community.

Since Sophie Lancaster's murder, my attitude to the whole Goth thing has changed actually; I feel a lot more identity with Goth subculture when I feel it's threatened.

[ISP289 IQ24⁴⁸]

In my experience, it has always been positive but I have seen others be torn apart for identifying in such a way. Further, I am a college professor. Part of my class includes discussing Hate Crimes. I explicitly discuss the murder of Sophie Lancaster.

[ISP461 IQ22⁴⁹]

48 IQ24 Being a Goth is important to my identity [free text]

49 IQ22 How would you rate your overall feeling towards the term Goth [free text]

It's permeated the mainstream to the extent that at least once a year a national newspaper will run a fashion piece inspired by goth. It's generally a pretty positive spin in the UK, and thanks for some of this must go to the wonderful Sophie Lancaster Foundation.

[ISP344 IQ46⁵⁰]

...the work of groups like The Sophie Lancaster Foundation and a change in social attitudes in general things are getting better. There's still a ways to go though.

[ISP834 IQ41⁵¹]

Society still holds negative views on Goth subculture, particularly here in the UK it seems, as evidenced by the tragic death of Sophie Lancaster, and the many other attacks on people belonging to Goth and alternative subcultures.

[ISP1213 IQ46⁵²]

In addition to the social impact of the Lancaster case, the academic community responded with increased attention on Goth as an area in need of critical attention. Scholars Jon Garland and Paul Hodkinson in particular, positively contributed to public discourse on Goth culture and its difficult association with discrimination and hate crimes, providing an invaluable source of insider discussion (see: Garland 2010, Hodkinson, Baddeley 2002, Brill 2008 et al). These works balance much of the ill-informed media commentary which saw Goths scapegoated in the immediate aftermath of major events (see: Hodkinson 2015, Hodkinson et al 2016, Garland 2010, 2011, Garland et al 2015).

Goth as Pejorative: Moral Panic and Subcultural Theory

The events described above form landmarks in Goth chronology, signifying a pivotal period of activity in public and academic discourse on the culture. Following these events, there was intense attention on the Goth look and the potential dangers of associating with Goth subculture or other 'deviant' outsider communities (Larkin 2017 p. 15). For many insider academics and participants interviewed for this study, the events of Columbine and Sophie Lancaster's killing triggered catalytic periods of cultural hyper-awareness, resulting in concerted efforts to examine and authentically represent Goth in academic discourse (Hodkinson & Garland 2016, p. 541).

Through *Grounded Theory* and similar works, the sociology of deviance and moral panic had become synonymous with subcultures in early critical texts and established deviance as a central tenet of academic investigations (Williams, 2011 p. 113). As outlined in Stanley Cohen's *Folk devils and moral panics: the creation of the Mods and Rockers* (Cohen 1972), the broad sense of moral panic around 'alternative' groups had fermented in the American psyche for a generation. Examining 'youth culture' through a conflict perspective, the discourse often focussed on the most

50 IQ46 How would you describe the influence of Goth on fashion, culture or society generally [free text]

51 IQ41 Goth is used as a term of insult by outsiders [free text]

52 IQ46 How would you describe the influence of Goth on fashion, culture or society generally [free text]

extreme behaviours borne of social disaggregation, poverty, and sudden, profound generational change (Bessant 1995 p. 19, Cohen 1972 p. 24). This established a lasting association in both academe and public consciousness linking alternative cultures with deviance and anti-social behaviour. In the post-Columbine aftermath, this readily accessible, established language of moral panic saw Goth adopted as a broad umbrella term and applied to various troubled youth (Goodlad & Bibby 2007 p. 12, see also Hodkinson & Garland 2016, Garland & Hodkinson, 2014, Griffiths, 2010, Lumsden 2009, De Young 2004, Thornton and McRobbie 1995).

In actuality, incidences of violence perpetrated by Goths – as opposed to those perpetrated against Goths – are extremely low. As noted by Gelder, Goths tend towards a quiet, non-violent disposition in social settings, even at events on a massive scale (Gelder in Goodlad & Bibby (eds.) 2007 p. 218). This is supported in *Black Celebration: 20 Years of Wave Gotik-Treffen* (WGT) a festival that attracts over 25,000 visitors to Leipzig over four days each year. For the duration of the festival paramedics observed, "In four days, we have approximately the same number of incidents as occur on the average Saturday afternoon when a football game is taking place" (Nym & Hoffert 2011, p. 8).

To some extent, Goths have absorbed negative associations applied to it as well as exhibiting a historical reluctance to 'own' Goth as an umbrella term. When designing the surveys I aimed to interrogate this, posing two parallel questions which asked participants to reflect on the use of Goth as an insult.

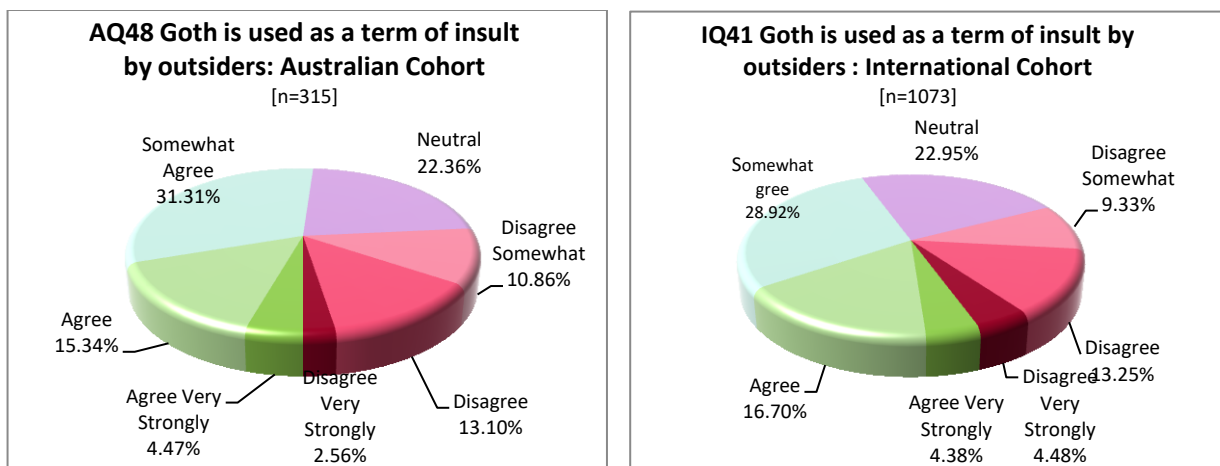


Figure 19 AQ48 & IQ41: Goth is used as a term of insult by Outsiders

The data in Figures 19 *Goth is used as a term of insult by outsiders* and Figure 20 *Goth is used as a term of insult by other Goths* demonstrate consistent responses from both cohorts to both questions. The results show belief that outsiders to Goth culture use the term as a pejorative,

however, the strong neutral result (22% for each cohort) also demonstrates there are many participants for whom no strong response was evident.

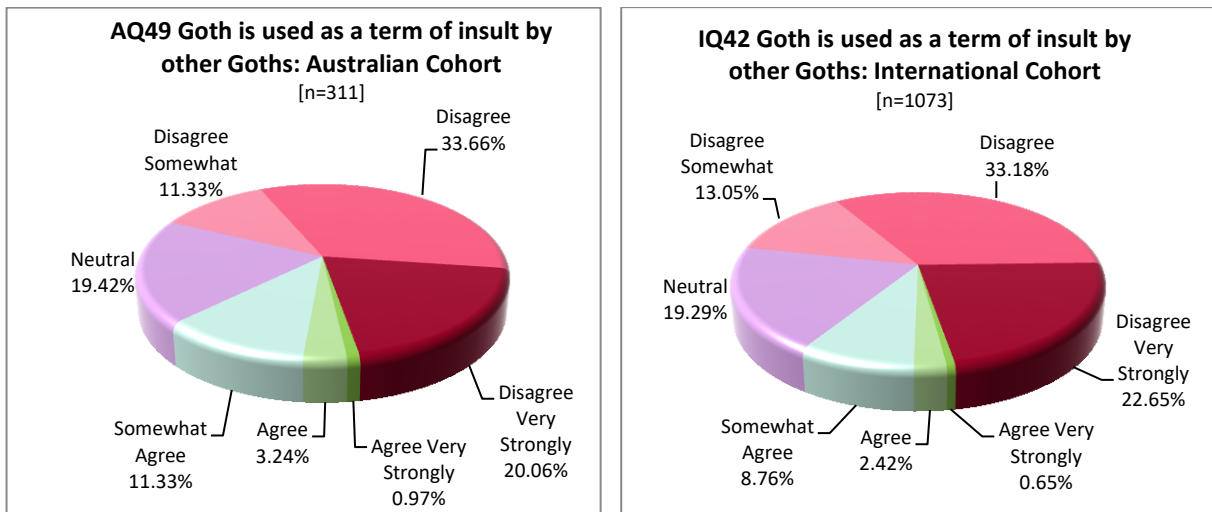


Figure 20 AQ49 & IQ42: Goth is used as a term of insult by other Goths

Figure 20 demonstrates Goths themselves are not using the term Goth as an insult. This is significant as a considerable proportion of participants described being uncomfortable with the label, providing alternatives, or simply rejecting labelling altogether

Acceptance of Goth: Family

For many, the experience of finding belonging in Goth community concurrently meant seeking acceptance within intimate family environments, which was sometimes not forthcoming. Familial relations for some participants were strained when they first developed Goth appearance and music tastes. Reluctance to accept alternative appearance or the perennial comment of 'It's just a phase' perpetuate negative perceptions of Goth, making Goth identity difficult for some participants.

As illustrated below in Figure 21 there is some consensus between the two cohorts, however, Australian responses demonstrate a higher negative familial response to Goth.

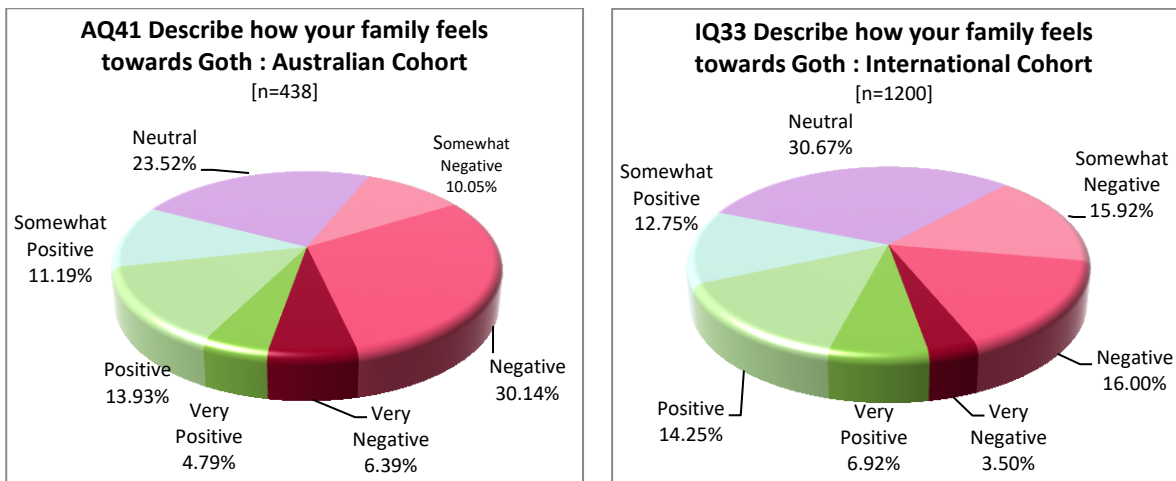


Figure 21 AQ41 & IQ33: Describe how your family feels towards Goth

The additional information section generated 8707 words in free-text responses to this question and provides great insight into negotiating Goth identity in the family setting, and the differences between Australian and international respondents. These responses expose some of the challenges as well as positive experiences met by Goths in their home environments.

My mom would take my clothes away when she found them. I started keeping them at school in my locker and changing clothes at school. She threatened to shave my Mohawk off when I was sleeping. She said I looked ridiculous and it was just a phase. She was wrong. I'm 41 now and I'm still this way.

[ISP584 Very Negative, Age 41]

They've always hated it. I come from an extremely religious Apostolic family.

[ISP229 Very Negative, Age 30]

My mother keeps complaining about my choice of black or dark clothing. I'd have thought she'd given up after 20 odd years but she's stubborn like that

[ASP188 Somewhat Negative, Age 49]

Now neutral, a few years ago negative. (They believed those clichés about violence against animals, sacrifices, drugs etc.)

[ISP793 Neutral, Age 27]

in the early years my family struggled to understand but as time went on saw the empowerment it gave me.

[ASP140 Somewhat Positive, Age 46]

Although in the beginning they took harsh measures to try to 'reform' me, they now are proud to tell people I am Goth and are happy to see me comfortable and confident. If any family members still have a problem with it, they aren't saying so!

[ISP309 Positive, Age 41]

Since I started going to clubs and being formally "goth" at 30, my parents (much older parents) thought it was great. They knew I was a professional, intelligent person. I never went through a rebellion as a teen. They loved the style and participated in my gothic wedding!

[ISP877 Very Positive, Age 48]

Living Gothic

Confidence in the sense of self Goth provides as well as in the safety of Goth cultural settings means participants find new ways of expressing elements of their personality or style which in other settings may be a source of ridicule or rejection. The role Gothness has in promoting authenticity and therefore positive mental health must be regarded as an important function of 'spectacular' Goth dress and a major constituent of attraction to the culture. Belonging in the Goth context, therefore, necessitates a certain level of outsiderhood; Goth sits apart from the mainstream, outside fashion norms, and it is this shared experience that generates belonging. To quantify constancy in the Goth culture, the motivations for continued involvement in the scene into later life and the forms this may take require consideration. Implicit in this is that Gothness is a non-binary state, occupying a greater spectrum of existence than in/out. Goth identity, aesthetics, and sociality may hold many forms and degrees of significance over an individual's lifetime, and within that, different modes of expression. The intangible, philosophical Gothness so commonly described by participants as being 'just part of who you are' (ISP340 Age 43⁵³) finds expression in a variety of modes throughout life, yet the belief of being a Goth remains, irrespective of appearance or performed identity.

As a lived embodiment of the Gothic mode, Goth culture integrates otherness into identity, positioning Goths outside the mainstream and consequently immune to the vagaries of popularity and vogue. As described by Gelder, this Goth mindset could instead be classified as a 'structure of feeling', a metaphysical space/place in which personal image and identity find balance and true expression (Gelder in Goodlad L.M. E & Bibby M. (eds.) 2007 p. 219). Consistent with participant comments, the performative nature of Goth identity suggests it occupies a philosophical state of mind, an attitudinal perspective by which everyday choices are influenced and a *mode of being* is defined. Gelder's interpretation of Goth as a new Goth mode gives weight to participants' arguments that there are crucial aspects of Goth that are neither spectacular nor overtly obvious. Far from a superficial 'shocking' fashion, for many participants Gothness brings salve and comfort, acting as simultaneously as a shield and an invitation to look – yet look on their terms. Goth has been from its beginning a liberated community; androgyny and sexually ambiguous dress are common in Goth social settings, allowing for participants of all genders and sexual orientations to experience belonging in the absence of conjecture and prejudice. This conscious self-styling negates traditional notions of male/female gaze and the use of heavily layered aesthetic

53 IQ13 How would you describe Goth identity

symbolism deflects unwanted attentions, creating an otherness that is not easily interpreted. Personal vulnerabilities can be overcome via Goth fashion; the community is a safe one, promoting authentic self-expression and tacitly encouraging participants to find and preserve their true selves (Inkpen 2020 p. 96). When choosing to retire 'spectacular' Goth style participants transition into a moderated expression of the culture in which subtle visual clues and language take on prime communication roles.

Goth Appearance

To better understand how Goths view the expanding Goth aesthetic spectrum and how this relates to Gothness as an enduring way of being, participants were posed the statement: *You can wear anything and still be a Goth*. Answers use the standard seven-point Likert scale (Agree Very Strongly to Disagree Very Strongly with a free-text section for comments) receiving 1755 total responses. The 'additional information' section of this question generated 9007 words in free-text response, with participants providing diverse perspectives on Goth visual style. This question aimed to, challenging participants beliefs of what is Goth and to articulate how Gothness is further defined beyond clothing choices.

The responses to this question (Figure 22) illustrate the vast majority of respondents from both cohorts agreed with the premise that *You can wear anything and still be a Goth*: 77.8% of the Australian cohort and 72.3% for the International cohort. It can be inferred from these results that the constraints on Goth appearance are in fact few and far between. The data indicates the majority of respondents believe there is freedom of appearance in Goth, allowing participants to fluctuate between high-Goth personal design and the less overt expressions of Goth.

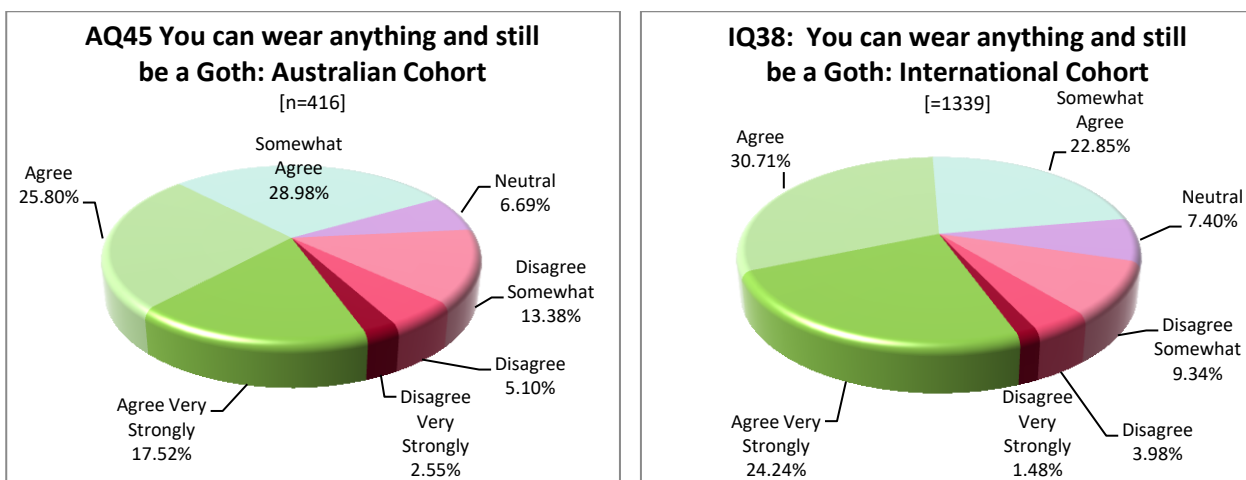


Figure 22 AQ45 & IQ38 - You can wear anything and still be a Goth

The free text section exposes some of the inherent contradictions and biases extant in the Goth community about clothing and appearance. In practice while Goths are acculturated to welcome outsiders there are perceptible boundaries of Gothness. Choosing an appearance which both challenges and conforms to Goth ideals is possible, however as noted above, the context is vital. Goth aesthetics can present difficulties which result in some Goths 'toning it down' for work or altering their Gothness to feel safe, less distinctive, meet corporate dress codes, or simply to ameliorate parents' feelings.

There are key characteristics that mark out imposters to the culture, as well as elements that underwrite authentic Goth identity. An attempt to emulate Goth aesthetics by wearing Halloween costumes, low-quality wigs, or unmatched seemingly random black clothing signifies inexperience and/or nescience of Goth culture. This is sometimes seen at Whitby Goth Weekend for example, where generally well-meaning folk join the Goth atmosphere. It can also be observed of young, inexperienced club/festival attendees who are not yet sufficiently informed of Goth aesthetics. For some participants, like all groups founded in teenage experimentation, there is a tendency to aspire to be the 'Gothest' in the crowd, resulting in the 'über Goth' tag described earlier.

For those disagreeing with the premise that you can wear anything and still be a Goth, the notion of stylistic display of Goth signifiers was vital.

This is myth circulated by lazy people. Of course one can't generally go to work in a mediaeval gown, but real goths dress gothic even when in a small way. The clothes are a very important expression of what's inside.

[ASP1204 Disagree Very Strongly, Age 33]

Eh, I'm actually quite torn on this question. Having met pastel goths, ethereal goths, tribal goths, I'm not sure clothing is as big a factor as it once was. There certainly is no real "goth clothing standard" at this point in time. However, what you wear is still a flag/calling card for the style of goth/music you ascribe to...

[ISP471 Disagree, Age 29]

Most people say that goth is on the inside. But I kind of have a problem with that, a little. I know a lot of people through goth groups online who abandoned the look many years ago, but think they are still goth. However, I would feel like I was wearing a costume if I had to wear khaki pants and polo shirts like these supposed goths do. I just couldn't uproot the style I have, it's an extension of my emotions and thoughts, so wearing other things wouldn't reflect who I am as a person.

[ISP496 Disagree Somewhat, Age 52]

I think people should feel free to do what they like. However, clothing choices are important to a sense of belonging in the Goth scene, even if it is only wearing black.

[ASP252 Disagree Somewhat, Age 50]

I have noticed a close friend starting to wear aqua coloured skirts, dresses and pants around the house and feel disappointed. I am dismayed that it is so important to me that I feel bothered by this.....

[ASP201 Disagree, Age 45]

The self-awareness shown by ASP201 reflecting on their friend transitioning towards a more colourful clothing palette and their poignant reaction to this illustrates the deep emotional connection Goths have to their culture and the impact of any disturbances in the stability of its aesthetics.

The comments above are particularly noteworthy as they illustrate the emerging divide in older and younger Goths. Younger generations appear to hold far less stringent views on what can be considered Goth. I suggest this is a direct result of online participation and the diversification of what is Goth as defined by younger participants. Older participants also demonstrate their belief in the establishment of Goth as a culture founded in clothing and music, and that clothing needs to be black. Participants described the appeal of finding belonging and beauty in difference, even when at odds with their family and peers.

Certainly in the UK... I grew up in a small village, and my sexuality was questioned. Even by my mother. You know, because, I had dyed black hair, I wore make-up. The only time I was accepted outside the scene was when I was at soccer, so I would go to soccer dressed that way, you know, in black, with make-up but with my scarf, you know and they accepted me. It was very much a tribal acceptance. The rest of the time I felt like a boundary rider, you know on the outskirts of society. Once you associate with a scene, you start to feel that sort of belonging.

[Interview Participant MPM106]

I have a mortgage to pay so looking professional at work is non-negotiable. As you get older, you may find yourself in positions of influence and you need to be taken seriously. My friends in IT continue to totally rock the look. If you've got a more conservative job, not so much. It's not cool to be our age (40+) and still living in your parent's basement. You have to find the balance between responsibility and being who you are. Sometimes that means looking normal-ish. Doesn't affect your personality though. No changing that.

[ISP616 Neutral, Age 41]

the aesthetic is pretty flexible, and is shared across a number of other subcultures, but that doesn't mean that anything goes..

[ASP301 Neutral, Age 43]

The flexibility of Goth aesthetics is an intriguing concept. I argue there is an accepted spectrum of Goth aesthetics, rather than it being wholly flexible —were it completely flexible, then anything would go... Participant ASP301 chose *Neutral* in their Likert response, however, the free text suggests the boundaries of Goth style are extant and should be respected. This notion is furthered below by ASP013 who provides extenuating circumstances for wearing non-Goth attire and provides salient observations on how Goths mitigate such choices.

Not "anything", really. But there's a definite edge you can spot when people get a bit older and tone it down a little for a variety of reasons - "goth dressed for work" should be a sub-group of goth! But you don't have to be full goth-club-ready dressed up to qualify.

[ASP013 Agree Somewhat, Age 37]

Largely true. It's a collection of interests, a sort of cultural *Bricolage*, and an attitude. That doesn't mean that if you suddenly start wearing bootscooting gear in public that you won't get a ribbing about it from your black-clad mates. But there's no one right way to do this; it's one of the things I like about it.

[ASP047 Agree, Age 42]

Yes the clothing matters but only to a certain degree and to a certain time in life when adult responsibilities take over as a priority over looking the part. You can be comfortable in who you are without broadcasting it using clothing

[ISP724 Agree, Age 33]

Ultimately, Goth is a state of mind / being, it's what is in your head that matters most. Visually it is a styletribe and most will follow the style, but someone can dress non-Goth and still be into the music, support the bands, run or support events, create art or literature, or any of the many other things that come together to build the scene.

[ISP338 Agree Very Strongly, Age 48]

Along with music, perhaps the most contentious debate in the goth community. Some don't consider styles like pastel goth to be goth, but I do.

[ISP693 Agree Very Strongly, Age 33]

As ISP693 comments, what is Goth is indeed one of the most contentious discussions in Goth culture, and with such a high proportion of respondents approving the notion of 'wearing anything' it seems this debate will continue. The acceptance gained within the Goth community rewards participants with feelings of being understood – of mattering.

The fine line between expressing Gothness and being a pretender to the scene is clearly a common consideration for participants. Navigating 'real Goth' appearance or exposing yourself as an imposter through your choice of clothing comes with a series of caveats and justifications, often underpinned by strong beliefs in Goth as having 'deeper' significance.

Goth Pride: I am a Goth

Outward exhibits of Gothness can fluctuate in sync with bodily transformation from youth to older participant. It is how older participants navigate such complexities and modify expressions of Goth culture which concerns the following. Focussing on the concept of being Goth, several survey questions encouraged participants to consider the baseline constituents of Goth identity and their attitudes towards the culture as a global phenomenon. Participants were asked to consider how Goth has shaped/influenced their lives and if their attraction to Goth identity has had any notable consequences. First among these attitudinal questions was an assessment of self-identifying as a Goth.

As illustrated in Figure 23, survey respondents were asked to consider the phrase *I describe myself as a Goth* using a seven-point Likert response scale as well as a free text 'additional information' section. The free text section received 6439 words in response.

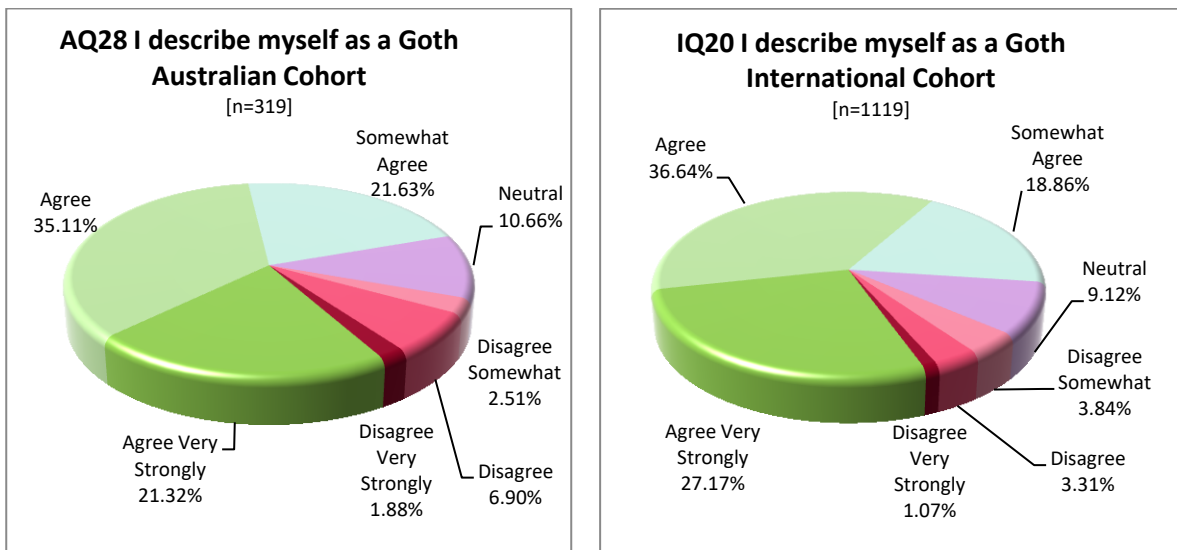


Figure 23 AQ28 & IQ20 - I describe myself as a Goth

The myth that Goths refuse to be identified as Goths is dispelled by this research cohort, indicating there is, generally, acceptance of the label. Data in Figure 23 demonstrates the vast majority of participants agreed with the statement and described themselves as 'Goth' with the International cohort displaying a higher level of comfort with the label. The 'additional information' responses provide insightful observations on Goth from within, reflecting the sometimes flippant nature of the scene as well as the long-term nature of participants' association with Goth.

Some participants displayed pride in the Goth name, which can be regarded as a fairly recent cultural development; for many years it was not done to self-label as a Goth (Jasper 2004 p. 91). I claim this indicates the culture (and its participants) has matured to a point where the once-controversial label is now more accepted and also signifies a shift in how Goths discuss the culture, with increased awareness and online openness amplifying Goth Pride.

Although as a "real Goth," I'm supposed to deny I am. :)

[ISP987 Agree Very Strongly, Age 52]

Of course this invalidates my claim as all true Goths are in denial. :)

[ISP338 Agree Very Strongly, Age 48]

This sense of humour of Goths towards their own appearance signifies the self-awareness and self-deprecating acknowledgement of ageing commonly observed in the scene. The great Goth 'inside joke' is hinted at: that all real Goths deny being Goth, yet are fully cognisant of their appearance. A few participants called this out directly, in a demonstration of both insider

knowledge and long-standing engagement in the scene. This has the dual benefits of acknowledging the label while simultaneously dismissing it as a joke and vice versa. Goths build a protective aesthetic image in order to repel deep scrutiny, and this practice is a further expression of that behaviour.

Goth and proud - if you're not proud of what you are, you're doing it wrong!

[ISP1273 Agree Very Strongly, Age 46]

Goth to the grave!

[ISP231 Agree Very Strongly, Age 52]

I do. Unashamedly. "Back in the day" was such an important part of my life that I will never turn my back on it & deny my preference.

[ISP075 Agree, Age 46]

Although I am most definitely a Goth, I also love the more punky/ rockabilly scene too. I'm not the pretentious type to say "oooh I don't like to label myself " or "I am me". I'm Goth & proud!

[ISP214 Agree Very Strongly, Age 48]

It's a label that I'm happy to wear. I think it's great that I can choose my own label. It's like belonging to a cultural identity that sits outside the obsolete Victorian invention of nation state and the more modern but equally absurd classifications of nationality and ethnicity derived from accident of birth rather than proper cultural identity.

[ISP807 Agree, Age 46]

Free text comments also highlight the internal pressures some Goths feel in relation to maintaining an acceptable intensity of Gothness, some responses cautiously accept the 'Goth' tag, and contradictory responses appear to both accept and reject being called a Goth.

Sometimes when I am very depressed I feel I don't have to right to label myself as goth given I cannot participate in the subculture fully as others do.

[ISP020 Agree, Age 46]

To be honest I describe myself as a lot of things depending on the context, and they're all true, more of less, but I do still identify culturally as a goth first and foremost, and have never been one of those folk who insist that I'm beyond labels because I'm too special and unique for that sort of thing. I'm quite happy to identify as a goth; I'm proud of my subculture and I still like it despite the fact that I grumble about it like a sad old fart because back in my day blah blah blah...

[ASP048 Agree, Age 42]

I am now 48 and stopped doing my Victorian and kitschy Tim Burton outlandish outfits to be more age appropriate. I sometimes feel too old for the corsets and costume outfits. But, I also realize that goth is just me. It is not just fashion although fashion creates my mood/theme. It is my being and my personality. I now dress 1920's, 40's, 60's Mad Men- which is more classy, timeless.

[ISP877 Agree, Age 48]

I do play up my goth past quite a lot - refer to my sense of dress as 'executive goth', tell stories to my students about going out covered in flour and that sort of thing. I seem to be a fully functioning adult but one with more than my fair share of dark clothes these days. More of a hint of goth than out and out goth.

[ISP1090 Somewhat Agree, Age 42]

Many comments reflect concerns around ageing and 'age-appropriate Gothness'; the data suggests there is no single Goth look for older participants, many mentioned no longer wearing corsets or other restrictive clothing. This correlates with observed social practices; the increased prominence of the terms 'Corporate Goth' and 'Executive Goth' further support this, reflecting the 'fully functioning adult' [ISP1090] nature of Elder Goths. The television programme *The IT Crowd* featured a sequence entitled "Goth to Boss" which contributed to improved recognition of the working/corporate Goth trope; it also brought new humour to the sometimes tricky problem of losing/maintaining Goth style in the office.

It is also interesting to note the comments relating to Industrial culture and the acknowledgement of shared social spaces which align it to Goth. As described in the preceding chapter, this relationship is vital to the survival of the Goth culture in that context. It is noteworthy that the survey preamble stated it was seeking long-term Goth participants. The connection between the two little cultures of Goth and Industrial are felt strongly by some participants such that the two exist symbiotically. The continuing influence of Punk was also expressed by a minority of participants, underscoring the lengthiness of Goths' shared social context.

I claim Industrial, and have no intentions of relinquishing it, and don't feel obligated to meet a stereotype to validate that claim.

[ISP196 Agree, Age 42]

I've ticked very strongly for the purpose of this survey as the definition of Goth here encompasses industrial subculture. Usually I would describe myself as Industrial though, and consider Industrial subculture distinct from Goth even if we do share the same scene.

[ASP054 Agree Very Strongly, Age 43]

I don't describe myself at all, boxes are for shoes not people

[ISP822 Neutral, Age 52]

I don't label myself, I try to keep evolving & avoid stagnation, but other people do label me as goth. I rarely argue with them.

[ISP741 Neutral, Age 50]

Curiously, despite self-identifying to participate in this research, 128 respondents across both cohorts did not support the statement, with a further 136 neutral participants. As per the comments below, participants are reticent to use the Goth term for a range of reasons.

no, but it is a label that is applied to me and one I will use myself as a kind of shorthand.

[ISP662 Disagree Somewhat, Age 52]

Generally deny being a goth (tongue in cheek)

[ISP846 Disagree Somewhat, Age 45]

I love goth music and culture. But I don't go around calling myself goth.

[ISP561 Disagree Somewhat, Age 46]

I'm a Sisters fan, not a goth (I hope this doesn't make my completion of the survey void) :-)

[ISP047 Disagree Very Strongly Age 45]

This correlates with other research which was found some Goths, despite adopting overtly Goth appearance, remain uncomfortable defining themselves by a single term (Hodkinson 2002, p. 80). External application of labels becomes an opinion, albeit usually based on an accumulation or assessment of observed socio-aesthetic factors. When Goths reject the Goth label, they effectively preserve the outsiderhood of Goth culture and the inscrutability of its membership, preventing its mainstream popularity and critical disassembly. As described by Agnes Jasper in *I am not a Goth*, Goths thus engage in a constant internal dialogue assessing Gothness in themselves, their surroundings, social engagements, and the artefacts of those settings (Jasper 2004, p. 93).

Jasper counters Hodkinson's description of the cultural autonomy Goths possess, instead characterising Gothness as a multi-sensory experiential notion that transects both insider understandings of Goth and external observed Goth practices (Jasper 2004, p. 93). That is to say, Goths are no different from any other member of society; it is only their 'spectacular' socio-aesthetic practices that mark them out as different. I argue Goth does not exist entirely removed from mainstream culture; rather it creates a cultural world within the hegemonic plenitude of mainstream pop culture.

As a consequence the only meaningful mechanism for verifying Gothness is self-identification; sustaining practices that individuals classify as authentic to Goth conceptions of taste, style, and personal identity. The declaration of or celebration of Gothness is determined by an evaluation of situational contexts, for example are there other Goths around, what is the median age/life stage and in what context does Goth identity matter etc... As identified in the participant comments above such considerations determine if declaring Gothness is appropriate, safe, or even necessary. It also influences the overall understanding of what participants mean when using the term Goth. Older, original generation Goths have a more traditional, in some ways rigid understanding of what is Goth whereas younger, more recent adopters tend to operate with a broader, far less prescriptive definition.

The maintenance of Gothness beyond youth can accordingly be interpreted as intrinsically valued by the culture and indicative of insider cultural awareness. In recent years Goth fashions have become increasingly available online and are more affordable, this has also allowed for newer Goth concepts (e.g. Pastel Goth) to become entrenched in the 'authentic Goth' products offered

online as well at festivals (etc.). The parameters of Gothness are therefore increasingly fluid and shift per social situations, employment, and personal limitations – not just age or preference for Goth types. The application and extent of these limits can be better measured when all Goth appearance attributes are removed, and participants are required to consider what else makes you Goth.

Nostalgia and Generational Change

Many surveyed older Goths gave insight into exploring their sexuality and identity at 'underground' or atypical events and clubs and many referenced the 'unusual' clientele of these settings and how social exposure to such variance shaped their views on the culture. Unlike some subcultures emergent from the 1970s such as Punks and Skinheads, the Goth scene offered a liberal – or at least politically neutral – community of belonging in which participants could experience a safe, shared space for sexual, social and style-based identity experimentation (Brown 2004 p. 160). Nightclubs in Europe, Australia, UK and America introduced patrons to new Goth music and styles, alongside live acts or fringe/experimental performances in small niche clubs, or in larger mainstream venues on their 'off' nights (Muggleton 2000 p. 67). These clubs were vital places of education for the early Goth generations and have shaped how those participants express Gothness (Hodkinson 2011, p. 267).

In the early years of Goth, small groups of young Goths could be observed, particularly during early experimentations with Goth identity, trialling particular looks and ways of signalling Goth aesthetics. It was common in such groups for each member to adopt a particular motif, style, or theme to assert individuality simultaneous to their Gothness, as can be seen below in Figure 24. This could include favouring a particular band, hairstyle or 'type' of Goth look.



Figure 24 Young Goths, Perth 1990 (used with permission)

Nostalgia for this form of Goth learning and experimentation is evident in interview and survey data; there is a particular bias in older participants whose first experiences of Goth depended on very public trial and error and local community exploration. Interviews revealed participants held a strong belief in earning their place within the scene at an early age.

Yeah, so when I first got into it, it was a bit scary. You just had to do your time. I think now a lot of people don't make an effort with their clothes. Before you really had to.

You want acceptance, but you acknowledge that you are different. You express your difference by kind of embracing it instead of going and buying Country Road clothes and trying to fit in.

MPF106: Melbourne Interview March 1st 2016

How these signifying practices are expressed by long-term participants demonstrates tacit decision-making processes and extensive deliberation on performing Goth identity. Many long-term participants describe lasting affection for the physical and emotional space Gothness occupies, even as their material interactions with the culture fluctuate. For some though, the sites of Goth sociality lose some of their mystique in the later stages of life.

When you reach a certain age, you go oh fuck you are old enough to be my daughter! What on earth am I doing here! I have shared DJ booths with DJs literally young enough to be my children.

... but I have long since reached the realisation that I am not the peak target demographic for nightclubs. Nightclubs may pretend they exist for promoting music genres or subcultures, but they are meat markets. That is what they exist for.

PPM012: Perth Interview March 24th 2016

Experiences such as this demonstrate the evolution of relationships between participants and generations of Goths, as well as with the venue proprietors and promoters. For some this evolution also generates feelings of nostalgia and triggers reminiscence for early Goth experiences. Elder Goths can be observed online reflecting on Goth clubs of the past, as well as engaging in 'new' modes of Gothness, such as posting 'then and now' selfies. Images tagged with #Goth on social media provide insight into the changing sensibilities of the subculture not just over time, but between generations and across geographical locations.

Where once Goths indulged in nostalgia for idealised bygone eras, Goths are now able to authentically eulogise and reminisce about their own shared history (Scharf 2018). These behaviours ensure a stable understanding of what Goth is from a particular point of time is sustained, cementing a continuity of Gothness in both memory and behaviours. These acts of nostalgia also serve to place older Goths within the contemporary Goth context, further validating their Goth credentials and claims to authenticity. In turn, these acts assert broader influence and a far greater potential audience than would have been possible in, for example, a 1990s suburban nightclub.

At least one generation of Goths now has children themselves, who may face significantly reduced pressures from their parents to conform to mainstream stereotypes. These second-generation Goths may also experience online peer initiations into Goth culture and sociality. The evolution of these practices further demonstrates the plasticity of Goth culture, with the online Goth world now representing a genuine social environment comparable with the clubs and bars of earlier generations.

The impact of online and commercial changes over recent decades has forever changed how subcultures connect and find community. Online sociality was not available to the first generation Goths. Instead analogue modes of subcultural knowledge acquisition were necessary and inevitably slower. This creates a frisson between Goth generations, with the older Goths placing intrinsic value on the gradual acquisition and expression of Goth knowledge, with many expressing a tacit understanding that back in the day attainment of street cred or authenticity was intrinsically linked to duration in the scene.

The capacity to buy Goth commodities so easily has enabled renewed engagement with the culture for older participants, while simultaneously allowing younger members to 'buy in' Goth identity. Much of the 'pre-learning' of Goth music is now conducted online, as described above,

forums, Facebook groups, chats, and other social media platforms provide a solid understanding of what is Goth. A search for 'Goth clothing' will return an astonishing variety of DIY, retailers, wholesalers, and boutique offerings from high-end historically correct couture including corsets, bustles, and frock coats, to one-off bespoke designs.

Young Goths now have the opportunity to learn from, adapt, and reject the choices of their subcultural forebears, even borrowing from their parents to relive the 1980s Goth heyday. This can be observed online, where the use of '#Goth' to identify Goth content has increased over recent years, both by younger Goths as well as in nostalgic 'Elder Goth' posts. Such online Goth communities extend the 'look' of Goth as well as create new mechanisms through which networks of belonging are established. Perhaps most significantly, the increase of *#Goth* has seen negative connotations with the term diminish and the phenomenon of Goth pride intensify.

This illustrates the cultural influence 'Elder Goths' and Gen X Goths are able to exert in the subculture, and how younger participants are beginning to find a more resolute voice. As in any culture, younger members both challenge and look to the more established in the cohort for guidance on the 'right' look, dress and behaviour. Online discourse reflects the generational changes occurring in the subculture and the apparent transference of cultural capital from the elders of the scene to the young, less experienced members of the community. Comments demonstrate a stepping forward of the younger generation, calling out older Goths for 'gate-keeping' and elitism, to claim a 'Nu Goth' generation. This is demonstrated through not only musical choices and personal blogs, but also through commercial resources supporting the culture.

Within the responses from 'Elder Goths' the influence of a younger generation can be observed, with Nu-Goth, Goth YouTube influencers, Pastel Goth, and other recent arrivals exerting cultural authority through their acts of performative identity (Elan 2021, p. 2). Notably choosing coloured clothing is referenced repeatedly in the free-text answers, with participants identifying pink and pastel colours as being simultaneously anathema and a new 'shocking' aspect of Goth aesthetics. Such colours may be worn in defiance of Goth 'elitism', a sartorial badge of honour which broadcasts deeper Goth credentials beyond standard black.

The profusion of mass-produced retail items catering for the 'alternative' as well as Goth markets includes products from basic printed t-shirts to pre-torn tights, dreadlock hair extensions, and spiked leatherette wristbands, etc. The sum total of this profusion of spending opportunities is a fundamental diversification of what is Goth as well as a tendency towards homogenisation of

particular sartorial themes within the 'Goth market'. It is not only Goth branded clothing that supports this, but also the hyper-availability of cheap, mass-produced fast fashion in which items can be reimagined or layered for Goth effect.

A proliferation of online stores servicing the alternative/Goth scene provides a ready source of visual identity through which patrons can then project globally recognisable representations of the subculture in both the virtual and physical world. The mass availability of 'Goth stuff' means the once rough edges of the Goth aesthetics have been somewhat smoothed: basic band t-shirts, cheap ragged cheesecloth skirts, DIY op-shop finds, over-worn torn fishnets, patched, faded, and balding velvet are less prominent as a result. Old band t-shirts from original Goth bands now hold nostalgic value as well as cultural cred, the motifs of *'The Batcave'* take on historical undertones intimating knowledge of Goth, if not actual lived experience. These older forms of Goth attire have largely been superseded by mass-produced, easily replicable generic Goth-style clothing and accessories. As such, Goths now buy from the same supplier, buying the same items; in so doing they generate a semi-homogenised and to some extent cleaner subcultural look, especially younger and more affluent cohorts. Adapting Goth aesthetics in this manner has resulted in the culture appearing more unified in its aesthetic types, with certain 'looks' easily replicated globally.

This predisposition for adaption appears to be fundamental to the longevity of the culture. The very differences and complexities which make up its visual styles, in turn, make it an accepting and convivial subculture in which personal experimentation and evolution are embraced. This complexity exemplifies the overall maturation and associated commodification of the culture which over time has enabled an unprecedented increase in the volume, quality, and variety of products designed specifically for the subcultural market. In parallel to this maturation, expression of involvement within the subculture has undergone an evolution since the formative 1980s, with members now more freely able to transition between styles and social networks which now span the globe. This has resulted in Gothness now being able to be demonstrated, validated, and refined using solely online platforms. Participants can post/like/share images of Goth attire etc. without actually owning the items or displaying them in a social setting. Over time this change has resulted in a reduction of in-person scrutiny and unanticipated social critiques. Goths can road test every aspect of their aesthetic and social selves online, sometimes anonymously, before setting foot in a Goth club or record store. This is a fundamental shift in the business of being Goth and represents a defining moment of generational change. Yet the online world has also generated a

powerful platform of critique which inevitably includes judgement and an emerging trend of 'elite' Goth identity.

The traditional model of Goth as a social outsider so frequently linked with the Goth scene of the 1980s and 1990s when fitting in was simply unacceptable culture now appears to be shifting towards expanded understandings of what Goth is (Cherry and Mellins 2012 p. 13). Online communities have heightened existing Goth behaviours of self-critique such that Goths now appear trapped disputing the validity of every aspect of the culture. Contemporary Goths are hyper-engaged in the on-going argument about Gothness, to the extent that those arguments themselves have become a point of contention and insider humour. As demonstrated in the meme below (Figure 25) by *IanCurtisIsHungry*, a social media account dedicated to Goth memes 'making Goths laugh since 2014', Goths seem determined to argue about what is Goth to the point of absurdity.

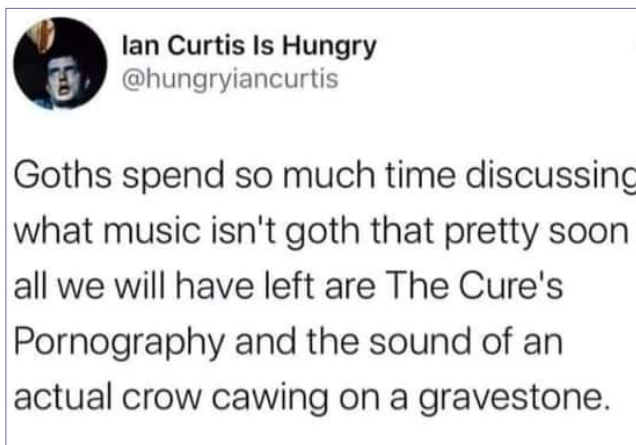


Figure 25 Goth Music Meme 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/iancurtisishungry>

While amusing, this meme also highlights how Goths can appear as pretentious to outsiders and insiders alike. With the modes of sociality and Gothness evolving, such self-deriding humour helps dispel the sombreness of Goth style and inject self-awareness into conversations without self-importance.

Many participants spoke nostalgically about early Goth purchases in the late 1980s, including buying their first pair of Doc Martens, winklepickers, or unique vintage clothes at quirky markets or tiny shops. These were regarded as the sartorial treasures of early Goth teenage years when retail experiences were far removed from the seemingly infinite options available today.

In Australia, it was exceptional to have more than a couple of retail outlets which stocked predominantly Goth-oriented products in Perth, with a slightly higher number in Melbourne and

Sydney. Doc Martens footwear was accessible at Army Surplus stores only; the purchasing of such footwear itself represented a voyage of sorts into the otherwise unfamiliar world of camouflage and camping equipment. When specialty shoe and clothing shops did open they were often short-lived, with record stores faring only slightly better.

Local purchases were supplemented by items sourced from mail-order catalogues such as the *Phaze* advertisement in Figure 26, which for Australian Goths included a several-month wait for delivery from overseas... or sometimes not arriving at all. While there is a romance to ordering a videotape compilation, a fanzine, or even band t-shirts there was little if any service for ordering 'regular' clothing items.



Figure 26 *Phaze* Clothing Mail Order Catalogue Advertisement NME 1988

The Punk-tinged, homemade imagery of early Goth attire has largely been replaced online by a beautifully tailored couture, gentrified and commercially renovated to produce an almost utopian image of Goth garb. As described by the Brisbane interview participant below, while online shopping has opened the way for great expansion within the culture there has been a sense of loss associated with it. The imperative of DIY for young Goths early in the culture's history helped create the slightly rough and imperfect looks now reproduced by commercialised online retailers (Spooner, 2008 p. 98). Anachronistic styles are no longer hinted at, they are accurately reproduced. Jackets come pre-printed, t-shirts are produced to order, and it is even possible to

design bespoke footwear. Online retail means it is possible to order a Victorian-era lace skirt, not only in the correct size but also with an accompanying top, jacket, corset, boots, etc.... all from the same retailer. The nostalgia felt during this exchange (both researcher and participant) illustrates how online shopping has homogenised Goth on a global scale, beyond minor purchases.

- BPM500: Yeah it is not so much anymore. Retail is online....
- ELB: Yeah online now. Does that affect the way people are shopping here too?
- BPM500: Yes. No one goes – everyone used to go as a group into a shop, you know.
- ELB: And army disposals
- BPM500: Yes, we still have one of those on Elizabeth street.
- ELB: In Perth, Saturday morning, you would have 10 people and you would all do the rounds of the army disposals, the record stores...
- BPM500: And you would all buy the same bag or some badges!
- ELB: Yeah true! But you would spend the money together...
- BPM500: Yeah get something! Gloves, fingerless gloves, boots, trenchcoat.
- ELB: Yep, gloves, all those things.
- The DIY stuff now, maybe it is less of a thing? Not making your own t-shirts, we used to make our own t-shirts...
- BPM500: Nah that doesn't happen anymore. Oh yeah the screen printing! Oh...[sigh]

[Interview Transcript Excerpt BPM500: Brisbane, 29th January 2016]

Early Goth participants reflected that when the scene was in its infancy they learned to sew, source fabric, and made it themselves. Interview responses have echoed a sense of wonder at this change in the culture and at the same time have lamented the limitations and decline of the DIY Goth ideal which followed the Punk movement.

Depends what your aesthetic and skills are. It's a lot easier to make a pair of ripped fishnets than a steel-boned corset. I've never tried to DIY platform boots, but that's another one that's hard to replicate. And a lot of stuff takes expensive supplies- the aforementioned corset would cost me at least forty bucks plus shipping. If you want leather, latex, or anything specialty like that, that takes some expensive equipment. Even sewing machines are pretty expensive unless you're lucky enough to find a deal. And a lot of things are pretty daunting if you don't have the requisite skills. And there's also the time cost to take into account too- when I was working 36 hours a week and going to school 30, I barely had time to make dinner, let alone clothing.

DIY is great, but it can't replace everything for everyone.

[Online Comment – Reddit – 26/07/2015]

It is not, however, restricted to expensive online shopping or make-shift DIY; many participants carefully create their attire using thrifty solutions to overcome cost barriers. Communal acts of shopping and creating are less necessary though op-shopping seems to retain its appeal for some participants. At the Whitby Goth Weekend, where Goths can be observed in the most elaborate

costume, interview participants emphasised the importance of creativity and investment in customisation.

- ELB: Did you find when the online stores came in that you bought more?
- UKWPF03: No I tend to find stuff in charity shops and get it customised.
Or I try to get things cheap...
- ELB: Do you sew yourself?
- UKWPF03: No but I have friends who do it, brilliant, amazing.
- UKWPM04: They are into that theatrical Tudor, kind of thing.
- UKWPF03: *Rosenkavalier*
- UKWPM04: Yes. He makes all sorts of gothic, historic, and restoration clothing.
- ELB: This is another thing I find extraordinary – the way people have found ways to make a career out of it, or to fit Goth into their career.
I trained as a fine artist and then a librarian...
- UKWPF03: Oh my friend is a librarian. And she is Über Goth and makes her own outfits.
- UKWPF03: Yes I have this friend and she makes the most amazing things. Head-dresses and all sorts.
I have this head-dress, horns. A green dress I got for £5 at a charity shop, she customised it and it is oh!
- UKWPM04: Another friend she has a fine art degree, textiles, and she makes a lot of stuff.

[Interview Transcript Excerpt: UKWPF03 and UKWPM04, Whitby UK 25th October 2015]

Goth Commerce and Couture: New Gothic Mode?

The increased availability and access to consumer goods online is of special importance in the study of subcultures where small populations of like-minded consumers from dispersed locations can drive a market and form geographically isolated collectives (Keltie, 2017 p. 52). In the Goth context, clothing holds primary importance as a signifier of membership; it provides visual indications which publicise in-culture references and communicate particular interests such as bands or discrete musical styles or Goth motifs. Music remains a fundamental inspiration for Goth style, inspiring the original expressions of the culture during its proto-Punk period when the trappings of Punk were still very much part of everyday fashion consciousness. A case can indeed be made for Goth as a primarily fashion-based culture, particularly in the case of Gothic Lolita (also known as Visual Kai or Elegant Goth Aristocrat EGA) (Carriger 2019, p. 128). However, that position is not supported in this thesis. The musical genres which have evolved around the Goth oeuvre are however inexorably linked to its visual imagery and extensive sartorial spectrum.

Yet the Gothic Mode is *not* Goth, as such.

Appropriation of such cultural artefacts is a central tenet of the Goth culture; much of the culture's imagery is a bricolage of borrowed and re-imagined, consciously subverted and contextually removed to amplify the overall effect. Yet these elements are for aesthetic pleasure, rather than overt shock or genuine funereal commemoration



Figure 27 Edgar Allan Poe Accessories

Exacerbating its perception as tricky for retailers, the Goth culture also creates an environment in which sartorial consumerism is overlaid with this intellectualised ideal of non-conformity, rebellion, and social exclusivity. Traditional gothic themes and literature is even overtly referenced in Goth accessories, placing the notion of the gothic mode firmly within Goth, as per Figure 27.

Baddeley argues, 'modern Goths who dress in impractical but elegant Victorian garb are not demonstrating approval of oppressive Victorian values, but contempt for brash modern aesthetics' (Baddeley 2002 p. 11). While there may be some truth in this (Goths do favour styles/materials evocative of foregone eras), the reality is the vast majority of those artefacts are mass-produced and widely available due to the inexpensive production and expansion of online shopping, predominantly from China. That these products are often very pretty and have immediate gothic appeal ensures a degree of uptake, regardless of implied/imagined social commentary.

Hodkinson illustrates the integral nature of consumerism in Goth subculture, detailing how the acquisition of in-culture goods and services (e.g. Goth music, clothing, shoes) acts as both a means of active participation in the culture as well as a method through which reiteration of specific Goth

aesthetics can be broadcast (Hodkinson, 2002 p. 131). Hodkinson has done much to further this in recent writings, drawing an added distinction between early studies into the subculture and contemporary understandings of what it means to belong outside the mainstream (Hodkinson and Bennett 2012 p. 140). Bennett and Taylor further the narrative on post-youth subculture from an Australian perspective, exploring the role of subcultural aesthetics and aging in relation to the music and commerce integral to subcultural longevity (Bennett & Taylor 2012 p. 234).

Thus retailers now hold a significant influence on Goth culture, producing items that meet the unconventional stylistic conventions of the culture as well as pushing new products with a *gothic turn* which enables commercial viability (Martin 2002 p. 39). As described above, these retailers are often present at Goth festivals and events, not only selling Goth-specific products but also providing support to relevant charitable organisations, musicians, artists, and active members of the Goth community.



Figure 28 Whitby Goth Weekend, Market 2015

Retailers face the difficult task of serving the Goth community without reinforcing Goth stereotypes or reproducing innumerable versions of imitation Victorian gowns, frock coats, or pseudo-Punk bondage trousers. Those who manage to balance mass consumerism with unique, authentic Goth imagery find in-culture success and achieve a level of consistent brand loyalty within the scene. There is a growing trend within Goth for t-shirts bearing the logos of Goth fashion companies such as *Sourpuss*, *Killstar*, *Alchemy Gothic*, *Punk Rave*, *Demonia*, etc. This trend can arguably have been started by alternative American retailer *Hot Topic* in the late 1980s-90s, a

retail chain that radically shifted the Goth/alternative clothing market. Other brands such as *Demonia*, *Gothic Pikes*, *Beserk*, and *New Rock Boots* have created niche shoe markets within the culture for mass-produced yet still edgy Goth footwear which is frequently name-checked in online discussions and fashion blogs while Punk stalwarts Doctor Martens continues to hold relevance and credence in several alternative cultures.

Online shopping has seen a measure of conformity, or at least categorical conformity materialise, rehabilitating the at times difficult relationship of Goth appearance through commercialised consistency. Online retailers often include Goth styles, make-up, clothing, and feature influencers offering shopping advice. As discussed by van Elferen, there is considerable evidence that the Goth culture has evolved to become a self-supporting micro-economy - not just a subculture - with a raft of goods and services specific to the culture being produced exclusively for in-culture use (van Elferen, 2009 p. 100). Retailers offer products tailored to the Goth market and 'Gothed up' items are created through a bricolage of DIY/thrift shop finds melded with readily available mainstream articles is increasingly popular, with many YouTube 'how-to' videos to assist.

As noted by Hodkinson, such brands and online services now contribute to the broader mechanisms which maintain Goth identity and enable consistent participation across translocal communities (Hodkinson, 2003, p. 286). It is this element that has, until recently, separated Goth from the everyday consumerism of popular fashion and rendered it a passing novelty or *haute couture* indulgence. The recent resurgent interest in the otherworldly has seen Goth lose some of its ethereal mystery, with mainstream brands now actively engaging with the subculture. Consumption of gothic cultural forms has experienced periods of seemingly uncharacteristic popularity in popular culture, fashion, and film in particular.

Goth has at times been the source of fashion trends, providing short-hand performative and visual expressions of the strange and unusual in otherwise conventional settings. However the Goth culture remains steadfastly outside normative cultural expectations; uncanny, morbid, and deathly imagery maintains primacy in its canon, in direct opposition to westernised ideals of beauty (Scharf 2001, p. 33). Therefore, in westernised culture Goth appearance remains too other, shirking traditional modes of dress and the ideal of female beauty/muscléd male virility in favour of exaggerated pallor and androgyny (Nally 2017 p. 3). Instead, Goths articulate an anachronistic life mode and style reminiscent of the pale and wan *femme fatales* of Gothic literature, transformed into vampires and spectres inhabiting an otherworldly way of life (Brottman 2007 p. 2).

Addressing this complexity with Goth insiders poses a particular predicament. As discussed by Jasper, Goths are especially reticent to discuss the culture and defend against inauthenticity by deflecting labelling; there is a need for the researcher to 'play along' to discover concealed truths of Goth identity (Jasper, 2004 p. 95). This wariness to external scrutiny generates from a variety of origins, not least of which is reflexive protection of a scene that is often stereotyped as pretentious and commonly misunderstood to be morbid and without self-awareness. Goths are vocal in scrutinising style shifts, to assess Gothness and maintain their own measures of Goth identity. Such behaviour can be characterised as conforming to the theory of Diderot unities, where adherence to a consumer pattern (in this case Goth) allows individuals to achieve a predetermined or imagined sense of self (McCracken 1988 p. 29). Deviation from the set behaviours (in the Goth case, such as buying a Top 20 record, a colourful summer dress, or a pair of beige chinos) may result in an exponential escalation away from the Goth identity towards another possible, previously undesired, identity mode.

Over the last forty years, there has been a fundamental shift not only in the way clothing is sourced but also in the enormous variety of items now able to be purchased (Dodd et al 2000 p. 42). Goths embrace consumerism; kitsch and irony are delicately balanced by the macabre and elegant, utilising existing imagery and historic tropes to convey Goth sensibilities. Goths can buy into the imagery with relative ease – however, demonstrating reserve and insider knowledge of where to draw the line between ironic and tacky is crucial. Cheap, mass-produced items are easily revealed for what they are unless they are ingeniously customised or combined with DIY items to avoid inauthenticity. Several academic studies are currently exploring the rich areas of marketing, tourism, and commodification in subcultures, providing invaluable data on the development and differences in subcultural commerce (see: Spracklen & Spracklen 2021, Karampampas 2019).

While the practice of DIY is still very much alive for many scene participants, there is a reduced need to do so, given the extensive and often inexpensive options now available online. Recalling the hey-day of Goth DIY one Australian participant described making his own Goth-styled trousers:

PPM013: Oh bondage trousers! I remember when all that bondage trouser thing started coming out here. I was like, really, I don't know, I don't get it. I was away 1993-1995 from about 1990 on I had been weaving metal into my jeans.

ELB: How?

PPM013: Safety pins mostly. And I had about 100 safety pins down this side, and my girlfriends sister gave me a curtain ring and I was hmmm yeah it was all nice and shiny so I stuck them down the other side, curtain rings down there.

I was into that kind of ethos of make you own, DIY.

Absolutely. DIY. Like I had a really awesome Cherrylane long sleeve black t-shirt and I just shredded the sleeves, so they looked like they were decaying, and I put slashes across the back. And I just really preferred that whole thing.

So when that shop opened with its semi-bondage gear I was a bit... meh.

The online world allows users to expand their understanding and expressions of Goth identity through clothing choices, independent of 'real world' pressures whilst presenting a curated, performative 'best' version of their true selves (Ragusa & Ward 2016 p. 6). There is underlying commercialism or consumer drive in this which mirrors 'standard' popular culture behaviour with participants attempting - particularly in youth – to emulate a near-perfect Goth image (Bloustein 2003 p. 194). This ideal is further obfuscated with layers of musical, aesthetic, and artistic elitism to contrive a cultural idiom that is imbued with obscure historical references, much removed from contemporary life. There is a risk then, that this brave new online world presents an ethical conundrum for younger Goths, mimicking the peer pressures of mainstream fashion and its insatiable appetite for 'trendiness', socio-cultural conformity, and temporality (Hodkinson 202 p. 73). If such trends are obeyed, much of the rebellious energy of the culture is surely lost.

The lived experience of Goth identity can therefore be controlled by the material and aesthetic expression: the possession of Goth cultural capital effectively authorises participants to participatory interest in Goth identity and the goods, services, and performative aspects of the culture. Central to this is the notion of protection of a concept of self or precious ideal (Goth) which restrains the socio-aesthetic markers within a necessarily restricted audience, rather than allowing it to become a mainstream trend (Nally 2017 p. 4). The size of the culture is therefore significant; too small and it would have died out in the early 1990s, over-exposed, or too commercial— as it appeared to be approaching in the 1990s – and Goth loses its unique 'cultural self' and sense of meaning to individual participants.

The role of Goth consumers has shifted towards business participators, rather than pure consumer or passive audience, with Goths actively contributing to the cache of bespoke online cultural capital. This is an idea observed in *Culture and Consumption II* (2005) where McCracken extends his analysis, exploring the concept of self-invention through the ritual consumption of consumer goods and the correlations between those goods and specific cultural structures (McCracken, 2005 p. 112).

The consistent re-expression of the culture, when coupled with the natural aging of the cohort, has allowed a broadening of Goth tenets, allowing new, younger members to co-exist with 'Elder

Goths' online and in person. The aesthetics have become imbued with significance, with each facet acting as agents of communication within the scene, defining, articulating and attracting participants to particular sets of aesthetic choices.

Goth Continuity

As established above, there is rich critical discourse around the nature of 'subculture', subcultural appearance, and the particulars of the Goth phenomenon. This critical discourse is built on insider understandings of the Goth culture and the intricate modes of socialisation and aesthetic function employed within the culture over successive generations of participants. The longevity of Goth culture and its socio-aesthetic constancy allows for a detailed review of its evolution and trans-generational influence. Several questions were put to both cohorts to explore the themes of outsiderhood and belonging in parallel with notions of constancy. Questions explored perceptions of individuality, collective identity and the rejection of commercialised mainstream fashion within Goth culture.

The following section explores these concepts in closer focus, using the data to establish indicative social and aesthetic patterns in the Goth culture and how these are correlated across diverse geographical locations over time. The accumulation of cultural artefacts, organisation of social events including festivals, primary aesthetics indicators, exploration of music, and discussions on the culture as an evolving entity all inform this discussion, as described in participant survey and interview responses. The changes in the Goth culture over its history have seen how Goths communicate alter dramatically, with an exponential increase in online interactions and more frequent contact between participants. How these changes have impacted long-term Goths is discussed in the following, with data analysis illustrating the changing social setting of the culture. This aspect of the culture serves as a starting point, as it provides an opportunity for a marked comparison between 'back in the day' and current modes of sociality.

Goth constancy is marked by stylistic types, 'styletribes' (as per ISP338) which communicate opportunities for belonging whilst exemplifying the particular aesthetic interests of members, outside of any moral or economic obligation. Each of these stylistic markers conveys a certain tribal meaning to participants where band t-shirts act as a form of contemporary tribal banner under which like-minded followers can gather, as expressed below.

I feel that to be a "true" goth - i.e. a true fan of goth music - this will or should be shown through the style of dress you choose - for example wearing band t-shirts.

[ISP1132 IQ38⁵⁴ Age 30]

Expressions of Goth attributes fluctuate significantly; 'spectacularity' can be seen to moderate over time as Goths age, and is well documented by Hodkinson (Hodkinson 2012), however, it is not only the natural process of aging which impacts expressions of Goth identity and therefore Goth belonging.

Modes of Goth expression can be modulated to respond to particular settings, dialled up or down to emphasise Gothness, or demonstrate relaxed yet present stylistic markers. In so doing Goth identity gives licence to engage in little acts of refusal and ritual, creating lifestyle practices that do not conform to rigid traditional models of 'acting your age' (McCracken, 1997 p. 21). Finding identity stability within Goth, therefore, necessitates an ongoing personal negotiation of Gothness and a succession of conscious decisions around which aspects of the culture are to be emphasised: 'what music do I like, what sort of clothing do I want to wear, how do I do my hair/make-up, what events do I want to attend, do I change my look for work, what will my family think, does this impact my religious/spiritual beliefs'...

While there are no definitive answers to such questions, the choices individuals make do influence how intense their relationship is with the Goth culture and perhaps how protracted that involvement becomes. Appearance projects this relationship to outsiders and insiders alike, with varying adaptations, engaging Goths in constant communication of Goth attributes and style mitigated by particular social contexts.

Elder Goths

Identifying the social conditions in which Gothness is expressed allows for the elements of sociality in Goth identity to be considered alongside the more direct aesthetic characteristics. Curated online and in-real-life social interaction is the means through which subcultural belonging is achieved, augmented by the diffusion of invisible aesthetic elements of Goth identity. This is especially evident in long-term participants. The capacity for online anonymity also allows Goths new to the scene – or those curious to experiment – the opportunity to 'pre-check' their Goth outfits or to receive social sanction for music choices or to just gain confidence in their general Gothness. This has contributed to increased liberty around Goth tropes, with participants using social media forums to expand the spectrum of what is Goth. It has also elevated once 'old Goths' to Elder Goths, an affectionate and venerable term for 'senior' members of Goth society.

⁵⁴ IQ38 You can wear anything and still be a Goth

The present convenience of online services may enhance the experiences of Goth and open it up to further exploration, personal re-engagement, and investment. However diverse the expressions of Goth become, it never strays far from its underpinning stylistic tenet of dark, dramatic imagery including a distinctive morbid flair. Maturity also allows Goths to engage in social expressions of their Goth self, perhaps even riskier expressions of Goth than in youth, with renewed confidence, as depicted in the meme in Figure 29 (used with permission). Images depicting Elder Goths transforming into 'Queenagers' such as in Figure 29 are common on Goth Facebook pages and other sites, compounding perceptions that Goth identity can extend into adulthood and providing a positive affirmation for such expressions.



Figure 29 Be the Goth Queen you wanted to be when you were 12⁵⁵ by Joana Shino (2015).

The use of such in-scene argot coupled with knowledge of Goth music demarcates Goth spaces and identifies Elder Goths. The phrase 'back in the day' or more revealingly 'I was there', have become an indicator of a long-term association with the culture, conferring authenticity and validity. In so doing it has emphasised the age of participants and initiated discussion around ageing in the scene, generating the phrase *You are never too old to be a Goth*.

To test the survey cohort's views on this concept, the statement *You are never too old to be a Goth* was included in surveys, without the addition of 'free text' space. As per Figure 30, a total of 1438

⁵⁵ <https://joanashino.tumblr.com/tagged/shinobinaku/>

responses were recorded for this question, which recorded overwhelmingly strong positive responses in both cohorts indicating ageism is not a factor prohibiting engagement in Goth communities. These data demonstrate older participants did not feel excluded from participating in Goth and that they expected to continue their engagement with the culture.

I note the age of my research cohort pre-disposes this result, given the older target audience for the survey. These results advocate future research opportunities which may seek broader views towards this concept and interrogate how older Goths are viewed by younger participants.

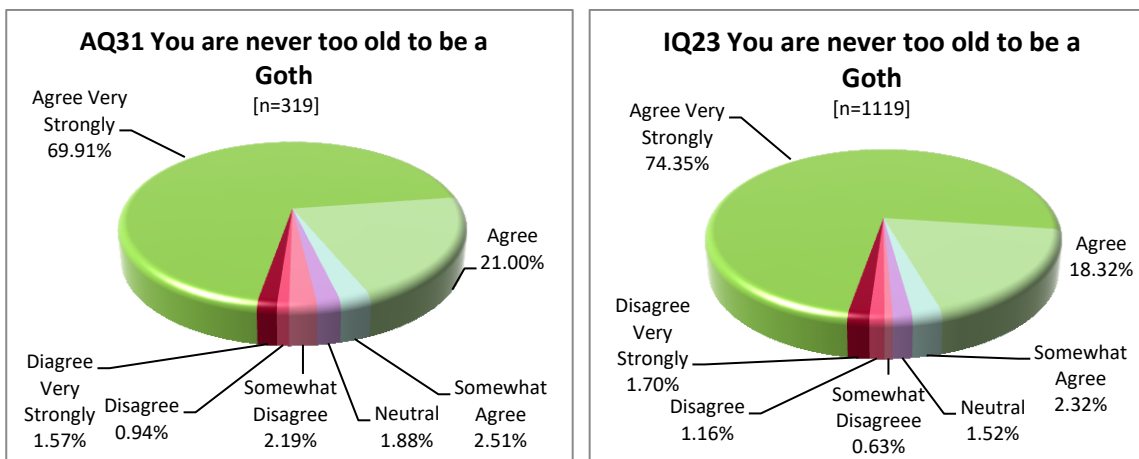


Figure 30: AQ31 & IQ23 - You are never too old to be a Goth

From these results, I suggest ageing in the Goth community does not appear to impede Goth sociality and experiencing belonging in the culture.

The commitments associated with age and family may impede upon or preclude nightclubbing; however, the notion of being too old to be a Goth is refuted. With an ageing population, clubs continue to play traditional/classic Goth music alongside Industrial and other tracks to demonstrate a connection with the core tenets of Goth culture. This phenomenon itself sometimes results in patrons complaining about repetitive setlists, yet it appears to be a necessary convention for preserving the aesthetic and musical Goth canon.

Elder Goth Identity: Back in the Day vs. Now

The increasingly online narrative of Goth scenes contributes to the longevity of culture and represents a discrete aesthetic heritage largely unseen by mainstream media. Finding or re-finding belonging in the Goth scene via online platforms, independent from the pressures of early adolescence, is a crucial aspect of contemporary Goth sociality. There is a genuine Goth community online, which simultaneously connects and archives the culture through social media platforms such as *Goth.net*, discussion groups via Reddit, Facebook, and image platforms like

Pinterest, Instagram (etc.). Becoming an established convention of Goth identity, a growing number of 'Elder Goth' influencers and YouTube presenters, discussion boards, Reddit threads, and Facebook groups now perform the function of informal, self-appointed global Goth advice bureau. Goth websites feature reminiscences of ex-clubs, shops (etc.) alongside discussions on current products/music information, accompanied by images of participants as well as associated local histories and recollections. Such sites are crucial for perpetuating the culture between generations and recording valued historic information in oral and written histories of the scene.

For Australian Goths, online connectivity is crucial, capturing uniquely Australia argot such as *Swampies*. Similar to *Grufti* (German Goths), these early adopters of post-punk/late-era Punk, form an important bridge between alternative/grunge rock styles and Trad Goths in Australia. In-scene information sharing was discussed with a long-term Goth whose contributions to his local Goth scene extended over several decades as a participant and DJ. The internet has also re-opened opportunities to experience original Goth music:

PPM012: Any way at some point around 2007-2008 I actually picked Mick Mercers book off the bookshelf again, took the dust off them, and sort of went back and was like, what did I miss the first time round.
Since we didn't have the internet the first time round of course you really didn't have the access. Stuff like Blood and Roses, and now all of a sudden we did.
And there is some stuff here that is actually really, *really fucking good!*

The excerpt above captures some of the sentiments expressed in interviews and reflects the views of several Elder Goths describing 'typical' Goth re-discovery experiences, comparing contemporary experiences to back in the day. Participants provide accounts of involvement in the culture across multiple decades, with personal style fluctuating with time and as local/translocal scenes change and develop. Significantly, participants repeatedly expressed the belief that the Goth mode exists independent of fashion or music. As stated by an Australian survey participant:

There is no back in the day - this is a lifestyle, and state of mind, not a passing fad.

[ASP231 Age 49 AQ7⁵⁶]

In the Goth context, traditional measures of aesthetic 'age-appropriateness' become redundant; instead in-culture exemplars provide participants with fluid modes of expression which falls within the scope of Goth.

⁵⁶ AQ7 At your most involved, "back in the day", how did you express your Goth identity [free text]

As a long-term identity framework, Goth consequently poses a manner of living that largely ignores the conventional strictures of life stages (adolescence, adulthood, and old age), supplanting them with a constant, yet flexible, socio-aesthetic mode. In *Plenitude: Culture by Commotion* McCracken identifies 'species' of social life – styles of life – as distinct from 'lifestyles' (McCracken 1997 p. 35). This distinction is pertinent as it sets aside ideas of trends, fads, fashion, and style for its own sake and recognises a cultural position simultaneously rooted in past, present, and future: a plenitude of existence. It presents more fluid, forgiving modes of engagement with 'spectacularity' which resonates with the experiences of Elder Goths.

New perceptions of Goth have grown from this experience of aging, with new freedoms and cultural confidence emerging in Elder Goth populations. For some, increased confidence in the culture as a whole has seen a general relaxation of 'rules' or tenets of Goth to incorporate previously unimaginable iterations, such as the emergence of a Goth football team in Whitby (Figure 31). These changes reflect the emergent diachronic diversity of the culture and the opening out of its aesthetic spectrum over time.



Figure 31 Whitby Goth Weekend Football match and crowd

The personal empowerment Goth style brings remains evident for older participants, yet how this is expressed is often modified. Bennett and Hodkinson discuss this in *Ageing and Youth Cultures*, suggesting Goth have 'strategies for age negotiation' with particular attention paid to bodily appearance and the inevitable tolls of an ageing body (Bennett and Hodkinson 2012). For older Goths a renegotiation of even the most familiar elements of the culture may be necessary to retain the empowerment Goth initially offered.

To examine these changes, two questions were posed in the surveys: in one, participants were asked to articulate their aesthetic markers 'back in the day' at their point of peak engagement with

Goth culture, and in a second, comparator question, measuring expressions of current day Gothness.

AQ/IQ7: At your most involved, "back in the day", how did you express your Goth identity (choose all characteristics that apply or provide your own answer)

AQ51/IQ37: How do you now express your Goth identity (choose all characteristics that apply or provide your own answer)

Figures 32 and 33 on the following pages illustrate the responses to these two critical questions in which 1895 total participants define their aesthetic preferences, ascribing definitive changes between expressions of Goth "back in the day" compared to the aesthetics expressed as an older participant. An 'Other' or free-text additional information option was included which generated a total of 7801 words in response describing participants' individual perspectives on expressions of Goth over time.

A key set of data for this study, these questions provide a range of responses that give insight on a number Goth behaviours, among which is unique empirical descriptions of the culture, in-culture perspectives on key aesthetic signifiers as well as an illustration of the shift of Goth attributes over time. Once again, the two cohorts demonstrate remarkable correlations over almost all categories. The relative changes for each category are consistent, as is the overall trend towards less spectacular accoutrements, hair, and make-up, clothing, and appearance.

Of all the categories, the data demonstrate only corporate clothing increased for the current period (in both cohorts), all other aesthetic elements can be seen to have diminished compared to 'peak engagement'.

Other notable aspects of Goth appearance which show decreases for older participants include fishnets, band t-shirts, dyed black hair, and piercings; interestingly these too have become more accepted in the mainstream. It is possible to infer a range of motivations behind this, including that the increased fashionability of such items has reduced their appeal to Goth audiences. It is also feasible that Elder Goths simply no longer display such aesthetic traits or have bodily changes which make such choices no longer desirable.

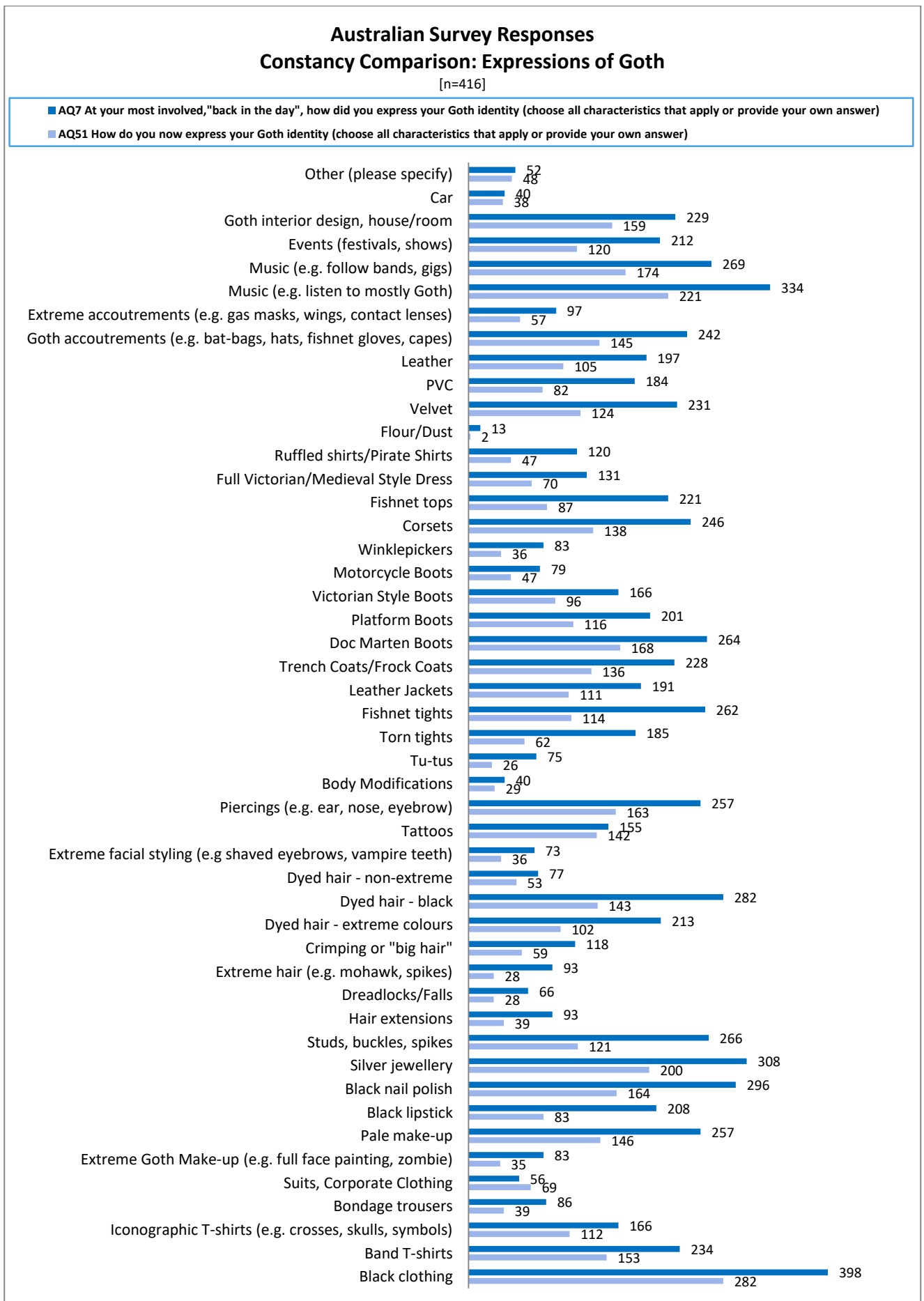


Figure 32: AQ7 & AQ51 - Expression of Goth Identity

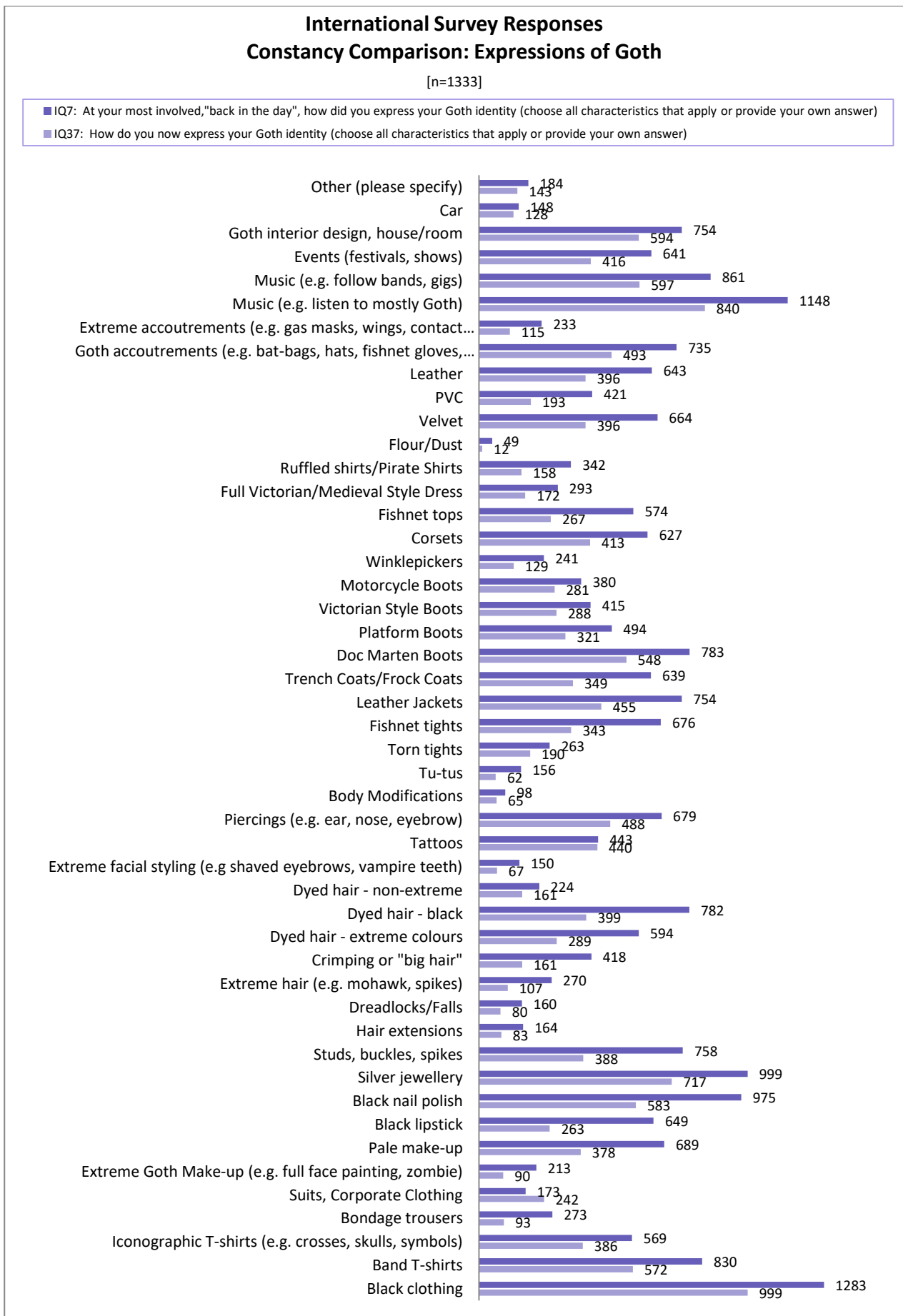


Figure 33: IQ7 & IQ37 - Expression of Goth Identity

Tattoos, given their permanent nature, are unsurprisingly stable; however, an increase to this element could have been envisaged given the greatly increased popularity and social acceptability of tattoos over the last forty years. As mentioned in the comment below, the motivations behind tattoos are entirely personal, whether Goth in nature or not.

Old Goths never die, they just wear less eyeliner. And my tattoo and piercings are because I wanted them, not because I thought they made me more 'Goth'.

[ASP416, Age 43]

Similarly, black nail polish and lipstick have experienced a period of surprising popularity in mainstream culture over the last five years and could have translated to increased use in the Goth population; however, the opposite is the case, with both cohorts reporting significantly decreased preferences. Interestingly corsets have also enjoyed a period of mainstream fashion revival during this period, yet older Goths report decreased use.

Responses indicate strong consistency in Goth aesthetic markers in both cohorts; of the top twenty responses for both cohorts, only four aspects of Goth appearance are not repeated: Fishnet Tops, Dyed Hair - extreme colours, Platform Boots, and Iconographic T-shirts (e.g. crosses, skulls). All other elements maintain a level of importance for participants beyond their period of peak involvement with the culture.

The overall results show marked conformity in the modes of expression chosen by long-term Goths, irrespective of the 'type' of Goth they ascribe themselves. Consistent with findings presented by Bennett and Taylor, data demonstrates an acceptance as well as defiance of aging in the Goth population. Bennett and Taylor noted: "Almost all of my interviewees situated themselves as 'outsiders' to the 'mainstream' which they perceived as granting them some immunity from judgement and expectation" (Bennett and Taylor 2012, p. 236).

Some aspects of Goth attire, however, remain solely Goth attributes: the flour/dust category shows a unique example of codified visual style unseen outside Goth, pioneered in the mid-1980s by English Gothic Rock band *Fields of the Nephilim (Nephs)*, whose highly stylised image included dusting their clothing with flour to create an aged effect, as shown in Figure 34.

In fairness I still wear most of the above. Not the flour though, much as I still love the Neph :)

[ISP064, Age 35]

Hat, a la Nephilim

[ISP177, age 41]

There is a marked decrease in its use, in contrast to the 1980s and-1990s when it was common for Goths attending gigs to similarly coat their clothing and hats in flour, emulating the band's 'spaghetti-western gothic' stage appearance. The band remains active, however, and still has an influence on Goth appearance, as per the information above.



Figure 34 Fields of the Nephilim, Live, Whitby Goth Weekend 2015 (Photograph by the author)

The conspicuous reduction in participants' engagement with Goth music is curious. As suggested in the comments below, this may instead indicate participants have not actively engaged in finding new music, but rather have remained faithful to the music of their youth or period of peak engagement with Goth identity. The remarks offered by participants also demonstrate an increased interest in other forms of Goth art, other than music, with many participants noting exhibitions, academic literature, and their art practice as being increasingly important elements of their Gothness.

Interest in the music, albeit not much contemporary but more 'of the past', and reading academic works, attending occasional talks / exhibitions.

[ISP683, Age 53]

Reading historic gothic literature (18th century), foreign languages (French, Latin), occult studies, playing funeral music on violin, graveyard visits, night-time picnics, sun avoidance

[ISP683, Age 41]

Also listen to punk, hardcore, medieval etc music, [+other types]follow gothic lit., and horror films, etc.

[ISP1281, Age 53]

Some participants show continued interest in the social aspects of Goth music, despite reducing private listening.

sitting around in the pub talking about the old days and the crazy tours we did

[ISP063, Age 47]

I don't listen to goth music in my free time, but I still regularly get out to the clerb [sic] for some stompy time.

[ISP1000, Age 34]

Putting on Club Nights, Playing in different Goth Bands, I played in Kommunity FK as most goth musicians in LA did in the 90s

[ISP036, Age 44]

Inclusion in the Goth scene is a common theme in the responses, with neurodivergence, sexual and gender fluidity mentioned by several participants. The prevalence of gender fluidity and androgyny is a defining characteristic of its aesthetic palette, allowing Goths of all genders to find safe ways of expressing identity. As a means of empowerment, this aspect of the culture is critical, offering participants the freedom to experiment in social settings without judgement.

The notion of the 'Goth demeanour' is difficult to quantify; haughtiness and a purposeful manner come across in the comments below, adding valuable depth to how Goth can be described.

All of the eyeliner! Plus I think I acquired a purposeful and brisk goth strut, I danced a terrible goth two step even at non goth events. I started a goth band, took photos with candles and I hung out on #gothic on IRC. I sort of hung around the edge of organising things as well.

[ASP393, Age 35]

Wit, irony, sarcastic humour. Cynicism. Pursuits that are more creative and intellectually based. Apart from what I've ticked above, I wear no outward signs of 'Goth'. I am that Goth that isn't, I am The Anti-Goth. (which in a group noted for individuality, is about as individual as you can get!)

[ISP213, Age 48]

I tend to present like a stern librarian meets demented nun crossed with an aristocratic dowager with a pinch of wicked witch

[ISP741, Age 50]

Some responses indicate Goth identity and appearance remain relatively unchanged for many participants: increased financial capacity is a key element here as many Goths were too young to have independent incomes when first experimenting with Goth identity. As older participants, they have the opportunity to fully express their Gothness which means the quality or brands of these items are also of increased value. This is an interesting element of Goth, as many of the products favoured by participants include elegant detail, are made of high-quality fabrics and materials, or are from a previous era, incorporating 'designer' or high-quality merchandise.

FYI I'm most involved now and can wear/do all this stuff now as i have the money now

[ISP1068, Age 47]

I still dress the same way at 40 that I did in my 20s and don't see the need to change just because I hit a milestone birthday at the beginning of May :)

[ISP815, Age 40]

Participants also express pride in a continued low-cost, DIY practice in clothing and personal design, often with some nostalgia for the past. These comments exhibit the Goth anti-establishment outlook the 'anything goes' attitude resulting in the refusal to be changed by others opinions.

Lace lace lace! A huge range of pieces of clothing that can be rearranged to make a massive variety of outfits. Self-made clothing and DIY sensibility with all clothing and accessories. Chains! Attached to our trench coats ornately. Purple laces with my docs (verses red or white).

[ASP158 Age 37]

Some participants reflected on changing body shapes and mobility and how this had revealed new methods of exploring Gothness and expressing authentic Goth identity with increased contextual and bodily awareness. The requirements of work and modifying appearance to suit certain contexts is a critical part of maintaining a comfortable Goth appearance in later years, as highlighted by some participants.

I'm less eccentric now than in the nineties. Piercings are sort of old fashion and makeup also. There's not much need to be a freak anymore and even the young people are not really exotic, in my eyes anyway. I wear huge boots up to my knees, but also sweaters and t-shirts or suit jackets. My goal is to be comfortable, look good, but not try to shock people. I would fail and look lame. My friends have seen it all. They are more impressed by talking to me than looking at me.

[ISP282, age 45]

Not that much has changed. The quality, however, has gotten much better. Some things don't look as good on an older person (black lipstick and very heavy white makeup) so that has eased. I am more adept at moving between the worlds. I dress for the occasion, but always keep a bit of gothic flare.

[ISP777, Age 50]

I now use a wheelchair which I have decorated in goth style. :)

[ISP217, Age 39]

Over time, pieces of my 'garb' found its way into others' closets... weight gained=donations made. Being self-employed, the finances aren't always there for expensive purchases. Staple pieces and the right accessories go a long way. Besides, at my age (gasp), there's no need for over-dramatics... What you see, is what I am.

[ISP357, Age 42]

Almost everything I own to wear qualifies as Goth, one way or another. My footwear is often limited (due to health), but I do my best to balance aesthetics and practicality. I'm naturally SUPER pale, so my make-up isn't pale - I am... complete with extreme eye make-up, extreme eyebrows, and red lipstick as my everyday make-up.

[ISP118, Age 41]

The mechanics of an aging body necessitate certain functional lifestyle alterations however the aesthetic foundations of Goth for many have remained virtually unchanged.

Interview participants suggested their 'outsiderhood' brought comfort and freedom in later life, where perhaps in youth it had been a source of angst. For many participants, Goth is viewed as a way of fitting in, whilst remaining an outsider.

UKWPF03: As I have got older I wear stuff that is more flattering.
I wouldn't walk around now in PVC

ELB: Did you wear PVC when you were younger?

UKWPF03: Oh Yeah! Back in the day, oh yeah.
But now, I have had a daughter and I have got bigger...

ELB: Is it still pretty much the same aesthetic for you?

UKWPF03: Yeah it is.

McCracken provides perspectives on the role consumer goods can play in generating and sustaining in-culture belonging, describing the specific socially-derived parameters groups place around material goods and social meaning-making within defined social/cultural settings (McCracken, 1990 p. 72). Through the absorption of bespoke in-culture practices, subcultural groups form the social, visual, and musical categories which define that culture, generating the particular markers of that group. In the case of Goth culture, it is the music and visually 'spectacular' image it portrays; in other groups it may be religion, sport, or political drivers which are primarily evident (McCracken, 1990 p. 89).

Goth clothing and 'peak Gothness' are best experienced at gigs, festivals, and large social events such as the Whitby Goth Weekend in the UK. Major events and gigs remain an important part of the Goth community, with participants using the occasion to parade Goth appearance, acquire new artefacts, and source points of further connection or sociality. As indicated in the comment below, for some this comes later in life:

I'm most involved now and can wear/do all this stuff now as I have the money now

[ISP177 Age 47 IQ7⁵⁷]

Individualism, as well as a collective identity within the Goth subcultural space, is enabled through tailored consumption of the artefacts of the culture, thereby generating a subcultural canon in a mutually fulfilling cycle. It is through judicious additions and deviations to this canon that aesthetic evolution occurs; invention or appropriation of new yet aesthetically consistent motifs can be seen

57 IQ7. At your most involved, "back in the day", how did you express your Goth identity

to have been absorbed with each new generation. As observed by Hodkinson, at the Whitby Goth Weekend participants from diverse socio-economic backgrounds join together in a shared experience of cultural immersion at a culturally significant location, trading both figuratively and actually, in definitive cultural capital. Within this context, the consumerist activities of Goth culture occur simultaneously across multiple micro-locations (clothing stalls, music vendors, jewellers, gigs, social events), each with particular emphasis, as well as crossing over subcultural lines. McCracken positions clothing as language within the discrete social worlds of consumers, a visual and aesthetic link between the understanding of culture and the processes of decoding social meaning, in partnership with initial consumption (McCracken, 1990 p. 64). Participants may be new to Goth customs, occasional members, or long-established festival regulars, all have the opportunity to acquire Goth artefacts to augment, stabilise or elevate their position in the scene. Such opportunities for sharing provide a catalyst for diversification and rejuvenation within the culture, whilst concurrently conserving the 'traditional' aesthetics of the genre and providing fiscal support.

Large festivals are viewed as opportunities to fully immerse in the culture and engage in intense expressions of Goth visual spectacularity and collective identity. These events are each accompanied by coded social interactions and function as sites for most elements of the culture. Live music (gigs, festivals, concerts, etc.) simultaneously creates a platform for commerce at the venues as well as tangential to the main event, such as record stores, hairdressing, make-up and pubs for more casual catch-ups. For long-term older participants these events fulfil a range of functions:

At one point the streets were so packed with festival-goers and sightseers that the famous swing bridge had to be temporarily closed to prevent gridlock between vehicles and pedestrians.

WGW 2015 Foster 2015 58

Middle-class rebels. Seriously though as people with an ear towards something more meaningful. The scene has always been small but passionate especially about live music.

[ASP415 Age 51 AQ8⁵⁹]

Goth clubs were not just a place to drink and dance or socialise, they were also a form of group therapy, a place where you could talk about anything from socialism, to spirituality, to mental health issues to art and history. The Goth scene encouraged and nurtured creative types, introverts, those exploring their sexuality and the intellectual types in a way that no other scene did. To a certain degree people didn't care if your clothes were from the op-shop or from Gallery Serpentine so it crossed the borders of class, and to a certain degree race and religion as well. There is no other club scene that I've experienced where you didn't have to be young and pretty to fit in.

58(http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/13929219.Dark__gothic_and_ghoulish___Crowds_flock_to_Whitby_for_popular_Goth_Weekend/?ref=mr&lp=16)

59 AQ8 How would you describe Australian Goths and the Australian Goth scene.

[ASP203 Age 34 AQ8]⁶⁰

Interview participants in both the United Kingdom and Australia were asked about venues able to cater for Goth audiences and how these scenes were managed when crowds dwindled. The following quote from a Brisbane based Goth describes the current scene:

- BPM402: No – no. I would love to see a dedicated alternative venue in Brisbane, but, I know it is not going to happen. There is just so much more money in R&B and stuff like that.
- ELB: Really. Ok. Is the Fortitude Valley scene still a scene, like it was back in the 1990s?
- BPM402: No not really. Again you have the problem where there is only really one club that has had huge success, and because of stuff related to that club it is very difficult start up a Goth club in Brisbane now. A lot of venues, no...

Similarly, the Perth scene has suffered a reduction in dedicated Goth clubs in recent years, resulting in a significant portion of Goth sociality moving online.

- ELB: How many clubs do you still have going?
- PPM012: About zero..... but do moderate the Perth Goth forum and when I am admitting people to that I do see a lot of metal and a lot of techno but very very little Goth...
These days it is pretty much all online.

On the following page, Figure 35 illustrates survey question [IQ11/AQ19] *What is your experience of Goth events, community and clubbing? (Please choose all that apply)*. This question was designed to further interrogate the sociality of Goth culture, examining the different methods of interactions and levels of constancy Goths experienced in the two cohorts. The question generated 1753 total responses and 3624 words of free-text added information.

The data demonstrate consistency between the two cohorts for many of the options such as online participation, zines, working in Goth-specific industries, and organising events. Several categories however show differences between Australian and overseas experiences of Goth sociality, aligning to the different leisure conventions of the two cohorts. Australian Goth scene is very much organised around nightclub culture, whereas the UK and European countries have a stronger festival and live-band pub scene.

60 AQ8 How would you describe Australian Goths & the Australian Goth scene

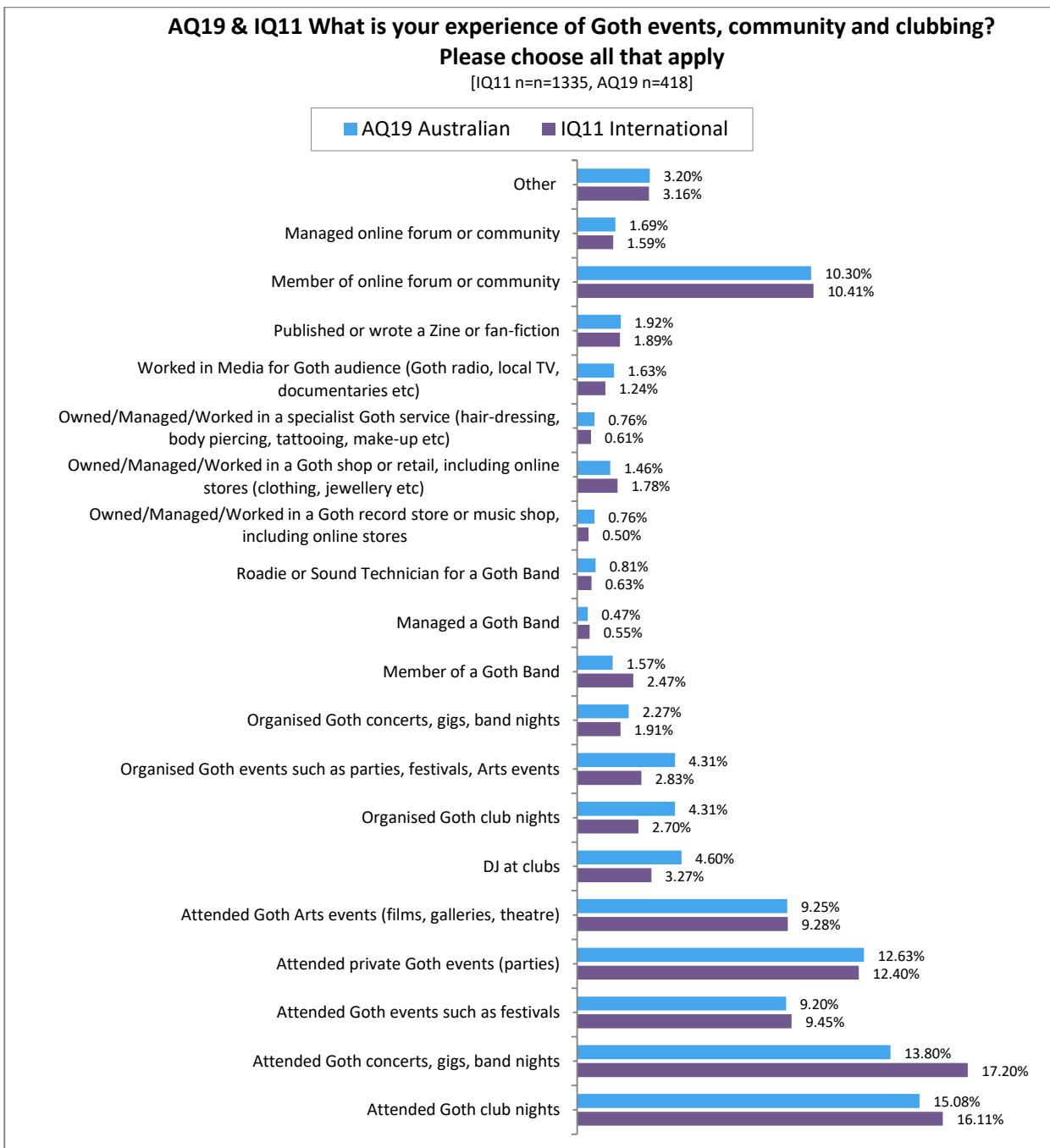


Figure 35 Australian and International Survey Responses: Events

Goths travel to engage in Goth activities worldwide, experiencing the empowerment of, for example, being among the 25000+ strong M'era Luna crowds, all dancing to the same music. The euphoria and deep sense of connection and belonging generated by attendance at such events build strong bonds between participants. Citing the Goth subculture as having a "coherent, defined and engaging worldview" McCracken pinpoints a fundamental characteristic of the culture. This has enabled its longevity and simultaneously provided a catalyst for its diversification and evolution over time (McCracken 1997, p. 24).

McCracken's viewpoint is at odds with traditional subcultural theory, redirecting scholarly attention towards the rich lived experiences of Goths. This phenomenological perspective is crucially important as the experience of being Goth is vastly different from observing Goths at festivals, clubs, etc. This is a hugely significant shift in the investigative approach and one which is evidenced throughout this thesis; the study of Goth culture must be modified from conventional investigations based on antagonistic sociological positions, predicated on rebellion against oppression and class to a less combative mode of study. The sociality of Goth culture holds significant emotional value for participants; it provides empowerment through positive self-image and gives participants feelings of authentic personal and collective identity. Moreover, applying a socio-aesthetic mode of engagement to the study of other micro-cultures offers far broader research opportunities and greater chances for meaningful interaction with alternative groups.

A follow-up question was put to participants to gauge the level of consumerism at Goth events. The question received 1380 total responses, with an additional 3543 words in free-text information. The data in Table 12 shows around half of the respondents in each cohort did purchase items at Goth events, with the International cohort marginally more likely to do so. This demonstrates a strong propensity towards consumerism connected to in-scene events.

Table 12 AQ26 & IQ18 – Goth Consumerism at events

IQ 18/AQ26: Do you normally purchase products or merchandise (such as band T-shirts) specifically for or during these Goth events			
Australian Cohort		International Cohort	
Yes	No	Yes	No
142	157	567	514
47.49%	52.51%	52.45%	47.55%

The collection of memorabilia is a well established practice among fan-groups; in the Goth culture items regularly feature artwork produced by participants such as publicising associated club events, retail venues or future tours (Lothian 2013, p. 544) In the free-text responses, several Goths discussed band t-shirt conventions, as well as collecting ephemera, zines, and other Goth accessories at events. For those who did not purchase items, there was a common thread of 'thrift shop' Gothing up existing items and a clear desire to not have identical clothes to other participants. This DIY approach was exhibited throughout survey responses, with hundreds of comments relaying the importance of not only buying ready-to-wear clothing but augmenting it with Gothed-up items. Body shape was also raised by several participants, whose shopping needs were impeded by non-standard size.

Occasionally buy band t-shirts at events. Usually by band t-shirts or other clothes (e.g. leather coats) before going overseas to ensure I have something decent to wear to the gig.

[ASP054, Age 43]

Definitely at WGT - I will spend a lot of money on stuff there.

[ASP122, Age 40]

Mostly music but next weekend I'm off to my first alternative bring and buy sale with the London gothic meet up group so hopefully some clothes.

[ISP674, Age 51]

Yes, as I plan my outfits well in advance. Also being a plus size Goth means that I often have to adapt high street clothing as a lot of alternative clothing is in small sizes only.

[ISP978, Age 56]

I don't look for "pre-packaged Goth" fashion. I take normal things and make them Goth.

[ISP1112, Age 47]

The band t-shirt, while appearing straightforward in its communication of musical preference, provides Goths with detailed aesthetic information and avenues for social interaction. As a means of conveying musical preferences and aesthetic tastes within the Goth spectrum, the band t-shirt requires knowledge of the band to establish a meaningful connection. Thus t-shirts can convey belonging to particular musical tribes within Goth – sub-genres of heavy metal, industrial, rock, ethereal, etc. or individual bands. The distinct themes extend beyond musical boundaries, projecting affiliation with diverse sub-groups which may, in turn, indicate preferred musical taste, correlate to religious beliefs, or are founded in sexual identity, political alignment, or other significant cultural correlations.

In the Australian context, the wearing of band t-shirts has its own particular anecdotal codes of practice with one interview participant noting:

You never wear an obvious band t-shirt to a (live) gig. You wear a t-shirt from another band, or a related band, a side project, or an old album or something... just never their latest one though.

[MPM111, Age 43]

Similarly, there is an international equivalent of this convention, as per the quote below:

That's very uncool. People who buy band shirts and clothes don't look classy. They look like like look trashy and stupid. Everybody has a Joy Division T-shirt, please try to have a personality.

[ISP282, Age 45]

Clothing (and other visual elements) forms a critical function within Goth culture as a means of defining and communicating personal taste as well as identifying members of a micro-culture within Goth. Bonded by their differentiation, Goths find commonalities in their aesthetics and assert a "consistent cultural distinctiveness" to maintain distance from the mainstream (Hodkinson, 2012 p. 564). The Goth scene is adept at creating events and safe locations in which

to explore these outer extremes of the culture. As Issett discusses: "...the primary focus of Goth is not simply to be different from the mainstream, but rather to explore and even to celebrate those aspects of the human psyche that most try to deny..." (Issett 2011 p. xvi).

In Europe at gig/events with high attendance volumes there is a high probability of someone wearing the same t-shirt as you; to combat this, ways of maintaining individualism within the crowd have emerged. M'era Luna Festival sees participants donning elaborate costumes and horns to retain their spectacularity. Thus, electing to wear a band t-shirt is permeated with perceptions of etiquette, contextual conventions recognised by both the wearers and the broader subcultural community. Contextualising these preferences within a club, concert or other social environment interprets this message and overlays it with dense cultural meaning.

The influence of Goth

Gothness can be regarded as a conscious expression of alternative to mainstream fashion, equally embracing DIY, couture, and re-purposed generic fashion to create Goth style. The scholarly attention paid to style is therefore important and provides a valuable mechanism for interpreting Goth. Yet in the context of life-long affiliation, style falls short of fully describing the phenomenon which is Goth culture. For older generations, Goth style was foremost experienced firsthand in-person, in clubs, at events, and through private social gatherings. This is particularly relevant for Australian Goths, geographically isolated from US and European hubs of activity. For early Goth generations there were few other ways to explore Goth style other than by personal experience and through scouring music press such as *NME*, *Melody Maker*, *Sounds*, local street press etc., for news of Goth music. Consequently, the first Goth generation shared more commonalities of appearance and more concentrated, often localised, musical tastes on a narrower aesthetic spectrum than emerging generations.

The digital revolution of Goth mirrors the sudden stylistic freedoms afforded young people following Punk; it was that explosion of avant-garde-art-fashion that permitted new 'youth cultures' and styles to emerge (Hebdige 2014, p. 37). For new generations, the internet is the natural mode through which to explore the increasing stylistic plasticity of Goth, with vast databases of Goth music and imagery available to guide choices. The power of online global influence has resulted in the emergence of unlikely departures from traditional Goth imagery towards ideas such as Pastel Goth, Health Goth, and Mexican-based Cholo Goth, etc. (Hodkinson, 2003, p. 286). The emergence of the latter of these hybrids dramatically disrupted the notion that

Goth was predominantly the domain of middle-class Anglo-Saxon youth, raising awareness of the extant ethnic diversity in the culture (Perez and Gonzales-Martin 2019 p. 23). The viability of Goth is now secured via online presence. What retailers produce and how they market to Goths profoundly influences the culture, and how Goths interpret these aesthetics, in turn, influences the culture.

The question AQ54/IQ46 *How would you describe the influence of Goth on fashion, culture or society generally* provided an opportunity to reflect on these changes and how the Goth aesthetic has shifted over time.

It's lovely to see how it's branched and morphed. Kids now can have way more fun and push barriers in ways that I never could. It's also interesting to see the mainstream clothing stores catering for Goth kids and how things like black nail varnish have become a mainstream fashion item.

[ISP195, Age 44]

I don't care. I guess once you have got to my age – I am what, 51. Once you get to that age, you have seen the subculture go through so many phases. You know. You have seen the Emo's and we still use the term Babybats, you have seen the Birthday Party girls, you have seen the Swampies, New Romantics – so whatever. Little Pastel kids calling themselves Goth... good on ya. Enjoy it. You want to be one of us? That's fine.

[Interview excerpt: MPF105, Age 51]

Yeah. The other thing that has made things a bit different now is that... in the late 1990s, early 2000s you had a real commercialisation of Goth and Industrial. So it entered the mainstream which is both good and bad. On the one hand it is getting it out there and there are a lot of people who would not have been exposed to it otherwise, and they have found something that they can really get into. Unfortunately you also get a lot of people who decide 'I am going to do this Goth thing because it is edgy.' Or because they get street cred or whatever...

[Interview excerpt: BPM402]

The mechanisms of online sharing and shopping have uncoupled Goth from localised habits, opening opportunities for experimentation and improving the visibility of the most niche aspects of the culture. It is precisely this complexity which allows Goth subculture to coexist within the mainstream, providing an obscured parallel universe in which participants can explore the margins of Gothness, dipping in and out of the mainstream without losing their Goth foundation.

Not Just a Phase: Conclusion

As described above, for a significant proportion of participants, Goth is not just a phase, but an evolving, complex culture based on socio-aesthetic conventions. The nature of Goth identity has been described as adhering to a coherent canon of Goth music and aesthetics, with cultural expression present irrespective of location, language, class, or gender. Individual Goths build up cohesive understandings of culture that transcends national boundaries or language, instead

utilising social and aesthetic characteristics to secure personal feelings of belonging, empowerment, and, perhaps most easily overlooked, enjoyment. The culture engages in diverse modes of sociality and commerce to support ideas of Gothness, allowing for gradual evolution over several generations.

Goth aesthetics have been shown to function not as signifiers of class, wealth or status, but as the quintessential building blocks of culture, the substructure on which layers of distinctiveness can be applied to create a comprehensive cultural whole. That this aesthetic is layered and inclusive of manifold variations is imperative: inherited and re-imagined aesthetic signifiers retain their communicative power for new generations in conjunction with Elder Goths, rather than usurping them as is the case in conventional culture. The acquisition of cultural artefacts, as in mainstream culture, is a natural trait of Gothness, however, this acquisition is highly specialised, contingent on in-culture meaning, and often tied to a bricolage of creative and social activities beyond solely personal enjoyment.

The current condition of Goth suggests there is now such fluidity of expression and maturity of aesthetic approaches that notions of commitment to a single, constant distinctiveness are difficult to measure using the conventional subcultural construct. The continuous fusion of aesthetic and cultural factors sustains its longevity. As described by McCracken, Goth creates its own universe in which to constantly expand, contract, react and reinvent itself. Goth culture exists, at once, in the current, present, and past tense. The Goth spectrum incorporates the plenitude of difference of contemporary society, whilst reflecting to the artistic and literary traditions which inspired the term.



Australian Goth

Image overleaf: Melbourne Victorian & Gothic Picnic 2017

Photograph by the author

Chapter 6 : AUSTRALIAN GOTH

The Australian Aesthetic, we're not as polarized or claustrophobic about genre or style. Perhaps that comes from multiculturalism.

[ASP415 Age 51 AQ11⁶¹]

This Chapter examines Goth identity in the Australian context. The focus is on the under-researched area of Australian experiences of Goth and the critical context of Australian Gothic phenomena. The Goth culture has been little studied in Australia and presents an ideal prospect for examining its relationship with International Goth, gothic traditions, and extant notions of alternative culture/subculture. As the first large-scale study of its kind in Australia this data represents a significant contribution to the knowledge of Australian Goth and provides a foundation for more advanced study.

Using empirical data I discuss the experience of Goth in Australia. Data is derived from survey tools administered specifically for Australian participants and includes questions designed to investigate concerns particular to Australian conditions. The Australian Surveys received a total of 441 responses (415 Australian survey responses, plus an additional 26 ex-pat responses). Twelve interviews were conducted with Australian participants in addition to hundreds of hours of in-scene and social media-based discussions and observations. Free-text options generated 534700 words in response, representing a significant dataset.

I present survey data to build an understanding of Australian Goth identity, allowing Australian insider perspectives to be compared with the translocal phenomena of both the Gothic and Goth. These data serve as the foundation for the following sections which examine perceptions of Australian Goth culture with geographical and climatic considerations, sociality and notions of community, Australian Goth aesthetics, and access to music.

Comparative examinations of Australian and International subcultural characteristics are included to identify connections or parallel behaviours as well as variances from other Goth communities. In so doing this chapter forms a bridge between the existing, predominantly non-Australian, theoretical positions on Goth and emerging discourse on Goth culture via the voices of Australian participants.

⁶¹ AQ11 In what ways, if any, is the Australian Goth subculture distinct from European Goth subculture

Australian Goth

Yeah there were a lot of us. And I remember seeing a Goth girl on the train and she was there in her long black skirt, and her lace, and her velvet... and she was dripping in silver jewellery and she had the white face and black make up and I thought she was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen in my life...

[Australian Interview participant MPF104]

The interview excerpt above resonates with my first encounters with Goth culture, my fascination with the aesthetics and enjoyment of the social scene which it supports. I have been an active participant in Australian Goth for over thirty years. I grew up in Perth, Western Australia, then moved to Melbourne at around 25 years old. I have remained engaged with the Goth scene throughout my adult life as a participant, a community member, an academic observer, and a fan of the music and aesthetics. I have experience as a Goth club promoter and DJ in Australia, where I established Goth nightclub nights and undertook Goth art and design services. This provides me with a solid background in the culture. In addition to this, for this study, I travelled widely to Australian and International Goth gigs, festivals, picnics, clubs (etc.), attending over fifty major Goth events and hundreds of smaller ones, establishing a broad network of connections and insider expertise.

Background: Australian Goth Music & Clubs

As introduced in the preceding chapter, during interviews participants consistently recalled early moments in their involvement with Goth culture when they felt a profound sense of belonging in Goth due to particular music. Significantly, this experience was recalled by several participants as being so fundamental to their understanding of their identity as to permanently alter personal perspectives on belonging and social conformity.

The Alternative music scene supported live bands and clubs nights, where members of various underground scenes including Goths first found belonging. Licensed venues represent the prime locus for much of the transferral of subcultural knowledge and substance, as well as the site for instigating social connections and relationships. Located within Australian capital cities, non-mainstream venues specialised in showcasing emerging live artists as well as hosting club nights. *Swampies, Grebos, Wavers* (and others), co-habited with Goths, not always peacefully, so venues could remain profitable enough to sustain regular events. The venues provided a space for young people to experience alternative music and culture first hand and to adopt Goth spectacularity in varying degrees (Stratton 2008, p. 250).

Due to Australia's geographic isolation major international bands seldom toured. This inspired an entrepreneurial approach to Goth club and local band scenes. Goth communities found ways to combat isolation and forge stronger local and translocal connections, self-publishing night-club flyers and posters, gig guides, pen-pal links, tape-ordering services, and reviews of local social activities. Homespun mail-order catalogues, tape libraries, and bootleg audio recordings fuelled the passion for music, broadcasting, and critiquing emerging artists and imagery as it occurred around the world (Bennett and Peterson 2004 p. 139). Pre-internet, commercial street press and international music magazines provided means of information-sharing, further supported by local and international fanzines which provided niche information. The Fanzines tradition of self-publishing and documenting underground scenes is common among subcultures, with Punk, SKA, Mods, Skates, and others all generating cultural material specific to their communities. Small, independent record stores supplied these publications with the music and the all-important band t-shirts. The internet only enhanced and further cultivated this convention of long-distance Goth connections with the introduction of Internet Relay Chat (IRC), forums and various social media and chat services.

The promotional materials in Figure 36 illustrate how Industrial club flyers have a dystopian feel, whereas the more Goth flyers utilise vampire, kitsch-horror and traditional Gothic-influenced themes. Club flyers feature in Goths scenes all over the world and are an important piece of cultural collateral for the scene, often kept by patrons as keepsakes and mementos. These club nights were run by scene participants, featuring DJs and music across the Goth-Industrial spectrum with regular inclusions of the 1980s, New Romantic, and Indie bands to expand the customer base. Dance floors were the site for experimenting with unusual aesthetics and disseminating Goth argot. Dreadlocks, Winklepickers, crimping, falls, fishnets, corsets... such items became staples of the Australian Goth scene, despite overseas origins (Story 2003 p. 117). Clubs such as *Amnesia*, *The Assylum*, *The Firm*, and *Fruition* established Goth in Perth, drawing strong crowds mid-week and over weekends, later followed by specialised nights at *The Loft*, *Interzone*, *Geremiah's*, and *Dominion*. Featuring set-lists packed with traditional Goth favourites as well as Industrial dance music, these clubs became the lifeblood of the Goth scene and helped support local record stores, Goth businesses, and DJs.



Figure 36 Assorted Western Australian Goth Club and Retail Flyers (author's collection)

The music played in these clubs directly influenced how Goths looked; Goths were inspired by and emulated European Goths with make-up and clothing perfect reflections of trends in the English Goth scene. Fans emulated Siouxsie Sioux, Patricia Morrison, Robert Smith, Andrew Eldritch, and Australian Nick Cave, signifying cultural attachment to the ‘parent’ Goth culture of Europe. This connection to Goth scenes of the United Kingdom and Europe provides the key characteristics of the subculture and understanding of what Goth sounded like and what Goth looked like.

Perth in particular developed a Goth scene which at its height in the mid-1990s was arguably the largest of its kind in Australia despite its isolation (or because of it), and comparative to Goth communities in British cities with far higher populations. Perth has produced many designers and artists, such as Erica Wardle 1974-2017, whose contributions to Goth culture are internationally significant. Bespoke couture brands such as Wardle's *Alysian Empire* and hairdressers *Wildlocks* provided the scene with internationally-regarded alternative looks. Increased interest in Goth enabled the establishment of businesses catering to the alternative market with participants

actively contributing to sustaining its social and economic activities beyond attendance at club nights and gigs.

The Goth scene relies on support from independent music stores and alternative radio stations such as 6RTRFM (*RTR*), who produced radio shows on the international forward edge of alternative music. Hosting a programme entitled *Difficult Listening*, with stablemate *Darkwings* gave greater exposure to Goth and avant-garde sounds exposing listeners to experimental music in "a range of styles that push the very barriers of sound creation and composition."⁶² Interviews with Diamanda Galás and playing tracks which went on to become dance-floor staples of the Goth-Industrial scene, these programmes also re-visited early bands of the genre, ensuring the growing scene was schooled on musical influences from all over the world.

Few local bands truly embraced the Goth look or sound though many had strong Punk/Goth followings at home and in Europe. *The Lime Spiders*, *The Church*, *The Scientists*, *The Triffids*, *The Stranglers*, Rowland S. Howard, *The Boys Next Door/Birthday Party/ Nick Cave and Bad Seeds*, Kim Salmon, *The Reels*, and others shaped a new alternative Australian music scene founded on independent style and unconventional themes. As described by Stratton, there is a predisposition for melancholic nostalgia in Australia and lyrical traditions of the gothic are present in bands like *The Triffids* (Stratton 2008 p. 616). While aesthetically outside the established Goth norm, the band's connections with the UK underground post-Punk scene secured a following among Australian Goth audiences. In Brisbane *Bat Nouveau* and *The Vampire Lovers* attracted a devoted post-Punk neon-Goth following, whose shared love of American-influenced camp-trash-Punk helped launch Goth in that city. The *Little Band Scene* based out of North Melbourne was supported by bespoke radio shows, record stores, and an assortment of artistic home industries which facilitated the emergence of a true alternative to popular music (Kritzler 2014 p. 13).

There was a 'gloom boom' of Post-Punk and proto-gothic aesthetics throughout the 1980s and 1990s. *Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds* and Rowland S. Howard became the archetype suburban Australian Goth image (Stratton 2008, p. 255). This coincided with the rise of music television programmes including *Countdown*, *Rock Around the World*, *Rock Arena*, *Kulture Shock*, *The Noise and rage* [sic] (and later *Recovery and Countdown Revolution*). These formats provided a perfect vehicle for expanding musical palates, introducing a new spectrum of musical sounds to a ready audience. The programmes articulated the breadth of international alternative music culture and

⁶² RTR Website: <https://rtrfm.com.au/shows/difficultlistening/>

showcased off-beat, live performances. Goth, alternative and avant-garde artists such as Diamanda Galas and *Einstürzende Neubauten* (with guitarist Blixa Bargeld from *The Bad Seeds*) are exemplars of the radical musical styles given unprecedented coverage. The visual elements of these programmes were influential for alternative music fans, with many participants referring to the shows as vital sources of early Goth education.

Nightclubs played a vital role in bringing the music of Goth, Industrial, and electronic body music (EBM) to patrons. Local outfits such as *And An A* contributed to Australian notions of Goth-Industrial music and helped clubs to establish the scene. The experimental industrial music scene produced several Goth-Industrial pioneers: J.G. Thirlwell and bands such as *Voigt/465*, *Primitive Calculators*, *S.P.K.*, → ↑ → (Tsk Tsk Tsk), *Severed Heads*, and *Mi-Sex* produced electronic noise music overlaid with dystopian lyrics reminiscent of European outfits of the genre (Reed 2013 p. 145). In particular, *SPK*'s early work reflected the sonic terror-as-social commentary ethos of UK's *Throbbing Gristle*, themselves extreme innovators on the very edge of music, activism, and art. The industrial movement described itself as "artists in spite of art" at the time, reflecting the anti-romantic, dystopian views of the culture which served as the antidote to the sometimes saccharine Goth half of the Goth-industrial scene (Austin et al 1983 p. 4).

In the late 1990s the Australian Alternative scenes saw a profusion of bands emerge, such as *Beasts of Bourbon*, *These Immortal Souls*, *Insurge*, *Imaculata*, *And An A Caligula*, *Dark Cell*, *Thou Gideon*, *Falling Joys*, *Humming Birds*, *The Clouds*. Some of these performers embraced Goth, some attracted a Goth crowd. It was arguably the second wave of bands in the Goth-Industrial contingent who achieved the greatest success with bands like *SNOG*, *Shinjuku Thief*, *Dogmachine*, *Subterfuge*, *IKON*, *Black Lung*, etc. all attracting a large, dedicated Goth-Industrial following.

During the 1990s, a period of adolescence for many participants in this study, Goth experienced a period of relative commercial success. Goth-Industrial was at its commercial peak with International Goth-influenced bands like *Nine Inch Nails* and *Rammstein* achieving mainstream success as well as post-punk Goth stalwarts *The Cure* receiving positive media attention following the release of *Disintegration*. The aesthetics of these bands were quickly reflected in local scenes; distinct tribes of Goth emerged, identifying with discrete sets of cultural capital with unprecedented spectacularity. It is the vastly expanded spectrum of Goth music styles during this peak period of popular outsider culture which gave rise to the now idiosyncratic Goth identity types. Club nights provided opportunities for 'promenading' high-end Goth distinctiveness from coloured hair, to band t-shirts and all manner of boots, bags, and buckles. These choices can be

contextualised in separate social behaviour patterns based around musical choices including Goth-Industrial, Steampunk, Death-Rocker, etc. Participants exhibited outlandish Goth aesthetics, with some setting up businesses around Goth fashion, tattooing, or beauty, further enmeshing the culture as part of their everyday lifestyle. Significantly this increased comfort with spectacularity was accompanied by a growing sense of confidence and longevity in Goth identity as differences were met with greater ease than any preceding generation (Thomson 2016 p. 47).

Critical Background: Australian Goth

Literature on Goth in the Australian context is currently very limited. Australian cultural activity has less rigid class-based social divisions than seen in Britain; the focus has instead been on the creative heritage and aesthetic attributes which influence sub/cultures (Bennett 2011, p. 27). A leading scholar in subcultures and the Australian Gothic Mode, Ken Gelder, provides an important narrative on Goth subculture and Gothic aesthetics from an Australian perspective, examining parallels between the two phenomena. Gelder identifies the capacity of Australian Goths to simultaneously connect with and reject national identity, positioning the discussion of Australian Goth identity alongside scholarship on the literary Gothic Mode. Gelder discusses 'weird melancholy', giving a unique insight into Goth cultural markers and providing a theoretical bridge between the science of sociology and the art of culture (Gelder in Goodlad L.M. E & Bibby M. (eds.) 2007 p. 222).

The cultural condition described by Gelder is largely prospective, as observed in his discussion, founded on academic conceptions of the Gothic mode rather than underpinned by ethnography or insider participation. Like McCracken, Gelder supports the plenitude subcultures transmit to mainstream culture, with their surprising and uncanny aesthetics. Gelder articulates the otherness of subculture, while questioning the tacit moral superiority of the hegemonic 'normal' culture which surrounds it (Gelder in Goodlad & Bibby (eds.) 2007 p. 218).

Ken Gelder: Six Subcultural Logics

In *Subcultures: cultural histories and social practice* (Gelder 2007) lays out the primary scholarly considerations in the discourse on Subculture. While new language to describe Goth culture is being established, the foundational ideas presented by Gelder provide valuable context for how Goth was received in Australia and how it now negotiates new ways of being. The following sections utilise Gelders' *Six Logics of Subculture* (Logics) to structure discussion on Australian Goth, using data from the International cohort as a comparator throughout.

Gelder proposes six cultural logics to determine subculturality which can be applied in the study and analysis of such groups (Gelder 2007, p. 3). These subcultural logics (Logics) include: 1) discrimination and being routinely misunderstood or evaluated negatively 2) Matters of class, economic capacity and employment 3) The locus of subculturality and claimed social space 4) Sociality removed from the domestic environment, 5) Notions of deviance and excess and 6) General oppositional attitude to convention and hegemony (Gelder 2007, p. 3).

These Logics have varying degrees of relevance for Goth subculture. Class, as described throughout, is less influential in Australia and decreasingly so in the United Kingdom. As discussed in the previous chapter, class (Logic Two) holds little influence over Goth identity and style, as it is generally regarded as a relatively placid, even middle-class, subculture or aesthetic trope. As addressed in the following, matters of employment (Logics One and Two) discrimination continue to be a concern for Goths, as is personal safety and wellbeing. Social spaces are a vital part of the Goth cultural experience, extending now to broader social contexts and sites which routinely include (and thus contradict) Logic Four).

Logics Five and Six, Deviance, excess and oppositional attitude pose a more complex problem for Goth culture as eclectic gothic notions of excess, deviance (sexual, religious or otherwise) are commonly attributed to both the dress sense and motifs of Goth culture. Goths as a collective community do not engage in oppositional attitude as expressed in Logic Six in a political sense, however the deviancy often alleged in Goth clothing and behaviour implies a difference form of opposition to hegemonic status quo.

Employment

Goths are not inherently financially subjugated or disadvantaged (Logics One and Two), yet Goths do experience discrimination based on their looks alone, as detailed below. Correspondingly the idea of Goths being under-employed is inaccurate, with employment opportunities increasingly linked to the scene such as tattooists, make-up artists, models, designers, etc. As described in the previous chapter, Goth has at times been the focus of discriminatory behaviour and demonisation; conversely it has also resulted in laws which expressly protect individuals' rights to look different. Employment was raised in questions as per Figure 37 - AQ435: *Which of the following best describes your employment*, choosing from the list, plus the 'other' option where employment type could be added.

AQ43/IQ35 Which of the following best describes your employment	Australian n=417	International n=1340
Accounting	2	12
Administrative	13	56
Advertising/Marketing	9	15
Analyst	2	7
Armed Forces	0	3
Architect/Building Designer	3	4
Artist/Creative	22	73
Business	1	8
Consulting	2	5
Customer Service	5	37
Education - Teacher	8	34
Education - Tertiary	3	19
Engineering	2	29
Fashion/Beauty	7	11
Finance/Banking	3	7
Government/Public Service	4	32
Graphic Designer/Web Programming	4	12
Health Care Professional - Doctor	2	4
Health Care Professional - Nurse	6	16
Health Care Professional - other	8	26
Human Resources	2	10
I am a Student	34	94
I am currently not employed	17	55
Information Management, Library, Archives	2	14
Information Technology	21	60
Law enforcement/Legal	4	14
Management	8	25
Manufacturing	4	6
Musician/Music Industry	6	12
Other	78	253
Product Design	0	3
Project Management	3	4
Research	4	7
Sales/Retail: Alternative or Goth	1	9
Sales/Retail: Traditional	10	44
Science	3	31
Strategy/Planning	1	1
Tattooing or Body Piercing	2	2
Writer, Journalist or Publisher	3	28

Figure 37 AQ43/IQ35: Which of the following best describes your employment

Note: some participants completed the 'other' response without recording an employment status.

Of those who chose 'other' the most common descriptions were allied health and mental health professions such as counsellors, aged care workers, hospitality/food workers, stay-at-home parents, self-employed, and multiple professions or a combination of several categories. Of the 1757 total responders, 72 (4.09%) described themselves as unemployed. As a point of comparison, the Australian national unemployment rate in August 2015 was 6.2%.⁶³ Given the age bracket of survey respondents, this ratio appears consistent with the national rate at the time, when higher levels of youth unemployment are prevalent

To further quantify these results, participants were also asked in AQ44/IQ36: *Describe how being a Goth has impacted on your career or career choices*. This question was a free-text format and received 7786 words in response from Australian participants and 21245 from International participants. Australian respondents described their identity and appearance as having little to no impact on their employment opportunities. As seen in the sample responses below, many participants described their alternative perspective as having assisted or even enhanced their careers.

As a social worker at a university I feel I have a closer relationship to students who identify as alternative. My own identify also shapes some of the more alternative communal activities I help create.

[ASP044, Age 33, Health care provider, other]

It has never really influenced what I do for a living. It has influenced how I spend my money.

[ASP085, Age 46, Fashion or Beauty Industry]

Needed to be secure in my job before I could 'look' goth. Was worried I would loose my job, was once told not to shave and colour 'patterns' into my hair. Now tho I do it anyway and don't care, got too old to be told what to do lol

Being Goth in and of itself hasn't driven my choices of where and what to do for work. However the values that I have that I see are a strong part of the goth culture (though not exclusive to it) have strongly influenced my work choices. I've always been determined that I would not change my hair or remove my piercings in order to work somewhere. This may have also been an idealistic desire to work within a meritocracy.

[ASP181, Age 43, Education - School teacher]

Not impacted. Though I do dress appropriately when needed for meetings. Suits etc, black of course.

[ASP034, Age 46, Human Resources]

For some participants their appearance has impacted their employment experience or their sense of job satisfaction:

Completely. Its not that I wasn't accepted but that I didn't want an office job. I wanted to work with like minded people.

[ASP206, Age 34, Tattooist]

I refuse to change myself for any Career and/or Employment. I've been out of work a lot because of this but I have always either studied or had employment or Volunteered. Being

⁶³ <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/lookup/6202.0Media%20Release1Aug%202015>

Goth hasn't so much impacted on my ability to gain employment so much as having a disability does.

[ASP233, Age 32, I am a Student]

I have had all kinds of jobs over the years. I did lose a job once for dressing inappropriately but haven't had a problem in my career otherwise.

[ASP236, Age 48, Public Servant]

It can be seen from these comments that Goth identity is not solely related to image; several participants list sharing a work environment with like-minded folk as an important consideration. Likewise, the importance of retaining key identity elements, such as piercings, hair colour, or make-up, is also mentioned regularly as important factors for authenticity and job satisfaction. It can also be interpreted from these data that some Goths continue to encounter discrimination, misunderstanding, and negativity concerning their 'excessive' or spectacular appearance, rather than their work ethic or capability (Gelder 2007, p. 3).

Property and homeownership were not regarded as crucial points of inquiry when designing surveys, however, in free text and interview discussions, some participants described difficulties in securing permanent jobs and rental properties due to discrimination based on appearance. Gelder links such discrimination and subsequent homeownership to the 'vagabond' street traditions of some subcultures. Unlike hippies or surf subcultures for instance whose sociality depends on environmental factors (surf, communal and idyllic living, etc.) survey responses do not indicate widespread support of Logic Two (Gelder 2007 p. 21).

In Logic Three Gelder identifies that social aspects of subcultures, the social worlds, are the primary locus of subcultural identity and therefore their territoriality is an essential element of any discourse on subculture. This holds true for Goths whose sociality is largely cited in clubs, pubs, and public locales. The creation of life-worlds for Goth culture is endemically linked to music; however, aesthetics must be added to this. Goth is rooted in social behaviours which are guided, informed, and driven by aesthetic practices inevitably associated with consumerism or creativity (Hodkinson 2002, p. 137).

Goth culture has a history of claiming social spaces, not only nightclub and event spaces but also in the form of picnics, popular meeting spaces, and locations that have become associated with Goths (e.g. Whitby). In question AQ17 *Describe how you came to be involved with Goth, for example: did you have a mentor or friend who introduced you to the subculture*, the experience of shopping, meeting friends, and generally being seen as part of Goth 'pack' was an important entry into Goth culture.

In his observations of the Melbourne Goth scene, Gelder identifies community 'nodal points' which direct Goth visitors and would-be Goths towards the essential subcultural sites of the city. Most Goths growing up in Australia would have experienced the 'hanging out in the city' form of territorialisation common to Goth sociality (Gelder 2007, p. 48). That is not to suggest participants were devoid of purpose in such activities, quite the opposite; joining in collective displays of Goth identity informed the general (hegemonic) public and other Goths that they had the right to be there and that the value they placed on their socio-aesthetics were both legitimate and meaningful (Gelder 2007, p. 90).

In Perth, this meant hanging out on the steps of the GPO in the city, in Melbourne around Flinders Street Station and shops like *Morticias*, in Adelaide at *Mabs* or along Rundle Mall, and in Brisbane's Fortitude Valley you may have hung out at *The Velvet Web* (and there are many other examples for each city). In Sydney the practice of territorialising space has found new purpose in the "Gothic Mile" in Newtown, along which a plethora of alternative retailers were located in the 1980-90s; this now functions more as a meeting point for sightseers rather than an active retail site. Importantly, it retains significance to Goths, despite its actual functional decline, becoming instead a place of pilgrimage and cultural history. Instead of colonising sites of antiquity as is the case in Whitby, Australian Goths perpetuate the significance of such 'historical' in-scene cultural places through modern, urban sites.

Saw this guy at school when I was younger wearing a black trench coat with the anarchy A on the back and big black boots. Thought he was cool. Ran into the other misfits at Flinders street train station. Hung out.

[ASP006, Age 33, AQ17]

I came in through being in the mod scene. The Cure were a huge influence on my image. I went to the city one Friday night and at the mall there was a huge gathering of Goths and punks playing music and hanging out. I got talking with them and the rest is history.

[ASP334, Age 44, AQ17]

First saw lots of Goths hanging around the town centre in the City, thought they looked amazing, interesting and very mysterious - an older sister of one of my friends gave me a Sisters tape... when I heard the music I was totally hooked. Started clubbing when I was still at school with a group of friends who all had the same sort of interests.

[ASP055, Age 41, AQ17]

Being attracted to certain bands. See Goths around the city and thinking they looked amazing. Meeting like minded people at uni.

[ASP104, Age 44, AQ17]

Goths continue this tradition, utilising their unique self-fashioning as a way of signalling 'territory' as well as defining the type of Goth culture is on display. This is consistent with studies of other music-oriented communities of belonging considered in Gelder's *Subculture* (Gelder 2007, p. 64). Where other micro-cultures may delineate social territory along the lines of sexuality or music

styles alone (rave, techno, dance, etc.) Goth combines the powerful combination of music taste and micro-genres within the Goth scene. For instance, Goth-Industrial fans display their band t-shirts, militaristic trousers, etc., where the Trad and Glam Goths crimp their hair into wild bushes and wear an elaborate bricolage of historic gowns and frock coats. To outsiders, these black-clad folks may appear the same, yet the communication afforded by these distinct styles is an unambiguous declarative method of territorialisation and niche alignment of taste. Thus this socio-aesthetic framework of Goth has scaffolded self-styling, socialisation, music tastes, locus of sociality, and communication of potential partnering to like-minded participants.

The socio-aesthetic world of Goth culture is influenced in varying degrees by the other elements of subculture identified by Gelder, however, unlike Logic Four, Goth culture does tend to have locus in domestic settings. The initial experience of Gothness is increasingly occurring in the home environment, mediated by internet connectivity and social media platforms. For those who partner with members of the culture, or affiliated groups, this results in Goths sharing domestic space or even finding 'safe' accommodation in shared houses. Common in youth, shared houses are the site of significant knowledge sharing in the Goth scene and can be instrumental in establishing life-long friendships and taste behaviours (Hodkinson 2002, p. 95). Some younger Goths, as explored above, are now the second or third generation of families where parents or even grandparents have alternative or Goth patterns of sociality and aesthetics.

In relation to Gelder's fourth logic, as with all sites of Goth culture, the influence of music and the bands of the Goth/gothic rock genre play a vital role in establishing the aesthetic and social parameters of the culture. Unlike American Goth which shares more with the ruggedness of Punk rock/Rock'n'roll (Iggy Pop, *The Ramones*, etc.), the early Gothic Rock familiar to Australian audiences engaged a unique Britishness; it is eccentric, awkward, and aloof. The continuing influence of British Goth bands that most impacted Australian Goth scenes includes original Goths *The Cure*, *Siouxsie and the Banshees*, *Bauhaus*, *The Sisters of Mercy*, *The Fields of the Nephilim* and *All About Eve*. These bands all draw heavily on nihilist, romantic, artistic, and gothic literary traditions variously referencing Edgar Allan Poe, Shelley, Keats, Dylan Thomas, Jean Baudrillard, Albert Camus, T.S. Eliot (the latter heavily referenced by *The Sisters of Mercy* writer Andrew Eldritch) as well as other decadent influences. These references are far from restrained: Australian group *Dead Can Dance* overtly emphasised death, the band *Nosferatu* references the original Vampire film, *The Cure* band name references a line from German Expressionist horror film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *Siouxsie and the Banshees* cites the Rodger Corman film *Cry of the Banshee*, whilst several band names reference bastardised versions of religious institutions or horror-

premised artforms (Mercer 1988). Drawing further influence from silent-era films, gothic horror, Weimar cabaret, and the Victorian era Pre-Raphaelite-styled *femme fatales* Goth established an early association between the genre and artistic *Bricolage*. Thus Gothness becomes a riddle where no image lacks reference, meaning, or allusion to preceding artforms. As described by Hebdige, audiences and outsiders to Goth are left to “discern the hidden messages inscribed in code on the glossy surface of style” (Hebdige 1979, p. 111). Such deliberate posturing underscores how Goth culture relies on existing artistic traditions and literary frameworks to build the spectrum of Goth canon.

An examination of the multifaceted nature of Goth is explored in the Australian context by Vicki Karaminas. Karaminas provides a valuable narrative on the visual representation of Goth as rendered by artist Louise Graber, whose gothic comic *Black Light Angels* both influenced and represented the Sydney Goth scene and provided a Goth archetype particular to the Australian audience (Karaminas 2007, p. 438). While semi-fictional, these characters are based on real Goths. Admittedly, the rendering of Goth as a comic strip does diminish the impact and reach of the acute observations. Karaminas draws parallels between the artistic representation of Goth culture and the genuine lived experience of Sydney-based Goths, identifying the Australianism (such as flannel shirts) within the comic. As experienced in the Sydney Goth club scenes in which Graber is a participant, the 'street fashion' particular to Australian Goth is emphasised, where clubs feature DJs and more everyday Goth interactions. This is in contrast to European experiences of Goth which often centre on live bands and feature festivals at which extravagant couture Goth appearance is common. Crucially, the fashions depicted by Graber in the comic series are drawn from direct observations in Goth clubs and of genuine Goth participants, who in turn mimic the comic representation of the culture.

Goths and their Gothic sensibilities are described by Karaminas as conforming to Hebdige's ideal of the Bricoleur as well as Gelder's Fifth Logic of excess. Goth is depicted as an aesthetically grounded yet constantly changing spectrum of melancholic appearance which rejects 'regular' societal rules and instead suggests otherness (Karaminas 2007, p. 444). Karaminas, like Hebdige, identifies this as a bricolage of historic style, designed motifs, and contemporary influences which facilitate Goth identity remaining valid. Also consistent with McCracken's idea of plenitude this argument provides a thorough depiction of Goth identity in the gothic mode created by Australian participants.

In comparison, Ragusa and Ward provide important insight into experiences of Goth identity from the perspective of males in rural Australia, identifying patterns of bullying and entrenched feelings of apprehension, social distrust, and general misunderstanding of what it is to be Goth within Australian rural and isolated communities (Ragusa & Ward 2017). These findings are restricted by the distinctive rural isolation of its cohort and cannot be broadly applied to Goth communities in major Australian cities. Unique in its focus, this research demonstrates the need and cultural appetite for research of this kind in Australia and the maturation of the understanding of what it is to belong within a translocal subculture.

The outsiderhood of Goth culture is its primary claim to the oppositional attitude suggested in Gelder's Sixth and final logic (Gelder 2007, p. 90). Outsiderhood is a fundamental dynamic of Goth identity and therefore occupies a significant space in the overall discourse on Goth, and indeed other subcultures. Goth outsiderhood when combined with its profound self-awareness and satisfaction in irony distinguishes a culture which in order to find belonging has embraced alienation to reveal a new dark beauty (Gelder in Goodlad L.M. E & Bibby M. (eds.) 2007 p. 226).

Gelder dissects the palpable awareness of outsiderhood in Australia, noting how artists have successfully re-imagined gothic and the alternative, crafting a niche in the canon of Goth, with Australians including long-standing artists such as Nick Cave, Rowland S. Howard and Lisa Gerrard are important contributors in establishing the gothic music genre (Gelder, 2007 p. 219).

Pertinently, Gelder further describes the distinct social worlds created by subcultures like Goth where it is the key characteristic of 'spectacularisation of identity' in different life stages which results in belonging and contentedness (Gelder, 2007 p. 72). Gelder reveals the significance of otherness as a catalyst for belonging and proposes an approach to the study of subcultures that marries them far more closely to their communal importance and socio-cultural values, stating the study of subcultures centres on "the analysis of subcultures in terms of their sociality and social practice" (Gelder 2007 p. 4). This approach echoes McCracken and extends the discussion on the role and significance of geographic, historical, and social settings.

Goth communities offer an alternative to the mainstream, embracing an amalgam of ideas intrinsically linked with the Gothic Mode and replicating anachronistic stories through its music and aesthetics particularly the ethereal vampiric ideal of the 19th century. By utilising these aesthetic and lyrical devices the Goth experience becomes removed from the everyday, evoking an ambiance of horror and dread, eroticism and wit, in a performative enactment of the 'perverse' (Smith 2009 p. 3). The value placed on the thick aesthetic quality through which Goths 'think their

own world' could be characterised as overcompensation of the Punk 'no Culture' attitude described by Hebdige (Hebdige 1979, p. 103).

As discussed by Stratton, the Australian music scene of the 1970s and 1980s, as in America and Europe, saw an explosion of non-mainstream acts whose fan-base existed resolutely outside the pop/rock duopoly of popular culture, earning the collective label Alternative (Stratton 1985 p. 196). For Australian Goths this is an entirely concocted aesthetic built on notions of the Gothic to create communities bound by a desire to find beauty in the darkness of the human condition (Byron and Townshend 2014 p. 62). Gothic Mode shares much of its aesthetic palette with contemporary Goth subculture; perhaps unsurprisingly its emotionally charged themes of altered realities, vampiric romance, doomed sentimentality, sexual deviance, spiritualism, and morbidity are now synonymous with perceptions of Goth (Barratt in Brown et al 2016, p. 236).

As briefly described above, the Goth subculture in Australia draws on the varied traditions of the Gothic Mode to construct an expression of Goth which is paradoxically consistent with international iterations of the culture and at the same time perceptibly distinct from it (Gelder, 2012 p. 384). In *The (un)Australian Goth*, Gelder depicts Goth in terms resonant to insiders, using the language of art and literature to define it as a cultural practice deeply embedded in the lives of its participants (Gelder in Goodlad & Bibby (eds.) 2007 p. 218).

Australian Goth is in some respects an outsider to the (already outsider) culture of Goth, existing remotely from the romanticised ideal of history-rich Europe which informs much of the visual palette of the culture. Through Gelder's depiction of Goth as a bookish, literary-minded culture, Goth sensibilities can be viewed as aesthetic sensibilities and can be read through the prism of artistic analysis as well as through the familiar framework of sociology. By drawing on this perspective to describe Goth participants and their social behaviours, the socio-aesthetic framework of contemporary Goth subculture is apparent. Gelder helps navigate the Australian Goth/Gothic context, presenting evidence from the culture which has enabled it to rise above literary conceit to instead produce a new Goth mode.

Little Worlds: Lived Experiences of Australian Goths

As described in the following sections, the climate and geography influences the range of Goth aesthetics in Australia and produce an intrinsically 'weather-permitting' attitude to the more extreme expressions of Goth dress. The high summer temperatures, vast distances between capital cities, dispersed and low population numbers, and a higher proportion of the population living on the East Coast of Australia are inherent factors that influence Australian Goth.

Participants provide insight into clothing choices, gig attendance, sociality, and the everyday aesthetic choices required in the sometimes extreme Australian environmental conditions. Participants describe the cultural context in which Australian Goth identity developed and how they negotiate the pressures of being in an 'un-Australian' subculture.

The lived experience of Goth for many incorporates an aesthetic distinctiveness which sits (sometimes uncomfortably for non-Goths) alongside notions of morbidity, melancholy, and nostalgia for an idealised past. An interesting example of how this ideological rift is being mended is the recent growth in popularity of Goth picnics which are often paired with Victorian/historic re-enactments. Sometimes aligned with other festival or events, picnics have increasingly become a way for the Goth community to meet outside clubs/music focussed environments to informally interact in public spaces, significantly in daylight hours. Though informal in nature, these picnics present an opportunity for peak Gothness to be displayed and accoutrements of the culture unsuited to nightclub settings, such as parasols elaborate drinkware and table-settings, to be displayed. It also offers members of the public an open occasion to interact with Goths and potentially participate in the festive atmosphere.

The Facebook page for the *Melbourne Gothic and Victorian Picnic* highlights the interests of the group, charity outcomes resulting from donations as well as providing a source for public enquiries for the event.⁶⁴ In the UK where the public familiarity with Goth is greater, regular photographic and video features are published during the *Whitby Goth Weekend* highlighting extravagant examples of Goth attire.⁶⁵ Similarly in Germany *Wave Gotik Treffen*, the largest Goth festival in the world, appears on the *Travel Leipzig* website and has featured in news articles during the festival for over ten years.⁶⁶ These events have opened opportunities for dialogue between Goths and the general public, sometimes resulting in wider media reports and increased local engagement which reduces social barriers and improves relationships across cultural lines.

While Goth events have been common in Germany for decades, the emergence of Goth in Australia has followed a slower and less concentrated path to public awareness. In the 1970s and 1980s Australian culture was undergoing an awakening and a coming of age which was reflected in cinema, music, style, and beliefs (Stratton, 2008 p. 614). The enduring class concerns of British Punks were less acutely felt in 1970s Australia, where even the poorer among the community shared a level of affluence and social freedom uncommon to inner-city British youth. Australia was

⁶⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/melb.gothic.victorian.picnic/>

⁶⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/gallery/2016/nov/07/whitby-goth-weekend-in-pictures>

⁶⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BDQgdQouwMs> (Note: in German)

starting to find a distinct character and strong cultural presence. Media depictions tended to show Australians as lacking sophistication, typified by a brashly laconic, uncouth, and male-dominated aesthetic. Despite being in a period of multiculturalism and inclusion the idea of Australians being "young, white, happy and wholesome" permeated Australian popular culture and forced diversity from the mainstream (White 1981 p.). These stereotypes do not reflect the Goth identity in Australia, nor make space for true diversity it in its simplified urban vernacular of 'laconic tanned Aussies' (Caterson, 2014, p. 10). During the 1970s and 1980s the term bogan began to be applied to this supposedly 'lower class' Australian.

Punk – Hebdige's British "Aesthetic Terrorists" – showed less stamina in the Australian context, where Oz-rock reigned, producing archetypal suburban rock acts *Australian Crawl*, *Midnight Oil*, *AC/DC* and *Cold Chisel* which dominated Australian masculine role-models for decades to come (Rhodes & Pullen 2012, p. 34). These bands offered internationally acclaimed and importantly new sounds, yet in many ways were the aesthetic antithesis of Goth. In Australia, it was the vibrant underground band scene that provided a fertile climate for the flourishing of Goth culture. Yet it also created an oppositional relationship with the more mainstream stereotypes of Australianism.

Respondents express confidence in the 'inclusiveness' and generally benevolent nature of the Goth community, yet bias against the idea of the 'bogan' is evident. Interviews and surveys illustrate participants desire to dissociate from the 'traditional Australian Bogan' culture; this sentiment, while seemingly benign, evidences an underlying snobbery of Goth culture in Australia.

There really was no other music other than Barnsey and Farnsey...whatever, and I just knew I did not want to be part of that.

[Interview MPF105]

What else do we have? Surfy bums or racist bogans. Nooooope nope nope nope.

[ASP052 AQ14⁶⁷]

I feel Australian Bogan culture has infiltrated a lot. There's a move away from Neo-Victorian and trad styles, more industrial/metal jeans and t-shirt. Less romanticism, and less desire to dress to the extreme.

[ASP043 AQ11⁶⁸]

It certainly does feel reactionary at times, to that whole Australian sensibility of being laid back, sun-loving bogans

[ASP269 AQ14⁶⁹]

It does help combat boganism, and unwanted Australian standards. I believe Goths should be open minded, polite, and understanding of others, and the Australian culture is very much "Let's go in the sun, listen to top 40 and get drunk"

67AQ14 Goth subculture fills a cultural void for Australian Goths

68AQ11 In what ways, if any, is the Australian Goth subculture distinct from European Goth subculture

69AQ14 Goth subculture fills a cultural void for Australian Goths

[ASP394 AQ14⁷⁰]

Participants describe how the difference of Goth aesthetics served as a signifier of a deeper, philosophical position of difference from the prevailing culture of suburban Australia. Comments reflect participants desire to be part of an alternative to the mainstream, but not to challenge it. Goth aesthetics do however challenge Australian suburban identity and disrupt nationally accepted modes of sociality.

Understanding how the culture is regarded by non-participants plays an increasingly important role as Goth communities move to online platforms for social and aesthetic expression. The Australian cohort was additionally asked in AQ16 if they believed Goth is regarded as a phase in Australia.

As per Figure 38 responses indicate the majority of participants believe Goth is regarded as a phase in Australia: Overall Agree 60.25%, Neutral responses 13.35%, Overall Disagree 26.40% (n=322). Regional influences remain an important consideration for Goths, in the form of risk awareness or simply seeking local communities for Goth social experiences. Despite places like Melbourne being identified by participants as largely Goth-friendly, survey results suggest Australia does not yet have a developed understanding of the culture.

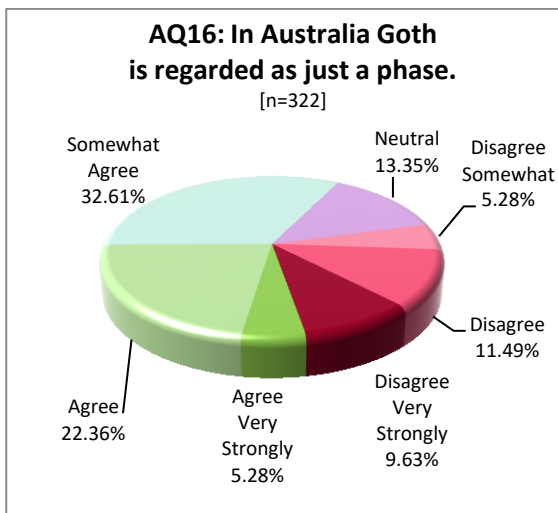


Figure 38 AQ16: In Australia Goth is regarded as just a phase

Interesting regional differences are evident in free-text comments of AQ16. Melbourne is identified as an Australian Goth hot-spot, highlighted by many participants as a culturally diverse city supporting a strong Goth scene. As one participant [AP09] observed, Melbourne possibly has

⁷⁰AQ14 Goth subculture fills a cultural void for Australian Goths

“a more enlightened attitude” towards Goths. This may be attributed to its climatic similarity to milder European cities and its strong creative, black-clad design-savvy community engaged in socially challenging arts and fashion (Dovey 2012, p. 36). Perth and Brisbane also feature in comments, identifying these locations as places of high Goth activity either currently or historically.

Participants noted that, unlike in the UK and Europe where well attended Goth festivals are frequent, Goth culture is sparingly mentioned in Australian media. Australian Goth is consequently far more self-contained and DIY, in part due to the vast geographical distances and lower population. Goth nightclubs are common in state capitals, Melbourne and Sydney are regular sites of major events and band tours, thus able to provide relatively consistent leisure and employment directly or tangentially connected to the scene (such as tattooing and clothing manufacture). These factors certainly contribute to Melbourne's active Goth community; similarities can be seen in other sites, like Camden in London or Leipzig in Germany, where predominantly urban Goth populations have flourished alongside complementary lifestyle opportunities.

A notable moment of Goth exposure in Melbourne was the *Black in Fashion: Mourning to Night* exhibition held in Melbourne's National Gallery of Victoria in 2008. The exhibition featured mourning and *haute couture* clothing including gothic items and utilised *The Sisters of Mercy's* song 'Black Planet' to emphasise the theme. The exhibition was a rare occurrence of Goth style celebrated in Australian mainstream arts-media and encouraged further study of an emerging Australian academic voice in the design/aesthetics fields (Gray, 2008 p. 534). For many of my research participants, the irony of considering Goth a phase whilst simultaneously celebrating decades of cultural influence was a parallel source of amusement and frustration.

Climate and Geography

The unique conditions of Australia warrant specific consideration. Survey instruments and interviews sought to interrogate how, if at all, the natural characteristics of Australia have impacted Goth culture and identity, present unique challenges, or elicit particular solutions. Cooler climate regions like Melbourne with its cloudy skies and rainy, melancholic winters are more reflective of European cities associated with Goth culture. However, Goths from all states except the Northern Territory responded to this survey. Supported by participant comments throughout, I argue that regional differences in Australian Goth attire are apparent. I suggest that Australian Goths have a highly developed self-awareness, using humour and self-mockery to make

light of the challenges of wearing Goth attire in a hot climate. I present evidence to demonstrate Australian summer heat has resulted in modifications of 'traditional' Goth appearance to maintain a 'Goth look' in +40°C temperatures.

The need to maintain an authentic identity is explicitly present in the Goth community. Notions of authenticity and permanence of Goth in Australia are pertinent discussion points. The lack of authentic gothic buildings contributes to the sense of inadequacy in Australian Goth, marking it out as a potential pretender to the scene. Furthermore, the restrictive nature of traditional Goth clothing forms a common thread in Australian Goth discourse, noting the unsuitability of the climate for expressions of über Goth identity with its many layers of elaborate costuming.

Survey participants were asked to consider the statement: AQ12 *Australian Climate makes being a Goth difficult*, using a standard 7-option Likert response scale with 155 participants expanding on their answer with 3841 words in free-text 'additional information' responses.

This question was followed by AQ13 *Has the geography of Australia influenced or impacted Goth subculture*, which shifted attention from the climate to the overall geography of Australia. This question also included a free text, *If yes how?* option which generated 6332 words in response from 193 participants.

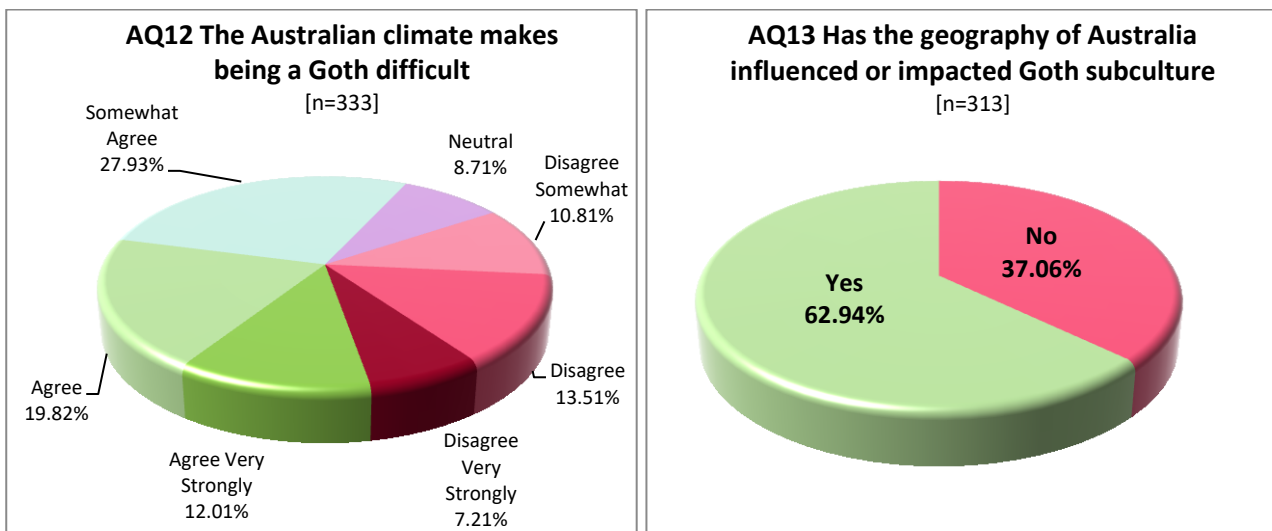


Figure 39 AQ12 Australian Climate & AQ13 Australian Geography

The responses in Figure 39 show 59.76% (199 of 333 participants) agreed with the statement, *The Australian climate makes being a Goth difficult*. The result for AQ13 *Has the geography of Australia influenced or impacted Goth subculture* similarly received 62.94% 'yes' responses (197 of 313 participants). Goth respondents make it clear the climate is challenging, however, it is not an

impediment to the continuance of the Goth culture in Australia. Goth scenes have, and continue to, thrive across Australia.

It's not that the climate makes "being" a goth more difficult per se- it's just that many of the ways goths tend to like displaying their identity are less practical on account of the temperature/UV. (eg... it's hard to wear velvet, vinyl and multiple layers in the heat, summer goth staples like fishnets/lace, corset tops and hotpants leave one at serious risk of sunburn- especially when one is very pale.)

[ASP205 Disagree, Age 33]

In Melbourne it's ok We're a Goth city here and winter is our most popular time of the year.

[ASP311 Disagree Somewhat, Age 45]

I live in Brisbane. My friend in Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, England went to the Whitby goth festival which ran 3 days with heaps of bands and market stalls, not to mention the venue!!!!!! She can dress in layers!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

[ASP202 Agree Very Strongly, Age 45]

Similarly, the respondent above shows clear amazement at the idea of being able to comfortably wear layers of Goth garb whilst attending a Goth event in a place of historic significance. To an outsider these differences may appear insignificant, however, membership in and knowledge of the Goth culture is primarily communicated through layered displays of subcultural products. I suggest the subtraction of such historic faculties decreases the extent to which participants can fully express traditional Gothness. Australian Goth can therefore be regarded as a little world within global Goth, subtly redefined by its Australian context, history, and modes of sociality.

The emergence of distinct, city-based Goth aesthetics is suggested by some participants as being a notable feature of Goth in Australia, as is the 'clique' nature of smaller scenes. Participants describe travelling to enjoy other Goth scenes around the country and overseas with differing experiences of Gothness.

Each capital city has there own insular scene with little overlap in population due to the distances between them, there is no big Australian goth conference. What's popular in one scene may be outdated or unfashionable in another. One could argue that the internet has changed this. Because of the distance between cities there is a lot of overlap between the goth, rockabilly, Steampunk, sci-fi, Cosplay, gamers, role-players, industrial, pagan and fetish scenes in each city because of the economics of holding events (and possibly the personality types of the participants).

[ASP254 Yes, Age 34]

The distance between big cities means that the culture differs moderately from each other. Also makes it harder to mingle freely between cities.

[ASP284 Yes, Age 40]

Cities are so spaced apart so scenes were different from city to city. Nowadays thanks to the internet its become more of the same with population being the deciding factor. More people = more events and better survival as groups fragment and cliques form. A higher population can absorb the changes (e.g. - Melbourne) where here in Adelaide a split can kill events.

[ASP417 Yes, Age 38]

Tasmania's isolation and size created a tight knit community of goths (who didn't like being called goths) and the ability for non-Goths to try it out (the long standing Goth nightclub in Hobart, The Coven, was the only alternative night club in town for at least 10 years and was frequently attended by general alternative types). I think the same may be said of Melbourne, although the community is much larger and perhaps more diverse.

[ASP273 Yes, Age 35]

The insights offered here set the tone for responses in the following questions. Participants were asked to reflect further on their experiences in and the nature of Goth culture in Australia. Examples of modified Goth attire were presented by the cohort as instances of 'Australianised' Goth appearance. Australian Goths made several references to hot summer temperatures and resultant difficulties wearing make-up and maintaining hairstyles. The addition of cargo shorts and lightweight tops/singlets as well as flowing dresses and fishnets appear to be regionally standardised in Brisbane and Perth, emulating the attire worn at German summer Goth festivals such as M'era Luna, Black Castle Party, etc. Variations of lighter weight clothing options are commonly seen in hot American states; however, the two cohorts have subtle differences. Sunglasses and parasols are common accessories in Australian Goth scenes, whereas velvet and other traditional Goth fabrics are ill-suited to Australian summers.

Yes! My goodness yes! When you get a week at a time of 40 degrees (sometimes 40+) all you can get around in is a lightweight black linen top and cargo shorts! So difficult! Love when Autumn arrives!

[ASP225 Agree Very Strongly, Age 38]

I guess if you tried to wear a Russian great coat with stovepipe black jeans, knee high boots on a 42 degree day in Brisbane and went walking in the sun, that would be difficult (possible extremely dangerous-overheating wise). There is a vast variety of light weight coats that cover all skin that can be worn instead. Parasols help. Hats are lots of fun. I have many, many hats. Summer dressing in black and lace can look sexy, stylish and glamorous. I wear a lot less makeup these days so i don't really have the issue of it sliding/melting off my face. I also have very short hair now. Long hair just became too difficult to deal with in the heat of the Brisbane summer. The fun thing about short hair is I can bleach it white and then put purples and reds through it and change it each week as it suits me

[ASP207 Disagree very Strongly, Age 43]

The heat makes wearing the velvets and layers really hard. Makeup is also hard to keep on and look good.

[ASP189 Agree Very Strongly, Age 44]

Bloody heat makes your hair limp, your make up run and your corset get all sweaty. Damn I hate that.

[ASP230 Agree Somewhat, Age 50]

For older participants the transition to more moderate clothing in summer is a source of consideration, noting many respondents suggested a common-sense approach which allowed for a little flair even when 'dressing down'. Australian Goth attire can therefore be characterised as

less layered, it uses lightweight materials, features less extravagant outer-wear (coats, capes, jackets) with an emphasis on balancing looking good and maintaining bodily comfort in the heat. The stereotype of white-middle-class Goths raises additional questions around societal perceptions, diversity and cultural authenticity. As a culture which actively draws on the Victorian era for aesthetic inspiration, it could be viewed as endorsing the horrors of white settlement in Australia (Willoughby et al., 2013, p. 36). This is a cause for concern for many participants and a stereotype the community actively works against, regularly discouraging such commentary in online discourse. The lengthy free-text response below to Question AQ12 *The Australian climate makes being a Goth difficult* demonstrates that Goths do indeed consider these issues as part of their Goth identity alongside more everyday environmental or social concerns.

All around Australia, from the tropics to Tassie's snow, I've seen goths adjusting their wardrobes to suit the climate - pretty effortlessly (with the exception of the dedicated, determined and sweaty PVC-clad few who insist on soldiering on in airless Brisbane nightclubs on New Year's Eve). If anything we get a few more opportunities to experiment with a variety of different looks, from fishnets and tattered scraps in Summer to wool coats with nipped-in Victorian waists in Winter. Certainly it can be challenging avoiding a tan, but given the massive hole in the ozone layer, that's fairly sensible goth or no. I'm inclined to say that rather than the climate, Australia's distance from the countries who inspired the majority of Gothic imagery is the biggest challenge; we have no ancient castles, no medieval ruins, and our Victorian Era here was characterised largely by outback struggle and indigenous genocide rather than class issues, the aristocracy, European artistic traditions, and Penny Dreadfuls. <- obviously this is all broad generalisation, but hopefully you get the drift.

[ASP042 Disagree Very Strongly, Age 48]

This answer also clearly demonstrates the perception of interconnectedness of global Goth sociality and the inherited sense of Gothness derived from European ideas of the gothic and artistic traditions. Here the authenticity of Australian Goth is called into question, rightly categorising the Australian Victorian era as being more brutal than elegant and contemporary Goth more observed than participatory.

Free-text commentary is most instructive for this question: a common theme 'the tyranny of distance' was noted as creating consistency and difference in Australian scenes. In the following responses the character of the Australian Goth culture is revealed; the lack of touring bands, reliance on older information, DIY clothes and overly-intimate local scenes are all described as being factors in Australian Goth culture

What is telling from Australian comments is the scarcity of music events and how Australian Goths have great aspirations to be better serviced in this regard. Difficulty attracting live music/tours/bands was raised by over 40 participants from all Australian capital cities, citing high touring costs and vast distances as obvious impediments to travel.

Distance and population. We're too small and too far to attract big name bands much; or have big festivals; or have lots of shops.

[ASP014 Yes, Age 37]

the tyranny of distance from Europe and America makes tours very rare.

[ASP402 Yes, Age 45]

The tyranny of distance... cannot be ignored. Not only were we a long way from the USA and Europe, but there are long distances between large cities within Australia. This meant that, for example, international bands coming to perform were perhaps less frequent than in other places. We didn't have the strongly goth-flavoured festivals found in other parts of the world. I wonder if this meant that our *scene* was more intimate, more condensed with people forced to share the same spaces if they wanted to participate in the subculture through live music, clubs, parties, or retail shopping. Whether this has meant that our goth subculture has shifted less than other areas of the world (much like Mediterranean migrants holding onto practices now out of style in their homelands), or whether we evolved along different paths (like evolution of species in the Galapagos Islands) I can't say.

[ASP011 Yes, Age 38]

distance between cities reduces contact compared to Europe, its why we can't have a successful national festival. Which would of course, build the culture.

[ASP162 Yes, Age 56]

Smaller population concentrated in major urban centres separated by vast distances. Equivalent to spanning multiple continental European countries. Rural alternative population isolated.

[ASP172 Yes, Age 42]

The distance from Europe and bands (both larger and smaller). The wide distances between towns also limits smaller bands travelling around the country. The weather also limits the fashion styles.

[ASP189 Yes, Age 44]

It's distance from just about anywhere else means touring bands must organise a huge logistical hurdle if they want to come to Australia. This in itself has stopped many bands. Additionally the relative low population of Australia adds to the hurdle as the effort to profit ratio may not be there for some. Not only bands suffer from the population dispersal but clubs also have to overlap their alternative scenes in order to enough punters through the door to cover costs. Whether that's in itself is a good or a bad thing is up for interpretation.

[ASP351 Yes, Age 48]

The relative isolation, particularly in the early days meant that congregation was the best way of hearing new music and news. With the ubiquity of the internet now though, it is far easier to be goth without necessarily engaging regularly with the community face to face. There are a lot of opportunities to engage online though.

[ASP369 Yes, Age 40]

The suggestion above of 'congregation' raised by this last responder to describe Goth communities is an interesting one, and perhaps a more fitting interpretation. The ability to coherently create communities of belonging through Goth is a central appeal of the culture and one which is made appreciably more difficult in the vastness of Australia. Regional scenes hold significance akin to congregations, where influential individuals shepherd communities around particular sites of significance, rituals, and activities. Australia's vast size prevents easy interstate in-person socialisation; this has in part been mitigated by online connectivity, yet remains a challenge.

Several participants linked these two factors and made further connections between the increase in internet connectivity and the decline of DIY/anti-commercial attitude in contemporary Goth. As demonstrated in these comments below, even travelling local distances can be difficult for Goths attending gigs and events, with transport not always safe, reliable or feasible.

Goths are relatively few and far between. In the town I currently live in (which is significantly large) there is only one other Goth that I definitely know of. There are more the closer you get to the city, of course. Most events are located in the cities so travelling to these as you get older with work and family commitments becomes more difficult. Goths in the outer suburbs or rural areas are definitely limited in their choices.

[ASP405 Yes, Age 45]

Being so far away from the rest of the world, we don't get to see as many bands or go to big goth festivals or even know what the latest music is sometimes (although the internet changed that). I have heard that the goth scene is declining even in Europe though so I'm not sure that the lack of younger people into goth is a uniquely Australian thing.

[ASP122 Yes, Age 40]

Distance and being Goth. Discuss the implications of full Goth on Public transport at 3am!
Hmhhh

[ASP102 Yes, Age 49]

The fundamental nature of finding belonging in the Goth scene is frequently correlated with experiencing live music, seeing bands, and being part of the audience. This scarcity of regular touring (until the mid-2010s) has certainly shaped how the Australian Goth community socialises and shares cultural artefacts. The cost of importing music and clothing was noted as being prohibitive for some participants although internet services have improved this. It is significant that some participants, however, feel Australian Goth is in some way lagging behind other sites of Goth activity.

I think it's because we seem so distant that band gigs, events and international guests will pass us. It's pretty much left us to develop our own community. It's only up until the last decade that we've had many goth bands come and finally gig here. Where as these bands have gigged the rest of the world a plethora of times over.

[ASP367 Yes, Age 39]

We're so far away that tours by most bands are not viable. My partner leads an Australian goth band and it costs \$10,000 for them to even get to Europe to tour. It has made it harder for our own bands to grow and those that have done well have moved overseas, from Nick Cave and Dead Can Dance to Angelspit. Clothing is now easy to access via the internet, however.

[ASP049 Yes, Age 36]

We are remote and isolated, harder to get to the gigs and access to bands in the genre. Clothing is expensive because it comes mostly from OS market.

[ASP085 Yes, Age 46]

Yes, as I said, we are not connected like Europe is, we are removed, fewer bands tour here, we have some bastardised version of 'goth'.

[ASP412 Yes, Age 34]

A lot of the Gothic bands never come to Australia and the music scene is behind the times

[ASP211 Yes, Age 46]

The notion of being behind the times in Goth is interesting, implying that 'fashionable' trends exist within the culture as per mainstream culture. Classics of Goth canon, while often from the 1980s, are still very much being produced and Goths have a strong appetite for new material. Similarly, the clothing market has greatly expanded over the life of the culture; Australian Goths appear to have reservations about being Goth enough or having an authentic culture.

Describing Australian Goth

As described in the following sections, both qualitative and quantitative questions were used to build a layered data-set of the lived experience of Australian Goths. Questions were arranged to shift emphasis as participants moved through the questionnaire, using modified language to explore key themes from different directions.

Three free-text foundation questions were posed to participants to capture their views towards being Goth in Australia; the following primarily draws on these open-ended questions in which participants describe the Australian Goth culture in their own words:

AQ6 Describe why you chose Goth and what attracted you to your particular style

AQ8 How would you describe Australian Goths & the Australian Goth scene

AQ9 Describe the primary factors which keep you involved with the Australian Goth scene

In the following, I present data that represents the spectrum of outlooks offered in the responses. There were up to 417 respondents to these Australian survey questions. AQ6 generated 13183 words in free-text response, AQ8 8138 and AQ9 5101 words in response. The data were sorted using keyword analysis.

AQ6 Describe why you chose Goth and what attracted you to your particular style

The free-text questions *AQ6 Describe why you chose Goth and what attracted you to your particular style* and *AQ9 Describe the primary factors which keep you involved with the Australian Goth scene*, required participants to consider not only the why of Goth identity but also the underlying points of attraction which sustain their engagement in the community. Receiving a total combined response of 18204 words, these data provide a snapshot of the establishment and established Goth identity. These vital components represent the underpinning characteristics Goths identify as being core to their Gothness and to a continued association with the community.

The outcomes of question AQ6 give a wide-ranging account of Goth from the view of prospective Goths transitioning into active participants. Motivations for choosing Goth identity demonstrate extant feelings of outsiderhood or not fitting in before assuming Goth identity for a large number of respondents. The data demonstrate that music is a principal attractant of the culture for almost all respondents. This is supported by the expectation of finding belonging and community within the culture, finally, the realisation of that hope is a powerful motivator for continued engagement.

I met the people first via #gothic on IRC. Went to a meet up where we went to a club after and loved the aesthetics and music. Also I had been listening to industrial music since I was 15 via a community radio show but I never knew it was called industrial.

[ASP417 Age 38]

Started listening to the music, loved the music, still love the music, I enjoy the aesthetics of all variants of Goth style, but for me it's primarily about Goth as a musical genre. I suppose I was attracted to the style of Goth though because of a love for Horror movies, Gothic novels, DIY Punk etc.

[ASP416 Age 43]

I love the music, the aesthetic and the connection with poetry, music art, literature and film. I like that it embraces the outsider, the intellectual and those that challenge norms I enjoy the cultures' expression of darker emotions and the transgressive

[ASP214 Age 41]

The anti-establishment ideals of Punk/Goth also still appear to hold some value for participants; comments reflect a desire to be different from the mainstream and demonstrate individuality, intellectual engagement, and acceptance of diversity. This is not limited to visual appearance and music but extends to a personal ethos of diversified interests, behaviours, and modes of sociality and morality.

I don't know why I chose Goth, besides the beauty of it all. I find gothic architecture fascinating, dark & beautiful, as do I find the clothing & hair of the Victorian era. I myself are more of a 'Morticia Addams' type Goth. I find that style elegantly dark and beautiful.

[ASP209 Age 45]

Growing up in regional Australia I never quite fit in with everyone else. I liked horror books and movies and liked wearing black and listening to more alternative music. When I moved to Sydney I found there were people just like me going out to goth clubs so I just knew this was where I fit in.

[ASP122 Age 40]

First attracted by the music which was more alternative-goth originally (Cure, Mary Chain etc) then discovered industrial music which was aggressive, nihilistic and anti-establishment - not to mention better for dancing. Industrial aesthetics appealed to me with their militaristic overtones and futurist viewpoint - goth-look but more attitude and no makeup. Basically, it's a culture for people who don't like society as it is, but know it can't be changed - and deep down wouldn't mind terribly if it was all destroyed anyway.

[ASP054 Age 43]

The elegance and whimsy of the clothing. The variety of the music. The openness of the people. The focus on the bizarre and the weird and the spooky and the beautiful and the old and the elegant

[ASP400 Age 38]

Goth holds different beauty standards to mainstream culture and for some participants, the connection with unconventional, dark beauty was a principal driver for Goth identity. Integrating 'whimsy' and the fantastic into everyday dress gives Goths the facility to visualize other worlds/lives/characters and heighten otherwise ordinary experiences. This elevates Goth identity into a sort of augmented reality where the pressures and conflicts of conventional beauty (or gender etc.) can be extinguished (Lamerichs 2014, 113). The sentiment of being liberated to authentically express identity is illustrated in the comments below:

What originally attracted me was the blend of dark alternative with punk and new wave romantic in the 80s. When I socialised with others back in the 80s I found a broad streak of pagan and occult activities which further captivated my interest, There was also an academic quality, with most goths then being academically or artistically inclined, not fashion obsessed. In Queensland, of course, we were also widely persecuted by the Police and government, creating a more cohesive sense of community than is seen today.

[ASP300 Age 44]

Although I navigated through a few different aesthetics as a younger man, my most enduring style was Victorian/romantic. I was attracted to the clothing of Rococo aristocracy and the romantic notion of living in a candlelit world. I also became interested in sewing and design in order to create my own style, as there were no ready-made goth shops back then, for which I am glad.

[ASP030 Age 45]

The dramatic aesthetic, the colours, fabrics, the evil, sinister look, the mood of it, melancholy, despair, beauty, everything from glamorous femininity to androgyny, the taking on of an aesthetic that incorporated that which is artificial as well as fantastical

[ASP269 Age 31]

Inter-Generational Goth

Familial connections to Goth and unconventional aesthetics appear in many comments, particularly from younger, second (or third!) generation Goths. Exposure to less traditional styles, for some participants, is connected with childhood memories and formative experiences with Goth music, aesthetics, and cultural influences.

Mum was a goth. Brought up on Tim Burton films and gothic picnics!

[ASP302 Age 26]

My mother was a Goth in the 80's, so this style has always been normal for me.

[ASP035 Age 27]

other was Goth, grew up in the gothic subculture and is the norm for me. I have continued because I find this culture to have open minded, empathetic people who look for self improvement. Plus the music is good.

[ASP354 Age 26]

I was kinda raised in a Goth household. But I love the music of staple Goth bands, I've always loved horror movies and spooky novels and i love to dress up in fancy clothes.

[ASP296 Age 31]

My parents are very alternative anyway, and were not surprised when I finally just went out all Goth. In fact they were super pleased. They don't step in and tell any of us what we should do and what we should look like and what we should conform to. To them, like me, its more important to be a good person first. Grandparents hate my piercings and tattoos, but love the dresses. Cant win them all!

[ASP152 Age 34]

My parents think of themselves as a little alternative, and they see it as being about literature and music in a more positive way than my sibling who was into hiphop. My dad has a Goth employee, and proudly told them that he had a goth daughter, so he understood what it was about, I gather that was well received.

[ASP341 Age 35]

My dad doesn't say much but my mother and brother hate it (ironic, given that the latter used to be a Goth too).

[ASP140 Age 30]

As well as being raised in Goth households, or being exposed to alternative aesthetics, several respondents commented on the relationships between different age-groups of Goths and how this is evolving over successive generations.

I am one of the very first generation Australian Goths...there was no-one to mentor us, we were the mentors, we still are.

[ASP180 Age 49]

I don't think mainstream Australia really cares that much one way or the other. The general position taken by parents was traditionally that it is "just a phase", but I think it is becoming more associated with being a lifestyle. The large number of older Goths around is making it clear that most aren't growing out of it. Gen X parents will probably be more accommodating than boomers were and will likely be aware that their kids won't necessarily "grow out of it". It's probably viewed a bit like more being a hippie was in the 80's - more a lifestyle choice, than a teenage fad. Also I think the emo has helped there a bit. Kids who might have had a Goth phase, probably ended up having an emo phase instead - leaving the lifers to take the Goth path.

[ASP003 Age 43]

It is for some - not for others. I believe the older generations of goths who sprang from the punk era are more comfortable being outcasts at an older age than the younger gens, who actually do it more to conform to a group rather than be apart from the majority. I think their commitment is more likely to waver in the face of modern distractions.

[ASP393 Age 45]

Long standing, committed, a scene that is stable & is inter generational

[ASP408 Age 37]

Old Goth can be arrogant. Younger goths are lovely. I put this down to the difference between the sub-goth genre of Emo and the new generation of goths.

[ASP047 Age 34]

The perceptions of difference between 'Gen Xers' and the younger generation above highlight some of the difficulties of finding belonging in an increasingly diverse, diffused culture where age holds limited significance for many participants (Strong, 2011 p.139). Other subcultures associated with Goth, such as Emo, are mentioned as aesthetic diversions by the Goth 'lifers'. In actuality,

there is no single homogenised Australian Goth experience, rather a plenitude of scenes, groups, crowds, and cliques make up the overall personality of Gothness in Australia. Scene is a powerful concept in Goth culture as it can imply local communities, regional ('Melbourne style Goth') as well as philosophical scenes, that is 'in crowd' or primary socialites (*scenesters*).

Melbourne scene from around 1998-2007: vibrant, incestuous, polyamorous melting pot, busy. Melbourne scene from around 2008-2012: A lot of clubs petered out or went monthly and many of the regular clubbers disappeared from the scene. Felt like the scene died off a lot during this time. Mostly saw people out at the Nocturnal Instincts/Circa Nocturna alt fashion shows or at gigs (Diamanda Galas, Wendy Rule, Rammstein). 2013-2016: more club nights and large-scale events starting to happen including the Goth and Victorian Picnic. Social media is making it easier to connect with others interested in the way of life both here and o/s. Things like WGT in Germany are helping put Goth on the map again in Australia.

[ASP018 Age 41]

The idea of a Goth 'in crowd' corresponds with some participants' views of 'cliques' in Goth communities, often built around particular night-club scenes, groups, or styles of appearance. As with preceding and subsequent questions, the importance of Goth clubs and events was highlighted by almost all respondents in some way, once again drawing attention to the significant role music and its associated sociality has for the culture.

To establish how Australian Goths viewed their scene, Australian Survey Question 8 (AQ8) asked participants in a free-text format: *How would you describe Australian Goths & the Australian Goth scene.*

This allowed respondents to voice individual perceptions and experiences of Australian Goth culture. The question was answered by 311 respondents, generating 8138 words in response. Responses range from single words "Insular" (ASP06, Age 33), "Relaxed" (ASP062, Age 36) to the extremely detailed, illustrating the lived experience of being a Goth in Australia and how the scene has changed over the last forty years.

Scene can also refer to Goth as a social phenomenon – The Scene – and for many Goths this is a complex concept which generates much online discussion. In question AQ9 *Describe the primary factors which keep you involved with the Australian Goth scene* I sought to emphasise the concept of *scene*, purposefully making a distinction from identity. Through this approach I hoped to encourage participants to consider their long-term Gothness and how/if this was connected to an idea of scene. This resulted in 52 respondents directly addressing the notion of scene, with many stating they were no longer or less actively involved in 'the scene', however maintained a stable 'Goth lifestyle' and interest in Goth music, aesthetics, and established social circles.

Music was the primary attractant for the majority of respondents; over half of the 417 respondents (generating 5101 words in response) directly mention music, correlating these experiences (gigs, clubbing, live music), with Goth sociality and identity. This is a significant figure representing a sound basis for positioning music as central to Goth identity. Furthermore, these responses unambiguously demonstrate the socio-aesthetic composition of Goth culture and the notion that Gothness explicitly engages in a constant evolution of distinct music, styles of appearance, social groups, and relationships.

Formative interactions in the Goth scene can be characterised as a sort of aesthetic and musical treasure hunt, discovering bands, styles of dress, and friendship groups. As Goth has continued to expand and produce more cultural substance, further discoveries can be made and the initial excitement of finding belonging and joy in the culture is replicated. In recent years there has been a marked increase in older Trad Goth bands touring, prompting reconnections with old friends at gigs and reigniting the excitement around music, with the added lustre of nostalgia and new merchandise.

I'm not that involved with it any more, to be honest; I go to events where I'm likely to hear the music I love, dust off the more spectacular glad rags and dance all night. It's become, to my eyes, a lot more competitive and focused on appearance (perhaps a combination of global homogeneity and the combination of the 'alt-modelling' industry and social media), and less about the things I find interesting, so I wander in out of a combination of habit and nostalgia, and to catch up with old friends.

[ASP048 Age 42]

My direct contact with the Australian scene occurs mostly through attending music events. Not so much clubbing anymore, but attending bands - particularly international bands that tour here. Also to a lesser extent visiting record stores and clothes stores, and keeping tabs through the internet on upcoming tours and events, and general scene gossip. I don't rely on the scene to justify my continued participation in the subculture - but it's nice to know what's going on.

[ASP054 Age 43]

I left the Goth 'scene' many years ago, but still keep the Goth lifestyle and look. It is all I want to be. My friends from back in the day keep me involved in gatherings, as it is always great to catch up with them

[ASP017 Age 41]

For some, this necessitates generating a local scene and organising new kinds of events to stimulate Goth community.

I like Goth people, clothing and style, I'm alternative, the guy I like is a Goth, I'm going to stay in Australia for the rest of my life so I want to stay involved in the Goth scene. I run a Goth & alternative Facebook group with nearly a thousand members, I organised a Goth ball this year, I run a Goffee group (Goth & alternative coffee group), & I'm going to be featured in a South African Goth magazine run by a friend, even though I live in Australia, they're going to do an article on me and my efforts to organise Goth events in the Central Coast and Sydney.

[ASP157 Age 40]

Hard to say. My motivating factors are based on lifestyle and ideology I decided on back in the 80s. Most of my friends are "goth" or in pagan circles. My wife started a vampire society in 1992 and is still running.

[ASP300 Age 44]

These comments illustrate the typical 'arc' of Goth identity in Australia, from early involvement in the nightclub scene, transitioning to strong friendships and musical interest, maintaining Goth visual aesthetics into adulthood.

It is clear from the perspectives offered below, however, that the 'physical' club side of the Goth community is regarded as in decline in several locations. Major capital cities struggle to maintain more than a one regular Goth night (or shared alternative night), either monthly or fortnightly. Instead there is a clear redirection towards low-cost (picnics) or no-cost (online only) sociality has been occurring since the advent of the internet and social media. This is a pattern observed in Goth communities the world over, and has created new ways of defining Goth spaces, sites and modes of interaction (Watkins 2018, p. 59).

We're rebelling against the job mainstream culture.

[ASP389 Age 44]

Perth goth scene is nearly nonexistent now. Was much larger in the 90s with an all ages goth club. I remember thinking back in the 90s I didn't want to be in the in crowd but was surprised there was an 'in' crowd. But that didn't bother me, I just ignored them and did my own thing. I remember being told that I was too happy to be a goth.

[ASP09 Age 33]

What I loved about it when I found it was the creative, thinking souls the scene attracted, the people that clearly felt they didn't fit in anywhere else. I don't think this scene tolerates bigots or ignorant people, it celebrates thinkers and artists. I hope its not dying and I'm ok with it morphing in to various sub-genres. Venues continue to close and events become fewer, but perhaps this will lead goth to go back to its underground roots and people will have to dig a little harder to find a place to hang out

[ASP170 Age 41]

In my experience, Australian Goths are largely what anyone would expect who knows Australians or Goths; dark sensibilities but with a laid back sense of humour, little tolerance for genuine pretentiousness (although pretentiousness for fun was always fine), and a strong current of irreverence. 'My' crowd were outdoorsy, political, fun, heavily involved in the arts and music scenes, and willing to go out and try anything.

[ASP048 Age 42]

I have been going to goth events in both Sydney and Melbourne. I would describe the scene as "dying". It is very small. The younger "cybergoth" crowd is much bigger than the crowd that listens to older industrial and darkwave music.

[ASP121 Age 36]

Goth culture, being small and relatively insular compared to mainstream sociality, is predisposed to cliques, encouraging occasional infighting and bitchiness between members. As with all communities, there is evidence in the Goth scene of hierarchy resulting in those whose Gothness is in doubt being identified and criticised. Both older and younger participants described the

sometimes catty nature of Goth in Australia, again situating Goth participation in nightclubs as the primary site of sociality.

Hidden there still is a separation and bullying. What I'm noticing is a lot of the goth scene has become political. You become lectured on what is and what isn't goth. ... many forget goth was built on the end of punk and anarchy there is no right or wrong way.

[ASP101 Age 33]

People are usually very lovely and welcoming but unfortunately there are a few who are pretentious and "über goth"

[ASP289 Age 19]

Multiple different groups of sub goth that seem to get along fine except for the theatresporters who have done damage to the original ideas of being goth..

[ASP298 Age 49]

bitchy, healthy, getting older. Insular in NSW and VIC, but friendly and accepting in WA

[ASP202 Age 46]

Very elitist back in the day and more clubs around. Not very friendly but very intelligent.

[ASP139 Age 38]

When I was younger the scene was quite cliquey and the people could be almost aloof and I find that the scene now is smaller but the scene seems more accepting and friendly.

[ASP236 Age 48]

Peak periods of Goth activity are consistently reported as being late 1980s to mid-1990s; the Australian scene during this time was able to sustain several Goth clubs in all capital cities and supported a variety of record stores and other businesses catering to the scene. Over recent years this has declined to shift community interactions online.

Small :(I used to be able to go to clubs 3 nights a week... Now we can go months without.

[ASP366 Age 41]

Now or then, it has ebbed and flowed changed and re-birthed over the last 3 decades. The 80s and early 90s were the party days of the scene here 3 or 4 diff clubs would pack on a Friday or Saturday. That was when it was a family, you would just congregate anywhere you bumped into somebody like you. I think it lost that in the very late 90s early 2000s when the industrial stage developed in Brisbane. Now the Aus Goth scene is very disjointed, and clubs in Qld really struggle to pull a crowd.

[ASP239 Age 45]

Diminishing numbers & not enough events/groups etc to cater for those that are around.

[ASP288 Age 48]

The quotations presented in this chapter thus far form a composite picture of Goth culture, Gothness, and Goth identity in Australia. The responses capture the complexity of describing Goth in Australia: it is consistent, yet evolving, providing consecutive generations with a socio-aesthetic context in which to experiment with and compose identity. The foundational interest in music remains consistent in both Australian and International respondents, but the mode of engagement in Australia is primarily in a club setting as opposed to an intimate local pub, festival, or large-scale

community event in larger overseas communities. The role of live music in the Australian scene is of lesser importance than in the UK (for example) where even major bands regularly tour local venues. Here the club environment supplies up-to-date and traditional favourite music via DJ sets and curated niche nights. Space-sharing with the Industrial scene is critical to the success of these events in Australia, relying on the increased numbers of participants for economic viability.

Comments demonstrate Goths in Australia appear to hold the core attributes of the national character in high regard, disparaging "über Goths" and looks-based elitism in favour of laid-back, welcoming Goth communities. The DIY nature of early Goth also still appears to hold value in the Australian context, with many participants speaking nostalgically about 'pre-internet' clothing production and self-sustaining cultural practices of making do with op-shop finds, advice from others, and shared musical resources.

Conversely, the internet has undoubtedly helped sustain and grow Goth here, using the powers of self-promotion, social media, and information sharing to connect with global understandings of the culture. This aspect of the culture is briefly addressed in the following section, where survey responses and interviews comments related to the decisive role of international connectivity (initially via international music press, correspondence, and mail-order then later online) for Australian Goths.

Virtual Sociality and Scene

The early Australian Goth scene relied heavily on discrete local or regional social spaces for dispersing and displaying Goth argot, resulting in a principally night-club-based scene supported by record shops and retail outlets. Local street press provided a medium for disseminating local events; this was supplemented by specialty record stores importing *NME*, *Melody Maker*, and other predominantly British music press. The importance of such press is reiterated by a large number of participants.

I lived in a very Goth hostile environment (Melton in the early 80's - seriously, you have no idea). So I was sort of a solo/fringe goth who did not have a lot to do with 'the scene'. I lived the scene vicariously through music and magazines (generally both imported) as there was no-one around.

[ASP230 Age 50]

As described by ASP230, connectivity through fanzines, mainstream media, and music press was a vital link to Goth culture and its music. For Australian Goths, the time between such publications – and the distances they had to travel before arriving – consequently rendered them more a

memento than a news bulletin. Along with nightclub flyers and other ephemera, these publications are common keepsakes and serve to document the scene as it evolved.

The internet offered a new asset of invaluable potential to Australian Goths whose communities were often separated by immense geographical distance. Online connection meant discussions became instantaneous, no longer tied to mail-order catalogues, fanzines, or even clubs; the once vast distances between suburban/rural/national/international communities were suddenly nullified. As early adopters Australian Goths populated internet chatrooms, forums, list-serves, message boards and set up fledgling websites. These emerged as crucial mechanisms for connection, resulting in Australian Goths having a rich community record of 'online-habitation' and a digital socio-aesthetic evolution (Gibson and Kaplan 2017, p. 133). Online connection points such as forums are a powerful tool in the culture, feeding into both virtual and real-world scenarios. This is being witnessed across all areas of social and public life, with the boom in social media allowing other subcultures, cultures, and groups to form connections, record and commemorate their cultural practices. A basic text-only messaging application, Internet Relay Chat (IRC), had a vital role in spreading Goth argot in Australia and building networks between Goths long before the advent of more sophisticated platforms. IRC and forums, as described in the interview excerpt below, allowed members whose connection with the scene had faded to re-engage with contemporary Goth to some extent removed from these social dynamics.

That Australia was at the forefront of this ideas-sharing network is significant, as it pioneered early examples of Goth 'wiki' or FAQ-style sites which listed current activities such as nightclub nights, record stores, clothing stores, etc. in each city (such as the now-defunct alt.gothic and aus.net.goth forums). Virtual chat rooms also removed the social scrutiny sometimes associated with the Goth scene, reducing social anxiety and enabling more in-depth interactions than noisy club environments allowed.

Social media allows for previously impossible reconnection; by celebrating the 1980s-1990s heyday of Australian Goth society, Goths relive memories through posted images, sounds, and artefacts from the 'boom times'. Referencing 'back in the day,' users name-check long-departed places such as *Memory Lane*, *Charley Weavers*, *Vicious Venus*, *Moulitatas*, *The Proscenium*, *The Loft*, *Alysian Empire*, *Cabaret Nocturne*, *Reload*, *Mortisha's (Melbourne)*, *Morticia's (Perth)*, *Faith*, *Outpost*, *The Firm*, *DV8*, *Abyss*, and *Fruition*, etc. Much like the forever-lauded *Batcave* in London, such places trigger nostalgia and encourage sharing of old photographs, experiences, and stories. As a result, Australian Goths have preserved unique Goth social lineages and an archive of

imagery. This preservation of experiences is supported by platforms that are now able to conserve the artefacts of each scene down to a particular DJ set⁷¹. As well as nostalgia, such overt name-dropping acts as gate-keeping, with only 'real' Goths able to identify and/or claim association with historic Goth locales and genuine sociality.

These sites now form an invaluable social record, capturing the ephemeral language and transient locus of scene sociality in real-time. There is a long history of subcultures maintaining and recording their own histories through bespoke ephemera and archive collections. What is of great interest in the case of Goth is how these practices have so radically and swiftly evolved to integrate sites of sociality, memory creation and commerce. Goth has undergone a dramatic shift in behaviour from clandestine macabre subculture to an eccentric yet, publicly accessible community, willingly sharing knowledge of its intimate social and aesthetic practices.

The notion of intimate access to the culture is crucial, as Goth has arguably maintained an aloof, somewhat unapproachable disposition until recently (Brill 2008, p. 30). Social media now transmits Gothness free of geographical constraints, meaning authentic personal expressions of Goth identity in multi-media formats can be cultivated entirely without local peer input. Goths regularly display knowledge of bands, particular terms, names, and topics into discussions to indicate insider knowledge and expertise in Goth idiolect. These conversations and postings preserve the personal and cultural histories of Goth communities and locales, with participants able to not only download or create content but safeguard it to private archives on home servers (Lothian 2013, p. 546). This unprecedented capacity to create and record Goth culture has enabled a new generation of Goths to capture their culture as it happens, creating a living digital archive of their experiences, feelings, interactions, experimentations (etc.) in the scene (Karampampas 2019, p. 995).

As Gelder notes, Goths (worldwide) mark out their habitation of urban spaces in a manner which is imperative in subcultural terms, capturing both current sites as well as historic locations on social media, 'such-and-such store used to be here', to demonstrate their continuous presence (Gelder in Goodlad and Bibby 2007, p. 218). The recording of Goth history first through fanzines and flyers, now online, directly connects Australian Goth identity with trans-national Goth traditions. These living archives therefore form an phenomenological record of a [sub]culture undergoing a significant evolution (Watkins 2018, p. 59).

⁷¹ See: https://open.spotify.com/playlist/5ZRpscx6LUemsXBFZfBeju?si=p4LAMnh1TW2osm_L5Xyfrng

These online platforms also play an important role in Goth constancy, connecting Goths who may have moved out of the scene or changed living arrangements over the years. The emphasis of Goth being an urban phenomenon is largely accurate concerning night-clubbing and commercial social activities; however, it does not reflect the lived experience of the vast majority of Australian Goths, for whom Goth is very much suburban. Unlike British and European communities where inner-city living close to historical relics is commonplace, Australian Goth communities tend to congregate in share-houses in the (often cheaper) alternative-friendly rental suburbs radiating out from the central city area. Australian Goths are predominantly situated in suburban settings, engaging in performative acts of going out, preceded by ritualised Gothing Up (Hodkinson 2002, p. 92). In 1990s Perth, the high density of Goths living and socialising around the North Perth/Hyde Park area ensured friendship networks were easily maintained, with local pubs becoming known Goth hangouts and commuting to the city centre to go clubbing was facilitated by shared car-rides, a short walk or taxi ride. Similar Goth-spots in relatively safe urban environments in Newtown (Sydney), Fortitude Valley (Brisbane), and smaller or isolated niche areas in Fremantle and Canberra, and semi-rural locations like Ballarat and Byron Bay meant Goth flourished around suburban areas and venues from the early 1980s onwards.

Australia is a locus in which Goth such venues are often short-lived. I argue this pattern of reflection evidences a strong need to affix Gothness to something more physical than music and personal appearance. As discussed above, simply 'hanging out' in the CBD, the Post Office, etc. all retain important memories for Goths as sites of communal gathering and distribution of the latest or greatest Goth finds. Australia is lacking mediæval castles or historic cemeteries at which to promenade; there are thus few 'Goth-appropriate' sites for socialisation, non-club events, and general congregation. I suggest the online immortalisation of Goth presence functions in much the same fashion as affixing it to historic locations overseas, with now-defunct venues, clubs, or sites written into the modern suburban lore of Australian Goth.

For isolated participants, for example, those living in rural locations, shift workers, and stay-at-home parents, virtual sociality supersedes the in real life experience as the source of community and belonging. The experiences of Goth males in rural Australia are examined by Ragusa and Ward, with twenty-five (25) respondents of that study similarly expressing the inherent value of the inter-connectedness of international Goth identity and online community (Ragusa and Ward 2017). Understanding this connectivity is a vital element of the Australian Goth experience where

practices of community and belonging may differ from places with higher populations and different modes of sociality.

To address this, Australian survey participants were set a range of questions that interrogated notions of belonging, social ethos, and community. Survey responses below indicate that Australian Goths living in rural localities do not have the same freedom of movement and access to transport as their inner-city or suburban neighbours, and may experience a sense of detachment from city-based Goth populations. As the majority of Goth nightclubs and concerts are situated in inner-city locations, the key sites of Goth sociality may be impracticable to access for those living outside capital cities. The relative prosperity and access are especially relevant for large touring bands/concerts where the cost of attendance may be prohibitive, thereby excluding certain members from participating and making in-scene connections.

I've moved out to a semi-rural area and while there are a few goth families of 'my generation' who have moved out here too, it definitely doesn't have a goth community.

[ASP048 Age 42 AQ37 – Disagree]

Unfortunately, I live in a smaller town where I'm the only real Goth!

[ASP189 Age 44 AQ37 –Disagree]

Depends on the definition of where I live. I am about 1.5 hour train ride (and half hour bus ride) from the nearest city which has quite a large goth population, it is smaller and much more spread out around the smaller city where I live and I have never met some of the local goths until recently.

[ASP153 Age 28 AQ37 – Somewhat Agree]

There used to be. Now they've been priced out of housing in my area.

[ASP146 Age 41 AQ37 – Neutral]

A disparity in responses can also be observed based on age and potentially income/leisure time, with less affluent members of the community unable to connect with or engage in leisure activities. As indicated in the participant quotation above, the cost of housing is a vital component of generating community integrity. The influence of gentrification on once affordable inner city suburbs is a key factor; the housing areas traditionally home to more bohemian communities have become increasingly unaffordable.

The free text comments show a number of older respondents noted they now live in rural or semi-rural, family-friendly locations, including Ballarat, Geelong, outer Brisbane, Central Coast NSW and several 'country towns'. The data indicates there are Australian Goths who have embraced rural life, and further research into this aspect of living Goth would be valuable.

The changing social dynamics of Goth culture may have exposed participants to increased global connectedness, yet there appears to be a correlating downturn in satisfaction in local experiences. Notions of Goth as a strong global phenomenon, as suggested in the data, indicate the role of online connectivity has adjusted how Australian Goths view the culture as a whole. While local scenes may retract, the ties between global participants have strengthened, primarily through performative acts of friending, posting, and sharing online. Anonymity also allows for experimentation impossible in a face-to-face environment where detractors may outnumber supporters, and cannot be blocked or otherwise avoided. This too is a significant change with online Goth identity succeeding club-based social interaction 'in real life' (IRL) as the dominant setting for performative displays of Goth identity.

A key theme in the data for AQ8 *How would you describe Australian Goths & the Australian Goth scene*, a (free text question, 8137 words in response) was the impact of Industrial music culture and style on Australian Goth. The responses show how Australian Goth heavily relies on the club and DJ circuits, and how over several decades music has moved away from traditional Gothic Rock towards more danceable tracks. In the Australian setting, where Goth participation is more concentrated around a small number of clubs in capital cities, stylistic shifts are profoundly felt in the small population. This has led to an increased role of Industrial music in Australian Goth culture in comparison to overseas communities, with the slower, more sombre gothic music more commonly reserved for private, intimate, or domestic settings. I suggest the early integration of EBM (Electro Body Music) and Industrial dance music is a defining feature of Goth in Australia, where traditional Gothic Rock receives comparatively little air-play; clubs will in fact favour Goth-Industrial/EBM/Industrial/Dark Electro (etc.) music in all DJ sets.

Under populated, and with an abnormally large Industrial following.

[ASP160 Age 31]

In Sydney, overly influenced by a small number of DJs personal music taste. The drift towards electronic music (second-hand / second-rate rave tracks) occurring at the same time Indy youth oriented music culture went more rock, cut the goth scene off from new blood, no pun intended. As a result, goth clubs now look like 30 year high school reunions.

[ASP134 Age 41]

Currently in quite a sad state. Somewhere in the 90s we allowed our own scene to be high jacked by what is really "Industrial dance" and the scene never really recovered with most of the younger crew simply not interested in what would be traditionally understood as Goth/Deathrock, despite the fact that overseas we are now seeing more exciting new acts than have been seen for many years. It would seem that Perth in particular just "doesn't get it".

[ASP402 Age 45]

Generally, the Oz scene is fairly similar to the European scene. We probably have a much closer connection between the Goth and Industrial subcultures - which have become rather co-dependent over the years. Shared aesthetics and some music overlap, as well as the need

for numbers to keep clubs viable, has helped keep the two subcultures well-linked. Also the broader Australian community tends to be fairly hostile towards outsider subcultures (particularly in redneck towns like Perth) - so punks, goths and industrials have tended to cooperate more in Australia than they otherwise might in European subcultures. In the Australian scene the goth subculture tends to be more female oriented and the industrial subculture is largely male, so that has also been a factor. In Europe the goths and industrial subcultures are closely knit as well, but probably not to the same extent as in Australia.

[ASP054 Age 43]

In Australia, there is a far tighter integration of the two forms of music and culture, so much so that the Australia Goth club scene could be characterised broadly as a Goth-Industrial community. The coming of the Industrial (music) revolution undoubtedly secured the future of Goth clubs in Australia, ensuring larger crowds and an extended musical catalogue for participants.

The assimilation of harder, more Industrial music with its more aggressive, dance-oriented, and techno aesthetics into the Goth club environment did however create complexity for some older participants whose understanding of Goth remains rooted in early Punk and proto-Goth musicality. The sometimes incongruent intersection of Goth and Industrial remains a point of contention; as illustrated by the following interview excerpt describing the emotional sensory experience of Goth music as opposed to the pure physicality of Industrial music. The interview participant illustrates how music is at the very core of being a Goth, describing his negotiations between personal aesthetics and musical influences which feed into Goth identity:

PPM013: Some of that stuff I guess I guess is yeah, I mean I remember seeing Rammstein videos and thinking hmm no I don't get this.

[...]

It is sad though they are all trying to prove something and I don't understand what they are trying to do – this is me - I am a Goth – I am an old Goth. You know?

I have that personality type and that music appeals to me. I hear a key change or a song and sometimes it reduces me to tears. Sometimes it sends a shiver down my spine.

I am a Goth.

But then you get these people on the periphery with techno or electro or industrial stuff and for me that is not Goth. I don't understand that it is not me; it is not what I do. I used to pay attention and criticise and say – no you have got it all wrong! And I still feel that way, they have got it all wrong, you are all screwed. BUT it is not me so I don't care anymore and this is me, I am happy with me and you guys go and do whatever it is you want to do.

[PPM013, Interviewed 24th March 2016]

The sentiment expressed here gives insight into the experiences of those who observe changing generations of Goth in Australia. It demonstrates awareness for some that the Goth scene has evolved too far from its earliest roots, and that with that change, elements of the culture have become unfamiliar.

Isolation

The uniqueness (or not) of Goth in Australia is a point of debate for many participants across the scope of the survey. Isolation and geographical distance from (overseas) Goths are cited by participants as the chief factor which influences Australian Goth aesthetics and attitudes. The isolation of Australia does offer opportunities for specialism: what constitutes uniquely 'Australian Goth' however is not unanimously expressed by participants. Regionality emerges from the data as a strong point of difference between Australia and other sites of Goth culture:

There hasn't really been an identifiable Australian Goth scene, but rather broken up geographically, e.g., South East Qld/Brisbane, Sydney region, etc. and each had peculiarities to those regions. Though the dark alternative nature has always dictated choices.

[ASP300 Age 44 AQ8]⁷²

It's actually unique from the rest of the world, though most wouldn't know it. We tend to look to overseas scenes for ideas and subgenres and then adapt it to our own needs. Being isolated from the rest of the goth movement has its advantages though most won't admit it.

[ASP367 Age 39 AQ8]

Friendly for the most part. Cut off from the culture in the rest of the world.

[ASP071 Age 42 AQ8]

Respondents compare Australia with other sites of Goth activity, with participants sometimes disparaging Australian Goth or expressing insecurities around the validity of Goth as a genuine phenomenon.

Much smaller and wider spread out, there are many different 'click' crowds and due to our remoteness not much in the way of bands... 'Hard core' (who can afford to) most travel to Germany for the festivals any opportunity they can, but the clubs (when there's one on) are awesome

[ASP192 Age 45 AQ8]

well behind that of the US & Europe

[ASP323 Age 55 AQ8]

Lack of understanding of real meaning of goth. Original goth came from London and Europe. Australia lacking in architectural history and music scene

[ASP374 Age 44 AQ8]

As illustrated here, Australian Goths expressed particular regard for English and European sites of Goth community. This was a behaviour observed online prior to survey development; a series of secondary questions relating to the global Goth community further examined this position, as detailed in the following.

72 AQ8 How would you describe Australian Goths & the Australian Goth scene

Australian Goth as Part of Global Goth Culture

Three thematic depth questions were posed to Australian participants to gauge their sense of connectedness to European sites of Goth identity: *AQ10 Goth subculture in Australia is the same as Goth subculture in Europe*, *AQ11 In what ways, if any, is the Australian Goth subculture distinct from European Goth subculture* and *AQ33 I feel connected to European culture through Goth*.

European Goth was chosen as a point of comparison (instead of, for example, the American Goth subculture) as Australian music tastes have a long-established preference for English and European Goth music, as detailed above. This also served to limit comparisons to that context, encouraging more concerted reflection on characteristics of Australian Goth as the primary factor.

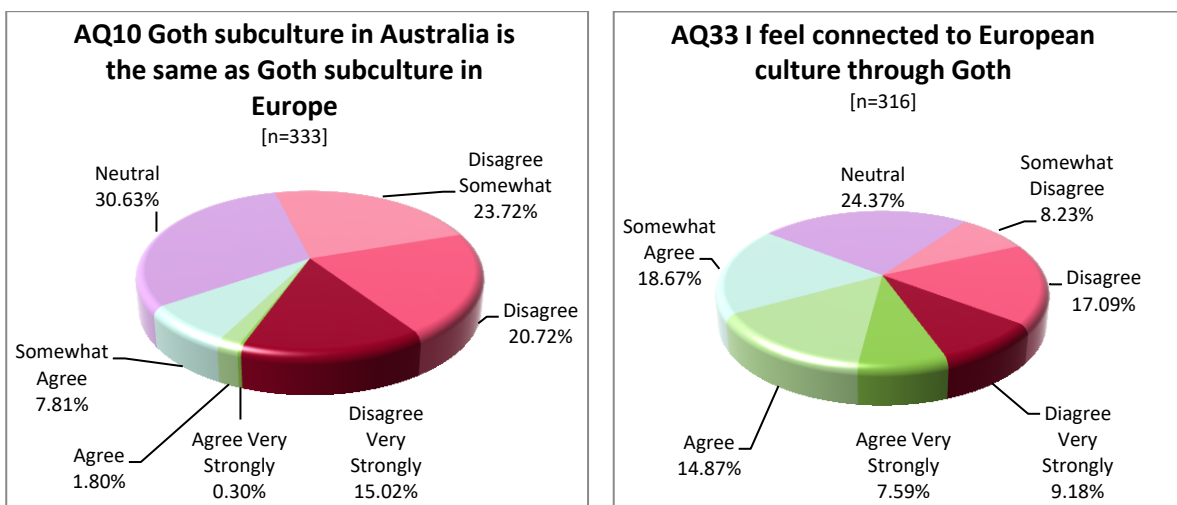


Figure 40 AQ10 & AQ33 Australian Goth Subculture - Comparison to European Goth

As Figure 40 shows, for Australian Goths, the replication of European sounds and styles in Australian Goth culture does not translate to Australian Goths being identical to their European counterparts. Only 41.14% of responses to AQ33 were positive [total question n=316]. Notions of Goth heritage and value in the longevity of the culture were evident in a few free-text responses; however, most rejected the statement.

No. I'm Australian. I personally feel very little affiliation with European Goths.

[ASP047 Age 31 AQ33, Disagree Very Strongly]

European culture is what fed my imagination and led me on a path of discovery. I felt connected to Europe even before I had travelled there.

[ASP030 Age 45 AQ33, Agree Very Strongly]

The origins of Goth are from the UK, it will always be our heritage to me

[ASP017 Age 41 AQ33, Agree]

Not sure if European means UK as well. Personally I feel much more connected to English goth and goth bands, as European bands can be quite distinctive in terms of language, accent, dress style etc.

[ASP049 Age 36 AQ33, Agree]

I think Goth culture is definitely Euro-centric, but I don't think it necessarily connects us more closely to Europe. There isn't much difference between Euro and Australian Goth scenes, but the same can be said for Goth scenes all over the world. In the 90s it didn't seem to link us more closely with Europe because of the tyranny of distance, though these days with travel being more affordable the scene does give you more opportunities/excuses to travel to Europe for Goth events.

[ASP054 Age 43 AQ33, Agree Somewhat]

The free-text question AQ11 *In what ways, if any, is the Australian Goth subculture distinct from European Goth subculture* sought to further test how Australian Goths perceived the culture here, compared to the more established European Goth scene. This question provided participants with the opportunity to offer authentic insights into how Australian Goths distinguish themselves from the seminal European Goth trope. Generating 5597 words in response, answers reflect the breadth of Goth across Australia as well as its enduring aesthetic and musical ties to Europe. Responses reveal Australian Goths as being more relaxed and less prone to the high-end extreme aesthetics seen in Germany etc. with at least 39 participants highlighting the smaller, more intimate nature of the Australian scene.

I think we are a little tamer than Europe. Here I see a few girls I know say 'a white face & black dress will do', no dark make up. In Europe they have always been quite extreme

[ASP017 Age 43]

Europeans take their goth subculture very seriously. It seems to have a harder edge than in Oz.

[ASP288 Age 48]

Australians are far less snooty.

[ASP298 Age 49]

Though they share music and clothes, all else is fairly different

[ASP005 Age 43]

I think it's more relaxed. I wore glitter, fishnets, goth makeup & had fun. I found goths more serious in Europe- no smiling allowed, quotes of poetry, perfect goth dress at all time, general wankery

[ASP379 Age 39]

The importance of live music, gigs, and large-scale festivals was raised by more than 50 participants, supporting my argument that music remains vital to the Goth culture.

Less large-scale public events (like WGT, etc). Less access to high quality garments (local shops don't sell a lot of the latest stuff because everyone orders online now). In Australia, goth seems to be more of an after-hours thing because there are few places that people can go to socialise during the day. In Europe they also have a lot more spectacular locations for photo shoots and parties ... all those old castles. Sigh.

[ASP018 Age 41]

The live music scene is much healthier in Europe. It's hard for Australian bands to get far without moving overseas. Australians don't tend to appreciate their local acts.

[ASP177 Age 44]

Australian goth scene is small, we don't have any large events on a regular basis, the country is large, primarily hot, and we don't really have control over any old romantic or dated buildings or venues... however the scene is still rather stubborn and independent, though I think the best of us take our cues from Europe.

[ASP30 Age 45]

In Europe niche bands are playing extremely regularly, whereas we're lucky to see an overseas band once a year. There is no regular band scene in Australia of local acts. They are also much more knowledgeable about obscure music. I went to a club in Berlin with two other Australian goths who had a long goth history, and we recognised perhaps a quarter of the music between us and yet the dance floor was packed. Many dress styles like capes, medieval or Renaissance clothing are also much more suited to a colder climate and more firmly rooted in European history and tradition.

[ASP049 Age 36]

The strong club scene in Australia compensates for the few festivals and gigs, with DJs in all major cities hosting Goth or alternative nights throughout the year. These events are the core of the Australian Goth social settings, augmented by picnics and semi-organised catch-up events. The online community provides the bulk of community support and connectivity beyond these events, linking Goths from diverse locations.

Positive experiences of ageing in the Goth community, as well as the spectre of Goth being a phase was raised by some participants, highlighting how in the European context Goth is far more widely accepted as an eccentric part of society.

The Australian scene seems more superficial and transient (can I even say that with a straight face?). People move through it as a phase and I know few (if any) who at my age still really identify as Goth

[ASP230 Age 50]

We have a much hotter climate which makes it more difficult to wear Victorian Goth clothing! As I live in rural NSW we get terribly hot temps during Summer! It makes it difficult to really go extreme when the temps are so high! I think that's one of the reasons my husband and I love going to Canberra a lot! It's cooler and we can Goth out a bit easier! I think, too, because Goth is relatively younger in Australia than in Europe the Goth teens of the 80s are now the parents (and grandparents!) are nor tolerant of the younger generations being Goth or any form of alternative.

[ASP225 Age 38]

Australian Goth as a part of a Global Community

The nodes of Goth activity may appear to academic onlookers to be tight-knit communities, however, it was fundamental to this study to seek authentic insider perspectives to confirm or reject this hypothesis. The Australian survey posed two questions that directly addressed notions of community – in Australia and as a general reading of the Goth culture on a global scale. The data provides insight into attitudes held about how participants regard Australian Goths' place in the global phenomenon of Goth culture.

The questions, unlike other questions in the survey, did not allow for additional information via free-text explanations, with the intention of focussing participants on the statements themselves. A standard seven-point Likert scale was used ranging from Agree Very Strongly to Disagree Very Strongly, with a neutral central option.

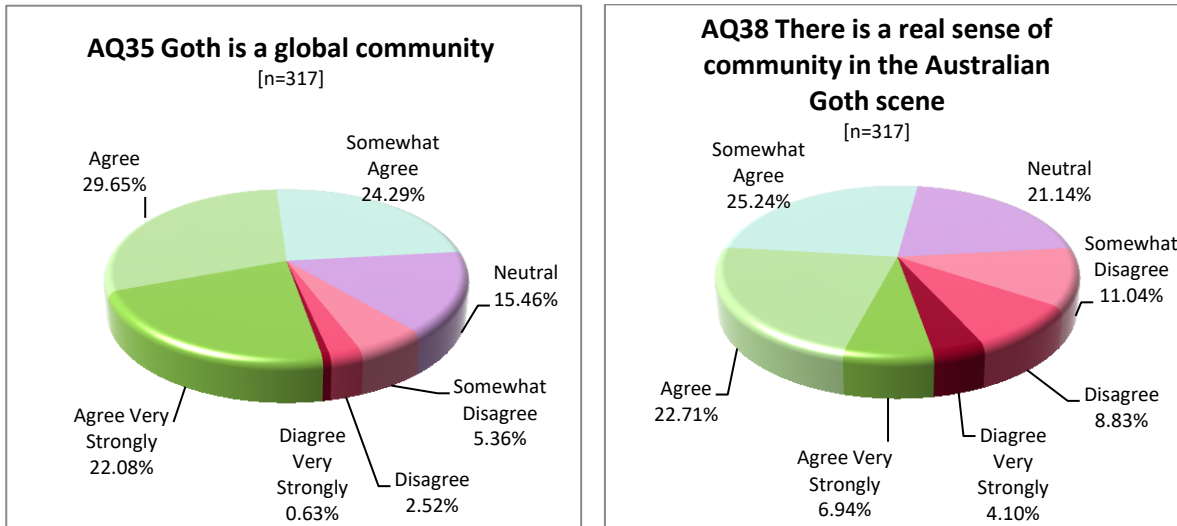


Figure 41: AQ35 Goth is a global community & AQ38 Australian Goth Community

As illustrated in Figure 41, participants were first asked to consider their attitude to the statement *Goth is a global community*. Over three-quarters of the respondents (76.02%) returned a strong positive response, with only 23.97% responses in the negative or neutral. The intensity of this response demonstrates Australian Goths feel camaraderie with their international compatriots and have an awareness of the culture outside their immediate locus.

The follow-up question (AQ38) sought to better understand how Goths view their local environment, seeking responses to the statement: *There is a real sense of community in the Australian Goth scene*. Over half of respondents chose a positive response (overall positive 54.89%); the strong neutral (21.14%) and overall negative responses (23.97%) suggest a more complex understanding of community in the Australian context. The discord between this result and the strong positive messaging frequently observed on social media indicates Goths retain some scepticism towards the culture and the authenticity of the bonds with the scene.

The sentiments expressed in question AQ38 may correlate with AQ46 (Figure 42, overleaf), in which participants were asked to consider the statement: *Goths are socially welcoming to outsiders*. The strong negative and neutral response to this question (together constituting 49.73%) indicates participants have experienced instances of social uncertainty in the Goth scene in Australia. These results are at odds with the sometimes idyllic descriptions of Goth community

offered elsewhere both in the survey responses recorded here and online. I suggest these results expose how protective Goths are of their overall image; Goths are generally regarded as inclusionary, non-violent, and generally safe. However, survey data perhaps highlight the culture's tendencies towards elitism and bitchiness, which can deter newer members and outsiders.

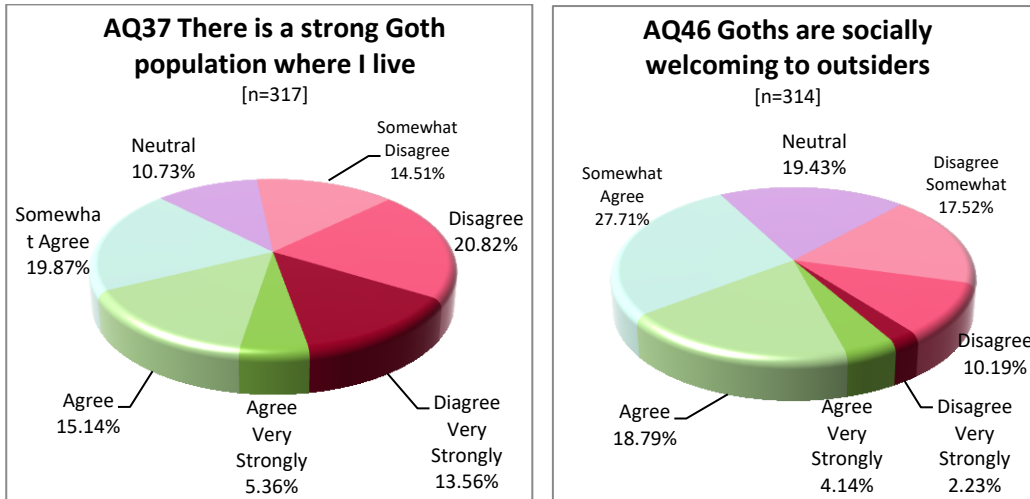


Figure 42: AQ37 Australian Goth Population & AQ46 Goth are socially welcoming to outsiders

This is an important factor for the continuation of vibrant Goth communities in Australia; with so many respondents claiming retraction in Goth sociality such as a lack of Goth clubs and events, attitudinal considerations undoubtedly have an impact. If a scene is regarded as standoffish or unwelcoming, there is an amplification of social tensions felt by newcomers. This may discourage the growth of the Goth scene thereby confining social groups to a set number of familiar individuals who remain at least tangentially known to each other.

The vast geographical distances between Goth populations in Australia make this a critical consideration for Goths travelling or moving interstate. Local connections with a scene may fade, be severed altogether, or perhaps retreat to online interaction only if a new local scene is regarded as hostile. To gauge the strength of local Goth communities, AQ37: *There is a strong Goth population where I live* provided respondents with the opportunity to rate their immediate Goth community, with the addition of free-text space to elaborate on their answers, resulting in 1429 words in response.

Conflicting responses from within the same capital city, as shown in the text responses below, indicates perceptions of engagement within the Goth community varies widely among the population.

Sydney

There are still many goths in Sydney.

[ASP150 Age 31 AQ37 –Agree]

There are some goths in Sydney, but really not many and they are rarely seen outside Newtown.

[ASP014 Age 38 AQ37 - Disagree]

The scene is very small in Sydney

[ASP152 Age 24 AQ37 Disagree]

I live in Sydney. The scene is small. It is not unusual to see no more than 20 people attending a club event at times. Having said that, occasionally some clubs have over 100 through the door.

[ASP121 Age 36 AQ37 Disagree]

Melbourne

The Melbourne Goth population is probably not as strong as it has been in the past but there are still sufficient numbers to attract international acts to tour here. The average age in the scene is probably higher than it used to be - but we are still attracting new blood.

[ASP054 Age 43 AQ37 – Agree Very Strongly]

There are many goths in Melbourne. However, some do not know very much about goth history, music, literature or general info. Some are just there for the sex, with little knowledge about the subculture or it's subgenres. So, yes there are many goths, but the true hardcore goths are less in amount than the sugar coated goths. With this being said- the Melbourne Goth scene is alive and well, with genuine Goths and people of Goth potential. From impression, Melbourne is more Goth friendly than other cities in Australia.

[ASP350 Age 30 AQ37 –Agree]

Melbourne is as big as it gets in Australia.

[ASP354 Age 26 AQ37 –Agree]

Melbourne has always been a city with a strong scene/population.

[ASP172 Age 42 AQ37 –Agree]

A bit more fragmented these days in Melbourne, but it's still there.

[ASP018 Age 41 AQ37 – Somewhat Agree]

The scene is large enough to get good numbers to a lot of events but you do see a lot of the same faces

[ASP038 Age 31 AQ37 – Somewhat Agree]

Melbourne is supposed to be the heart. It feels about dead/dried up!

[ASP043 Age 27 AQ37 – Somewhat Agree]

Brisbane

There are Goth nightclub nights. There has usually been at least one Goth club/night running pretty much the whole time I've been a Goth, although the clubs keep changing (with who is running it and what it's called and where its held etc). We have the Carpathian Magistratus Vampire Society in Brisbane which hosts an annual ball and reasonably regular picnics. I often see the goths when on the way to uni or shopping. Not huge numbers but I usually see one or two each time I go out. i do like seeing other Goths and I do try to give them a little smile, even if I don't know them personally.

[ASP207 Age 43 AQ37 - Agree Very Strongly]

Due to politics and poor quality clubs, the Brisbane Goth scene's waned over the last 10-15 years.

[ASP048 Age 36 AQ37 – Somewhat Agree]

It's Australia.... more to the point, its Brisbane..... I don't think the Sub Culture is growing too rapidly here but the same people I hung out with years ago in the Goth Scene are still in the same Goth Scene going to the same Clubs, some in their 50's now.

[ASP233 Age 32 AQ37 – Neutral]

Seems pretty dead in Brisbane at the moment.

[ASP071 Age 42 AQ37 – Disagree]

Results here support the hypothesis that the connectedness of an in real life (IRL) local community does retain value and that Goth sociality benefits from both physical *and* online relationships. These responses also demonstrate differences in expectations between locations, with Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane more vocal than other locales. The persistent issue of scene size is raised by many participants, indicating concerns around the contracting club scene and social events. Club nights in the 1980s-1990s would cater for several hundred patrons, therefore it is interesting that a Sydney respondent notes "...occasionally some clubs have over 100 through the door" [ASP121 Age 36] as a positive sign of life in the scene there by this participant.

The comment below from ASP01, answering AQ8 *How would you describe Australian Goths & the Australian Goth scene* demonstrates a Brisbane participants' view that a healthy club scene was more populous 'back in the day':

Back in the day we used to pack the Brisbane clubs a few hundred easily. These days we're a smaller well knit community. Doing our best to keep the scene alive.

[ASP012 Age 31 AQ9]

Melbourne participants were generally more upbeat in their assessment of the scene there, with several respondents noting the growing number of younger Goths and new demographics "...the Melbourne Goth scene is alive and well, with genuine Goths and people of Goth potential"[ASP350 Age 30]. This is an interesting observation, as people of Goth potential appears to indicate a desire, if not to actively recruit, to engage different people or characteristics to the scene.

Where once outlandish outfits or stylings could be promenaded and witnessed firsthand, the new mode of delivery changes almost all aspects of the interaction. For the performer, a certain amount of confidence or social courage was required to carry such appearance 'in real life', particularly in smaller Australian towns or cities. The somehow less real online environment mitigates this, providing participants with opportunities to prepare, curate, and edit their appearance and opinions to suit the desired audience.

Australian Goth: Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the unique physicality of Australia resulting in Goth culture evolving to manage particular environmental and social factors. Data shows Goths adapted clothing to cope with summer heat were early adopters of social media and used it affectively to create community. Data demonstrates that Australian Goths invested in local scenes to ensure clubs remained open, even when this meant sharing social spaces with diverse groups. The distinct sensibilities of Australia define Goth in this environment.

Empirical data has demonstrated perpetual absorption of outside influences and natural generational change in the lived experience of Australian Goths, introducing new aesthetic modes as well as reflecting the long-established Australian trope of 'weird melancholy' (Gelder in Goodlad & Bibby 2007, p. 219). Participant data described the introduction to the Goth scene, and how the dual factors of music and appearance are consistently the main foci of Goth culture. Goth aesthetics continue to inform the social structure of the culture, with events, activities, and community projects based around these factors. Personal connections within the culture were described as being generated and sustained by regular social occasions, through retail and other leisure activities online and in real life.

The unique geographical conditions of Australia have been shown to influence the culture, yet have not proved an impediment to its constancy. Australian participants have provided unique perspectives on the conditions of Australian Goth, its nightclub and social environment as well as its vibrant live music scene. Through this I have evidenced Goth as a legitimate Australian cultural phenomenon, displaying complex networks of sociality, distinctive argot, and bespoke artefacts of material culture. I evidenced the evolution of the characteristics of the culture, describing this in parallel to advancements of communication technology. These platforms were shown to have established means for continuance and dispersal of Goth aesthetic constancy. Online incarnations of sociality have been shown to provide the culture with vital connectedness. The trans-local belonging in Australian Goth constitutes an active, legitimate, and vibrant community authentically connected to international sites of Goth community, including online. These elements have been considered to illustrate the phenomenon of Australian Goth from authentic perspectives and provide previously unrecorded insights into the culture. Data has revealed several avenues for future research and ethnographic investigation.



ABBEY WARE

Beyond Youth

Image overleaf: Goths at Whitby Goth Weekend 2015

Photograph by the author

Chapter 7 **BEYOND YOUTH**

It had been my life, just because the years tick away doesn't mean I need to alter who I am to keep up with how society (or my in-laws) think I should be.

[ISP1067 Age 42, IQ9⁷³]

Research Conclusions

This chapter resolves the present research aims and provides avenues for continued research. It concludes the ethnographic interview and survey data explored throughout this thesis to depict a continuum of belonging unique to the Goth culture.

This study offers a wealth of evidence countering the suggestion that Goth is just a phase. Rather it confirms a case for Goth to be considered a little culture in its own right, a socio-aesthetic framework around which identity is constructed.

Goth is confirmed as a mature, complex global phenomenon. No longer confined to the language of subculture, Goth now occupies a global position as a culture. Discourse should now shift to consider Goth a socio-aesthetic framework around which identity is intentionally formed, maintained, and evolved through lived cultural experience.

The nature of long-term Goth identity can best be described as a movement within a predetermined spectrum of aesthetic and social structures which enable modified engagement in Goth identity, appearance and sociality. Summarised data is used to consolidate this position, demonstrating the fluid and constant elements of the culture.

⁷³ Describe the primary factors which keep you involved or interested in the Goth scene

Goth as an Identity Constant

To say that Goth and Goth culture has been an intrinsic part of my life would be a gross understatement. I may not wear the eyeliner as much or do my hair as high... but Goth is in my soul.

[Online Comment Age 46]

The empirical data gathered for this research and presented above builds on existing literature to form a compound picture of the nature of Goth identity and Gothness.

Goth is not a youth subculture, and Goth is far from dead. There is an eternal element of youth within Goth that helps to maintain momentum and generate meaningful expressions of Goth beyond youth. Goth is a culture in little, a plenitude of thousands of discrete characteristics and individuals presenting as a cohesive spectrum of aesthetic customs as a global phenomenon. Its cultural artefacts can be characterised as a careful curation of accumulated styles, extremities of fashion, and low/high culture references, expressed as music, thematic motifs, and self-fashioning. Goth is a framework of shared socio-aesthetic choices built on a niche commercial substructure that exists because of its strong social network and community of belonging. In totality, these elements create a self-sustaining, trans-national culture that can be identified by its unique visual language.

Data revealed participatory differences between the European, American, British and Australian experiences of Goth socialisation and event organisation. Most marked in these differences is the strong pub culture present in the UK which was shown to support small venue gigs and interpersonal sociality. Though geographic distance introduces difficulties for Australian Goths, it does not entirely impede cultural connections. The ubiquity of online Goth connection obviated the limitations of location and language; it is now possible to be an active participant in Goth culture irrespective of local scenes. In Australia, the musical connection to Goth is primarily built on listening to Goth music, with less emphasis on participatory activities such as being in a band or following a band on tour. Interviews showed foundational early Gothic rock and post-Punk bands remain key influences on Goth musical taste in all locations, with recent tours providing an opportunity for Goths to relive or experience firsthand the original leaders of the scene. The strong presence of Australian Goths online, along with American counterparts, has ensured geographically dispersed communities have remained engaged with current music and social

trends. Image sharing and social media platforms have proven to be invaluable for sharing Goth aesthetics from its earliest emergence.

The power of nostalgia, aesthetic experimentation in safe social contexts, and the enduring empowerment of engaging authentically with a strong identity mode pre-adulthood give Goths a strong motivator for continued engagement. When correlated with the intensity of Goth music, the potential for longevity of Goth identity is built upon a strong foundation. Its history as a culture of peacefulness, creativity, and inclusion has earned it recognition as a valuable basis of identity and belonging.

Goth Beyond Youth

Goth is now established in Western consciousness so much so that its position can no longer be contained to conceptions of tribalist outcrops of alternative subculture. Goth has evolved into a powerful socio-aesthetic mode that empowers its participants, releasing them from rigid perceptions of appearance, age-related appropriateness, and socio-typical behaviours. Embracing the macabre and alternative beauty ideals, Goth challenges outsiders with fiercely confronting style and an unrepentant rendering of darkness.

Goth continues to hold relevance for participants; it has social and artistic influence whilst retaining a distinct cultural space. The music of the culture continues to provide the framework for Goth social structures into adulthood; events radiate out from musical appreciation, participation, and commodification to supply participants with a holistic, fully formed community. Accounts from older participants have shown the 'classic' aesthetics and musical tastes of the culture remain, expanded on by subsequent generations to include Industrial/EBM, Rock, Folk, and other emergent musical forms. Dress codes have shifted to allow for different bodies, different genders, and new visions of what it is to be Goth, yet none of these has supplanted the original. Goth remains familiar, if not unchanged, to first-generation participants. Younger participants venerate the *Batcave* originals, not seeking to surpass or replace the structures of 1980s Goth, but rather to renew them for increased appreciation and opportunities to belong.

Cyclic introductions of new artefacts and ways of expressing Gothness have been continually drawn in from popular mainstream culture for more than forty years, each one modified and reimagined to suit the gothic form, rendered unfamiliar to outsiders. The construction of such social boundaries ensures Goth culture maintains its spectacular specifics and shields it from being consumed by mainstream media. As a place of sociality Goth culture offers participants a strong

place of belonging and comfort. It promises inclusion based on mutual respect and/or a little fear. Participants cultivate otherness and welcome it. Goths actively engage with a performative identity trope to maintain this boundary; the hair, make-up, morbid visage and mysteriousness protect participants and repel incursions to and from popularity.

Elder Goths

An 'Elder Goth' is generally considered someone who has had a long engagement with the culture and is over the age of forty, however, this is a contested area of discussion. Facebook groups and online discussions regularly test the boundaries of Elder Goth, imposing ever more stringent understandings of being an old Goth... For the purposes of this thesis, however, it is of interest that in the selection of comments the age range is large, as are the perceived impacts of ageing in the Goth community.

To the outside observer, the impression is perhaps that the Goth culture has uniformly adopted a stylistic palette which is globally devoid of difference, hued as it is in black with flashes of silver jewellery and occasional outcrops of brightly coloured hair or make-up (Eckart, 2005 p. 547). Outside observers may conclude these seemingly monotonous clothing choices and correlate them with aesthetic inertia or a lack of originality, perhaps even a lack of imagination. The ethnographic investigations for this study draw a parallel with findings described by Hodkinson, with interviewees overtly rejecting notions of homogeneity and a definitive Goth 'type' (Hodkinson, 2002 p. 62).

For many participants, the idea of retaining Goth aesthetics beyond youth is an important part of their ageing process if age has not diminished their admiration for the culture or its core musical and appearance traits. Goth culture fosters an idiosyncratic attitude to ageing whereby an ideal type of older Goth, the Elder Goth, is commonly perpetuated. Social behaviours may be truncated or subordinate to the needs of family, work, or 'adult' commitments, yet for many, there is a desire to remain part of the Goth community. The global demographics of the culture have been expanded by the rise of internet-based sociality, with participants no longer tethered to their geographic locations for interaction. Virtual meet-ups and sharing platforms have enabled Goths to pool aesthetic resources and create supportive online environments which occur alongside daily life.

Elder Goths share stories, images, and music with emerging participants, without impacting family responsibilities, employment, or other established routines. Older Goths have therefore actively

contributed to increased constancy in the culture through such sharing and online 'friending'. Elder Goths have also benefitted from this rise in online activity, participating in the digital Goth community not as a proxy for collective Goth sociality but as an adjunct to less frequent in-person Goth experiences.



Figure 43 Whitby Goth Weekend Participants 2015 (photograph by the author)

The average age of participants in this study is International cohort=35.4 and Australian cohort=38.7, with both cohorts recording their first experiences of Goth at an average of 15.7 years of age. For many long-term participants introduction to Goth occurs pre-adulthood, meaning initial experiences of being Goth were in teen years, a period of great personal exploration, development, and discovery. As such the experiences of 'youth' become the extended experiences of later life and can be perceived by outsiders as extending adolescence or by participants as circumventing ageing altogether.

Goth provides stability to participants, a 'continuous renegotiation' of what that Goth identity is, enabling participants to find identity constancy through evolving phases of participation and ageing. For some, early Goth experiences may have been shared with peers with whom they continue social contact into adulthood. Bonds are formed within the Goth social network based on

highly stylised appearance choices, which always seems just a little too weird to be fully embraced by mainstream pop culture, cocooning Goths (and Goth) from mainstream popularity (Latham, 2014 p. 282). Online sociality was not available to the first generations Goths, instead, more intimate and slower analogue modes of subcultural knowledge acquisition were necessary. Survey responses show participants still value the dedication and perseverance necessary to engage in the Goth world of the 1980s.

As survey and interview data has demonstrated, older Goths may choose to relive, or perhaps fully engage for the first time, with heightened Goth aesthetics. As noted by Hodkinson, corsets at once convey Gothness and in part obscure the consequences of ageing; furthermore, it indicates dedication and adherence to Goth tenets (Hodkinson 2012 p 140). Older Goths could conceivably forego the rigours of corsetry in favour of comfort, and yet choose not to. Goth aesthetics are infused with contradictions and a necessary discomfort. Were the style to be entirely homogenous it would fail to excite, were it to be truly diverse, it would lose coherence and fail as an identity signifier.

Survey participants agreed with the scholarly position on the role of nostalgia and reminiscence in Goth culture, acknowledging that despite continual evolution, there is intrinsically a strong underlying sentimentality and nostalgia embedded in Goth. This nostalgia grounds the culture, pinning it to a cultural heritage that defines its ever-evolving yet stable aesthetic palette: Punks, Bohemians, Victorians, Romantics... Goth conventions continue (and appropriate) the traditions of the 18th Century Gothic Mode, bringing the fantastical into the every day and serving as a living reminder of the presence of death, pushing one of the last taboos. However pretentious, Goths bring life to the nightmarish imaginations of the past and enact them as a darkly beautiful present, "presenting the unrepresentable" (Mishra 1994 p. 226).

Academic attention has been paid to this phenomenon, with Brill, Eckart, Hodkinson and Jasper and others recounting patterns of Goth distinctiveness, identity conflict, and the role internet and non-intimate relationships hold in defining the culture in comparison to the mainstream (Brill 2008, Eckart 2005, Hodkinson 2012, Jasper 2004). McCracken eschews the use of established constructs of age, gender, or class to define culture, suggesting instead that the distinct elements of difference that create and exist within micro-cultures help define selfhood and thereby culture as a whole (McCracken 1997 p. 64).

Mainstream and counterculture can be seen to work symbiotically, feeding into one another to counter-intuitively perpetuate both stability and profound cultural difference. This is a significant consideration as much of the theoretical and sociological literature on Goth has emerged some years after its first occurrence; aesthetic aspects of Goth which were once shocking and new are no longer. The horrors and shock of Goth, and the gothic, can now be seen to have matured into an altogether more complex and nuanced oeuvre of aesthetic expression (Spooner, 2017 p. 3).

It is this plenitude that defines Goth today, with its branded online stores, underground clubs, DIY aesthetics, manifold musical styles, all connected by an unrelenting consistency. Goths have become unconventional conventionists, making a little world for themselves with rules, customs, and etiquette, like McCracken's 'species', a collective global entity (McCracken 1997 p. 14). The continual evolution of Goth within its relatively restrictive aesthetic palette has resulted in a culture which reflects and enriches the multiplicity of society around it without betraying its socio-aesthetic foundation.

The longevity of Goth has been maintained through the dedication of its members by perpetuating these behaviours over four decades. The foundations of Goth remain, yet despite this stylistic constancy, Goth has broadened to include new forms such as Pastel Goths and Rockabilly in its social circle. Early and effective uptake of online resources – the online zines, message boards, MySpace pages, and forums of the 1990s – ushered Goth into the 21st century with an unparalleled level of preparedness. Systems and social etiquettes were established early, allowing participants to find familiarity and belonging among the innumerable emerging online platforms. Thus 21st century Goth/ic with its myriad of unique expressions of style and phantom-like appearance secured itself a cult-like niche for those who searched for alternative standards of beauty and identity (David H. Richter quoted in Mishra 1994 p. 54). This myriad expression of the Gothic can otherwise be described as plenitude: a simultaneous expression of multivariate elements which somehow coalesce into a cohesive understanding of shared aesthetics, values, and motivations.

As described by Ivtzan, "The ability of an individual to integrate into society without losing a sense of who they are can be viewed as a sign of maturity and is a crucial aspect of self-actualization" (Ivtzan et al 2013). When Goth is considered in the context of collective identity, continuously and authentically existing alongside mainstream, it is significant and marks Goth out as a cultural entity in its own right.

Goth – the new Generations

Emergent from this study has been a clarification of the generations of Goth identity within the culture and the role musical media has played in the evolution of Goth as an identity constant. A striking component of Goth behaviours throughout this study was their willingness to participate in this research and the open engagement of younger members seeking to contribute to this research.

Notably, emergent forms of the Gothic mode revealed themselves through sometimes unexpected expressions of the underlying Goth aesthetics. Pastel Goth, Health Goth, and Madewell Goth provided unpredictable examples of the Goth culture, displaying primary elements of the culture, seen through the eyes of the emergent generations. Younger members who engage with pseudo-Goth styles such as Emo, Kawaii, and Steampunk, are sometimes considered part of distinct separate tribes, appropriating Gothic themes to gain legitimacy in the context of subcultural identity without fully belonging. In so doing Goth culture has cultivated a sense of gate-keeping whilst encouraging experimentation with dark and gothic-influenced themes.

New generations of Goth continue to emerge and warrant separate studies. Of particular interest is younger members who have extended exposure to Goth/alternative lifestyles through family connections. The children of 'original generation' Goths were valued contributors to this study and offer unique insights into the future nature of Goth and Gothness.

Reflections on the research

This study set out to engage members of the Goth community to bring their stories of Gothness to the context of scholarly discourse. Undertaking this research has been an important and valuable experience during which deep connections with the global Goth community have been forged and rediscovered. A personal sense of belonging and connectedness to that culture has been heightened through the research, and the generosity of participants was humbling. Exposure to like-minded scholars from around the world, engaging in discourse and argument has further steeled my resolve to continue in this field of research, continuing the narrative of Goth culture in Australia.

Participant suggestions to expand my research also included the incorporation of wider elements of Goth culture – such as creating an 'International history of Goth', comprehensive documentation of Goth bands/musical influences and personal preferences, an online archive of Goth fashion, a record of online Goth channels (YouTube, etc.) and other miscellaneous ideas.

These suggestions exceeded the scope of my study and ethical research conduct. However, the dialogue helped reinforce thematic boundaries for the project and provided invaluable insight into a contemporary discourse within the emerging generation of the Goth community.

This research has also highlighted opportunities to explore other branches of culture and the intersectionality of diverse subcultures and practices. The Goth community is made up of a broad spectrum of individual life experiences, the intersections of which may further inform not only sociological practices but additional fields of research. The emergence of online societies where the ease of comment and the anonymity of the participants makes for an anarchistic culture with much factionalism is a clear avenue of future investigation.

From the outset, younger Goths articulated interest in this project, suggesting the study encompass a broader audience and subject matter. The enthusiasm and authenticity of this interest suggest further future study in this area will indeed be fruitful.

Future research projects would do well to focus academic attention on the lesser-studied Goth communities including those in non-Westernised countries. Learnings to date accomplished through the gathering of empirical data can be extended further through longitudinal studies of Goth communities.

Conclusion

Our world is what we make it. Goth means something a little different to everyone.

[Online discussion - Facebook - 07 02 2017]

As the largest study of its kind to date, this research has revealed hitherto concealed characteristics of Goth culture. It has offered insights into the socio-aesthetic practices, behaviours and demeanour of the global Goth community and opened the way for extensive future discourse. As a foundational study into Goth as a mature global phenomenon, this thesis has affirmed that Goth is not a phase and has confirmed the importance of Goth identity to its community. Gothness has been shown to be a complex, sometimes contradictory phenomenon made up of a clear, yet nuanced stratum of ways of being. It is evident from this that further academic attention needs to be focussed on Goth identity and specifically Australian Goth in academic literature.

Among the plenitude of Goth aesthetics, there is a constant communication of style, meaning, and substance, with each *Bricolage* element adding to the layered visual code of the culture. Music is inextricably linked to Goth culture, providing the aesthetic motifs, soundtrack, and iconic archetypes that inhabit the dance floors of Goth clubs the world over. Through its spectrum of music, we acquire the festivals, picnics, art exhibitions, retailers, online galleries, podcasts, forums, chats, videos, and online communities which sustain the culture of Goth identity. Goths ornament themselves with lace, rags, leather, and velvet, emulating fashions of the past set to a dark soundtrack of electronic futuristic rhythms. Through the sociality associated with these aspects of Goth we find collaborators, friends, partners, loved ones, and our community. Thus, Goth is a globally connected network of creative people whose curiosity for the obscure and appreciation for dark beauty binds them in a sometimes fraught discourse with conventional conceptions of identity and ageing.

The perennial question of what is Goth may never be definitively answered, yet data presented here has demonstrated Goths 'just know' it exists.



Appendices

Image overleaf: Goth Shoes, authors collection 2019

Photograph by the author

Chapter 8 APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Survey Instruments

During the data gathering phase of this research, extensive surveying of the Goth Subculture was undertaken. Utilising online networks such as Facebook, social forums and blogging sites, survey instruments were promulgated within the Goth community with the aim of reaching the broadest possible cross-section of the subculture.

Survey 0: Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an identity constant beyond youth.

Mini Survey: Music & Media

Survey 1: Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an identity constant beyond youth.

10 Quick Questions, Pilot/short-form survey

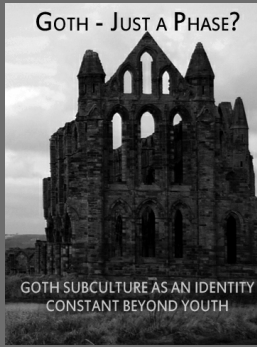
Survey 2: Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an identity constant beyond youth.

International Audience, Long-form survey – Administered twice

Survey 3: Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an identity constant beyond youth.

Australian Audience Only, Long- form survey – Administered twice

Appendix 2: Interview Information Sheet



Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth

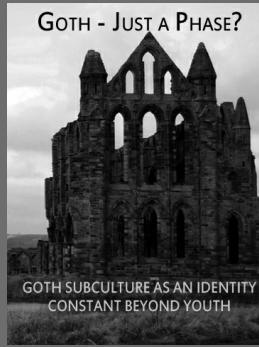
Ten Quick Questions

Welcome to my short survey on Goth Subculture

Ten quick questions about Goth Subculture

This study has been approved by the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (Project Number 5251 Approval Number RDHU-17-15). The Committee is comprised of members of the public, academics, lawyers, doctors and pastoral carers. If needed, verification of approval can be obtained either by writing to the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee, c/- Office of Research and Development, Curtin University, GPO Box U1987, Perth, 6845 or by telephoning 9266 2784 or by emailing hrec@curtin.edu.au

To ensure your thoughts and responses are best understood, participants are encouraged to provide free-text written responses wherever relevant.



Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth

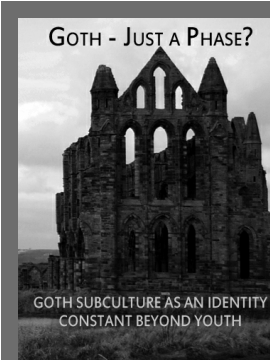
Ten Quick Questions

Notes on Terminology

Throughout this research I have chosen to use the term “**Goth**” as the least contentious, most efficient way of identifying the subculture and its broad subgenres.

In the context of this study Goth is inclusive of all subsets of the Goth subculture e.g. Goth-Industrial. As an insider-researcher (long-term Goth participant), I have chosen to assume participants in this survey have an affiliation with and an understanding of the Goth subculture; as such I will not be providing extensive definitions of what is Goth.

An opportunity will be provided following the questions to register for further involvement in interviews or additional surveys: if you are interested in participating, please complete the contact section.



Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth

Ten Quick Questions

Goth Subculture & What it means to you

* 1. In what year were you born? (enter 4-digit *Date of Birth* year; for example, 1972)

* 2. In what year did you first become involved with Goth? (enter 4-digit "*Date of Goth*" year; for example, 1988)

* 3. What is your city or country of residence?

* 4. Choosing from the list below - with which of the Goth aesthetics do you most identify:
(choose most appropriate or provide your own answer)

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Punk-Goth/Death Rocker | <input type="radio"/> Hippy-Goth | <input type="radio"/> Industrial or Rivethead |
| <input type="radio"/> Glam Goth | <input type="radio"/> Alternative or Indy Goth | <input type="radio"/> Raver or Techno Goth |
| <input type="radio"/> Victorian Goth | <input type="radio"/> Rockabilly-Goth | <input type="radio"/> Metal-Goth |
| <input type="radio"/> Romantic Goth | <input type="radio"/> Cyber-Goth | <input type="radio"/> Perky Goth or Pastel/Bubble Goth |
| <input type="radio"/> Traditional Goth (Trad) | <input type="radio"/> Steampunk | <input type="radio"/> Ex-Goth |
| <input type="radio"/> Fetishistic Goth/BDSM | <input type="radio"/> Goth- Industrial | |
| <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) | | |

* 5. Goth identity is just a phase

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

* 6. Being a Goth is important to my identity

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

Additional information

* 7. You are never too old to be a Goth

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

* 8. Describe the primary factors which keep you involved or interested in the Goth scene

* 9. How would you rate your overall feeling towards the term *Goth*

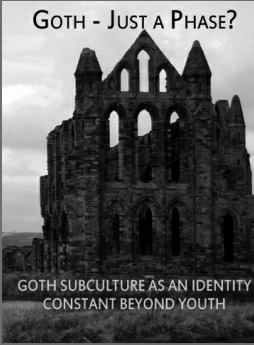
- Very Negative
- Negative
- Somewhat Negative
- Neutral
- Somewhat Positive
- Positive
- Very Positive

Additional Information

* 10. The Goth subculture gives me a sense of place

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

Additional information



Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth
Ten Quick Questions

Thank you!

Thank you very, very much for participating in this research.

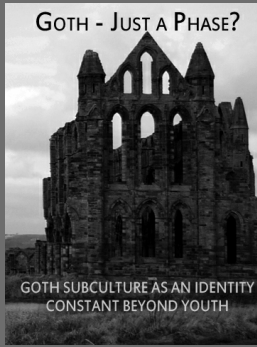
Your time is greatly appreciated and your contributions help create a better understanding of the Goth Subculture.

If you are interested in the outcomes of this research or participating in interviews following this survey, I welcome your contributions at:

[Pinterest](#)

[Facebook](#)

isgothjustaphase.com



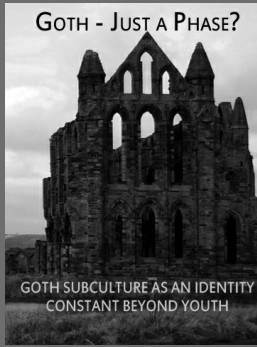
Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth

Welcome to my survey on Goth Subculture

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To ensure your thoughts and responses are best understood, participants are encouraged to provide free-text written responses wherever relevant.

If you are Australian - please complete the "Australia Only" survey, thank you.



Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth

Notes on Terminology

Throughout this research I have chosen to use the term “Goth” as the least contentious, most efficient way of identifying the subculture and its broad subgenres.

In the context of this study Goth is inclusive of all subsets of the Goth subculture e.g. Goth-Industrial. As an insider-researcher (long-term Goth participant), I have chosen to assume participants in this survey have an affiliation with and an understanding of the Goth subculture; as such I will not be providing extensive definitions of what is Goth.

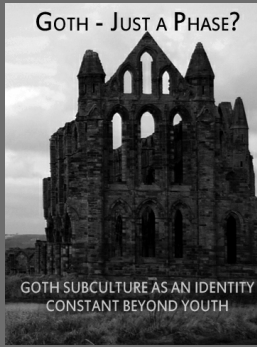
An opportunity will be provided following the questions to register for further involvement in interviews or additional surveys: if you are interested in participating, please complete the contact section.

If you wish to contact me, I welcome your contributions at:

[Pinterest](#)

[Facebook](#)

isgothjustaphase.com



Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth

First - A little about you

This information will help describe the Goth community over time

* 1. In what year were you born? (enter 4-digit "Date of Birth" year; for example, 1972)

* 2. In what year did you first become involved with Goth? (enter 4-digit "Date of Goth" year; for example, 1988)

* 3. What is your city or country of residence?

4. What is your gender?

- Female
 Male
 Transgender

* 5. Choosing from the list below - with which of the Goth aesthetics do you most identify (choose most appropriate or provide your own answer)

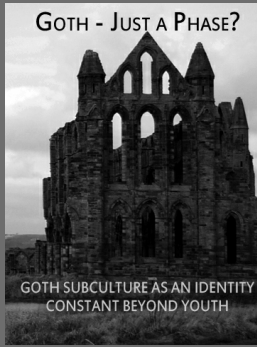
- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Punk-Goth/Death Rocker | <input type="radio"/> Hippy-Goth | <input type="radio"/> Industrial or Rivethead |
| <input type="radio"/> Glam Goth | <input type="radio"/> Alternative or Indy Goth | <input type="radio"/> Raver or Techno Goth |
| <input type="radio"/> Victorian Goth | <input type="radio"/> Rockabilly-Goth | <input type="radio"/> Metal-Goth |
| <input type="radio"/> Romantic Goth | <input type="radio"/> Cyber-Goth | <input type="radio"/> Perky Goth or Pastel/Bubble Goth |
| <input type="radio"/> Traditional Goth (Trad) | <input type="radio"/> Steampunk | <input type="radio"/> Ex-Goth |
| <input type="radio"/> Fetishistic Goth/BDSM | <input type="radio"/> Goth- Industrial | |
| <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) | | |

6. Describe why you chose Goth and what attracted you to your particular style.

* 7. At your most involved, "back in the day", how did you express your Goth identity

(choose all characteristics that apply or provide your own answer)

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black clothing | <input type="checkbox"/> Dyed hair - black | <input type="checkbox"/> Winklepickers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Band T-shirts | <input type="checkbox"/> Dyed hair - non-extreme | <input type="checkbox"/> Corsets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Iconographic T-shirts (e.g. crosses, skulls, symbols) | <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme facial styling (e.g shaved eyebrows, vampire teeth) | <input type="checkbox"/> Fishnet tops |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bondage trousers | <input type="checkbox"/> Beard, facial hair | <input type="checkbox"/> Full Victorian/Medieval Style Dress |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Suits, Corporate Clothing | <input type="checkbox"/> Tattoos | <input type="checkbox"/> Ruffled shirts/Pirate Shirts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme Goth Make-up (e.g. full face painting, zombie) | <input type="checkbox"/> Piercings (e.g. ear, nose, eyebrow) | <input type="checkbox"/> Flour/Dust |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pale make-up | <input type="checkbox"/> Body Modifications | <input type="checkbox"/> Velvet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black lipstick | <input type="checkbox"/> Tu-tus | <input type="checkbox"/> PVC |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black nail polish | <input type="checkbox"/> Torn tights | <input type="checkbox"/> Leather |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Silver jewellery | <input type="checkbox"/> Fishnet tights | <input type="checkbox"/> Goth accoutrements (e.g. bat-bags, hats, fishnet gloves, capes) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Studs, buckles, spikes | <input type="checkbox"/> Leather Jackets | <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme accoutrements (e.g. gas masks, wings, contact lenses) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hair extensions | <input type="checkbox"/> Trench Coats/Frock Coats | <input type="checkbox"/> Music (e.g. listen to mostly Goth) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dreadlocks/Falls | <input type="checkbox"/> Doc Marten Boots | <input type="checkbox"/> Music (e.g. follow bands, gigs) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme hair (e.g. mohawk, spikes) | <input type="checkbox"/> Platform Boots | <input type="checkbox"/> Events (festivals, shows) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crimping or "big hair" | <input type="checkbox"/> Victorian Style Boots | <input type="checkbox"/> Goth interior design, house/room |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dyed hair - extreme colours | <input type="checkbox"/> Motorcycle Boots | <input type="checkbox"/> Car |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) | | |



Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth

The following questions relate to : Growing Up Goth

8. Describe how you came to be involved with Goth for example: did you have a mentor or friend who introduced you to the subculture.

* 9. Describe the primary factors which keep you involved or interested in the Goth scene

* 10. As a young Goth - "*back in the day*"- how often did you attend Goth club nights, events or gigs

- Never
- Every Few Years
- Once or twice a year
- Once a month
- Once a fortnight
- Every week
- More than once a week

* 11. What is your experience of Goth events, community and clubbing?

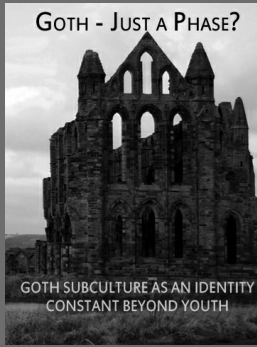
Please choose all that apply

- Attended Goth club nights
- Attended Goth concerts, gigs, band nights
- Attended Goth events such as festivals
- Attended private Goth events (parties)
- Attended Goth Arts events (films, galleries, theatre)
- DJ at clubs
- Organised Goth club nights
- Organised Goth events such as parties, festivals, Arts events
- Organised Goth concerts, gigs, band nights
- Member of a Goth Band
- Managed a Goth Band
- Roadie or Sound Technician for a Goth Band
- Owned/Managed/Worked in a Goth record store or music shop, including online stores
- Owned/Managed/Worked in a Goth shop or retail, including online stores (clothing, jewellery etc)
- Owned/Managed/Worked in a specialist Goth service (hair-dressing, body piercing, tattooing, make-up etc)
- Worked in Media for Goth audience (Goth radio, local TV, documentaries etc)
- Published or wrote a Zine or fan-fiction
- Member of online forum or community
- Managed online forum or community
- Other (please specify)

* 12. Goth identity is just a phase

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

13. How would you describe Goth identity



Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth

The following questions relate to : Goth Adulthood

Please describe your experiences as an Adult in the Goth subculture

* 14. My current social circle/friends are mostly Goths or ex-Goths

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

* 15. How often do you currently attend local Goth club nights, events or gigs

- Never
- Every Few Years
- Yearly
- A few times a year
- Once a month
- Once a Fortnight
- Every Week (or more)

* 16. How often do you currently attend Goth events in **other cities** (nationally)

- Never
- Every Few Years
- Yearly
- A few times a year
- Once a month
- Once a Fortnight
- Every Week (or more)

Other (please specify)

* 17. How many International Goth events have you attended (i.e. events in countries other than your home country)

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5-7
- 8-10
- More than 10
- More than 20

Please provide additional information (such as which events you attended, which bands did you see, where did you travel etc)

18. Do you normally purchase products or merchandise (such as band T-shirts) specifically for or during these Goth events

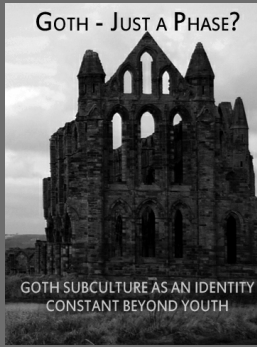
- No
- Yes

Additional information

* 19. Is attending these events still important to you

- Not at All Important
- Not Important
- Neutral
- Important
- Very Important

Additional Information



Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth

The following questions relate to : Goth Identity and Culture

Please describe your opinions towards the idea of Goth as an distinct identity and culture

* 20. I describe myself as a Goth

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

Additional Information

* 21. Other people describe me as Goth

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

Additional Information

* 22. How would you rate your overall feeling towards the term **Goth**

- Very Negative
- Negative
- Somewhat Negative
- Neutral
- Somewhat Positive
- Positive
- Very Positive

Additional Information

* 23. You are never too old to be a Goth

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

* 24. Being a Goth is important to my identity

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

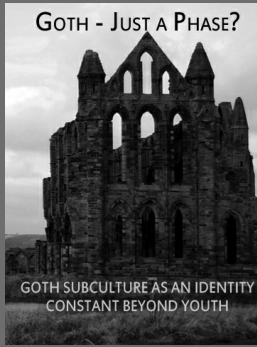
Additional Information

* 25. Goth identity gives me social courage

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

* 26. From the list below, choose three (3) terms you most associate with *Goth*

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intellectual | <input type="checkbox"/> Fad | <input type="checkbox"/> Legitimate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Sexy | <input type="checkbox"/> State of mind |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Culture | <input type="checkbox"/> Mainstream | <input type="checkbox"/> Music |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dark | <input type="checkbox"/> Dead | <input type="checkbox"/> Atmosphere |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lifestyle | <input type="checkbox"/> Scene | <input type="checkbox"/> Aesthetic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ironic | <input type="checkbox"/> Anti-social | <input type="checkbox"/> Identity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attitude | <input type="checkbox"/> Pretentious | <input type="checkbox"/> Subculture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Morbid | <input type="checkbox"/> History | <input type="checkbox"/> Violent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fashion / Style | <input type="checkbox"/> Image | <input type="checkbox"/> Introverted |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Just a Phase | <input type="checkbox"/> Melodramatic | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Serious | <input type="checkbox"/> Social | <input type="checkbox"/> Home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Superficial | <input type="checkbox"/> Deviant | <input type="checkbox"/> Comfortable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Misunderstood | <input type="checkbox"/> Exciting | <input type="checkbox"/> Friendly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rebellious | <input type="checkbox"/> Way of being | <input type="checkbox"/> Pacifist/peaceful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deep | <input type="checkbox"/> Personality | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) | | |



Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth

Goth as a culture & global community

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements about Goth culture:

27. Goth is a global community

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

28. Goths have a shared understanding of our subculture

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

* 29. There is a strong Goth population where I live

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

Additional Information

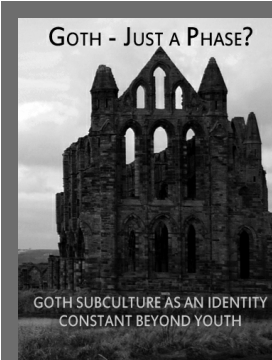
* 30. There is a real sense of community in the Goth scene

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

* 31. I have developed lasting relationships within the Goth subculture

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

Other (please specify)



Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth

Relationships: Goth subculture, work & the external community

Please describe your experiences as a Goth in relation to community acceptance and relationships with "non-Goths"

32. Reactions to my Goth image/identity are mostly:

- Very Negative
- Negative
- Somewhat Negative
- Neutral
- Somewhat Positive
- Positive
- Very Positive

Additional Information

* 33. Describe how your family feels towards Goth

- Very Negative
- Negative
- Somewhat Negative
- Neutral
- Somewhat Positive
- Positive
- Very Positive

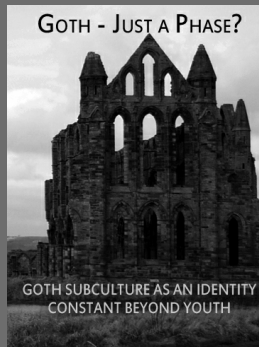
Additional Information

34. Which of the following best describes your employment

35. Describe how being a Goth has impacted on your career or career choices

* 36. People in my country/city understand the Goth subculture

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly



Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth

The following questions relate to : Goth Identity & Authenticity

* 37. How do you now express your Goth identity

(choose all characteristics that apply or provide your own answer)

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black clothing | <input type="checkbox"/> Dyed hair - black | <input type="checkbox"/> Winklepickers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Band T-shirts | <input type="checkbox"/> Dyed hair - non-extreme | <input type="checkbox"/> Corsets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Iconographic T-shirts (e.g. crosses, skulls, symbols) | <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme facial styling (e.g shaved eyebrows, vampire teeth) | <input type="checkbox"/> Fishnet tops |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bondage trousers | <input type="checkbox"/> Beard, facial hair | <input type="checkbox"/> Full Victorian/Medieval Style Dress |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Suits, Corporate Clothing | <input type="checkbox"/> Tattoos | <input type="checkbox"/> Ruffled shirts/Pirate Shirts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme Goth Make-up (e.g. full face painting, zombie) | <input type="checkbox"/> Piercings (e.g. ear, nose, eyebrow) | <input type="checkbox"/> Flour/Dust |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pale make-up | <input type="checkbox"/> Body Modifications | <input type="checkbox"/> Velvet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black lipstick | <input type="checkbox"/> Tu-tus | <input type="checkbox"/> PVC |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black nail polish | <input type="checkbox"/> Torn tights | <input type="checkbox"/> Leather |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Silver jewellery | <input type="checkbox"/> Fishnet tights | <input type="checkbox"/> Goth accoutrements (e.g. bat-bags, hats, fishnet gloves, capes) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Studs, buckles, spikes | <input type="checkbox"/> Leather Jackets | <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme accoutrements (e.g. gas masks, wings, contact lenses) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hair extensions | <input type="checkbox"/> Trench Coats/Frock Coats | <input type="checkbox"/> Music (e.g. listen to mostly Goth) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dreadlocks/Falls | <input type="checkbox"/> Doc Marten Boots | <input type="checkbox"/> Music (e.g. follow bands, gigs) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme hair (e.g. mohawk, spikes) | <input type="checkbox"/> Platform Boots | <input type="checkbox"/> Events (festivals, shows) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crimping or "big hair" | <input type="checkbox"/> Victorian Style Boots | <input type="checkbox"/> Goth interior design, house/room |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dyed hair - extreme colours | <input type="checkbox"/> Motorcycle Boots | <input type="checkbox"/> Car |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) | | |

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements:

* 38. You can wear anything and still be a Goth

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

Additional Information

* 39. Goths are socially welcoming to outsiders

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

* 40. I cannot be authentically me without Goth clothes, music, aesthetics, style...

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

Additional Information

41. Goth is used as a term of insult by outsiders

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

Additional Information

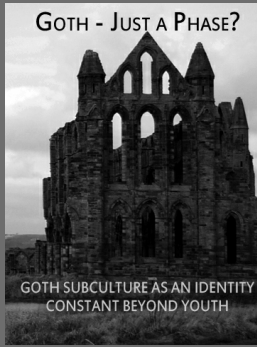
42. Goth is used as a term of insult by other Goths

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

43. I have said *I am not a Goth* to avoid judgement/pigeonholing

- No
- Yes

Additional Information



Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth

The following questions relate to : Otherness & Outsiderhood

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements:

44. Goth culture is provocative and daring

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

* 45. The taboo nature and *outsiderhood* of Goth culture is attractive

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

Additional Information

46. How would you describe the influence of Goth on fashion, culture or society generally

* 47. The Goth subculture gives me a sense of place

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

Additional Information

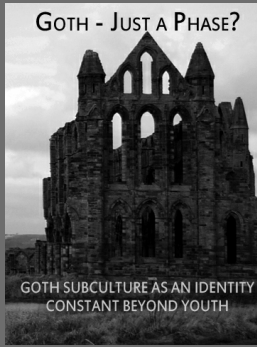
48. Do you have any other comments you would like to add about your experiences in the Goth Subculture?

If you are interested in participating in interviews following this survey please complete the form below.

Interviews may be conducted according to your preference - in person, by email or online. Interview outcomes will be used as case-studies within the research and all participant information will be anonymous or de-identified. A detailed consent form and information sheet will be provided prior to interviews.

49. Please provide contact information if you wish to be involved further:

Name	<input type="text"/>
City/Town	<input type="text"/>
Country	<input type="text"/>
Email Address	<input type="text"/>
Phone Number	<input type="text"/>



Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth

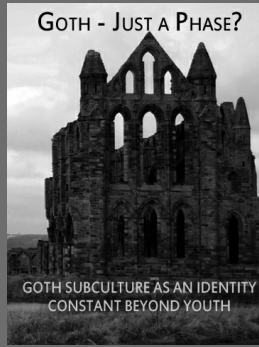
Thank you!

Thank you very, very much for participating in this research.

Your time is greatly appreciated and your contributions help create a better understanding of the Goth Subculture.

If you are interested in the outcomes of this research or participating in interviews following this survey, I welcome your contributions at:

isgothjustaphase.com



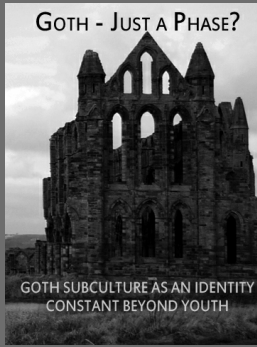
Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth - Australia Only

Welcome to my survey on Goth Subculture in Australia

This survey is designed for an Australian audience only.

This study has been approved by the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (Project Number 5251 Approval Number RDHU-17-15). The Committee is comprised of members of the public, academics, lawyers, doctors and pastoral carers. If needed, verification of approval can be obtained either by writing to the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee, c/- Office of Research and Development, Curtin University, GPO Box U1987, Perth, 6845 or by telephoning 9266 2784 or by emailing hrec@curtin.edu.au

To ensure your thoughts and responses are best understood, participants are encouraged to provide free-text written responses wherever relevant.



Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth - Australia Only

Notes on Terminology

Throughout this research I have chosen to use the term “*Goth*” as the least contentious, most efficient way of identifying the subculture and its broad subgenres.

In the context of this study Goth is inclusive of all subsets of the Goth subculture e.g. Goth-Industrial. As an insider-researcher (long-term Goth participant), I have chosen to assume participants in this survey have an affiliation with and an understanding of the Goth subculture; as such I will not be providing extensive definitions of what is Goth.

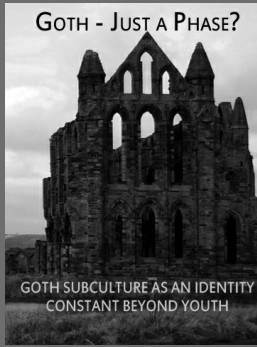
An opportunity will be provided following the questions to register for further involvement in interviews or additional surveys: if you are interested in participating, please complete the contact section.

If you wish to contact me, I welcome your contributions at:

[Pinterest](#)

[Facebook](#)

isgothjustaphase.com



Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth - Australia Only

First - A little about you & your experience of the Australian Goth Scene

This information will help describe the Australian Goth community over time

* 1. In what year were you born? (enter 4-digit *Date of Birth* year; for example, 1972)

* 2. In what year did you first become involved with Goth? (enter 4-digit "*Date of Goth*" year; for example, 1988)

* 3. In which Australian State or Territory are you resident

- Australian Capital Territory
- New South Wales
- Northern Territory
- Queensland
- South Australia
- Tasmania
- Victoria
- Western Australia

4. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Transgender

* 5. Choosing from the list below - with which of the Goth aesthetics do you most identify

(choose most appropriate or provide your own answer)

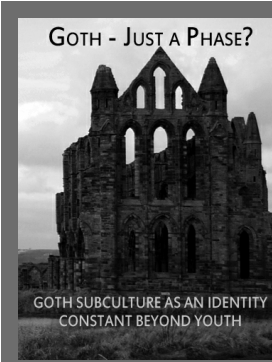
- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Punk-Goth/Death Rocker | <input type="radio"/> Hippy-Goth | <input type="radio"/> Industrial or Rivethead |
| <input type="radio"/> Glam Goth | <input type="radio"/> Alternative or Indy Goth | <input type="radio"/> Raver or Techno Goth |
| <input type="radio"/> Victorian Goth | <input type="radio"/> Rockabilly-Goth | <input type="radio"/> Metal-Goth |
| <input type="radio"/> Romantic Goth | <input type="radio"/> Cyber-Goth | <input type="radio"/> Perky Goth or Pastel/Bubble Goth |
| <input type="radio"/> Traditional Goth (Trad) | <input type="radio"/> Steampunk | <input type="radio"/> Ex-Goth |
| <input type="radio"/> Fetishistic Goth/BDSM | <input type="radio"/> Goth- Industrial | |
| <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) | | |

6. Describe why you chose Goth and what attracted you to your particular style

* 7. At your most involved, "back in the day", how did you express your Goth identity

(choose all characteristics that apply or provide your own answer)

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black clothing | <input type="checkbox"/> Dyed hair - black | <input type="checkbox"/> Winklepickers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Band T-shirts | <input type="checkbox"/> Dyed hair - non-extreme | <input type="checkbox"/> Corsets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Iconographic T-shirts (e.g. crosses, skulls, symbols) | <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme facial styling (e.g shaved eyebrows, vampire teeth) | <input type="checkbox"/> Fishnet tops |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bondage trousers | <input type="checkbox"/> Beard, facial hair | <input type="checkbox"/> Full Victorian/Medieval Style Dress |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Suits, Corporate Clothing | <input type="checkbox"/> Tattoos | <input type="checkbox"/> Ruffled shirts/Pirate Shirts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme Goth Make-up (e.g. full face painting, zombie) | <input type="checkbox"/> Piercings (e.g. ear, nose, eyebrow) | <input type="checkbox"/> Flour/Dust |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pale make-up | <input type="checkbox"/> Body Modifications | <input type="checkbox"/> Velvet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black lipstick | <input type="checkbox"/> Tu-tus | <input type="checkbox"/> PVC |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black nail polish, elaborate nails | <input type="checkbox"/> Torn tights | <input type="checkbox"/> Leather |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Silver jewellery | <input type="checkbox"/> Fishnet tights | <input type="checkbox"/> Goth accoutrements (e.g. bat-bags, hats, fishnet gloves, capes) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Studs, buckles, spikes | <input type="checkbox"/> Leather Jackets | <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme accoutrements (e.g. gas masks, wings, contact lenses) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hair extensions | <input type="checkbox"/> Trench Coats/Frock Coats | <input type="checkbox"/> Music (e.g. listen to mostly Goth) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dreadlocks/Falls | <input type="checkbox"/> Doc Marten Boots | <input type="checkbox"/> Music (e.g. follow bands, gigs) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme hair (e.g. mohawk, spikes) | <input type="checkbox"/> Platform Boots | <input type="checkbox"/> Events (festivals, shows) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crimping or "big hair" | <input type="checkbox"/> Victorian Style Boots | <input type="checkbox"/> Goth interior design, house/room |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dyed hair - extreme colours | <input type="checkbox"/> Motorcycle Boots | <input type="checkbox"/> Car |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) | | |



Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth - Australia Only

The following questions relate to : Australian Goth

Please describe your experiences of Goth in Australia compared to other Goth scenes

8. How would you describe Australian Goths & the Australian Goth scene

* 9. Describe the primary factors which keep you involved with the Australian Goth scene

* 10. Goth subculture in Australia is the same as Goth subculture in Europe

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

11. In what ways, if any, is the Australian Goth subculture distinct from European Goth subculture

* 12. The Australian climate makes being a Goth difficult

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

Additional information

13. Has the geography of Australia influenced or impacted Goth subculture

- No
- Yes

If yes, how?

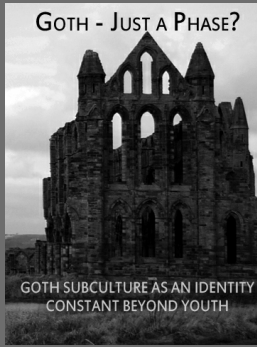
* 14. Goth subculture fills a cultural void for Australian Goths

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

Additional information

* 15. From the list below, choose three (3) terms you most associate with *Goth*

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intellectual | <input type="checkbox"/> Fad | <input type="checkbox"/> Legitimate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Sexy | <input type="checkbox"/> State of mind |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Culture | <input type="checkbox"/> Mainstream | <input type="checkbox"/> Music |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dark | <input type="checkbox"/> Dead | <input type="checkbox"/> Atmosphere |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lifestyle | <input type="checkbox"/> Scene | <input type="checkbox"/> Aesthetic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ironic | <input type="checkbox"/> Anti-social | <input type="checkbox"/> Identity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attitude | <input type="checkbox"/> Pretentious | <input type="checkbox"/> Subculture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Morbid | <input type="checkbox"/> History | <input type="checkbox"/> Violent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fashion / Style | <input type="checkbox"/> Image | <input type="checkbox"/> Introverted |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Just a Phase | <input type="checkbox"/> Melodramatic | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Serious | <input type="checkbox"/> Social | <input type="checkbox"/> Home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Superficial | <input type="checkbox"/> Deviant | <input type="checkbox"/> Comfortable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Misunderstood | <input type="checkbox"/> Exciting | <input type="checkbox"/> Friendly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rebellious | <input type="checkbox"/> Way of being | <input type="checkbox"/> Pacifist/peaceful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deep | <input type="checkbox"/> Personality | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) | | |



Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth - Australia Only

These Questions relate to Growing Up Goth in Australia

* 16. In Australia Goth is regarded as *just a phase*

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

Additional information

17. Describe how you came to be involved with Goth, for example: did you have a mentor or friend who introduced you to the subculture.

*** 18. As a young Goth - "back in the day" - how often did you attend Goth club nights, events or gigs**

- Never
- Every few years
- Once or twice a year
- Once a month
- Once a fortnight
- Every week
- More than once a week

*** 19. What is your experience of Goth events, community and clubbing?**

Please choose all that apply

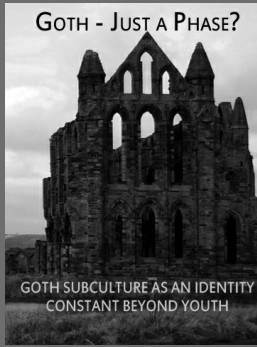
- Attended Goth club nights
- Attended Goth concerts, gigs, band nights
- Attended Goth events such as festivals
- Attended private Goth events (parties)
- Attended Goth Arts events (films, galleries, theatre)
- DJ at clubs
- Organised Goth club nights
- Organised Goth events such as parties, festivals, Arts events
- Organised Goth concerts, gigs, band nights
- Member of a Goth Band
- Managed a Goth Band
- Roadie or Sound Technician for a Goth Band
- Owned/Managed/Worked in a Goth record store or music shop, including online stores
- Owned/Managed/Worked in a Goth shop or retail, including online stores (clothing, jewellery etc)
- Owned/Managed/Worked in a specialist Goth service (hair-dressing, body piercing, tattooing, make-up etc)
- Worked in Media for Goth audience (Goth radio, local TV, documentaries etc)
- Published or wrote a Zine or fan-fiction
- Member of online forum or community
- Managed online forum or community
- Other (please specify)

* 20. Goth identity is just a phase

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

Other (please specify)

21. How would you describe Goth identity



Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth - Australia Only

The following questions relate to : Goth Adulthood

Please describe your experiences as an Adult in the Goth subculture

* 22. My current social circle/friends are mostly Goths or ex-Goths

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

* 23. How often do you currently attend local Goth club nights, events or gigs

- Never
- Every Few Years
- Yearly
- A few times a year
- Once a month
- Once a Fortnight
- Every Week (or more)

* 24. How often do you currently attend Goth events in **other Australian cities** (nationally)

- Never
- Every Few Years
- Yearly
- A few times a year
- Once a month
- Once a Fortnight
- Every Week (or more)

Additional Information

* 25. How many overseas Goth events have you attended

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5-7
- 8-10
- More than 10
- More than 20

Please provide additional information (such as which events you attended, which bands did you see, where did you travel etc)

26. Do you normally purchase products or merchandise (such as band T-shirts) specifically for or during these Goth events

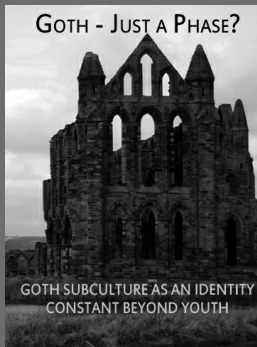
- No
- Yes

Additional information

* 27. Is attending these events still important to you

- Not at All Important
- Not Important
- Neutral
- Important
- Very Important

Additional Information



Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth - Australia Only

The following questions relate to : Goth Identity and Culture

Please describe your opinions towards the idea of Goth as an distinct identity and culture

* 28. I describe myself as a Goth

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

Additional Information

* 29. Other people describe me as Goth

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

Additional Information

* 30. How would you rate your overall feeling towards the term **Goth**

- Very Negative
- Negative
- Somewhat Negative
- Neutral
- Somewhat Positive
- Positive
- Very Positive

Additional Information

* 31. You are never too old to be a Goth

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

* 32. Being a Goth is important to my identity

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

Additional Information

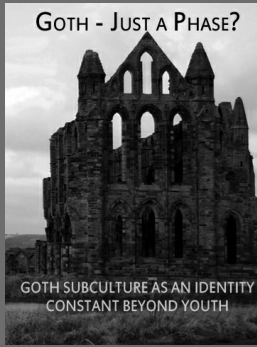
33. I feel connected to European culture through Goth

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

Additional information

* 34. Goth identity gives me social courage

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly



Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth - Australia Only

Goth as a culture & global community

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements about Goth culture:

* 35. Goth is a global community

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

* 36. When travelling overseas, I feel comfortable as part of the Goth scene

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

* 37. There is a strong Goth population where I live

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

Additional information

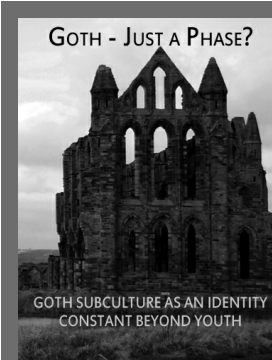
* 38. There is a real sense of community in the Australian Goth scene

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

* 39. I have developed lasting relationships within the Goth subculture

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

Additional information



Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth - Australia Only

Relationships: Goth subculture, work & the external community

Please describe your experiences as a Goth in relation to community acceptance and relationships with "non-Goths"

40. Reactions to my Goth image/identity are mostly:

- Very Negative
- Negative
- Somewhat Negative
- Neutral
- Somewhat Positive
- Positive
- Very Positive

Additional information

* 41. Describe how your family feels towards Goth

- Very Negative
- Negative
- Somewhat Negative
- Neutral
- Somewhat Positive
- Positive
- Very Positive

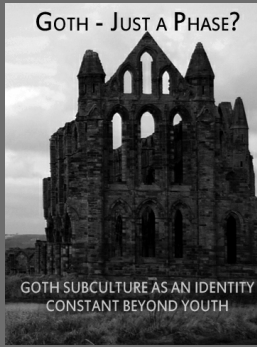
Additional Information

* 42. Australians understand the Goth subculture

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

43. Which of the following best describes your employment

44. Describe how being a Goth has impacted on your career or career choices



Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth - Australia Only

The following questions relate to : Goth Identity & Authenticity

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements:

* 45. You can wear anything and still be a Goth

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

Additional Information

* 46. Goths are socially welcoming to outsiders

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

47. I cannot be authentically me without Goth clothes, music, aesthetics, style...

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

Additional Information

48. Goth is used as a term of insult by outsiders

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

Additional Information

49. Goth is used as a term of insult by other Goths

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

Additional Information

50. I have said *I am not a Goth* to avoid judgement/pigeonholing

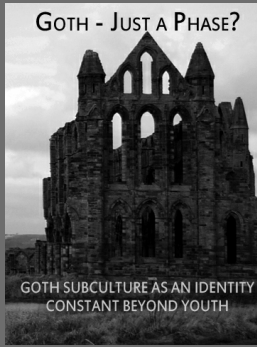
- No
- Yes

Additional Information

* 51. How do you now express your Goth identity

(choose all characteristics that apply or provide your own answer)

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black clothing | <input type="checkbox"/> Dyed hair - black | <input type="checkbox"/> Corsets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Band T-shirts | <input type="checkbox"/> Dyed hair - non-extreme | <input type="checkbox"/> Fishnet tops |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Iconographic T-shirts (e.g. crosses, skulls, symbols) | <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme facial styling (e.g shaved eyebrows, vampire teeth) | <input type="checkbox"/> Full Victorian/Medieval Style Dress |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bondage trousers | <input type="checkbox"/> Tattoos | <input type="checkbox"/> Ruffled shirts/Pirate Shirts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Suits, Corporate Clothing | <input type="checkbox"/> Piercings (e.g. ear, nose, eyebrow) | <input type="checkbox"/> Flour/Dust |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme Goth Make-up (e.g. full face painting, zombie) | <input type="checkbox"/> Body Modifications | <input type="checkbox"/> Velvet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pale make-up | <input type="checkbox"/> Tu-tus | <input type="checkbox"/> PVC |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black lipstick | <input type="checkbox"/> Torn tights | <input type="checkbox"/> Leather |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black nail polish | <input type="checkbox"/> Fishnet tights | <input type="checkbox"/> Goth accoutrements (e.g. bat-bags, hats, fishnet gloves, capes) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Silver jewellery | <input type="checkbox"/> Leather Jackets | <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme accoutrements (e.g. gas masks, wings, contact lenses) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Studs, buckles, spikes | <input type="checkbox"/> Trench Coats/Frock Coats | <input type="checkbox"/> Music (e.g. listen to mostly Goth) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hair extensions | <input type="checkbox"/> Doc Marten Boots | <input type="checkbox"/> Music (e.g. follow bands, gigs) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dreadlocks/Falls | <input type="checkbox"/> Platform Boots | <input type="checkbox"/> Events (festivals, shows) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme hair (e.g. mohawk, spikes) | <input type="checkbox"/> Victorian Style Boots | <input type="checkbox"/> Goth interior design, house/room |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crimping or "big hair" | <input type="checkbox"/> Motorcycle Boots | <input type="checkbox"/> Car |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dyed hair - extreme colours | <input type="checkbox"/> Winklepickers | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) | | |



Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth - Australia Only

The following questions relate to : Otherness & Outsiderhood

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements:

52. Goth culture is provocative and daring

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

* 53. The taboo nature and '*outsiderhood*' of the Goth scene is attractive

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

Additional Information

54. How would you describe the influence of Goth on fashion, culture or society generally

* 55. The Goth subculture gives me a sense of place

- Disagree Very Strongly
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Agree Very Strongly

Additional Information

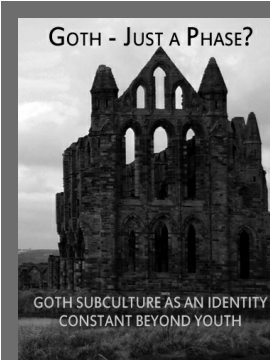
56. Do you have any other comments you would like to add about your experiences in the Goth Subculture?

If you are interested in participating in interviews following this survey please complete the form below.

Interviews may be conducted according to your preference - in person, by email or online. Interview outcomes will be used as case-studies within the research and all participant information will be anonymous or de-identified. A detailed consent form and information sheet will be provided prior to interviews.

57. Please provide contact information if you wish to be involved further:

Name	<input type="text"/>
City/Town	<input type="text"/>
Country	<input type="text"/>
Email Address	<input type="text"/>
Phone Number	<input type="text"/>



**Just a Phase? Goth Subculture as an Identity Constant Beyond Youth
- Australia Only**

Thank you!

Thank you very, very much for participating in this research.

Your time is greatly appreciated and your contributions help create a better understanding of the Goth Subculture.

[Click here to follow outcomes of this research](#)



RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Student Research Project: Just a Phase? Goth subculture as an identity constant beyond youth.

My name is Emma Baird and I am conducting a research project in the Faculty of Humanities towards a MPhil/PhD at Curtin University. This means that I will be writing a thesis based on the findings of surveys and interviews conducted as part of this study. I have been granted permission from the University to undertake this research and will be interviewing people who contact me as a result of notices listed on online networks, following survey participation or by word of mouth.

Aims

I am interested in talking to you about your experience and your perspectives on the Goth subculture and the transition from youth participant to adult in the culture.

Possible benefits

This project will contribute new knowledge to the limited literature on Goth communities and identity, with particular focus on Australian and European contexts. By gathering empirical data directly from the Goth subculture this research seeks to provide authentic perspectives on Goth from within the culture, contributing a genuine voice to the discourse on the subculture and examining the evolution of identity constructs over time. It is hoped this research will offer a valuable resource for future research, providing insights into the attitudes of long-term Goth participants.

What does the research involve?

The study involves you participating in surveys through an online portal and participating in semi-structured interviews which may be recorded in part or entirety and subsequently transcribed.

How much time will the research take?

The survey will take about 20-30 minutes to complete. The interview will take around one hour to complete.

Inconvenience/discomfort

Participating in this research will not cause any discomfort or inconvenience. The interview questions are designed to facilitate discussion and talk about your experiences as a Goth - there are no right or wrong answers.

Payment

No payments of any kind will be made to participants involved in this research project.

Can I withdraw from the research?

Being in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to participate; you are free to withdraw at any time, without prejudice, and need give no reason or justification for your decision. However, if you do consent to participate, contributions will be rendered anonymous and therefore unidentifiable.

Confidentiality

All information will be treated in the strictest of confidence. Documents, surveys and recordings will be coded with an ID number and kept by the Principal Investigator in a locked room.

No reports relating to the research, including my thesis or any research publications will disclose your name or any other details that will identify you, unless specifically requested to do so. Quotations from what you said in the interview will be attributed to a coded name that reflects your gender, along with your age (if provided) and your location of residence.

For example:

“I have been involved in the Goth scene since I was 13, clubbing regularly and organising social events.”

- Female A, 40, Melbourne

Storage of data

Data must be kept for 7 years to comply with legislation, and must be kept in a secure location on Curtin premises or electronically on a Curtin server.

Results

The findings will be published as part of my thesis, and may contribute to other research outcomes such as published in scholarly journals.

If you would like to be informed of the research findings at the conclusion of the study, please contact Emma Baird at the email address provided below.

<p>If you would like to contact the student researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact:</p> <p>Emma Baird emma.baird@postgrad.curtin.edu.au goth.just.a.phase@gmail.com isgothjustaphase.com</p>	<p>If you have a complaint concerning the manner in which this research (HREC Project Number: 5251) is being conducted, please contact: Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee:</p> <p>Office of Research and Development, Curtin University, GPO Box U1987, Perth, 6845 By telephone: (08) 9266 2784 or By email: hrec@curtin.edu.au</p>
<p>You may also contact my Supervisor, Dr Rachel Robertson at: R.Robertson@curtin.edu.au</p>	

Your contributions are greatly appreciated, thank you for your time.

Emma Baird

Research Participant Consent Form

Student Research Project: Just a Phase? Goth subculture as an identity constant beyond youth.

I _____ (the participant) have read the Information Sheet which I keep for my records and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to be interviewed by the researcher Yes No

I agree to allow the interview to be recorded (audio only) Yes No

I agree to allow the interview to be recorded (video content and/or photographs) Yes No

I agree to make myself available for a further interview if required Yes No

I would like to be sent outcomes from the completed research Yes No

I agree to participate in this research activity, realising that I may withdraw at any time without reason and without prejudice.

I understand that all information provided is treated as strictly confidential and will not be released by the investigator unless required to do so by law.

I have been advised as to what data is being collected, what the purpose is, and what will be done with the data upon completion of the research.

I understand that any recordings will be kept securely for 7 years upon project completion and it will be securely disposed thereafter.

I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published provided my name or other identifying information is not used.

My consent is limited to the current study only and my participation data may not be used for other purposes.

NOTE: This consent form will remain on record with the researcher for the duration of the study and retained by the university for seven years, as required by legislation.

PARTICIPANT	
DATE	

This study has been approved by the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (Project Number 5251 Approval Number RDHU-17-15). The Committee is comprised of members of the public, academics, lawyers, doctors and pastoral carers. If needed, verification of approval can be obtained either by writing to the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee, c/- Office of Research and Development, Curtin University, GPO Box U1987, Perth, 6845 or by telephoning 9266 2784 or by emailing hrec@curtin.edu.au



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IN GOTH WE TRUST

SKIN

Corporate Debt

Image overleaf: Goth Ephemera, authors collection 1988-2020

Photograph by the author

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