

'Forever Young':
Consumption and
Evolving Neo-tribes in
the Sydney Rave
Scene

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Table of Contents

List of Figures	iv	
List of Plates	iv	
Acknowledgements	v	
Chapter 1	Introduction: Theoretical Overview	1
1.1	The Geographies of consumption	2
1.2	Youth Subcultures, Subordination and Hegemony	4
1.3	A paradigm for rave culture?	5
1.4	Maffesoli's Tribes	7
1.5	Resistance, Incorporation and Consumption	9
1.6	Themes in Context	10
Chapter 2	Dance Music and Geography	12
2.1	Experiential Consumption in Dance Cultures	14
2.2	The Rave as Ritual	16
2.3	Beyond the Performative Nature of Raves	23
Chapter 3	Fragmentation and Consolidation: Historical Perspectives of The Sydney Rave Scene	25
3.1	The Sydney Rave Scene 1996-2000 - 'Old Skool' vs 'New Skool', and Disappearing PLUR	28
3.2	Media, Moral Panic and Regulation of Dance Parties in Sydney	31
3.3	Divisions in Terms of Genre of Music	34
3.4	Other Divisions and Threats to the Scene	37
3.5	Themes in Context 1996-2000	38
3.6	Fragmentation and Consolidation within the Sydney Rave Scene	39

Chapter 4	Commodities, Clubs and DIY Raves	43
4.1	Cultural Signs and Commodities within Sydney Rave Culture Today	45
4.2	The Place of Rave Within ‘Club Cultures’	52
4.3	DIY Raves - Regulating the Temporary Autonomous Zone	54
Chapter 5	Identity, Credibility and the Underground	56
5.1	Raver Identities, PLUR and Teeny Boppers	56
5.2	Credibility, Authenticity and Sponsorship in the Sydney Rave scene	60
5.3	‘Underground - ‘Where its Warm and Safe’	65
Chapter 6	Contextualising Rave as a Commodity Culture	66
6.1	Sydney Rave Culture – Evolving Neo-tribes	67
6.2	Geographical Perspectives of the Sydney Rave Scene	71
Appendix A		74
	Methodology	74
	Constructing the Questionnaire	75
	Recruiting Participants	76
Appendix B		78
	E-mail Questionnaire	78
	Written Questionnaire	82
	Glossary of Musical Terms	88
	Bibliography	90
	Filmography	94

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Rave culture is a relatively unstudied area of contemporary popular culture, and has not been previously studied in great detail within cultural geography. From its origins in 'Acid House' music in Chicago and Detroit in the mid to late 1980s, rave music and its associated culture have diffused throughout the world to become one of the most salient youth movements in contemporary society. Rave cultures have traditionally been associated with the quasi political agenda of opposition, carried out through the subversion of space and the assertion of power through parties of dubious legality (Ingham, Purvis and Clarke, 1999). Since its inception, however this agenda has, in a sense, been challenged through the increasing influence of commercial culture upon it. This raises a number of issues, particularly the relationship between musical taste and youth styles, and the means of group identification and differentiation within them, which will be considered in detail in this thesis. In considering rave culture in terms of the process of consumption, I will discuss the manner in which a global commodity (i.e. dance music) adopts a local interpretation and sense of identity. The thesis also seeks to evaluate the extent to which commercial culture has been incorporated into rave culture, and the extent to which these are changing perceptions of the rave scene as being oppositional, using Sydney as a case study.

On the one hand dance party culture can be conceptualised through the adoption of displaced global commodities, acting to construct distinctively local social narratives. On

the other hand local cultures can be seen to be constructing their own identities, through the appropriation of local meanings associated with this global commodity. While considering the importance of rave culture as a global phenomenon, I will examine the manner in which rave culture acts on a local scale, specifically the manner in which the scene has constructed its own local identity. Central to this analysis will be issues of authenticity and credibility, fragmentation and consolidation and the mapping of contemporary youth cultures. The role of power in this discourse will inevitably arise. This thesis will work towards analysing the changing place of dance culture in Sydney, where, since dance culture was once very much the 'deviant other', new spaces of partially sanctioned deviance have emerged. The consequences of this change for the perceived credibility of rave culture in Sydney will be analysed in detail.

This chapter discusses consumption in terms of rave culture. Specifically I outline contemporary theories of consumption, followed by a discussion of youth cultures in relation to consumption. I then go on to discuss Maffesoli's notion of postmodern neo-tribes, as they relate to rave cultures in forming a sense of shared consciousness. Lastly I discuss the relationship between consumption, incorporation and resistance in order to highlight these as underlying themes.

1.1 The geographies of consumption

Over the last decade geographical research on consumption has expanded rapidly, bringing together aspects of both cultural and economic geography. Traditional economic perspectives focused on sites of economic activity, whereas cultural perspectives have been more concerned with the distribution of goods and services. It is now widely accepted that '...an understanding of the processes of consumption is central to debates about the relationship between society and space' (Jackson & Thrift, 1995:204). Increasingly the geographical focus has been to trace the process of consumption back to the social relations of production and forward into cycles of use and re-use (Jackson & Thrift, 1995).

The globalisation of production systems, and the movement of people, goods and services, is increasingly acknowledged as having more complex, geographically uneven and socially differentiated effects, as opposed to being viewed as an overall process of cultural

homogenisation (Jackson, 1999). In accordance with the increasing tendency for social and economic perspectives to overlap, recent research has focused on the role of consumers in actively shaping the meanings of goods they consume in local settings, and the participatory role they play in the commodification of culture. In this sense the local popularity of a 'global' commodity is able to give it a new, locally relevant meaning. Crang (1996) presents the notion that consumers make all sorts of 'inhabitations' of commodity systems which ultimately result in a series of mutual entanglements with these systems. That is to say, when considering commodified cultures, one must take into account the complex relationship between consumer and commodity, as oppose to discarding the significance of consumption under the banner of cultural homogenisation.

Thrift (1996) suggests that tracing the networks between human and non-human actors offers a means of blurring economic and non-economic boundaries, and this approach has enormous potential for understanding other aspects of material culture and contemporary consumption (Jackson, 1999). This type of investigation also has implications regarding the definition of space, and the examination of consumption within it. Massey (1999) conceives space as being constituted through a set of interrelations, opening the opportunity for distinct narratives to exist, producing the potential for multiplicity. That is to say the potential exists for multiple discourses to coexist, and the idea of one single discourse through which space is conceptualised should be abandoned. Relating to investigations of consumption, a level of generality should be discarded in preference for particular systems of provision, which draws from both social and economic perspectives (Fine and Leopold, 1993). Moreover, to build an understanding of a consumption culture one must focus on a specific niche, in this case, rave culture.

According to Jackson (1999), there is little work on the geography of commodification, especially in terms of the commodification of cultural difference. He suggests that;

A geographical understanding of commodity cultures should...involve both an exploration of the physical movement of goods and services (the 'traffic of things') and an appreciation of the commodification of cultural difference. (Jackson, 1999:105)

To date, geographical work has focussed on changing *sites* of consumption; the *chains* that link consumption's multiple locations; and the *spaces and places* of contemporary

consumerism (Jackson and Thrift, 1995). An examination of the consumption of a particular cultural commodity should consider all of these perspectives, in terms of both ‘the traffic of things’ and the commodification of cultural difference. Cultural commodities differ from many other forms of commodities in so far as they have the ability to define culture rather than merely being the product of a culture. Music is a good example, given its potential for active participation and experience, creating a fluid dynamic within which cultures can be created, reshaped and dissolved.

1.2 Youth subcultures, subordination and hegemony

Within geographical research there had been a notable absence of studies regarding youth cultures (Valentine, Skelton and Chambers 1998). James (1986) focuses on how youth is defined through boundaries of exclusion, of what people are not, cannot do or cannot be (Valentine et al, 1998). The most obvious examples of these are legal restrictions such as the age at which one can drink, engage in sexual intercourse or earn money. In this case ‘The age of the physical body is used to define, control and order the actions of the social body...’ (James, 1986: 157, in Valentine et al, 1998). Solberg (1990) also identifies a performative aspect to the ambiguity of the term ‘youth’. In this sense children may transgress their age barriers by performing their identity as older than they really are, which is of particular interest when considering rave and dance party cultures. In this case age is outlined as a measure by which youth is considered subordinate by dominant, adult society, and transgression of age barriers offers a means of resistance to this subordination.

Indeed, the conceptualisation of youth as subordinate, in addition to mere age restrictions, underpins the basic theory of youth subculture. Hall and Jefferson’s (1976) research on youth subcultures;

...emphasised the measures used by subordinate groups to resist the dominant culture by creating their own meanings. Young people were understood to negotiate with, or oppose, the dominant ideology, or to subvert dominant meanings by actively appropriating and transforming those meanings. The creation of new subjective meanings and oppositional lifestyles were interpreted as a cultural struggle for control over their lives. (Valentine, Skelton and Chambers, 1998: 13)

This research was largely based on Gramsci's (1971) conception of hegemony, which attempts to address the manner in which people 'consent to' and negotiate their subordination. If youth is to be thought of as subordinate, then rave culture offers means by which this subordination can be challenged.

Grounded in Marxism, Gramsci uses the term 'hegemony' to refer to the way in which dominant groups within society through a process of moral and intellectual leadership, gain a form of consent from subordinate groups. Cultural theorists have since taken this concept to explain the various politics of popular culture, specifically the relationship between hegemony and popular culture. This approach is often referred to as neo-Gramscian hegemony theory, and it sees popular culture as a site of struggle between the forces of resistance of subordinate groups in society, and the forces of incorporation of dominant groups in society (Storey, 1993). This theory proposes that there is a middle ground between the imposition of culture as suggested by mass culture theorists and proponents of spontaneously oppositional cultures. Popular culture can thus be seen as a contested ground, moving between processes of resistance and incorporation at any given time, and labeled alternatively in historical accounts. Gramsci refers to the process within which aspects of popular culture moves as 'compromise equilibrium' (Storey, 1993). This thesis will analyse Sydney rave culture in terms of this 'compromise equilibrium'.

1.3 A Paradigm for Rave Culture?

Hebdige's work *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979) provides a thorough analysis of punk culture in Great Britain, as derived from the culture of mods, teddy boys and skinheads. In his approach he discusses the manner in which style is created through the use of cultural signs, operating at an unconscious level, in the form of commodities such as clothes. Hebdige's work provides a workable paradigm in terms of analysing rave culture(s), as indicated by the words of Luckman (1998);

...following on from the seminal work of Dick Hebdige (1979), rave culture can be seen and critiqued as the paradigmatic model of a lapsed subculture, redeemed via commodity co-option, under systems and processes of advanced capitalism. (Luckman, 1998, 45)

That is, Hebdige's approach can be utilised in contemporary analysis through the perspective of consumption, and its relationship with subculture.

Hebdige discusses the role of commodities in resistance, in terms of Gramsci's notion of hegemony.

We can see that such commodities are indeed open to a double inflection; to 'illegitimate' as well as 'legitimate' uses. These humble objects' can be magically appropriated; 'stolen' by subordinate groups and made to carry 'secret' meanings; meanings which express, in code, a form of resistance to the order which guarantees their continued subordination. (Hebdige, 1979:18)

In terms of this thesis, this has implications for the perceived feelings of being part of an underground movement, as commodities have the potential to operate as both expressing resistance and reinforcing subordination.

Hebdige (1979) describes the manner in which subcultures eventually return to dominant society in terms of the concept of incorporation. This can happen in two ways. The first is described as the commodity form of incorporation, in which subcultural signs are converted into mass produced objects, in which '...the creation and diffusion of new styles is inextricably bound up with the process of production, publicity and defusion of the subculture's subversive power' (Hebdige, 1979:95). That is the power achieved through the subversive use of cultural signs becomes nullified through a process of commercialisation and commodification. The second kind of incorporation is the ideological form, in which the dominant groups within society, such as the media, police and authorities label and redefine the deviant behaviour of subcultures;

...the Other can be trivialized, naturalized, domesticated. Here the difference is simply denied ('Otherness' is reduced to sameness). Alternatively, the Other can be transformed into meaningless exotica, a 'pure object, a spectacle, a clown' (Barthes, 1972) (Hebdige, 1979:97)

Through this labeling process, the subculture is thought to lose its socially resistant nature, as it either becomes accepted or placed beyond the realm of comprehension and analysis.

Bennett (1999c) however, conceptualises youth cultures in a somewhat different light. Essentially he declares Hebdige's model as unworkable when considering youth music and style;

...the musical tastes and stylistic preferences of youth, rather than being tied to issues of social class, as subculture maintains, are in fact examples of the late modern lifestyles in which notions of identity are 'constructed' rather than 'given', and fluid 'rather' than 'fixed' (1999c:599)

Bennett argues that the musical and stylistic sensibilities of people involved in the dance scene are indicative of a late modern 'sociality' rather than a fixed subcultural group. Specifically he argues that the notion of an ongoing working class struggle, and collective action as a singular use for adopting certain styles is not relevant. Another criticism is that the term 'subculture' is that '...it imposes rigid lines of division over forms of sociation which may, in effect, be rather more fleeting, and in many cases arbitrary' (Bennett, 1999:603). As an alternative he suggests Maffesoli's notion of *tribus* (tribes) as a means of explanation for groups of youth stylists.

1.4 Maffesoli's Tribes

Maffesoli (1996) offers a sociological theory of contemporary society in terms of the formation of 'tribes', more usually described as 'postmodern neo-tribes'. Particularly he notes how a shared ethical consciousness can act to create a 'tribe', which to a certain degree surpasses the importance of the individual. Maffesoli suggests that a tribe is;

Without the rigidity of the forms of organisation with which we are familiar, it refers to a certain ambience, a state of mind, and is preferably to be expressed through lifestyles that favour appearance and form. (1996:98)

So within this conceptualisation the notion of resistance of groups within contemporary society may be a part of its shared ethical ideals. The formation of these tribes is by no means fixed, is loosely organised yet still places an emphasis on style in expressing shared

ethical associations. This is important to consider when dealing with rave culture as it represents a framework, within which a philosophy may act to bind the subculture together, perhaps expressed through the process of consumption.

In the *Time of Tribes*, Maffesoli (1996) discusses how the concept of individualism should be discarded when considering postmodern subcultures. As an alternative he suggests that we are living in an empathetic age, and as such identification within groups 'is marked by the lack of differentiation, the 'loss' in a collective subject' (Maffesoli, 1996, pp. 11), what he calls *neo-tribalism*. In this sense the collective sensibility is considered to supersede the atomization of the individual, placing emphasis on a collective aesthetic experience;

It may be said that the aesthetics of sentiment are in no way characterized by an individual or 'interior' experience, but on the contrary, by something essentially open to others, to the Other. This overture connotes the space, the locale, the proxemics of the common destiny. It is this which allows us to establish a close link between the aesthetic matrix or aura and the ethical experience. (Maffesoli 1996, 14-15)

Essential to this concept is the idea of a shared social experience, which is born out of the sharing of the same territory (real or imagined). The ethical experience can be considered as a 'different morality' within a social group, which includes a strong component of empathy.

There would appear to be a link between solidarity and the communal ethic, which can be seen most vividly in the form of ritual. Although ritual is not goal oriented, its repetition acts to confirm the groups view of itself. Through shared gestures within the community a sense of solidarity is created. Maffesoli (1996) suggests that the expenditure of energy by the group guarantees its continued existence. Given this, the experience and participation in a rave is likely to solidify a sense of belonging to a neo-tribe, through the expression of identification within a group.

Where as the subcultural paradigm relies on a class based struggle between subordination and hegemony, neo-tribes are less specific, and this is related to the fact that young people appear to be far less concerned with the fit between visual style and musical taste (Bennett, 1999c). However, consumption and style are still thought to play a role with the overall ethical consciousness, as Bennett (1999c:606) notes;

Underpinning Maffesoli's concept of tribes is a concern to illustrate the shifting nature of collective associations between individuals as societies become increasingly consumer oriented.

From this perspective, a fully developed mass society offers a means of liberating, as opposed to oppressing, people, through the utilisation of commodities for the purpose of individual expression. The emphasis here is on choice, as opposed to the imposition of fixed subcultural rules. In this regard, the notion of neo-tribes does not necessarily mean the end of a 'subcultural tradition', but rather a new way of understanding the relationship between musical taste and visual style. The notion of a fixed relationship between musical taste and style gives way to an 'infinitely malleable and changeable nature of the latter (style) as these are appropriated and realised by individuals as aspects of consumer choice' (Bennett, 1999c:613)

1.5 Resistance, Incorporation and Consumption

Butsch (2001) calls for a reconsideration of the relationship between resistance (of subcultures) and commodification. Traditionally criticisms of commercialisation and commodification have emphasised the domination of the masses and cast consumers as victims of commercial culture (Butsch, 2001). However, he suggests that cultural theorists in the mid 70s to early 80s touched on the notion that;

...people were not suffering from false consciousness, but rather contended against cultural institutions and elites, often reinterpreting commodities to produce their own subculture serving their own interests (Butsch 2001: 72)

Although incorporation may challenge an oppositional subculture, members of a subculture may well use commodities in such a way as to act out their opposition. Butsch also suggests that neither incorporation nor resistance should be considered absolute, and that the next level of analysis after incorporation is largely missing in research. He indicates that future research should strive to identify new levels of resistance to incorporation, and consider the process as incomplete. Since Hebdige's time there has been a great deal of debate

considering commodification and resistance, and Butsch (2001) suggests that studies relating commodification and resistance need to focus on the relationship between the two notions, as opposed to one or the other.

Rosenbaum (1999) illustrates the significance of ascribing meaning to commodities in order to both create a sense of identity and differentiation. He writes; ‘Many commodities serve to confer identity because they allow the individual to differentiate him/herself from and/or assimilate with other people....’ (Rosenbaum, 1999:325). So, in this sense it could be suggested, in terms of Maffesoli’s notion of neo-tribes, that individuals are able to create a sense of themselves as belonging to a group, or not belonging to a group through the process of consumption. That is to say, through a constructed communal identity which, at least in part relies on the use of commodities. An alternative hypothesis could be that the ethical agenda of rave culture may act to completely reject commodification as it represents too great a challenge to the culture. The purpose of this thesis is to assess the complex and delicate relationship between consumption and subculture and/or the formation of neo-tribes, and to provide a detailed evaluation of this relationship in the rave scene in Sydney.

1.6 Themes in context

Rave culture, in many senses can be seen as having developed largely as an oppositional subculture (Garratt, 1998, Gibson 2000). This is a point which I will expand in Chapter Two, but is mentioned now to put this theoretical review into context. As rave culture has gained popularity, it will be seen that its oppositional status has been challenged, and processes of resistance and incorporation can be seen within the terms of Gramsci’s notion of ‘compromise equilibrium’. The process of commodification is of particular interest when considering this, as it represents the extent to which commercial culture has become absorbed into rave culture, that is, the extent to which the commercial aspects of mass culture have been absorbed into rave culture or smaller self contained commercial entities have arisen. Taking into account Butsch’s call for a more detailed analysis of this process, this thesis will analyse the extent to which this has occurred, and the implications which it has for rave culture as an oppositional subculture.

The framework I will use is Jackson's (1999) model of analysing the 'traffic of things'. Rather than merely following commodity chains, or analysing a culture from individual subjective experiences, I will look at the complex relationship between consumption and the extent of feelings of subcultural identity. The extent to which rave represents a contested domain will be evaluated, through an account of its status in Sydney, including its recent history, but more importantly its contemporary position. I focus specifically on the participants, that is those people who attended raves, their perspectives and an analysis of what they consume, how much they spend, and how this relates to feelings of rave culture as oppositional.

The principle hypothesis is that through processes of resistance, commodification and incorporation, members of rave culture have constructed new means of identification, and this has had an effect on the perception of raves as oppositional. Whilst relating to the process of incorporation, I will evaluate the extent to which Sydney rave culture fits with Hebdige's (1979) paradigm of subcultural style. In doing so I will also evaluate the role consumption takes in relation to the formation of neo-tribes. Integral to this evaluation will be the consideration of shared ethical consciousness, and the fluidity of these cultures in terms of shifting musical and stylistic preferences.

Chapter 2

Dance Music and Geography

Traditionally the field of music is one which has been left relatively unexplored by geographers, with a handful of studies which tended to map the diffusion of musical styles or analyse geographical imagery in lyrics. Smith (1997) describes how spaces of music are produced and consumed in many different ways, driven by the economy and embedded in a social and cultural context. Music is described as having the potential to construct meaning, evoking a sense of space and society that differs from, and is complementary to, that evoked by sight. Critical reflections on issues such as the nature of soundscapes, the definitions of music and cultural value, and the place of music in local, national and global cultures have been largely absent from geographical research, and require further examination (Leyshon, Matless & Revill, 1995). Gibson (2000) suggests that this emerging concern revolves around a conceptual development within geography, moving from 'objective' studies of cultural landscapes to the 'reading' of human made spaces as 'text'.

Analysing music presents geographers with a complex web of issues to consider, including the nature of soundscapes, definitions of music and cultural value, the geographies of different musical genres, and the place of music in local national and global cultures (Leyshon et al, 1995). Music represents a highly participatory art form, and is '...inextricable from the various politics of production, performance, listening and interaction in *space*' (Gibson, 2000: 3). The role of music in creating culture has been assessed in Halfacree and Kitchin's (1996) study on the Manchester popular music scene. They describe how fragments of popular music are used in the constructions of neo-tribes,

and these are formed and sustained through specific geographical contexts. In terms of this, choice in music allows youth cultures to display their attitudes through actively forming distinct groups;

...popular music 'transgresses' (Said 1991) from the musical realm to society as a whole. One's choice in music represents a 'cultural expression' (Frith 1988, 107) and one's cultural expression is increasingly significant in defining who one is, as alternative bases of identification have fallen into the background. (Halfacree et al, 1996: 48)

This quote sets up a context in youth cultures where factors such as visual style or attitude may be secondary to musical preference. This explanation, however, is limited, as it neglects the notion that music can function as a consumed experience by which affiliation can become ritualised beyond simple musical preference (i.e. in the form of a rave), and that musical preference may also be demonstrated through the appropriation, use and institutionalisation of certain commodities. They also fail to consider that the means of identification may in fact be more fluid and interchangeable than a simple, clear cut 'cultural expression'. Through the course of this thesis I will demonstrate that affiliation with electronic music in rave culture does not represent a solid cultural expression, rather it is under a continual process of evolution and development, within which genres, styles and attitudes undergo constant reinterpretation and change. I will also consider the manner in which music provides a means of identification for ravers, discussing the extent to which this identification is maintained within the context of Sydney. Whether or not certain tribes exist within sub-genres of rave related music exist will be considered, and I will discuss the use of associated commodities in terms of rave culture. The geographical analysis of music can take many forms, embedding aspects of sociology, cultural studies and economics. Halfacree and Kitchen (1996) emphasise a geographical perspective when analysing music based neo-tribes, in terms of its complementary nature to historical and sociological analysis.

Traditionally studies of cultural industries have revolved around areas such as film, fashion or even art. Although there are a small number of studies of the music industry, a great deal of work remains to be done on the commodity cycles of music, and their implications for culture. In short there is virtually no literature on 'the traffic of things' in regards to music. In terms of dance music specifically, there are a small number of studies focussing on the

rave and popular music scenes in Britain. Although Gibson (2000) discusses systems of provision in the Australian dance music scene, there have been no other studies considering dance music, youth styles and consumption here.

2.1 The geography of dance music and culture

Fundamental to the analysis of dance cultures are the notions of 'experiential consumption', performativity and group togetherness. Malbon's (1999) work on the geographies of clubbing in Britain provides a solid means of approaching the geographies of dance cultures. He argues that clubbing in particular renders notions of 'youth resistance' as simplistic. Rather he highlights the opportunistic nature of clubbing, specifically;

...in the relationships between processes of consuming, crowds and co-presencings, and the performance of identities and identifications in those crowds through the practices, spacings and timings of sociality. (Malbon, 1999:24)

In considering consumption in terms of dance cultures, Malbon (1999) conceives consumption as a process by which participants perform their involvement, across time and space, through which identities and identification constantly undergo the processes of construction, transformation and expression. In this sense consumption in dance cultures is conceived to be experiential, and this experience offers the context for identification, however fluid.

The focal point of the rave experience is the music, and the main form in which music is consumed is largely the DJ set (Gibson, 2000). The DJ set largely consists of a number of records spliced together, so one track follows into another, to produce a continuous flow of music, the DJ often feeding off the response of the audience in choosing the tracks to play. There are no set rules in terms of the extent of the creativity of the DJ, which ranges from the relatively simple splicing of records to the highly involved creation of new music every set, involving records, drum machines, samplers and synths. Hesmondhalgh (1998) relates this changed pattern of consumption to a shift in the codes of authenticity and credibility, as an apparent lack of concern regarding the identity of producers and performers turns the focus to the DJ as the artist. Another essential element in this shift in 'ideologies of authenticity' relates to a focus on rarity, obscurity and insider knowledge.

Dance cultures, with emphasis on collective consumption of recorded material (rather than private listening) and public participation at events (rather than attention placed solely on performers) has facilitated a shift of 'ideologies of authenticity' onto subcultural consumption, scenes, and knowledge of labels and places (Gibson, 2000, 125)

The DJs must be considered as a form of consumer since they are ultimately responsible for the purchase of music which is later consumed collectively by clubbers, ravers and party goers. Although not the primary focus of this thesis, the role of DJs in consumption should be appreciated contextually, as it is indicative of the experiential component of consumption for participants in dance cultures.

In Britain, the dance music explosion of the late 80s and early 90s produced some discussion relating the nature of sound to the environment in social, political, economic and cultural contexts. Ingham, Purvis and Clarke (1999) introduce the idea of the rave or dance party as a Temporary Autonomous Zone (TAZ), derived from Bey (1991), referring to an anarchistic notion of an uprising which liberates an area, and dissolves itself (to reform in another time or place) before the state can crush it. Their study focuses primarily on the transformation of industrial warehouses into venues in Blackburn, Lancashire, during the acid house explosion of the late 1980s. Of particular note is the complex geographical dynamic which;

...provides a vivid exemplification of the way in which a set of flows – primarily cultural and technological- can come to engage with the legacy of an earlier set of permanences; the specific configuration of types of space created by and creating a particular place. (Ingham et al, 1999, 291)

Ingham, Purvis and Clarke (1999) refer specifically to the temporary appropriation of the warehouse as a site of dance music consumption, as direct result of a series of fluid networks between various human and non-human actors. This appropriation of space and liberation of an area through music and dancing can be considered the means by which the rave is consumed performatively, drawing elements of sound, space and sociality into the overall experience.

From a geographical perspective, the consideration of dance cultures in terms of experiential consumption offers a broad scope for analysis, within the context of the theory outlined in Chapter One. Once participation in a rave is considered to be an act of performance, consumption and identification with a group, one can consider the extent to which such involvement constitutes the formation of 'subculture' (Hebdige, 1979). Hebdige's paradigm suggests that should rave culture constitute a subculture, as Luckman(1998) suggests, there would be a clearly defined style associated with it. Rather, if through the course of this thesis it is found that identification with groups is more fluid and interchangeable, then the notion of neo-tribes might be a more suitable means of understanding rave culture in Sydney. Although this may appear to offer a weaker version of 'subcultures', it shifts the level of analysis from style acting as means of resistance to hegemony (subculture), to style as the consumed expression of a shared social consciousness, which may be based on an aspect other than resistance (neo-tribes) . From here, consumption must be thought of in terms of both the experience, and in terms of commodities being ascribed meaning and being used to project style.

We now turn to the ritual of the rave, and the manner in which the isolated event of a rave acts to construct (or acts as a construction of) a shared ethical consciousness. On the one hand participation can be thought of as 'less of a singularly definable activity and more as a series of fragmented, temporal experiences' (Bennett, 1999c:611), where as on the other regular attendance and participation in the ritual can act to reinforce a shared ethic. Of paramount importance is the role of music, mediated through the DJ in creating this consciousness. As the following section deals with rave as a form of ritual, the issues of associated style will be dealt with more thoroughly in subsequent chapters.

2.2 The rave as ritual

The terms 'rave' and 'dance party' are often used by different people to mean different things. In the late 90s the term 'rave' has largely been phased out in Sydney as a result of state regulation. The term 'rave' once specifically referred to the (often illegal) appropriation and subversion of space, combined with certain types of music, lighting and drugs. The term 'dance party' largely referred to one off club nights, which although playing similar kinds of music lacked the spatially subversive, quasi political nature of a

rave. With the introduction of *The New South Wales Code of Practice for Dance Parties and Guidelines for the conduct of Dance Parties* (both released in their final form in 1998), came a change in definitions. Luckman notes that the first draft of the NSW guidelines;

...encourages promoters to use the name 'dance party' as distinct from 'rave party' as : 'The term 'rave' has a negative and pro-drug reputation, and the image it reflects will not help in getting the needed approval and consents' (Luckman, 2000:219)

Although I will use the terms 'rave' and 'dance party' interchangeably, it should be noted that the type of dance party with which this research is concerned largely revolves around those spawned from 'rave' culture. That is, I use 'rave' to describe events which combine electronic music, lighting and the appropriation of space not primarily set aside for the appreciation of music. Unlike clubs these events do not usually have age restrictions. Club based cultures will be dealt with, but only in that they relate to what is now predominantly only colloquially referred to as 'rave' culture.

Although there is great variation between sites of raves or dance parties, styles of music and the manner in which a rave or dance party is constructed, there are some common features which should be outlined at this early stage. These features act to not only define a rave or dance party as such, but demonstrate the manner in which music can be used to construct and define space, however temporal (Smith, 2000). As Zagora (1996) notes, "A rave is not a 'real physical' place, it is just a social conception" (Zagora, 1996:3). That is to say, in terms of Ingham, Purvis and Clarke's (1999) conception of the rave as a temporary autonomous zone, people use music, lighting, and space to construct a temporary world, which only exists as a rave or dance party for the duration of the event.

The defining feature of a rave or dance party is the use of electronic music, often dubbed by authorities as 'repetitive beats', to create a certain atmosphere. This music comes under many titles, and within Sydney the main genres are techno, trance, freeform, house, hardcore, happy hardcore, drum and bass and breaks. Each of these styles attract slightly different audiences, and are mixed in many kinds of ways at certain events. Perhaps the most important facet of these styles of music is the fact that they are all derived through synthetic means, combining technology such drum machines, samples, and electronic noises, giving dance music the ability to go beyond human capacity in terms of rhythm,

precision and speed. When DJs splice together records containing this type of music for up to 12 hours straight it act to create an environment which transcends that of human capabilities, by which participants socially share an other worldly experience.

Traditional postmodern approaches to the studies of raves focus on abandonment, disengagement and disappearance (Hutson, 2000). Technology such as lasers, visual projections, strobes, lights and smoke machines are also frequently used to heighten this synthetic experience of the rave. Lighting is usually timed with the music, and often require the use of a 'VJ', whose expertise in exotic visual stimulation add this perceptual dimension to the music. When highly stimulating lighting and loud electronic music are combined at the site of the rave or dance party, a virtual 'alternate reality' is created, where participants can dance, and allow themselves to fall into a trance like state through this synthetic sensual stimulation. The sensory overload of throbbing music, exotic lighting, exhaustive dancing and possibly the stimulation of drugs have been seen as fulfilling a relentless and intense desire for pleasure (Hutson, 2000).

For those who choose to participate, drugs can play a key role. Although I will not make any assumptions about the extent to which this is so, their role for some in assisting the sensual experience should be noted. Commonly used rave and dance party drugs usually include Amphetamines ('speed'), Ecstasy (which can include MDMA, MDA or MDE) and LSD. Ecstasy has traditionally been associated with rave cultures, and the empathetic effects of its original form of MDMA have largely been attributed to the formation of atmosphere of tolerance and acceptance within the rave. As Hutson notes: '...egos can be shed and inhibitions erased by MDMA, which is renowned as a harmony inducing drug' (2000:44) The effects of drugs on emotion (such as feelings of euphoria and happiness) and sensual experience (such as hallucinations or altered perception) can act to propel people well beyond the bounds of normality, and assist in creating what I have described as a 'synthetic world'.

Although it is popular in the literature to conceive the rave as a hedonistic escape from reality, Hutson (2000) suggests this approach doesn't consider the significant and meaningful spiritual experience gained by those who participate. He refers to the notion of "technoshamanism" as an explanation of why ravers interpret their experiences in spiritual terms. That is the DJ is viewed as a spiritual leader;

through a tapestry of mind-bending music, the DJ is said to take the dancers on an overnight journey, with one finger on the pulse of the adventure and the other on the turntables (Hutson, 2000: 38)

Hutson (2000) relates the altered states of consciousness at raves to the varied types of stimulation present. He also discusses how Andrew Neher argues that the results of rhythmic stimulation found at raves are comparable to that found in the ethnographic analysis of traditional ceremonies, which can include unusual perceptions and hallucinations.

The spatial layout of the rave can be attributed to its construction as a site of pseudo-spiritual ritual. Usually a rave will consist of at least a main room, and a 'chill out' area. At the front of the main room is the DJ stand, on either side of which are the main speakers. Surrounding this area will be a variety of lighting apparatus, and often a laser projection system directly above the DJ (Figure 1). This layout focuses the attention of the participants to one area of the room, from which the majority of their sensual stimulation will come. Ravers will face the DJ while dancing (Plates 1 and 2), and cheer when certain tracks are played. Occasionally an MC is used to interact with the audience and help hype them into a state of frenzied excitement. This behaviour is indicative of what Maffesoli (1996:11) describes as 'loss' in collective subject' of the rave.

The name of a rave or dance party plays an important role in projecting a sense of otherworldliness. Names such as "Utopia", "Field of Dreams" or "Mystic" all suggest the creation of a fantasy world. Other names such as "Hyperspeed", "Transmission: Hyperspace" and "Rushhour" all imply the active participation of attendees in creating an alternate reality. The "Transmission: Hyperspace" flyer boasts 'The best DJs in the whole galaxy sending you to another dimension' (Plate 3). By involving both the 'DJs' and 'you' with the 'galaxy' and 'another dimension', the flyer effectively shows how the rave will be constructed to take one from normality into another, synthetic world. References to space and fantasy undoubtedly play a key role in giving potential attendees the sense that the rave will propel them into another dimension.

On the level of the individual event, the rave acts to either provide the context or act as a creation of a shared social and ethical experience. Integral to this is the aspect of experiential consumption, by which participants both perform and consume their group identification for the duration of the rave. We must now analyse the social consciousness which transgresses that of the singular event, and discuss, in general the ethical consciousness which arises from regular participation in such events.

2.3 Beyond the performative nature of raves

There has been some discussion on the degree to which rave culture(s) represent the forum for the performance of a shared ethical consciousness. Although the potential fluidity of the means of expressing identity have been touched upon, there are some traditional features regarding the performance of involvement in rave culture. The philosophy of PLUR (Peace, Love, Unity and Respect), which rose from the Acid House movement in Britain in the late 1980s, has (at least historically) played an important role in producing an environment of tolerance and acceptance at raves (Garratt, 1998; Richard and Kruger, 1998; Weber, 1999), possibly as a result of the empathetic effects of Ecstasy (Hutson, 2000). Techno music of raves has been described as ‘... a special electronic expression for nearly every mood, its heterogeneous rhythm uniting dancers regardless of their race, class, age, gender or sexuality’ (Richard and Kruger, 1998: 162). Although this statement could be regarded as an exaggeration, it highlights the notion that an underlying ethic may transcend that of the duration of an individual event.

There has also been reference to the reconstruction of gender identities within the rave or dance party. Pini (1997), although conceding that the role of women in the cultural production of raves (flyers, events, Djing etc) may be limited, she suggests that women’s involvement in raves has in many ways been ‘liberating’. In particular she refers to an ‘undoing’ of the traditional (western) cultural associations between ‘dancing, drugged, ‘dressed up’ woman and sexual invitation’ (Pini, 1997: 154). Specifically she refers to the fact that the rave is largely constructed as a none sexual zone. This is indicative of the construction of a shared ethic or different morality within the context of the rave.

Rave culture can be seen as separate from club based cultures in that it refers to the temporary appropriation of space not usually set aside for music and the general absence of age restrictions. As an isolated event, the rave acts as a ritualised expression of, or context for, a shared social and ethical consciousness. Through conceptualising raves in spiritual terms, we set up a means of understanding how ‘a certain ambience, a state of mind’ (Maffesoli, 1996:98) may relate to ‘lifestyles that favour appearance and form’ (Maffesoli, 1996:98). The role of consumption thus may act as an expression of this shared social consciousness.

Luckman (1998) suggests that rave culture operates as an example of a lapsed subculture in terms of Hebdige’s (1979) paradigm. If this is the case in Sydney, then resistance will be seen as having a key role in group identification, and the process of incorporation (both commodified and ideological) will be shown as threatening the means by which participants identify with certain groups. Verhagen, Van Wel, Bogt and Hibbel (2000) describe how the Dutch rave subculture of ‘Gabber’ lost its sense of oppositional identity as the scene increased in popularity, and became increasingly incorporated into popular commercial culture. This was particularly true in terms of the subculture’s portrayal in the media. The remainder of this thesis will consider the importance of resistance in group identification within Sydney rave culture, through an interpretation of both experiential and commodity based consumption. This was analysed through a number of techniques, most significantly of which was a questionnaire based survey, administered at the University of Sydney and over the Internet (See ‘Methodology’, appendix A)

Chapter 3

Fragmentation and Consolidation : Historical Perspectives of the Sydney Rave Scene

The purpose of this chapter, rather than providing an exhaustive history of the Sydney dance party scene, is to outline some of the major features of its development. I will analyse the scene in terms of the processes of fragmentation and consolidation, attempting to frame the discourse in terms of both 'subculture' and 'neo-tribes'. I will also describe the manner in which notions of authenticity and credibility (i.e. the degree to which strong group membership is required) are constructed, in terms of the extent to which the scene operates as an 'underground' movement. This provides the context for later discussion of the Sydney dance party scene as it exists today.

Much of the literature regarding the Sydney Dance party scene takes the perspective that the culture is a merely the product of a displaced movement, namely that found in Europe and the United States. As early as 1992 Murphie and Scheer noted that 'House music in Australia is about constructing identities using borrowed or translated signifiers'. They refer to the notions that at that time there was virtually no locally produced house music, and events carried '...the seductive sounds of a nostalgia for unreachable origins' (1992: 183). The Sydney dance party scene however, can be viewed as operating as more than borrowed mythology;

The dance culture here is *part* of a thriving global network which reiterates and feeds off itself – techno is perhaps the first musical movement to truly capture this feeling which the Internet has done so much to achieve – the veritable ‘global community’ (Park and Northwood 1996:2)

Park and Northwood (1996) go on to describe the Australian dance party scene as a ‘vital organ’ of a central nervous system, rather than simply a ‘cheap imitation’. Lacking solid empirical grounding, this notion suggests that the Sydney dance party scene does in fact mimic overseas trends, but is, in a sense integrated reflexively with them. They do not consider the means by which Sydney may construct its own interpretation and meaning through participation with a global culture (ie rave), within a local setting. This section outlines the discourse of the Sydney dance party scene in terms of the local re-interpretation of this global phenomenon in a local context.

The event which is generally regarded as the earliest formation of the dance party scene in Sydney, is the Sleaze Ball, which occurs as part of the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. This event was first held in 1978, and at that time was met with violent clashes with police (Murphie et al, 1992). All the money made from the Sleaze Ball goes into supporting the Mardi Gras, and it can be seen as having a clear political and ideological motivation. This early incarnation of dance party culture can be viewed as an example of a subordinate group negotiating its position in terms of the hegemony of dominant society. In this respect it represented a ‘subculture’ as Hebdige (1979) describes. As the appeal of dance parties widened, values of gay dance culture were to follow through into inner city warehouse based rave cultures. These environments were accepting of polymorphous sexuality, celebrated difference, and moved the emphasis away from dance as a form of pick-up to an individual form of creative expression.

In 1983 the Recreational Art Team (RAT) were the first to broaden the scope of large dance events in Australia, even though these events preceded dance music as we know it today. The RAT parties grew in size from their conception, and the emphasis was on producing a creative atmosphere with a variety of things to do, and a warm atmosphere within which one could mix with and meet a variety of people. These essentially catered to the affluent inner city and north shore crowds (Murphie et al 1992). Following the success of these parties a number of other parties followed, including Dance Delirium, FUN and Sweatbox among

others. These parties largely represented a desire to participate in global culture, that 'seemed to transcend the so called 'tyranny of distance' and connect Australia with the instantaneity of fashion and music from the rest of the world' (Murphie et al 1992). Park and Northwood (1996) suggest that the early RAT and Hordern parties represented the most stable state of the Sydney dance party scene, before the various divisions and splits emerged by musical genre and sub-scene. The key aspect was artistic self expression through something not understood or recognised by dominant society, despite the generally affluent membership. In these terms, it still represented a perceived challenge to hegemony, through art and intellect rather than class resistance, and represented a relatively self contained, exclusive culture.

Many regard 1992 to be the year that the Sydney rave scene exploded, with parties such as Happy Valley, Ecology, Prodigy and Aztec (Park and Northwood, 1996). These parties used the names of other popular parties in Europe, perhaps in a bid to utilise their audience's idolisation of European dance culture, demonstrating both the localisation of dance party culture, and incorporation into the global community. This year is often regarded by older ravers as the best Sydney has ever seen, attracting up to 5000 people a party. Perhaps the most appealing aspect of this time was the fact that it was regarded as being 'underground', as an editor of *3D World* magazine wrote in 1998;

One of the fun parts of the early parties for many people was that they were doing something 'underground' and I don't just mean music. Their friends didn't know about it, their parents were clueless and hey the governing bodies sure didn't know what was going on. (401, 25/05/98).

The feeling at this time was of being part of a movement which was self contained, and represented resistance in terms of self expression. It was considered 'underground' due to the fact that it was based on insider knowledge, and represented a site for resistance not yet acknowledged by most of society. The group was thus integrated through a feeling that each member was involved in something new and relatively secret, and it maintained its position as a 'subculture' through the shared feeling of negotiating a *perceived* 'subordination' through music.

Divisions within the dance party scene are thought to have arisen around 1993/94, following media attention after Happy Valley 2, when a number of ravers returning from its south coast location were involved in fatal car accidents. For the first time, the media had introduced the term 'rave' into dominant society. This had a dual impact on the scene; on the one hand it grew due to increased exposure, and on the other it shrunk down to around 1000 of the 'original' ravers who continued to attend parties in the rave scene. DJ Jim Jams noted that in 1994 there appeared a clear distinction between 'the core of the rave scene' and people who 'didn't really know anything about it', who annoyed the ravers at the 'core' of the culture (Park and Northwood, 1996). From a subcultural perspective, this represents an ideological form of incorporation, which notably had a detrimental effect on this subculture's identity, in terms of members feeling an ability to express 'resistance'. This widened appeal also decreased the perceived credibility of the scene, as its exclusive 'underground' nature was threatened through increased participation.

Rather than representing a class based struggle between subordination and hegemony, Sydney dance party culture rose from gay culture negotiating their subordination in terms of mainstream society. This grew to represent a wider group carrying ideas about art and social consciousness, and expressing resistance in terms of these. Remaining exclusive, and considered 'underground' as result, early dance party culture acted largely as a 'subculture' as Hebdige (1979) describes. A result of media attention, the process of incorporation threatened the subculture in terms of both negative exposure to dominant society, and the attraction of people outside the exclusive circles within it was once contained.

3.1 The Sydney Rave scene 1996-2000 -'Old Skool' vs 'New Skool', and disappearing PLUR

In order to set up the context within which Sydney rave culture exists today, I examined letters to the street magazine *3D World* from 1996 to 2000 (see 'Methodology', Appendix A). This section will demonstrate the fluid nature of affiliations within rave cultures in Sydney, and build a context for understanding the scene in terms of the processes of fragmentation and consolidation. The period around 1996 and 1997 was a time which is often regarded as a crisis point for rave culture in Sydney, from which many people retrospectively thought it might not recover (Mark Dynamix, per comm, 2001).

As rave culture became more popular amongst a wider audience in the mid 1990s a general distinction emerged between those who were active in the scene in the early 90s (the 'old skool' ravers) and those who had become active in the mid to late 90s (the 'new skool' ravers). These groups differentiate between each other in terms of music taste (eg 'Old Skool' vs 'Happy Hard'), attitude towards PLUR and expression of group identification (through clothes and other accessories). DJ Daniel Midian explains this distinction on a more detailed level;

The scene itself goes through a kind of metamorphosis every two years. What I mean by that is around (the) second year the number of new ravers outnumber the ones who have been raving for longer than a year. The new majority often have different tastes and ideals to the older ones, so inevitably the old skool vs new skool debate begins, which always results in the older ravers thinking it is not what it used to be and leaving. (Daniel Midian, per comm, 2001)

In light of this, older ravers will inevitably view younger ravers as a threat to 'their' scene, and either leave the scene or move into other related dance music scenes (e.g. clubs). The scene is often viewed by participants as in a constant state of decline, for which younger ravers are singled out as being responsible. Both the media and the increased commercialism of the scene are often indicated in informing the younger ravers of events (Desenberg, 1997; Gibson et al, 2001; Park et al, 1996).

In the past, letters to *3D World* have frequently cited the appropriation of rave culture by young teenagers as being harmful to the scene. In issue 289 (18/05/96) one 'concerned raver' wrote;

The reason the scene is in so much trouble is the abundance of kids under the age of about 18 trying to party in a scene they should not be in.

Another wrote in issue 304 (1/07/96):

...the new rave scene is nothing more than a mass of uneducated children, ignorant to what damage they are doing to themselves and to the reputation of what used to be a wonderful dance culture.

These comments focus specifically on the perceived irresponsibility of these younger participants, the second comment in particular alluding to drug use. The indication is that should these younger ravers harm themselves (i.e. through drug use) then it would damage the reputation of the scene in general, in terms of potential media attention and resulting intervention by authorities. This period in the mid to late 90s (as opposed to today) was marred by frequent police shutdowns and council interventions. In this way anything which might have heightened these occurrences had the potential to either decrease the number of raves or lead to police shutdowns, which would make participating in raves harder and less pleasant.

Another perspective is that such attacks are more indicative of an underlying anxiety which might be expected from a subculture under threat of change as the ideals, music and cultural signs adapt to a new generation. Other comments regarding concern with age around this period included such statements as 'I'm pissed off with this Kiddy Core shit' (Issue 298, 20/05/96). 'Phillip S' wrote in issue 378 of *3d World*;

In the past few months there has been a lot of debating on whether the Sydney scene has been destroyed by the arrival of a sudden flood of younger party goers. Lets face it when partying the only thing more important than music is the people you are partying with. A lot of older ravers have been turned off warehouse parties because they don't feel comfortable to be in the same place at the same time as these new "kiddycore" ravers. I'm 18 years old and personally feel that our scene has taken a turn for the worse due to the above facts. (8/12/1997)

This concern with participants of younger groups is a topic which is still relevant in the contemporary rave scene. It is of interest as it demonstrates how many 'old skool' ravers perceive not only the credibility, but the existence of the culture itself as being under threat due to the increasing participation of youngsters. In particular they are all blamed for underdeveloped music tastes, including Kiddycore, Happy Hard, Hardcore and Gabber. All of these styles are faster in tempo than traditional acid house or old skool styles, and Kiddycore and Happy Hard particularly include melodic aspects which blatantly appeal to less refined tastes, often branded as 'cheesy' by old skool ravers. New skool ravers also introduce new cultural aspects to rave culture. Whereas the original acid house movement

placed little emphasis on appearance (the standard 'uniform' usually only comprising t-shirt, jeans and sneakers), clothing and other commodified accessories such as children's backpacks, glow sticks and lollipops have become potent cultural signs within rave culture in Sydney.

Another aspect, although not viewed exclusively as due to the scene getting younger, is the decrease in the number of ravers adopting the philosophy of PLUR. A letter in issue 307 of *3D World*, by a apparent 'hardcore' raver indicates this;

I am alive and missing raves like hell - its hard, its tearing the insides of me apart. If you are as strong as I, you could feel the hardness inside you.....So little softies go home until you have realised there can be no happiness especially in this world so stop trying to fake! "Can I get an E hug" - that's all you hear at raves now days with all these Jolly Rogers. Next time someone does that to me I'm gonna say 'can I give you a smack in the mouth!' I've done it once before and I can't wait to do it again - now that's where I get my energy not from heeby jeeby DRUGZ! I've grown up to HATE everyone and I love it - but that's life! The hardcore bitch is baaack and ready to attack even harder than ever. (22/07/96)

In this letter one can see an interpretation of the rave scene which vastly contrasts from one of Peace, Love, Unity and Respect This shows that the rave scene may have been under threat in terms of people introducing ideals which don't fit with this shared ethical agenda. In this respect the neo-tribal notion that rave is based on the shared ethic of PLUR is challenged, indicating that there may be other factors which bind the group together. In this case the author indicated that their preferred genre of music was 'hardcore', acting as the primary point of identification with the scene. This shows that there are at least two general attitudes within the scene in 1996, one which is aggressive and confrontational and one which maintains the idea of PLUR. Essentially, under 18s have been singled out as having a lack of *understanding* of the subculture, and threaten the scene in the eyes of old skool ravers as they appropriate the culture and introduce new codes of authenticity and credibility, in terms of style, attitude and musical taste. The notion that increased commercialisation has led to fewer people attending for 'the right reasons', and a subsequent decrease in the prevalence of people adopting the attitude of PLUR, has also been noted in other parts of the world, such as Toronto, Canada (Weber, 1999).

3.2 Media, Moral Panic and Regulation of Dance Parties in Sydney

From dance party culture's original incarnation acting largely as a 'subculture', rising from Sydney's inner city gay population, its position would be both threatened and reinforced through media representations. On the one hand the media acted, through moral panic, to cast rave culture outside the realm of dominant society, reinforcing its resistant nature. On the other it acted to simultaneously define it and give a sense of legitimacy to its members.

Within Sydney, the media have played an integral role in constructing and perpetuating public opinions regarding rave and dance party culture. In many ways the media have acted to mythologise dance party culture, portraying it largely as the deviant other, and have both reflected and constructed strong dominant public opinions. As Gibson and Pagan note;

Media communication can entrench myth in relation to subcultures by setting up normative boundaries that define deviance, and politicise youth subcultures through this representation. (Gibson & Pagan, 2001: 9)

At the same time the media has acted as one means by which dance party culture has been legitimised in the eyes of its participants. Just as the rise of the nation state coincided with the rise of print culture, as newspaper reading acted to legitimise the implementation of control strategies (Anderson, 1983 in Gibson et al, 2001), one means by which dance party culture assumed status as a subculture was through media discourse. This discourse plays an integral role in the construction of dance party culture in Sydney as we know it today, through its influence on public opinion, dance party participants and political forces which act to regulate it.

Jesse Desenberg (aka DJ Kid Kenobi) (1997) discusses the importance of the drug Ecstasy in the dominant culture's understanding of dance party culture, through the media perception of raves and ravers. He suggested that media perceptions often fall into portraying dance party cultures as 'folk devils', as has been done with many sub-cultures of the past, such as hippies, punks or mods. He discussed the manner in which drug taking was 'understood' by the media according to the moral standards of the time, and interpreted the media outcry following the 1995 death of Anna Wood in this light. Desenberg (1997)

described how this media attention constructed a public interpretation of the Sydney dance party scene. In portraying a middle class girl from the north shore as the corrupted innocent, and associating party organisers with the drug trade, the media firmly defined dance party culture as being outside the status quo. That is, media portrayals of moral panic act to carry out what Hebdige describes as an ideological form of incorporation of rave culture, in that '...the Other can be transformed into meaningless exotica' (Hebdige, 1979: 97), which places a subculture outside the realm of comprehension of dominant society. In this way a tacit understanding is reached between the subordinate group and dominant society, which Gramsci (1971) describes as 'consent' on both sides, reinforcing the subordinate group's status and guaranteeing its resistant nature.

Ecstasy use within club cultures can be understood as perhaps one of the most potent means by which participants express resistance. It can be viewed as a commodity (albeit illegal) by which members of rave culture define themselves. Although motivation for use may appear to be purely hedonistic, the generally poor quality of Australian manufactured Ecstasy (often substituted with speed, PMA, Ketamine or other impurities) (Buckfield, per comm, 2001), would indicate that its use in Australia can often act as a cultural sign. That is, through the performance of consuming 'Ecstasy' tablets, participants demonstrate their affiliation with rave culture and express resistance. Members of rave culture often don't care if its true MDMA, '...so long as it has an effect' (Anon, per comm, 2001). This is of course not the case for all users, many of whom will only purchase the highest quality MDMA, often testing them with legally available kits, or reading reports on web sites such as www.pillreports.com or www.peakers.net. In both cases however, Ecstasy can be viewed as a commodity by which participants in rave and other club cultures demonstrate a form of resistance, whilst guaranteeing their continued subordinate position in the eyes of dominant culture. It is unlikely that it will ever undergo the commodified form of incorporation, and thus perpetuates the notion of rave culture being 'underground'.

The media has acted to create a new discourse for the Sydney dance party scene. Desenberg (1997) describes this as the media 'acting out its own dreaded self fulfilling prophecy', in terms of drawing audiences to dance parties whose average age fell well below that acceptable prior to the explosion of media attention. Gibson and Pagan (2001) noted how media attention from 1992 onwards had acted to create a rediscovery of rave culture in a more marketable form;

The growing warehouse party scene that had promoted this rediscovery of rave culture was slowly being made accessible through a dual process of commercialisation and media representation. (Gibson et al, 2001: 13)

Whilst attempting to trivialise rave cultures through the process of ideological incorporation, the media had, in effect, acted to widen its appeal, informing people outside its exclusive circles;

When Anna died and the media made such a story of it, the rave scene was changed unbelievably within a few months. What the general public didn't realise is (that) it was probably the biggest advertisement the rave scene has ever had. Before Anna's death maybe 20% of all the youth in Sydney knew what a rave was. After her death, about 80% knew. (Daniel Midian, per comm, 2001)

In painting Anna Wood as the corrupted middle class innocent, the media had both represented rave culture as a site of resistance and guaranteed its continued subordination in terms of dominant society. This subordination meant that the perception of rave culture as 'underground' was maintained, ensuring its continued credibility and desirability.

3.3 Divisions in terms of genre of music

A third distinct group (as oppose to the binary 'old skool vs 'new skool' distinction) can be seen as existing. On the one hand those 'new skool' ravers who apparently do not carry the philosophy of PLUR are in direct opposition with 'old skool' ravers who are intolerant to change. The third group represents those true proponents of PLUR who embrace change and maintain the ideal that all should be welcome at raves. Rather many contributors blamed the attitudes of ravers, as oppose to certain groups. For example;

Ever since the Anna Wood incident I have noticed a lot of in-fighting, and bitchiness among ravers.....WE are the problem....The easiest way to destroy any movement (or personal relationship for that matter) is to attack it from within...

(‘Smylee’, 298, 20/5/96)

Other writers suggested that this internal bickering contradicted the true meaning of rave;

I have noticed a certain bickering between the various electronic music styles. When you seriously look at it, it is the music which binds us together, whether you are a raver or a clubber, whether you like house or happy-hard. We do it for the love of the music.

(‘Ben’, 346, 28/4/97)

One can see that despite the feeling of some ravers that the scene is fragmenting through increasing participation and introduction of new styles (such as hardcore and happy hard), others feel that the underlying philosophy of PLUR and the shared love of electronic music should never be forgotten. That is, there is an underlying sentiment in these letters that petty differences should be put aside for the utopian ideal that is rave culture. In the case of Ben’s comment in particular, music is identified as the commodity which binds the subculture together, and other aspects such as age and appearance should not be considered.

The general argument around 1996-97 regarding genre appears to be between proponents of hardcore/happy hardcore and those who request more diverse musical genres at raves. ‘Old Skool’ ravers make comments like;

...think back to the ‘old skool days’....when DJs would play intelligent sets....I mean, what about a bit of diversity here. What about trip hop, jungle, trance, hard house and the rest of the styles of techno that are around.

(‘Tracey’, 346, 28/04/97).

This self proclaimed ‘old skool’ raver felt that she had a more developed taste in music, a view possibly shared by others. In presenting this idea, old skool ravers manage to project a desire for continued exclusivity of rave culture; that is if certain genres music are more difficult to appreciate then it will effectively exclude people who are unable to appreciate those genres.

Happy Hardcore (sometimes referred to as Happy Hard) is a genre which is often criticised as being unrefined. It comprises of a heavy, regular kick drum beat, which is played at a

faster tempo than house or trance (see Glossary of Musical Terms). This is combined with repetitive melodic synthesiser lines which vary occasionally through the course of a track. Some feel that the rise of Happy Hard in the rave scene has threatened its underground nature;

How could you possibly call a party featuring the baldest lineup of Happy Hardcore DJs underground? Happy Hardcore is about as underground as Mariah Carey (ie not very) although I'd rather hear Mariah Carey at a party than this sacrilegious crap which sounds like a pre-school on speed. ('Rosy', 301, 11/06/96)

In this sense ravers who identified with Happy Hardcore in 1996 were frequently perceived by old skool ravers as not really understanding the scene, and thus threatening its cultural value and credibility. As will be shown, today Happy Hardcore and Hardcore are not only accepted, but indeed well liked genres within rave culture in Sydney. This is indicative of Daniel Midian's (2001) notion that the scene goes through cycles of old skool and new skool ravers.

Indeed members of rave culture who identified with the scene through genres such as Hardcore and Happy Hardcore savagely defended these styles. Hardcore is similar to Happy Hard, except that it is often faster and contains less melodic lines. In response to a letter suggesting that Hardcore dominated parties at that time, the following comment was made;

...Fuck you! Raves should be a mixture of up front techno. Yes that came from a small minded, hardcore DJ's pen. The scene doesn't need gits like yourself telling it where its gone wrong...Hardcore definitely doesn't dominate parties these days. The last party I was at consisted of about 3 hours of hardcore the rest of the night was banging happy-hard. ('DJ Tyme II', 345, 21/04/97).

In this case DJ Tyme II defends the both the genres he plays (i.e. Hardcore) and in doing so the point of identification for these new skool ravers. This letter indicates that in 1997 the new skool hardcore and happy hard genres were beginning to represent a significant sub-group within the rave scene.

3.4 Other Divisions and threats to the scene

In addition to younger people, 'Home Boys' were another group who were singled out, whose behavior was seen as clashing with the '...intention to create a feeling of warmth, security, abandon, freedom and above all happiness and joy' (289, 18/05/96). In 1998, this comment arose;

Another bad point is the introduction of thieves to our scenes. Who the F@#K invited them? Then there is "The lost children of the black with white stripe Adidas" (no offense to wearers with other colour combinations, but Homies DO NOT usually wear other colours). All of you get lost.

('Red Star Boy', 397, 27/04/98)

Here one can see the manner in which rave culture has been challenged through participants who choose to present themselves (through the use of commodities such as clothing) in different ways. Clearly for such a stereotype to emerge, 'Homies', or people wearing similar clothes must have been a significant portion of rave culture at this time. Whether or not the link between Homies and theft at this time is real cannot possibly be evaluated. A letter in response to this stated;

I myself wear apparent homie gear to a few parties but not once has someone called me a homie for wearing any clothes that could make me seem like one. Don't be so arrogant, we are all here to enjoy the same scene, and as its already decaying its people like you through small mindedness contribute and speed up this decay. ('Diablo', 400, 18/05/98)

What is clear, however is that by dressing a certain way, by adopting new standards of dress at raves (ie Adidas or other 'Homie' gear), some perceived a threat to emerge. This is based directly in the commodities which members of rave culture chose to use as cultural signs. In this case consumption can be seen as acting to threaten perceived tribal nature of rave culture, as this clothing style may indicate something about one personal philosophy.

In the late 90s there was concern amongst the community regarding poor quality promoters, who were criticised as being motivated primarily by profit. This was seen as being the reason for the use of unsafe venues, party closures, overcrowding and lack of running water at raves. Letters requesting readers to 'Boycott dodgy promoters and their events' (Anon, 314, 9/9/96) and 'Fuck the scammers' ('Matt', 316, 23/09/96) were common around 1996. One letter (Mr Courtenay LEE SHOY, 316, 23/9/96) describes the manner in which a venue/promoter of a party called "Ballistic" had disconnected the taps in the bathrooms, and were charging exorbitant prices for bottled water. This letter even calls for regulation regarding running water at rave events. There were also concerns voiced about promoters making promises which were not kept, involving line up, light shows or venue issues. Editors replies to letter often involved advising readers to 'CHOOSE CAREFULLY' (Eds, 316, 23/9/96) when considering a party to attend. In one sense this comes down to the fact that rave's ever increasing popularity meant there were 'renegade' promoters attempting to put on parties at the minimum of expense, and exploit ravers financially by any means possible (eg bottled water sales). Around 1996 and 1997 there were a large number of smaller promoters, and the Code of Practice, and associated self regulation within the community of promoters had not yet come into effect. The impact of poor organisation within the scene had the effect of causing disillusionment amongst ravers, damaging the perceived happy and safe environment of rave events.

3.5 Themes in Context 1996-2000

The rave scene did not fall clearly into Hebdige's paradigm of a subculture between 1996-2000. Rather than having explicitly undergone a process of 'defusion', as it moved from resistance to incorporation, new styles and musical genres were introduced while maintaining the underlying factors of electronic music, dancing and use of novel space. In this way individuals sense of identity represents something more fluid than merely belonging to a rigidly defined subculture. Whilst new styles, genres and personal philosophies have at times been criticised, the ongoing rhetoric of PLUR ultimately allows them to absorb, or be absorbed into the Sydney rave scene.

Musical taste is the feature which is most commonly indicated as the point by which people identify themselves as being a part of the rave scene. Although there were two distinct groups; the 'old skool' preferring Acid House, Anthems and Old Skool, and the 'new skool' preferring Hardcore and Happy Hardcore, there was also a strong sentiment that all electronic music should be appreciated in the context of rave. Within the survey (See 'Methodology', Appendix A), 80% of respondents listed three genres or more as their preferred taste in dance music, indicating that generally Sydney ravers have fairly diverse tastes. This is indicative of the vague association with a 'state of mind' (Maffesoli, 1996) - in this case electronic music in general -, which is expressed through consumer choice. That is, while some members of the rave group felt stronger affiliations with certain genres than others, different genres represented different consumer choices within the rave scene. This notion is also true for visual styles, which may have been criticised upon first introduction (eg Home Boys), but were met with the notion that they should be tolerated. These individual styles thus become one of the many consumer choices through which identification with rave culture may be expressed.

3.6 Fragmentation and Consolidation within the Sydney Rave Scene

Through examining the history of the Sydney Dance music scene, one can begin to uncover two forces, those of fragmentation and consolidation. These processes are by no means absolute, but rather represent general trends at given time periods. On the one hand the scene can be seen to increasingly divide into sub genres and niches (fragmentation) , where as on the other it can be viewed as a more commercialised and less differentiated entity (consolidation). These can be measured by assessing the strength of affiliations with certain sub-genres, and the indication of distinct styles. As the media has both reinforced and challenged notions of 'the underground' aspect of dance music, various new niches have emerged. This process is also highlighted by divides in ethical consciousness of members of the subculture, and this will be dealt with more thoroughly in subsequent chapters. At the same time, largely through media attention and increased regulation of dance parties, a less differentiated commercialised, and perhaps 'mainstream' scene has emerged. This consolidated form of rave culture may also be due to the acceptance by many ravers that the scene will inevitably evolve, and that new developments should be tolerated. This process is exemplified through the increasing deployment of the term 'club cultures' as opposed to

more specific terms such as rave, acid house etc (Luckman, 1998). Thornton (1996) highlights the importance of avoiding binary distinctions when considering dance cultures and this was considered during research. Although a more detailed evaluation of the dance party scene in Sydney will be provided later, this section aims to outline the various trends over the last decade leading up to its present state.

Although, as has already been noted, the 'warehouse' scene never really existed in Sydney as it did in Europe or the USA, the introduction of *The NSW Code of Practice for Dance Parties* and *Guidelines for the Conduct of Dance Parties* (both released 1998) have been instrumental in affecting the organisation of parties in the inner city. Although the code is rarely followed verbatim, its impact has been increased safety and better organisation of parties in general (Luckman, 2001); some smaller promoters particularly were deterred from putting on parties of a sub standard quality for fear being shut down and/or fined. As a result some feel the 'do it yourself' attitude of the urban parties of the early 1990s has in some ways been superseded. Where as once dance parties in Sydney were about the subversion of space (albeit industrial or otherwise), and the assertion of power through youth action, dance parties have increasingly been produced for the purpose of profit. Dance scenes in recent years have increasingly moved into clubs, or more highly regulated dance party events. This is indicative of both the process of consolidation of scenes into 'club cultures' in general, and a process of increasing commercialisation. As a result the nature of the Sydney rave scene existing as a clearly defined subculture has moved to more general affiliations with electronic music.

It is generally agreed that since the introduction dance culture (both in Sydney and around the world) that 'the scene' has become more stylistically fragmented. Dance party culture as we know it today essentially began with the Acid house movement in the UK during the summer of 1988, dubbed the 'second summer of love'. As this subculture increased in popularity, for many of its members it lost its cutting edge, and numerous new styles would develop and gain popularity, such as techno, jungle (aka drum and bass), gabber, hardcore, trance etc. As this happened new subcultural rules were established. Where the Acid house scene had relied on house music, ecstasy and a philosophy later to be dubbed PLUR (Peace, Love, Unity and Respect), new scenes would require increasing knowledge of clothes, music, drugs and other features essential to identification with that given subculture. It

should be noted, however that accounts of subcultures, and their signs can too easily be caricatured in observation (Thornton, 1995).

So from the discussion it becomes apparent that any concise, clear definition of subsections within 'club cultures' is difficult to attain. There are of course key differences, but many variations represent many tones of grey as oppose to a black and white distinction between them. As it is one of the purposes of this thesis to outline the differentiation of rave culture in Sydney through consumption and the construction of neo-tribes through shared ethical consciousness, consideration will be given to this. The fact that many of these sub sections within 'club cultures' share characteristics will also be taken into account. This is not to say that the cultural differences between, say, the commercial house based club scene of Sydney and the Happy hard rave scene are not significant. Rather the complexity and integration of these cultures needs to be acknowledged if one is to present a meaningful account of rave culture in Sydney, as existing within 'club cultures'.

As dance music scenes fragment, accounts of dance culture that participants move between these subsections within 'club cultures' (Thornton, 1995; Garratt, 1998). As will be seen, however, these movements are far from absolute, and hence the process of consolidation can be seen through increasingly eclectic tastes in music and sub-genres played at rave events. In short, the processes of fragmentation and consolidation lie in a balance, where at a given time one may seem more prominent than the other, yet both will be active. As people move between scenes, they may carry on certain aspects of their previous scene, and may return to their original scene from time to time, making general distinctions more difficult to make (Thornton, 1995). An editor in issue 346 of *3D world* made the following comment;

The argument seems to be that a lot of people used to go to raves ad loved them, but now feel alienated by the music that doesn't cater to them anymore. Sure you can move to the club scene, but lets not kid anyone, clubs hardly hold the atmosphere ad excitement of the one-off venues used for raves, do they? (28/4/1997)

Music taste and event types have strong links to authenticity, credibility, sense of exclusivity, resistance and commercialisation. The remainder of this thesis will analyse the precise place of contemporary Sydney rave culture within 'club cultures', through the perspective of Hebdige's (1979) subcultural paradigm, and commodification.

In order to evaluate the extent to which a 'raver' image exists in Sydney, the degree to which the scene exists in either a predominantly fragmented or consolidated state must be determined. That is, if it is shown to be more fragmented, then this will have weight with the consideration that the Sydney rave scene acts as a series of successive subcultures. If a more consolidated scene is apparent, it will indicate that there is a less specific point of identification within the rave scene. If this is the case, then it will support Maffesoli's notion of neo-tribes, in the respect that affiliations with sub sections are more transient, and a more abstract collective consciousness binds the culture together as whole. In order to assess the extent of fragmentation, notions of style must be analysed. To do so I examined the use of commodities, ideas about style and feelings of identity within the scene. At the time research commenced, raves were generally large and featured a variety of musical genres in multiple arenas, this indicates that the scene was more unified than it has been in the past, and indicated that early 2001 was a more consolidated period for the Sydney rave scene.

Chapter 4

Commodities, Clubs and DIY Raves

Chapters Five and Six will discuss the results of the survey (see 'Methodology', Appendix A), in terms of the manner in which commodities are used by ravers to project a certain style. The aim is to attempt to discover whether a raver image exists, and the importance of this image to people who attend raves. If Hebdige's paradigm is to be considered applicable, then the process of incorporation will seem to lead from opposition to defusion. That is the resistant nature of rave culture will have given way and a successive 'subculture' or 'subcultures', displaying their own specific features. If, as suggested by Bennett (1999c), Maffesoli's notion of neo-tribes, based on a shared ethical consciousness is a better means of understanding youth style, then identification with rave cultures will thus be more transient and less specific than the more rigid criteria for subcultures as outlined in previous chapters. In particular I will examine the extent to which a shared ethical consciousness is present, with a particular focus on the way in which this is constructed. I will pay special attention to the role of commodities in this, and will determine if, as Hebdige suggests, the process of incorporation is in fact detrimental for a youth culture which identifies itself through music.

It has been well documented that rave cultures running from the original British acid house culture have fragmented in several ways (Luckman, 1998), and the scope of this thesis is within that culture which defines itself as 'rave' culture, as outlined in Chapter Two. Luckman describes how the place of rave derived cultures within 'club cultures' should be taken into account;

...rave derived cultures can be mapped in terms of a trajectory running gambit from resistant and exclusive subculture through redemption, entailing incorporation into the dominant culture by means of mass commercial exploitation. The commercial co-option of central tenets of the original subcultures in order to facilitate the renewed profitability of nightclubs, is recognised through growing deployment of the term “club cultures” , instead of the original and more specific terms: rave, dance party, acid house, et cetera. Rave-derived cultures ultimately represent complex sites of both nuanced co-option and resistance; of large scale commerciality, as well as community based oppositional action. (Luckman, 1998, 48)

Luckman suggests that rave cultures have, in a sense, fragmented, and yet should all be classified under the banner of ‘club cultures’. Through this chapter, the impact of commodification, resistance, and incorporation will be assessed in terms of identity and ethical consciousness of people who consider themselves ‘ravers’. In light of this, several key aspects must be considered; 1) The extent does Sydney rave culture represents ‘mass commercial exploitation’ 2) The self placement of Sydney ravers within the ‘nuanced co-option’ (such as ‘sub scenes’, sub genres etc), resistance and large scale commerciality, and; 3) The extent to which the Sydney rave scene represents a forum for ‘community based and oppositional action’.

It will be shown that resistance within rave culture in Sydney has taken on new forms from the traditional illegal occupation and subversion of space, within the context of the Temporary Autonomous Zone. Rather than an outright resistance to the commodified form of incorporation, we will not only see commodities put to subcultural use, but the process of commercialisation actually being used in gaining credibility for a given party. The process of incorporation can be seen as having direct effects on the underlying philosophy of PLUR, which has become an optional attitude choice within the scene. I will thus be examining additional means by which a shared ethical consciousness exists, in attempting to frame rave culture within the concept of neo-tribes. The key issues examined in this context are the use and appropriation of certain commodities, the relationship of rave to club culture, the effect of incorporation on the organisation of raves, the relationship between commercial sponsorship and credibility and the degree to which Sydney rave culture operates as an underground movement.

4.1 Cultural Signs and Commodities within Sydney Rave Culture Today

We must now turn to perception of the Sydney rave scene as it exists today. In preliminary interviews conducted with ravers I discovered the general sentiment that the scene had become 'more commercial', and that this was seen as both a positive and a negative thing. Currently, it is generally accepted amongst the rave community (including DJs, promoters and ravers) that the scene is perhaps the healthiest it has ever been. I now turn to analysing the relationship between this 'commercial' aspect of rave, and the fact that it is currently so successful. Despite the introduction of the Code of Practice, many parties are still of dubious legality. Despite this, there have been virtually no police shutdowns in the last twelve months. Negative media attention has also given way for more objective understandings of the culture, including the Four Corners episode 'Under the Mirrorball'.

Some 95% of respondents agreed that in the time which they had been attending raves (which ranged from 3 months to 8 years) the scene had become more commercial. This was seen as affecting the scene in a number of ways, particularly in terms of the scale and frequency of parties, and the type of people who attend them. The key question here is whether or not this trend towards a more commercialised rave culture has affected the perceived subcultural value for members, and if so in which ways. If commodities are to be used to carry messages about group identity, then a balance must exist between exploitation and subcultural use. This section will outline how the relationship between consumption and commercial exploitation presents a new perspective regarding youth cultures and consumption in terms of contemporary capitalism, which goes beyond the notion of incorporation as presented by Hebdige.

Of the entire sample, 61% indicated that they bought clothes specifically for raves. Of this group the average amount spent a month was \$114, and the average of the entire sample was \$70 a month. There was a great diversity in terms of the type of stores where respondents shopped for their 'rave clothes'. They went from boutique Oxford Street stores through to Op shops and St Vincent de Pauls. There was also one respondent who indicated that he made his own clothes from a variety of materials. It was revealed that certain brands such as Rushn, NRG, Fresh Jive, Diesel, Mooks, Levi and Lee were particularly popular. Stores

which were mentioned frequently in the sample were Central station Records, General Pants, Clothes Encounter and Urban Store.

A division exists between those who felt fashion is important, and those who did not. DJ Dave Psi, in an interview made the point that;

When you get to a party and your favourite song is on. Open your arms, close your eyes, and enjoy the moment. If your wearing the sickest T-shirt supplied from Rushn or even a \$10 shirt from Go Lo, the feeling is the same (PLUR) Who cares about the label, it ain't important..... (Dave Psi, per comm, 2001)

However, the opinion also existed that clothing plays a role in distinguishing between certain genres, although not being necessarily vital. Prominent Sydney DJ Mark Dynamix, who had the benefit of playing both raves and Sydney's larger clubs, and made this comment regarding fashion in the dance scene;

Its important, it gives it an identity. Each genre of dance music has its own identity, and that's backed up by what people wear. Clubbers wear more sophisticated stuff, the ravers wear more colourful things, glow sticks hanging round their necks. (Mark Dynamix, per comm, 2001)

Daniel Midian, a Sydney rave promoter, made the comment that;

Fashion is quite relevant to raving, as with any subculture as it promotes the "raver" identity. It changes with whoever thinks the scene is fashionable. For instance if clubbers think rave is fashionable, then they bring club clothing with them, though the basic 'kiddy core' raver outfit never changes. (Daniel Midian, per comm, 2001)

So it can be said that a division exists between those who feel that fashion is important to rave culture, and those who feel other factors are important. What is clear is that to at least a portion of the rave community (and a majority as indicated by my research), projecting their raver identity through the consumption and use of clothes was important. What is also clear is that certain brand names and labels carry a stronger message of group identification, and this indicates that in this case commodification acts to strengthen the raver identity. This

challenges the notion of many previous studies that mass production of consumer goods acts directly to threaten subcultural value (Jackson, 1999).

Clothing companies, particularly 'fresh jive', 'Rushn' and 'nrg' frequently sponsor rave events. These clothing brands were all listed in responses to the questionnaires. Some promoters use sponsorship to promote their raves in terms of merchandise. For instance, Hyperspeed Trilogy sold 'Hyperspeed packs' which included an 'NRG' key ring and a Rushn Hyperspeed T-shirt, and had a Rushn stand at the event (Plate 4).

Often clothing companies such as Rushn produce T-shirts subverting the Trade Marks of well known brands, with drug references or sexually suggestive comments. In this case the same colour and design is used, yet the words of the trade mark are changed. These include 'Telstra' to 'Tripper'; 'MasterCard' to 'Misterhard'; 'Streets' (Ice cream) to 'Speed'; 'Cocoa Cola's - Real Thing' to 'Cocaine - The Real Thing' and 'PK' (chewing gum) to 'P-King' (the word 'peaking' is used as a euphemism for being under the influence of ecstasy). Often these shirts are produced by smaller less well known clothing labels. Their presence and use in the rave scene is of significance as they clearly act to challenge dominant commercial culture through the repossession of well known trade marks. The fact that these shirts refer to social taboos (e.g. drugs) suggests that they will not become absorbed into mass society, and will largely remain a means of projecting affiliation with 'club cultures'. Their use could be considered both a form of resistance, and an example of the manner in which a commodity acts to project a raver identity, as oppose to a example of homogenised mass commercial exploitation.

Although no distinct 'raver image' exists, there are several common stylistic features in terms of what people wear at rave events. Bright colours are preferred, which may include orange roadwork vests or loose brightly coloured T-shirts which tend to have a design in the middle of the front section, including, but not exclusively those already described. Often people make an effort to dress in particularly unusual or interesting ways, such as furry knee high boots (Plate 5) or furry vests. A range of materials are used and often synthetic or plastic are used, particularly by girls for tops or skirts (Plate 6).

There are a number of other 'signs' used by people active in rave culture to project their image. Some of the many 'extra items' purchased for a rave, listed in response to the

questionnaires included; glow sticks, body glitter, flashing rings, coloured glasses, lasers (hand held flashing objects), beads, plastic jewelry, piercings, hair accessories, body shimmer, eye shimmer, bottled water, chewing gum and chupa chups. Chupa chups, a small, inexpensive variety of lollipop, offer a salient group symbol for ravers. In Sydney, Chupa Chups are used frequently at raves (Plate 7), dance parties and clubs, possibly for their therapeutic role in easing the severe jaw clenching often associated with Ecstasy use. Some 71% indicated that they purchased Chupa chups sometimes or always either at or before a rave. Although the market for Chupa Chups clearly goes beyond that of rave culture, it should be noted that the company often sponsors rave or dance party events, and even puts full page colour advertisements in the street magazine, *3D World*. To an outsider, this might appear unusual marketing practices for what appears to be primarily a children's lollipop.

Chupa Chups represent an example of cultural distinction, of commercialisation and a means by which the rave subculture can maintain its subordinate, 'underground' position. They represent what Hebdige (1979) might refer to as the magical appropriation of 'humble objects', which express resistance in a form of code, and act to reinforce the 'subordinate' status of the group. Chupa Chups also represent the commodified form of a means of identification with a group, of which participants seem quite willing.

Other cultural signs appropriated by ravers act to help participants to create the sense of 'other worldliness', as outlined in Chapter Two. The use of Glow sticks (small fluorescent sticks, usually in bright colours such as yellow, green, blue or orange) by ravers is a prime example (Plates 8 and 9). Before being introduced to the rave scene, the primary market for glow sticks was as safety device for scuba divers and campers, yet, like Chupa chups, these objects have been 'stolen' by rave culture and made to carry new meanings. At raves, glow sticks are often worn around the neck, or held in the hand while dancing. Observation would indicate that they provide a psychedelic enhancement of the drug experience. The company "Glowstix Australia" frequently sponsors rave events and they are frequently on sale at raves. In short, glow sticks have become one of the most salient cultural signs for ravers. In fact, the use of glow sticks is often cited by ravers and clubbers alike, as a means of differentiating between the two cultures.

Whilst many ravers strive to present themselves with unusual styles, there is not great consistency amongst those who present themselves with the most extreme styles. Some

aspects such as chupa chups, glow sticks, and the styles of T-shirts described are common features amongst a more general rave style. These commodities can be viewed from the subcultural perspective, in that they are objects which are 'stolen' and made to carry new meanings, however the fact that they have become mass produced items would indicate that rave culture is undergoing the commodified form of incorporation. This incorporation, however has not been detrimental to the scene in terms of the number of people attending parties, as Utopia 13 2001, attracted around ten thousand people. A better way to interpret this commodification in the rave scene is to consider that consumption acts as an expression of their affiliation with certain genres of music.

4.2 The place of Rave within 'Club Cultures'

Having discussed the manner in which rave culture identifies itself, and differentiates itself from club cultures, through the use of cultural signs, we now turn to the idea that the commercialisation of rave culture is in some ways linked to its fusion with club cultures. Generally the perception exists that clubs in general cater to older, more discerning punters whereas rave cultures are a dance culture for the under 18s. In my study however I found that the average age of self proclaimed ravers was 20, with ages ranging from 15 to 30. Of the group as a whole 80% of respondents indicated that they go to clubs in addition to raves. Clubs listed included a range of styles and locations, and included both 'gay' and 'straight' clubs. The most frequently listed however were nights such as 'sublime' at home, 'plastic' at Zen, 'progress' at gas and 'Sounds on Sunday' at the Greenwood. All of these clubs feature DJs who play at rave events, which is to be expected. In particular 'sublime' has been indicated to be most effective in re-creating the rave experience in a club environment. In reference to raves, former 'sublime' resident DJ Mark Dynamix made the following comment;

...it seems to be that they're the only thing that the under 18 kids can go to...um, the over 18 people, there's a lot more music in clubs these days, types of music, you've got house, you've got trance, you've got breaks whatever - so that appeals to a wider audience as well, and I think before rave music was only played at raves, but now you can hear rave music in clubs...and you know a club is a much nicer venue to be hanging out in, it's a lot classier

than a seedy warehouse....I think both are bigger in they're own respect. (Mark Dynamix, per comm, 2001)

So it can be suggested that the increasing popularity both the club and the rave scenes could be related to a merging of the two cultures. Daniel Midian makes a similar comment from the perspective of an exclusive rave DJ/promoter;

The thing here is rave culture is not being taken over by club culture, today's rave culture is club culture. Mainstream club music (trance) has taken the old sound of hardcore and happy hard as the dominant sound. As raves face has changed from an underground scene to a commercial scene, it is only natural that the underground music is overtaken by what the majority want, commercial club music. (Daniel Midian, per comm, 2001)

This comment is perhaps to extreme, as some styles are played exclusively in clubs, or club held dance party events, such as deep house or funky house. In recent times however, as indicated by the comment made by Mark Dynamix, once exclusively 'rave' music such as hardcore and happy hard have begun to creep into club nights such as 'Logic' and 'New*Life*Energy' promoted by renowned rave DJs/promoters DJ Fenix and DJ Matrix respectively. Both of these nights play the genres of hardcore and happy hard, which were once exclusive to the rave scene. What is to be indicated is that the two cultures are becoming less polarised, into what Luckman (1998:48) suggests is '...recognised through growing deployment of the term "club cultures"'. In terms of genre, larger rave events such as Utopia cater for a variety of tastes, including trance, hardcore, happy hard, breaks and drum 'n' bass. 'Commercialisation' of rave culture has led to this larger, less differentiated, more consolidated market, dubbed 'club culture'.

There is a clear division within the rave community as to whether or not a truly 'underground' scene exists in Sydney today. In the study, 34% of respondents indicated that they felt part of an underground movement, 46% said they didn't and 20% gave ambiguous answers. DJ Fenix made the comment that;

It's not advertised of TV yet, so I'd say even the most commercial events are still quite underground. (Mikel Prince, per comm, 2001)

While this statement is true in the fact that raves are not explicitly advertised as such, many television commercials do allure to 'club culture' in general, as a means of associating a product or service with what is considered 'hip' and 'cool'. Particularly, through 2001 the following products or services made explicit reference to club culture through the use of imagery such as DJs mixing records, or young people dancing in clubs or raves: 'V' energy drink, McDonalds restaurant, 'Frutopia' fruit drinks, Holden Barina automobiles and 'City Search' Internet site. In this sense, club culture undergoes what Hebdige (1979:97) calls an ideological form of incorporation, where; '...the Other can be trivialized, naturalized, domesticated. Here, the difference is simply denied ('Otherness is reduced to sameness')'. Rave culture's place within 'club cultures' means that it is directly influenced by this ideological form of incorporation, through commercial exploitation.

The fact that there is significant overlap between club based culture and rave culture further strengthens the notion that identification with rave culture is fluid and interchangeable, and lacks the rigid definition of a subculture. People who attend raves identify 'the atmosphere', 'the people' and 'the music' as their main reasons for attending, yet don't show an exclusive affiliation with rave culture. This suggests that within 'club cultures' a loosely defined group of people who attend dance music events exists, as opposed to many mutually exclusive subcultures which have lapsed from the 'original' rave culture.

4.3 DIY Raves - Regulating the Temporary Autonomous Zone

A significant part of an underground movement is the idea that rave culture possesses a strong 'do-it-yourself' mentality. In preliminary interviews it was determined that some older ravers felt that the Sydney scene had lost this sense. What is apparent is that although this may be true, the outcome has been safer, better organised parties;

Do it Yourself is long gone and the rave scene is a business and promoters are professional. Its natural that the industry is going to protect its market. If something goes wrong at one party it affects every party, the domino effect is very severe in the rave scene. The Do it yourself culture was for the better part disorganised and illegal. Today's big ones are professionally run, and done by the books. To do it the right way costs substantially more and you have to protect it from mavericks who cut corners for an extra dollar. Not only do

they affect other promoters, they can actually hurt the scene. (Daniel Midian, per comm, 2001)

Another perspective is that the scene is still open to people who want to participate in putting on parties, yet they need to follow the self established guidelines;

...it is still a do it yourself scene, but all the Sydney promoters have teamed up to make sure any new promoter holds an event using safe and successful guidelines, like having security and first aid. Most new promoters barely think they need a security guard to make it safe, let alone first aid on site. We're there to (tell) anyone new, its not worth doing a party unless you can do it right from the word go. (Mikel Prince, per comm, 2001)

DJ Matrix, DJ Fenix and DJ Dave Psi (who all also promote parties) indicated that the 'Code of Practice for Dance Parties' had next to no effect on the occurrence of illegal parties, yet there have been virtually no police shutdowns in the last twelve months.

The scene's self regulation, and absence of poor quality promoters such as those around in 1996, has caused the scene to grow substantially. A perceived growth in the scene (in terms of attendance, size and frequency of parties) is frequently cited as one of the outcomes in the commercialisation of rave culture. This growth through self regulation has been coupled with the increased association of commodities such as clothes and glow sticks, as indicated by their presence in sponsorship. At the same time, club culture and rave culture have merged to a certain extent, creating a larger, more consolidated market, which has undergone a certain degree of incorporation, in the ideological sense. A raver identity clearly exists, reinforced through consumption and commodification, operating largely as an open and fluid sub-section within 'club cultures'. Affiliation with club cultures in general appears to be the main way by which respondents identified themselves, indicating that within club cultures, sub-scenes are constantly undergoing shifting cultural boundaries. The extent to which a 'raver' identity exists will be the main focus of Chapter Five.

Chapter 5

Identity, Credibility and the Underground

5.1 Raver Identities, PLUR and 'Teeny Boppers'

Most ravers agree that some of the major indicators of the increased commercial aspect to raves has widened their appeal, led to larger parties and bigger venues, and an increase in ticket prices. Although the majority of ravers feel that the scene has become more commercial, this is not exclusively viewed as a bad thing. Whilst the increase in the quality of parties is noted, it is also apparent that increase in appeal has introduced unwelcome social elements in terms of threatening the philosophy of PLUR. As previously noted, 80% of self-proclaimed ravers in the study frequent clubs, of the remaining 20%, a total of 6 were under 18, leaving 2 ravers of legal age who did not go to clubs at all. This indicates that rave culture in Sydney today is highly integrated with club culture, and that a portion of the rave scene (15% in the study) consists of people too young to attend club-held events. As the attendance of younger people at raves is frequently cited as a negative outcome of commercialisation, this creates an indication of the role that rave culture plays within 'club cultures'. That is, on one hand, rave acts as an introduction for young people to club cultures, and on the other, it largely acts in conjunction with the club scene for older ravers.

The increasing tendency for club-based dance culture and rave culture to merge was a point that was noted by respondents. A 23-year-old veteran raver made the point that;

Broadening the audience has brought more of a casual aspect to it, and the cross-over audience with the mainstream club scene (a-la-Oxford St) has introduced an element that is more about “being seen” rather than “being in the scene”

This comment links to the survey results which indicated that the majority of ravers also frequent clubs. It should also be mentioned, however that those whose primary identification is with the ‘mainstream’ club scene are often regarded with contempt by self proclaimed ravers. Some ravers strongly feel that *their* scene is being infiltrated by an unwelcome element, one suggesting that ‘more clubbers (are) coming to our parties, and more trouble (is) being caused’. On top of this people labeled ‘disco queens’ and ‘muscle men’ were also considered unwelcome, and these two images are frequently considered to be associated with club culture.

The increase in number of clubbers who go raving has also changed the ‘traditional’ sexually androgynous nature of raves. When questioned on the effects of commercialism on the scene, a 20 year old male raver, who had attended 3 raves in the previous 8 months, made the point that;

It has led to increasing popularity of the scene however this has transformed it from being ‘about the music’ to being a standard night out. I like to go to clubs as I enjoy the music/ atmosphere. I don’t go there to pick up, unfortunately the latter has become an entrenched expectation created from the commercialism of the scene, Some may argue that the quality of the music has also diminished.

Respondents also cited people who ‘...look for drugged out girls to crack onto’ and ‘little sluts that walk around looking for sex’ as being unwelcome at raves. This would indicate, that at least to a degree rave culture has maintained the sentiment that a rave is not a place for sexual invitation or advance. However, the increased commercialisation of ‘club cultures’ in general, associated with the decreasing differentiation between club and rave culture, has led to a perceived compromise of the non-sexual element to raves.

As mentioned earlier, raves appear to be ‘...the only things the underage kids can go to...’ (Mark Dynamix, per comm, 2001). The place of minors at raves, however is fiercely

contested within the group. On one hand the involvement of younger people in the scene seems to stem from a general concern for their well being, with comments such as;

the scene has been promoted too much and marketing has seemed to be targeted towards young kids who are about 14-15. There are too many young kids at these events off their chops...Ever since Anna Wood died, the media portrays ALL ravers as unsafe, fucked up drug culture, when in fact it is a music culture...for children to be going out all night taking drugs at that age is wrong (20y/o male); and

there's too many little kids in an environment that is unsafe for them, being surrounded by drug fucked people isn't healthy for 14 year olds (18 y/o male).

In this sense older ravers feel that younger people don't have the maturity or responsibility to understand the 'safe' use of drugs in this environment. This raises concern both for their safety, and for the fact that drug related harm may incite a negative media response and be damaging to the scene in general. It also suggests that there is an ethical code (at least in more mature ravers) regarding safe drug use at raves, debunking the media stereotype of irresponsible drug use at raves. Observation indicated that it is the younger people at raves who tend to stand out as using drugs more irresponsibly, both in terms of how often they take them and how much they take when they go out. 'Drunk people' were often cited as being unwelcome at raves, due to the fact that they were seen as inciting violence and other alcohol associated problems. This demonstrates what Maffesoli calls a 'different morality' in terms of drug use. That is, only certain drugs should be consumed at raves (speed and ecstasy) rather than alcohol, and younger people should not be exposed to these drugs as they are considered to not possess the responsibility to use them.

Younger ravers also describe 'teeny boppers' as a type of person who is unwelcome at raves;

there are just more teeny bopper types, who you know are only going coz (sic) they think its cool to take drugs and all their friends are doing it....not because they like the music or have a good time (15 y/o female); and

'too many teeny boppers bopping round thinking their high' (16 y/o female).

It is unclear whether these two ravers felt that they were not classed within the teenage bracket, or whether 'teeny bopper' is a label for a particular stereotype of people who don't attend raves for purist reasons (i.e. to enjoy the music). The first quote would suggest that the latter is true, in that these 'teeny boppers' only attend because they think it's 'cool'. A frequent response for people considered unwelcome at raves were those who were 'not into the music' which indicates that music is the primary point of unity within rave culture.

Increased commercialisation, and expanded participation has been seen as beneficial both to the environment of raves and to the people becoming involved with the scene. Comments on the scene becoming more commercial included;

Good and bad. Bad because you get a lot more people who really don't know what raving is all about, or stands for going. But good because quite a few people than can really benefit from the scene get introduced as well, where they wouldn't have been otherwise (24 y/o male); and

It just means that many people that wouldn't normally attended a 'rave', now do, that isn't bad, because it gives you many more people from different socials groups and socioeconomic backgrounds to meet. It just makes for a more interesting night for YOU! (19 y/o male)

Both of these comments indicate that the slightly more mature ravers maintain the philosophy of PLUR, in that all people should be welcome so long as they attend for the right reasons. This would indicate that so long as people attend raves for 'the right reasons', then they are welcome.

As we have already seen, rave culture in Sydney is closely associated with club culture, and acts as a sub section within what is described in the literature as 'club cultures'. For the 15% of underage ravers, raves may act as means of introduction to this broader categorisation of dance culture in general, from which new identities are shaped through sub-genre. A letter to *3D World* (553) in 2001 indicates this;

I am 16! And quite frankly I am sick of hearing about "glow stick holdin', Chuppa chup sucking 16 year olds"...I'll admit these people do exist, there are "teenaged teeny boppers"...but we aren't all like that.....I did the whole rave thing and I'm sick of it - there

is only so much happy hard you can hear in a lifetime....for people who like commercial dance there are a constant supply of sleazy under 18s “dance parties” but for people like myself, who love house and funky music of all kinds there is nowhere to go....why should we have to wait to hear the music that we love.

A common sentiment among clubbers is that house and funky house represent a more refined taste in music, and both genres are completely absent from the rave scene. In this way, the rave scene may act as an entry point into the dance music scene in general, with its traditionally limited styles (although broadening in recent times). That is, younger people (often under age) become involved in the rave scene, associated with the main styles of hardcore, happy hard and trance, which they sometimes ‘grow out of’. In attempting to maintain the excitement of their initial introduction to the scene, they move onto different genres and different sub-scenes within ‘club cultures’. This transition is far from immediate, and it has been shown that the differentiation between the club scene and the rave scene in Sydney is lessening. There are of course people who never grow tired of the rave scene, (perhaps indicated by the 5% in the study) and maintain rave as their intrinsic point of subcultural identity.

5.2 Credibility, Authenticity and Sponsorship in the Sydney Rave Scene

We now must turn to an examination of the extent to which rave culture in Sydney offers a means of resistance or opposition within Sydney. It has already been shown that rave culture operates largely in conjunction with club culture in Sydney, and as a means for younger people to be introduced to club cultures in general. Rave culture, as a sub-section of ‘club cultures’ also represents a commercial enterprise, and while undergoing incorporation and resistance to incorporation, remains largely independent of mass commercial exploitation on the part of dominant culture. The extent to which this commodified sub-culture represents a form of resistance must now be analysed, in terms of both its relationship with commodification and the operation of raves themselves. To do this, we must consider the manner in which raves are constructed, or rather promoted, in Sydney.

As rave promoters are largely self regulated, a virtual monopoly exists when considering many of the larger scale raves in Sydney. Particularly promoters such as Powerhouse

Productions, who have been responsible for Sydney's largest parties in recent years, namely the 'Utopia' and 'Godspeed' series. Powerhouse productions were responsible for introducing the Olympic Park/Sydney Showground venue at Homebush as a venue for rave events. Within the community of rave promoters there was a tacit understanding that this was 'their' venue, and when an established promoter attempted to put on a party called 'Superlove' at Easter 2001, it was boycotted by the network of promoters due to its apparent invasion on the space. That is, it was not advertised on web sites such as Overdrive, which acts a hub for rave information in Sydney. The party failed to attract numbers that would make it profitable, and as a result failed (Toby Royce, per comm, 2001).

Superlove (Plate 10) had been sponsored by 'nrg' clothing and 'BLM' (A sound and lighting company). Since this time there have been several successful parties not put on by Powerhouse at this venue, including 'Rush hour' (Plate 11) promoted by 'Mod Squard'. This party featured many of the same DJs as Superlove, including a few extras, and boasted four arenas as opposed to two. It should be noted however that Rush hour had a great deal more sponsorship than Superlove, including BLM, Rushn, Darren Hart Photos, Glowstix Australia, CPX 99.9 (a rave radio program) and Overdrive. Rushn also produced 'Rush hour' merchandise, including T-shirts, Hats, Jackets, Key rings and more. Both of these events sold tickets at eleven specific locations, plus all Ticketek outlets. Superlove had boasted 'old skool experience, with new skool technology' (Superlove advertisement, 2001) whereas Rush hour was less specific in its appeal saying;

Party People get ready for one of our nations' biggest all night dance parties.....Your sense will feel ecstasy (sic) as the countries most successful production suppliers unite to produce an atmosphere and event more explosive than any other experience before. (Rush hour flyer, 2001)

The Rush hour flyer was littered with typing errors, but featured bright colours and simplistic language. Rush hour was highly successful, and was considered an enjoyable event by many . Although Mod Squard is more or less a renegade production company, and Superlove was put on buy an established and recognised Sydney DJ/promoter, Rush hour succeeded at the same venue in which superlove had failed. Clearly the key differences lay in two areas, the market to which the parties appealed and the degree of sponsorship and industry support received by the parties.

The degree of sponsorship which a party receives is closely tied to the perception of how successful they are likely to be, particularly in larger venues such as the Homebush site. Although sponsorship of rave events is not new, and often doesn't indicate monetary support, it has important ties to the credibility of rave events. Dave Psi (per comm, 2001) noted 'I feel promoters these days need to show those things to prove the event is more legit'. Due to the notoriously unreliable nature of rave promoters (which has been dealt with recently through the process of self regulation), parties often need the names of well known brands or associated industry bodies to gain credibility. That is, the association with well known brands/industry bodies carries the implicit meaning that the party will most likely go ahead, will be well attended and be of a high standard. The fact that this has implications for the number of people who attend carries with it a powerful message regarding commodification of the rave culture. Ravers, rather than resisting this commodified form of incorporation, actively seek out indicators of it in order to determine the credibility of a given party. That is, whether aware of it or not, ravers choose to reject the notion that their culture is 'underground', in preference for a guarantee that their night be successful.

The willingness of companies to provide sponsorship through funding or discounts is also indicative of a wider incorporation of club cultures into dominant culture. Mark Dynamix noted;

Dance music's become such a big thing, and its out in the open these days, people know what it is and people know that it's a pretty safe practice...you know its not dodgy anymore, like it used to be. Companies now know they can put money into these things (Mark Dynamix, per comm, 2001)

In this sense, rave culture has been partially normalized by these companies, and a symbiotic relationship emerges by which raves use well known brands to achieve credibility for their parties and these companies use rave culture as a target market for these commodities. The consumer can therefore not be thought of as powerless to a process of cultural homogenisation, rather they play an active role in allowing certain commodities to become involved in the rave scene.

5.3 Underground - 'where its warm and safe'

This process of commodification has important implications for the consideration of rave cultures as being oppositional. Although rave culture does possess several characteristic features (both in terms of cultural signs and underlying philosophy) which defines itself uniquely within club cultures, the extent to which raves in Sydney operate as sites of resistance must be considered limited. Although the commercial aspect of rave culture is largely contained within itself (i.e. niche markets for glow sticks, clothing), the media discourse and processes of incorporation discussed suggest that it has been exploited commercially to some degree. Although resistance to incorporation can be noted (such as the T-shirts subverting well known trade marks), it is clear that there is a general acceptance of increased commercialism, which at times is even considered beneficial for the scene. Although there is a general ambiguity as to whether the scene is perceived as 'underground', this chapter has outlined that it really cannot be considered the case, at least for the 'core' of the rave scene as discussed in this thesis. When questioned as to whether or not he thought an 'underground scene' existed in Sydney, Mark Dynamix made the following comment;

I think it is definitely there. I don't think its as big, and I don't think people really associate underground or over ground, they don't care anymore, its all dance music you know...whether its for a big corporation or whether its for a small time promoter it really doesn't matter anymore.

In short, the notion that raves act as a forum for resistance through an 'underground' movement has given way for a more general appreciation of dance music. Where as credibility was once linked to exclusivity and the opportunity for resistance, it has been shown in the contemporary Sydney scene to have close ties with the opportunity to further consume rave related commodities in the context of a rave.

Chapter 6

Contextualising Rave as a Commodity Culture

Through the course of this thesis I have outlined the relationship between musical taste and visual style in the Sydney rave scene. Drawing from a selective history, I have examined the extent to which rave culture in contemporary Sydney still acts as a means of resistance. From the perspective of Hebdige's (1979) paradigm of subculture and style, I have shown the degree to which both the commodity form and the ideological form of incorporation have affected the scene, in relation to increased commercialisation. At the same time I have been assessing the extent to which Sydney rave culture fits into the rigid format of 'subculture', as Hebdige describes it. As suggested by Bennett (1999c), a more appropriate means of understanding the relationship between youth styles and musical taste may be Maffesoli's notion of postmodern neo-tribes. This emphasises a more loosely defined means of common identification through a shared ethical consciousness, expressed through the process of consumption.

In terms of neo-tribes, consumers exercise their power by choosing the event they wish to attend, based on the music they want to hear. They buy the environment of noise, and lights, and they often buy their happiness for a night. They purchase the experience of being with people who appreciate the same music, and who share the same desires as themselves. If they like what they have purchased then they may return, if not then they will not. Often friendships are forged and maintained, and this may reinforce the desire for continued participation. Beyond groups of friends, there is little cohesion in terms of visual style, and shared ethical agendas. Some genres of music may have stronger affiliations with certain

styles, however the generally diverse tastes of ravers, and the shifting boundaries of inclusion and exclusion render specific sub groups within the Sydney rave scene difficult to classify clearly. Rave culture appears to be less about a subcultural identity, as Hebdige describes it, and more about a consumer choice to experience pulsating music and ecstatic dancing of one night, over and over, until it no longer fulfils people's intense desire to escape reality. This does not discount the fact that rave may offer a strong spiritual experience for many, rather it moves the emphasis from resistance expressed through style to a less specific identification through music. It is this identification with *music*, as oppose to a class based struggle between subordination and hegemony which renders the neo-tribal explanation more applicable to the contemporary Sydney rave scene.

6.1 Sydney Rave Culture - Evolving Neo-tribes

Rave culture in Sydney represents a complex and integrated network between people, music, styles and places. Malbon notes more generally;

The practices of youth cultures can be as much about *expression* as about resistance; as much about belonging as excluding; as much about temporarily forgetting who you are as about consolidating an identity; as much about gaining strength to go on as about showing defiance in the face of subordination; and as much about blurring boundaries between people and cultures as affirming or reinforcing those boundaries. (Malbon, 1999:19)

Although this statement is all inclusive in terms of both the theoretical models of youth styles I have outlined, it suggests that identification with dance cultures should be considered vague and open to reinterpretation and change. It is not necessarily about a relationship between the dominant society and subordinate groups, and it is not necessarily about protest or resistance in the traditional sense. The apparent transience of identification with certain genres, and the fact that boundaries between sub sections of 'club cultures' are never as firm as they may seem, shows that a factor other than resistance is the essence of the collective consciousness of rave culture in Sydney. This is most saliently demonstrated by the manner in which sponsorship and commercialisation has become both accepted and reinforced aspects of the scene. Although music is clearly the feature which is considered fundamental to rave culture, the diverse tastes of participants renders specific links between

style and musical taste virtually impossible to attain. Indeed, the plurality of style within rave culture indicates that there is no fixed, absolute 'subculture' present, rather there are general stylistic trends which are concurrently constructed, revised and expressed. In this way a more general affiliation with electronic music, and its associated experience, becomes the intrinsic point through which neo-tribes are formed in the Sydney rave scene. This loose emphasis on genre, appearance and form creates a context within which the scene undergoes a constant process of evolution, as identity and attitudes undergo continual reinterpretation and change.

In the process of this ongoing revision there is a relatively fast turnover in terms of participants within rave culture. As demonstrated by the old skool/new skool distinction, rave culture goes through a cycle every two years or so whereby new participants introduce new styles, genres and attitudes into a scene which is essentially open to change (indicated by the ongoing rhetoric of acceptance and tolerance). This suggests that rather than operating as a subculture, it largely acts as a recreational activity, within which participants consume and identify with electronic music. The high turnover (as measured through subjective interpretation) suggests that a large portion consists of people relatively new to the scene, who view it as a 'new' activity. This results in a process of continual redefinition and development, whereby there is no point in time at which rave culture can be concisely defined in terms of genre, style and attitude. Rather than demonstrating the rigid boundaries of a subculture, it represents a transient experience for participants, which often leads on to involvement with club based culture. Although there are clearly some unique features of rave culture (as opposed to club culture), such as the use of glow sticks, there is a strong overlap with club based culture in Sydney. The use of some general commodities was described; however the majority are not exclusive to rave culture as a sub section of 'club cultures'.

In other parts of the world, rave derived cultures have been analysed from the subcultural perspective. The rave sub-scene of 'Gabber' in the Netherlands has been analysed from the subcultural perspective, in that it lost its subversive power through the process of ideological incorporation; 'The Gabber culture collapsed under the weight of its own success and was cuddled to death - even by parents' (Verhagen et al, 2000:163). Whilst the subcultural paradigm has been applied to early incarnations of rave culture in Sydney, the transient and fluid means of group identification in the contemporary scene renders this

explanation no longer applicable. Rather in Sydney, incorporation has moved the scene beyond subculture, and it largely functions as a commodified expression of a communal appreciation of electronic music. As this has increased the breadth of participation, some ravers feel that the strength of their identity as a raver is no longer as strong as it once was. This has happened as the scene has become more consolidated; and as such it still thrives on a larger scale (beyond specific sub-groups), based on the shared positive experience of music as opposed to resistance. Cultural boundaries in the Sydney rave scene (in terms of style and genre) are not as specific as 'Gabber' in the Netherlands; rather identity relies on 'a certain ambience, a state of mind, and is preferably to be expressed through lifestyles that favour appearance and form' (Maffesoli, 1996:98), which is integral to the formation of neo-tribes.

Within Sydney, the notion of peace, love, unity and respect has subsided for a more general identification with electronic music. This has happened as the scene has become more commercial, and attracted a wider audience. A similar development occurred in Toronto, Canada, where increased commercialisation of the scene meant it moved from an 'underground' culture to a more mainstream one, related to the decreasing importance of PLUR (Weber, 1999). Increased participation in the Sydney scene, however, is not exclusively viewed as a bad thing, despite a decrease in the number of ravers adopting an attitude of PLUR. Becoming involved with the scene can often be seen as beneficial to many new participants. Many ravers in Sydney still cite PLUR as a binding force within the scene.

Whilst Maffesoli's notion of neo-tribes offers a better explanation of Sydney rave culture than Hebdige's notion, one must question the extent to which the theory is ambiguous to a point of being all inclusive. If neo-tribes are based on a shared ethical consciousness, expressed through means of consumption, and constantly undergoing reformation, this may say little meaningful in terms of youth cultures. That is, this thesis has demonstrated that people who attend raves, are young, do so to have fun, often to take drugs, attend primarily for the music and sometimes (but not always) identify themselves through consumer items. Although this may be meaningful in terms of how commercial culture has become involved with dance culture, it really says little about a group ideology which goes beyond that of shared appreciation of electronic music. In terms of the wider forces of global capitalism, rave cultures do not exist as a clearly defined entity, rather they act as shifting and loosely

defined groups of consumers, who attain a degree of power through their consumer choices, as opposed to overt resistance. Elements of resistance still exist within the scene, however, it is clear that the contemporary rave scene in Sydney does not operate solely on a class based struggle between subordination and hegemony.

Although this thesis has highlighted the fact that music is the focal point within which people can 'bathe in the affectual ambience' (Maffesoli 1991:14) of the neo-tribe, I have not fully considered the potential links between attitudes and politics which lie outside the direct influence of the scene itself. Halfacree and Kichin (1996: 48) note;

...popular music provides one of the key 'symbolic tags' in contemporary society and thus becomes intimately linked to neo-tribalism and the 'postmodern condition' which it addresses. In short, sections of youth society display their attitudes and politics through actively forming distinct groups.

This thesis has demonstrated that there are significant links between affiliation with electronic dance music and attitudes such as PLUR, and shown that this affiliation is often, but not always projected through visual style. Identification with rave culture in Sydney does provide these 'symbolic tags' within contemporary society, however they undergo a constant evolution, and should by no means be considered fixed. Beyond PLUR, and a communal appreciation of music and the experience of rave, the potential exists for other aspects of youth identity to exist, and therefore further analysis of other underlying attitudes and politics should be addressed. Although this thesis has indicated that the primary objective of a rave is for entertainment, there is also an active spiritual element which may indicate a quasi-religious quality to attendance at raves, which should also be considered more carefully in future work. As elements of resistance are still apparent in the form of illicit drug use and the transcendence of age barriers for those under-age, further consideration may suggest that youth resistance is in fact a more prominent aspect of the shared attitudes and politics of rave culture than I have indicated.

6.2 Geographical Perspectives of The Sydney Rave Scene

Rather than searching for new levels of resistance within the subcultural tradition (i.e. resistance to incorporation) as Butsch (2001) suggests, it is more applicable to consider the Sydney rave scene as operating as a neo-tribe, bound through the shared experience of appreciation for electronic music. In doing so it is possible to consider why commercialism has been a factor which, rather than threatening the scene, has in fact made it stronger in many ways. This is perhaps indicative of a wider social trend; ‘...so called youth ‘subcultures’ are prime examples of the unstable and shifting cultural affiliations which characterise late modern consumer based societies’ (Bennett, 1999c: 605). Consumption has become such an intrinsic part of rave culture, that the potential to consume beyond the performative experience at a rave, in the form of rave related commodities, is used as a means of gaining credibility for a given party. In this way, rave culture may reflect the tendency of western societies to become increasingly consumer oriented.

In terms of rave cultures in Sydney, youth cultures can be conceptualised very much as Bennett (1999c:599) describes; that is, style and musical tastes are not so much tied to issues of social class (as suggested by the subcultural paradigm), but more indicative of late modern lifestyles in which identities are ‘‘constructed’ rather than ‘given’ and ‘fluid’ rather than ‘fixed’’. In this way, consumption acts as an expression of rave culture’s constructed identity, projected through commodities such as music and clothes. Rather than acting as a form of cultural homogenisation, flattening the distinctiveness of a local culture, commodification of the Sydney rave scene has been very much a part of creating a distinctive local narrative (in terms of incorporation strengthening the scene rather than threatening it), whilst maintaining elements of the global (in terms of the key features of the rave as an event). This supports Jackson’s (1999) notion that commodification does not necessarily threaten the authenticity of a local culture, and that a more complex relationship exists between consumers and commodities in local cultures which adopt aspects of global cultures.

In terms of a broader relationship of this work to the wider world of geography, one must consider Crang’s (1996:63) concept of ‘mutual entanglements’ within cultural commodity systems;

...we consumers make all sorts of 'inhabitations' of commodity systems; and these ways of inhabiting result not in a simple alienation, a losing of our real selves under the pressures of various corporate and other institutional strategies for 'governing our souls' (Rose, 1989), but rather in a series of 'entanglements' of consumers and consumer systems, both being opened up to the other.

Within Crang's notion, we can see that consumption within rave culture in Sydney is not a homogenized nor a locally bound activity. It shares many key features with dance cultures around the world, and yet has moved from a state of being merely a phenomenon mimicking that found overseas. Whilst there is some consistency in terms of raver identities in Sydney, its cultural boundaries are vague, and are constantly open to revision and reinterpretation. Crang uses the term displacement to refer to the manner in which local processes of consumption are also bound up through connections and networks, which transcend the direct boundaries of space. Within this notion of displacement, people are positioned, and position themselves, in terms of these flows and representations of music, style and attitude. Sydney rave culture can be seen as being 'entangled' with these networks, demonstrating different boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, and while operating in a localised setting, still possesses connections of differing strengths transcending spatial boundaries. Perhaps the most salient global bond within dance cultures is the rhetoric of PLUR, however other factors such as style can be observed to differ from one local context to another. In this way rave culture represents something which is transient and mobile, from a global to a local scale which is embedded within the process of consumption.

Within the guise of contemporary capitalism it is overly romantic to consider youth cultures as acting as clearly defined 'subcultures', based on a class oriented struggle between subordination and hegemony. Rather, they should be analysed in terms of consumption, considering commodification not as a process of cultural homogenisation, but rather as an integrated network within which global commodities can act in a local context to create specific narratives. Involvement in youth cultures may or may not contain an element of resistance for given participants, as consumption can act both to assert power or to experience certain pleasures. Future work on youth cultures should consider the important role consumption plays as a means of expression within commodity cultures, and consider that both economic and cultural geographies should not be thought of as being mutually exclusive. Consumers are not helpless victims in the face of mass commercial exploitation,

rather their relationship with cultural industries is reflexive, and they ultimately have the power to create, reshape and dissolve the products of these industries.

Appendix A

Methodology

Thornton (1995) notes in her research on club cultures that it is difficult to clearly slot people into a given subculture, and so an analysis of different groups within the classification of 'rave' should not attempt to create stereotypes in terms of belonging to a sub-scene. This was taken into account, and when recruiting participants I invited people who identified themselves generally as 'ravers' to complete the questionnaire, as opposed to specific sub-scenes. The techniques used for gathering data were participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and questionnaire sampling.

In total I attended 8 raves between January and September 2001. I also attended a variety of associated club nights and dance party events. In attending these events, participant observation was used, as I became involved with culture on a personal level. When attending these events I made a variety of observations, and conducted a number of mini-interviews. Observations included watching people's behavior and making estimates regarding demographic distributions (e.g. sex, ethnicity etc). When talking with people at raves, I made sure to tell them that I was writing a thesis on rave culture. Reports were written following each attendance, and referred to during the writing phase. It was difficult to accumulate any meaningful data during these times as conversations were generally short, people were generally not in the frame of mind to give meaningful answers and there was no means of standardising the interview process. Given that my personal observations were influenced by subjective interpretation, and meaningful data was hard to attain, this method of data collection had poor validity, and acted primarily as a means of building a context.

I also conducted five preliminary semi-structured interviews with people who identified themselves as active in the rave or dance party scene. These people were identified through social contacts. Participants were allowed to use an alternate name if they so desired. They

were also advised that they shouldn't feel obliged to answer any question if they didn't want to. Most interviews went for around 45 minutes. All of this information, from both attending raves and interviewing people, was then collated to assist in the production of a questionnaire.

In addition to producing a questionnaire I interviewed a number of prominent Sydney DJs and promoters: DJ Matrix (Toby Royce), DJ Fenix (Mikel Prince), DJ Mark Dynamix, DJ Dave Psi, Daniel Midian and DJ Defcon 1 (Duncan). This was done in the later stages when a more advanced understanding could be utilised to acquire the desired information. These people were located via social contacts, Internet research and in response to the web based invitation.

The letters pages from the street magazine *3D World*, from the years 1996 to 2000, and the year 2001 were read in order to gain a perspective on attitudes within the scene at various times. *3D World* acts as a forum for discussion on the Sydney dance music scene, and being free is highly accessible. Whilst some letters are written by promoters (Gertler, per comm 2001), it provides a general means of accessing relevant themes at a given time.

The questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to assess consumption patterns of people who attend raves. It also aimed to gain some perspective on how people interpret rave culture. To put it in the context of the literature outlined in Chapter One, I needed to look at the 'traffic of things' in relation to rave culture. Due to the enormity of considering every aspect of consumption in rave culture (from vinyl to clothing to confectionery), I decided to focus simply on the participant. The questionnaire attempted to get some perspective on how ravers spend their money on commodities related to rave culture. In particular I was looking at clothes, rave tickets and CDs. There was also an open answer question which asked if people bought anything else in preparation for a rave. Given 'chupa chups' are a frequently cited cultural sign of ravers, I included a question of whether or not people bought chupa chups at or before raves, and in normal everyday life. The questionnaire consisted of a mixture of closed and open ended questions.

Another important aim of the questionnaire was to assess the extent to which people felt that they were part of an underground movement. This was asked explicitly, but there were also questions considering aspects such as who is not welcome at raves, whether or not the scene has become more commercial, and what people enjoy most about raves. Two versions were produced, the written version and the e-mail version. See the appendix for a copy of both versions of the questionnaire.

Recruiting participants

Group 1 consisted of a group of university students from the university of Sydney. Most of these consisted of first year geography students (15), and several other participants were recruited through social contacts. The first year geography students offered to take part in a lecture, and were given a chupa chup or a mintie for their participation. Of 32 questionnaires handed out, 22 were returned, giving a non-return rate of 31%. Of the returned questionnaires, 7 were excluded as they failed to list at least one rave or dance party event attended between January and August 2001. This was the requirement for question 6 in the questionnaire. The total group size was 15. A problem with this sample of university students was that many did not take the questionnaire seriously, giving answers with poor validity. These were excluded on the grounds listed above. Another problem was that answers from this group were generally short, as questionnaires were completed during lecture time giving participants a time constraint.

Group 2 were recruited via several means. After gaining permission from web site administrators, I placed an invitation to participate in my study on the chat forums of three web sites; www.inthemix.com.au, www.overdrive.com.au and www.peakers.net. Hutson (2000:36) notes that 'The anonymity of much computer-mediated communication removes inhibitions that govern normal social encounters', in relation to his own web based study of rave culture. This was indeed shown as responses of Group 2 were generally more extensive and informative. All answers given in this group were done so with seriousness and sincerity, indicating that responses generally had higher validity than group 1.

I also ran an advertisement in *3d world*, issue 576, August 20th, 2001. It was placed in the wanted section of the classifieds, this received next to no interest. Both the Internet and newspaper invitations asked anyone who was interested to send an e-mail to

raveme_baby@hotmail.com. 27 questionnaires were returned via e-mail, and one was excluded on the grounds listed above. The size of group 2 was 26.

As the non valid responses from group 1 were excluded, I combined the results to form a total sample size of 41.

Appendix B

E-mail Questionnaire

Dear raver,

Thank you for your interest. Below is a brief explanation detailing what this survey is all about. I hope after reading it that you will be willing to participate. I myself am a raver, which is why I have chosen this topic.

This questionnaire will be distributed to a number of people who identify themselves as active in the dance party or rave scene in Sydney. The information gathered through the use of this questionnaire will form part of the source of data for an honours thesis in the Department of Geography at the University of Sydney.

Since the mid 1990s rave and dance party culture in Sydney has undergone many changes. I am particularly interested in the impact that state regulation has had on the perceived credibility of dance party scenes in Sydney. As this is a geography thesis I will be referring specifically to the manner in which use of space has changed within rave and dance party cultures in Sydney. Rave culture has been probably the most powerful cultural movement for young people in the 1990s, and I feel it is important to show how it interacts with larger society as we move into a new decade.

Chris Brookman

To complete this survey please fill in the answers and send to raveme_baby@hotmail.com (either by using the forward function or reply to sender). If you don't wish to complete the survey, but still have something to say about Sydney rave culture, please e-mail me.

Please do not feel obliged to answer all questions, and if you wish to withdraw from the study at any time, please do so. Your anonymity is assured. Please write your answers in the space provided or put an 'x' next to the appropriate answer as indicated. Use the arrow keys to scroll down. Please write your answers next to the ":" symbol.

1. Are you male or female? (M / F) :
2. How old are you? :
3. In which suburb of Sydney do you live? :
4. Are you.....? (please put an "x" next to appropriate answers)
 Currently engaged in full time study :
 Working full time :
 Working Part Time :
 Currently seeking work :
5. How long have you been going to dance parties or raves? :

6. Below is a list of some of the larger rave and dance party events which have occurred in Sydney since January 1st 2001 to present. Please put an “x” next to the ones (if any) which you have attended.

Atomic Playground, Sat 13/01/01 :
Age of Love, Sat 20/01/01 :
Mystic 4 – The Fourth Dimension, Sat 27/01/01 :
Rave in a Box, Sat 03/02/01 :
Bangers Underground II, Fri 09/02/01 :
Happy Valley 2001, Fri 9th- Sun 11/02/01 :
Liberation, Sat 17/02/01 :
Transmission:Hyperspace, Sat 24/02/01 :
Pressure Zone, Sat 24/02/01 :
Godspeed (Old Syd. Casino), Sat 03/03/01 :
Timeless, Sat 10/03/01 :
Invasion, Fri 09/03/01 :
Bangers Underground III, Sat 17/03/01 :
Jeff Mills, Sat 17/03/01 :
We’re Buggin, Fri 23/03/01 :
Back 2 Basics, Sat 31/03/01 :
Scattered (with DJ Hixxy), Sat 21/04/01 :
Toytown (with DJ Hixxy), Fri 27/04/01 :
Utopia (Sydney Superdome), Sat 05/05/01 :
Fishbowl 2, Sat 12/05/01 :
Hyperspeed Rezerection, Sat 26/05/01 :
Area 51, Sat 09/06/01 :
Gods Kitchen, Sat 09/06/01 :
Rushhour, Sat 23/06/01 :
Once Upon a Time, Sat 30/06/01 :
Mystic – The Fifth Miracle, Sat 14/07/01 :
Eckythump, Sat 21/07/01 :
The Reception, 28/07/01 :
Godspeed, Sat 04/08/01 :

7. Please list any other dance party, rave or ‘doof’ events you have attended this year. (Including name, date and venue/site) :

8. What style(s) of music do you like? :

9. A) What styles of music *don’t* you like? (if there aren’t any please go on to Question 9.)
:

B) If you knew this style (that you don’t like) was to be the main style at a rave you were thinking of attending, would you still attend? (Yes/No) :

10. A) Do you buy CDs of your preferred of style music? (Yes/No) :
(if answer is ‘no’ then go on to Question 10)

B) What were the last 3 dance music CDs you bought?

#1 :
#2 :
#3 :

c) In a normal month, how much would you spend on dance music CDs? :

11. A) Do you buy clothes especially for raves or dance parties? (Yes/No) :

(if answer is 'no' then please go on to Question 11)

B) In what stores do you buy these clothes? :

C) What labels of clothing do you like? :

D) How much would you spend on clothes in a normal month? :

12. What other items (e.g. glow sticks, glitter, coloured glasses) might you buy to go a rave or dance party? :

13. Do you buy Chupa Chups at or before a rave? (Always/sometimes/never) :

14. Do you buy Chupa Chups in everyday life? (Yes/No) :

15. What is the most you have paid for a rave or dance party:

16. Do you consider yourself part of an underground scene?:

17. A) In the time that you have been attending raves or dance parties do you think the scene has become more commercial than it used to be? :

(if answer is no please go on the question 18)

B) (If 'yes') How has this affected the scene? :

18. A) Do you go to clubs at all? (Yes/No):

(if answer is no please go on to question 16)

B) Which clubs do you go to:

19. If you choose to take drugs at a rave or dance party, how much would you usually spend on them? :

20. Do you feel there is any 'type' of person that does not belong at a rave or dance party? If so, please describe them:

21. What do you enjoy most about a rave or dance party?:

22. What factors will make you decide that you will definitely attend a rave or dance party? (Please put an 'x' next to appropriate choices, also feel free to add your own at the end)

Friends going :

DJs you like are playing :
It will be your style of music :
Venue will be interesting :
Venue will be reliable :
Venue will be big :
Lighting / visuals :
It will be underground :
It is open to everyone who wants to attend :
People will be friendly :
People will be 'your kind of people' :
You managed to buy drugs beforehand :
You could afford the ticket price :
The tickets aren't too expensive :
It will be easy to get to (by transport) :
Getting there will be a adventure :
Any others you'd like to add:

Thanks for completing the survey! Your help is greatly appreciated - hope to see you round!
Please send it on to raveme_baby@hotmail.com

If you have any additional comments on the Sydney rave scene feel free to write to me, or
write here:

Thanks again!

Chris brookman

Written Questionnaire

Rave and Dance Party Questionnaire

Thank you for choosing to take part in this study. This questionnaire will be distributed to a number of people who identify themselves as active in the dance party or rave scene in Sydney. The information gathered through the use of this questionnaire will form part of the source of data for an honours thesis in the Department of Geography at the University of Sydney.

Since the mid 1990s rave and dance party culture in Sydney has undergone many changes. I am particularly interested in the impact that state regulation has had on the perceived credibility of dance party scenes in Sydney. As this is a geography thesis I will be referring specifically to the manner in which use of space has changed within rave and dance party cultures in Sydney. Rave culture has been probably the most powerful cultural movement for young people in the 1990s, and I feel it is important to show how it interacts with larger society as we move into a new decade.

Chris Brookman

**Sydney Rave and Dance Party Questionnaire
August 2001**

Please do not feel obliged to answer all questions, and if you wish to withdraw from the study at any time, please do so. Your anonymity is assured. Please write your answers in the space provided or circle the appropriate response where provided.

23. Are you male or female? M / F

24. How old are you?

25. In which suburb of Sydney do you live?

26. Are you.....? (please circle appropriate answer)

Currently engaged in full time study

Working full time

Working Part Time

Currently seeking work

27. How long have you been going to dance parties or raves?

28. Below is a list of some of the larger rave and dance party events which have

occurred in Sydney since January 1st 2001 to present. Please tick the ones (if any)

which you have attended.

Atomic Playground, Sat 13/01/01	
Age of Love, Sat 20/01/01	
Mystic 4 – The Fourth Dimension, Sat 27/01/01	
Rave in a Box, Sat 03/02/01	
Bangers Underground II, Fri 09/02/01	
Happy Valley 2001, Fri 9th- Sun 11/02/01	
Liberation, Sat 17/02/01	

Transmission:Hyperspace, Sat 24/02/01	
Pressure Zone, Sat 24/02/01	
Godspeed (Old Syd. Casino), Sat 03/03/01	
Timeless, Sat 10/03/01	
Invasion, Fri 09/03/01	
Bangers Underground III, Sat 17/03/01	
Jeff Mills, Sat 17/03/01	
We're Buggin, Fri 23/03/01	
Back 2 Basics, Sat 31/03/01	
Scattered (with DJ Hixxy), Sat 21/04/01	
Toytown (with DJ Hixxy), Fri 27/04/01	
Utopia (Sydney Superdome), Sat 05/05/01	
Fishbowl 2, Sat 12/05/01	
Hyperspeed Rezerection, Sat 26/05/01	
Area 51, Sat 09/06/01	
Gods Kitchen, Sat 09/06/01	
Rushhour, Sat 23/06/01	
Once Upon a Time, Sat 30/06/01	
Mystic – The Fifth Miracle, Sat 14/07/01	
Eckythump, Sat 21/07/01	
The Reception, 28/07/01	
Godspeed, Sat 04/08/01	

29. Please list any other dance party, rave or ‘doof’ events you have attended this year.

(Including name, date and venue/site)

30. What style(s) of music do you like?

31. A) What styles of music *don't* you like? (if there aren't any please go on to Question 9.)

E) If you knew this style (that you don't like) was to be the main style at a rave you were thinking of attending, would you still attend? Yes / No

32. A) Do you buy CDs of your preferred of style music? Yes / No
(if answer is 'no' then go on to Question 10)

B) What were the last 3 dance music CDs you bought?

#1

#2

#3

c) In a normal month, how much would you spend on dance music CDs?

33. A) Do you buy clothes especially for raves or dance parties? Yes / No
(if answer is 'no' then please go on to Question 11)

B) In what stores do you buy these clothes?

C) What labels of clothing do you like?

D) Ho much would you spend on these clothes in a normal month?

34. What other items (e.g. glow sticks, glitter, coloured glasses) might you buy to go to a rave or dance party?

35. Do you buy Chuppa Chups at or before a rave?

Always / Sometimes / Never

36. Do buy chuppa chups in your everyday life? Yes / No

37. What is the most you have paid for a rave or dance party?

13. Do you consider yourself part of an ‘underground’ scene? Yes / No

14. A) In the time that you have been attending dance parties or raves, do you think the scene has become more commercial than it used to be? Yes / No

(if answer is ‘no’ go on to question 15)

B) How has this affected the scene?

15. A) Do you go to clubs at all? Yes / No

(if answer is ‘no’ go on to question 16)

B) Which clubs do you go to?

16. If you choose to take drugs at a rave or dance party, how much do you usually spend on them? (please don’t feel obliged to answer this question).

17. Do you feel there is any 'type' of person that does not belong at a rave or dance party? If so, please describe them.

18. What do you enjoy most about a rave or dance party?

19. What factors will make you decide that you will definitely attend a rave or dance party? (please circle & feel free to add your own)

Friends going

DJs you like are playing

It will be your style of music

Venue will be interesting

Venue will be reliable

Venue will be big

Lighting/visuals

It will be 'underground'

It is open to everyone who wants to attend

People will be friendly

People will be 'your kind of people'

You managed to buy drugs beforehand

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Your help is greatly appreciated.

Glossary of Musical Genres

Please note: This section is to provide some general distinctions in genres present in the Sydney rave and club scenes. As genres are constantly being created and redefined, it represents but a general overview as observed by the author, and is far from being absolute.

Acid House- The 'original' genre of rave based music as we know it today. Rose out of Chicago and Detroit, became popular in Ibiza, then was adopted by Britons in 'The Second Summer of Love', 1988. Consisted of 'Acid Bass' (a specific synthesised bass sound), an early drum machine kick drum sound (which features in virtually all genres today) and often piano lines. There were often vocal samples or singing or speaking, and it sampled heavily from the New York Disco Sound of the 1970s.

Breaks/ Break Beat- a particularly diverse style of dance music, drawing primarily from drum 'n' bass (see listing), yet played at a slower tempo and encompassing aspects of techno, house and even trance. Primarily a club based sound, it is beginning to gain recognition and appreciation within the rave scene.

Drum 'n' Bass- Also called 'Jungle', this genre consists of syncopated beats, played at a fast tempo and lacking the regular kick drum sound. It also has a strong bass line. Often played at raves as a separate and lesser draw card to other genres, and often in a similar manner at clubs.

Forever Young- The title of a rave track which was popular in 1995. Often still played today and regarded as an 'old skool' anthem.

Gabber- A particularly aggressive version of Hardcore (see listing) to rise out of the Netherlands, where it has strong subcultural affiliations

Happy Hard/ Happy Hardcore- genre of dance music which consists of a fast and heavy regular kick drum beat with synthesised melodies which are repeated many times Often played at Raves.

Hardcore- A genre of dance music referring to particularly hard ad fast dance music with a heavy relentless beat which is often distorted. It has little or no melody. Often played at raves

House/Funky House- A Broad description given to the highly melodic, often commercially successful genre of dance music. Directly derived from Acid House, it is predominantly a club based genre.

Techno- A broad description of electronic music played at dance events, but more specifically a genre within dance music with a heavy, relentless beat and little or no melody. Frequently played at raves and clubs alike.

Trance- A variation of the original Acid house sound, with more emphasis on psychedelic experience. Includes the standard kick drum sound, with sweeping synthesised melodies, and breaks in which only melody is present. Frequently played at raves and clubs alike.

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'Human Traffic' (1999), Director : Justin Kerrigon, Producer: Alan Niblo, Fruit Salad Films

'Sorted' (2000), Director: Alexander Jovy, Producers: Mark Crowdy and Fabrizio Chiesa, Jovy Junior Enterprises