The F… is Goth Anyway

Classification, Dynamic Practice and Goth in Adelaide

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation utilises dynamic practice theory to examine how goth is negotiated and practiced in two distinct but overlapping scenes (Dark Alternative and Post-Punk) in the city of Adelaide, South Australia. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted from 2012 to 2014, I explore how goths negotiate and renegotiate the definition and the boundaries of goth in the flow of practice. This fieldwork included an extended period of participant observation, interviews with key participants and 'online' research on social media sites, social networking sites, and various online resources that were available to goths in Adelaide. This multifaceted approach helped account for the complexities of research participants' lives and practices and of my research field, where goth was a marginal cultural practice that overlapped with other similar practices in local scenes.

The primary aim of this thesis is to unpack how goths work to sustain an image of goth as a legitimate cultural practice that is not only distinctive, but 'normal' to do and be. As the title of this dissertation suggests, what goth 'means' and how it 'should' be practiced is a prevalent concern and recurrent source of tension among goths. Throughout my fieldwork these tensions and concerns became apparent in different ways, including: overt questions such as 'What is goth?', 'Is [x] goth?' and 'Am I goth if…?', as well as in implicit and explicit value judgements, the policing of boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, and an emphasis on tacit understandings and actions. This dissertation focuses on these evaluations of authentic and legitimate people, practices, and things. I demonstrate that my participants use these evaluative processes to claim authentic identities and a legitimate status among goths. This impacts where and how they practice goth, and whether or not others believe they have the authority to represent goth in various contexts. An essential part of this process involves participants' development of personalised interpretations of goth, which I call 'my goth'. This process requires significant commitments to goth practices and interests, particularly its musical aspects. However, it also necessitates that individuals do not limit themselves to goth but embrace 'non-goth' aspects of their lives and interests, negotiating these diverse dimensions in practice.

Throughout the thesis chapters, I explore goths' practical negotiations of their cultural practice and its boundaries. I contend that these local practices intersect with transnational practices, histories, and definitions—both those within goth and within the popular imagination. I demonstrate that these transnational discourses are vital to the practices of goths in my research field due to the small number of goths in Adelaide. I suggest that locally-grounded practices, especially public performances within Adelaide's Dark Alternative and Postpunk scenes, are also vital spaces for collective negotiations of goth in Adelaide.

My findings make important contributions to both the study of youth cultures and the application of dynamic practice theory. In particular, I demonstrate that dynamic practice theory is a useful theoretical lens that helps account for the complex, dynamic and everyday characteristics of goth as a distinct cultural practice.

THESIS DECLARATION

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide.

I give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

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Briony Morrison

Presentation of Research

The development of this thesis was aided by the presentation of part of the research within academic forums throughout the candidature. This includes presentation of the work at four conferences. I list these here:

Morrison, B. (2014) 'Grounded goth: Navigating transnational (youth) culture & local scenes in Adelaide'. Paper presented at the 'Interactive Futures: Young People's Mediated Lives in the Asia Pacific and Beyond' conference, Melbourne, VIC, 1-2 December.

Morrison, B. (2016a) 'From face-to-face to the internet: Changing interactions with music & culture.' Paper presented at the Musicological Society Australia conference 2016, 'Shifts and Turns: Moving Music, Musicians, and Ideas', Adelaide, SA, 30 November – 3 December.

Morrison, B. (2016b) 'Youth in ageing 'youth' cultures: Generational perceptions & possibilities for creative and original engagements in goth culture.' Paper presented at the Australian / New Zealand branch of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music conference 2016, 'Isolated Musics, Connected Musics', Mackay, QLD, 7-9 December.

Morrison, B. (2017) 'Goth and the popular imagination: negotiations of meaning and cultural identities in practice'. Paper presented at the Australian Anthropological Association, Association of Social Anthropologists, and Association of Social Anthropologists of Aotearoa/New Zealand's joint conference, 'Shifting States', Adelaide, SA, 11-15 December.

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(All photographs used with permission)

Notes for the Reader: Conventions & Terminology

Throughout this thesis I have cited material from the chat-logs of online interviews and social media sites. Some of these citations include spelling and grammatical errors and inconsistencies. I cite verbatim from these sources with three exceptions: (a) where meaning is altered by mis-typed words; (b) where the author followed their error with a correction (indicated to me during interviews through the use of an asterisk followed by the corrected text); and (c) where I have used an ellipsis ('…') or single square brackets around words ('[ ]') to indicate where I have left words out or replaced words. This is intended to preserve the integrity of participants' voices in this thesis whilst also ensuring, especially in the third instance, that I indicate where I have made alterations.

In these quotations, I have also indicated their actions or changes in tonality using double square-brackets ('[[ ]]'), denote their pauses with a single dot between parentheses ('(.)'), and unfinished words or phrases with a single dash ('-') where they broke off. For interviews with multiple participants, I have also indicated overlapped sections with two dashes ('--') at either end of the overlapped sections.

Finally, where I have cited from one of my participants' personal blogs, I have acknowledged their authorship but have not provided a URL or exact date for their post to preserve their privacy to the best of my ability. In some places I have anonymised quotations from research participants because of their potentially inflammatory nature, and to avoid participants' being accused of inauthenticity or 'pettiness'.

'The G-Word'

Before I begin, it is necessary to clarify how I use the term goth throughout this thesis. In part, this is necessary because of differing conventions regarding capitalisation. I have chosen not to capitalise the 'G' in goth. This convention is explained in a recent publication by Karl Spracklen and Beverley Spracklen

(2018) who write that they 'prefer goth, not Goth, because [they] are speaking of a culture, or a genre, or space, or scene, or lifestyle, or possibly sub-culture. It is a descriptor like punk, or skinhead' (Spracklen and Spracklen, 2018: 3).

It is also necessary to make such terminological clarifications due to participants' ambivalent feelings toward 'labels' and the stereotypes that are often associated with them. Not everyone who uses the term is referring to the same practices or people and its meaning can change depending upon who is using it and for what purpose. As participants note in the following quotations from interviews:

> I try not to use 'the g-word' because it's too- it's too easily misunderstood.
>
> (Evony)

> In the end if someone asks if I'm goth I'll say yes or maybe depending on my mood if they really need to clarify me. But usually that question is followed up by an insult or some kid spouting how much they love Marilyn Manson, Trent Reznor, Tim Burton or some other pop culture figure the mainstream thinks of as goth.
>
> (Adam)

As these participants indicate, individuals frequently have mixed feelings about the term goth, sometimes referring to it as 'the g-word' or preferring other 'labels' such as 'dark alternative' or 'deathrocker' to describe their tastes, practices, and identities. Many refused the term, insisting that it was too confining; a reductive label that boiled their complex and nuanced personalities and tastes down to a single term that did not always refer to what they believed to be 'real' goth. This latter belief was connected to their assertions that the term had been 'corrupted' through 'overexposure' in popular media and (mis-)associations with a demonised stereotype or a watered-down distortion of its 'real' meaning, making it an 'unserviceable' term (Thornton, 1995). In this thesis I therefore distinguish between these popular interpretations ('goth') and what participants believe to be 'real' goth. As this is bound up with issues of the legitimacy of goth as a cultural practice, as well as with participants' evaluative judgements, I explore this subject further throughout the thesis.

The difficulties surrounding the label pale in comparison to the difficulties that come from avoiding the term to describe goth and its participants (which I struggled to do when I first started writing my thesis). Thus, while I use the terms goth and goths, I acknowledge their potentially contextual usage and that they may be 'unserviceable' for many goths.

Chapter 1 - Thesis Introduction

Definition and boundaries between 'insider' and 'outsider', 'real' and 'fake', 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' are persistent sources of debate within goth. Such issues also pervade studies of youth culture, where scholars continue to deliberate about the relative substantiveness or fluidity of these cultural phenomena into the twenty-first century. In this dissertation, I use dynamic practice theory, outlined by Elizabeth Shove and colleagues (Shove et al., 2007, 2012; Hui et al., 2017a), to explore how goths negotiate the boundaries and definitions of goth in the flow of their practices. In particular, I focus upon their evaluative judgements about individuals' understandings and practices of goth. I explore how these judgements impact goths' perceptions about who and what is goth as well as how these boundary-marking practices connect to participants' efforts to assert that goth is a distinct, yet 'ordinary', thing to do and be.

I contribute to broader scholarly literature about the role of participants in constructing their 'youth culture'. However, I move beyond youth cultural scholarship to understand goth as a distinct 'cultural practice' that is neither specific to 'youth' nor isolated from other aspects of participants' everyday lives and identities. This approach accounts for both the 'normal' and 'distinctive' aspects of goth, which participants negotiate in their everyday lives, not merely when they are, to quote a research participant, 'being subcultural'. In this sense, this dissertation contributes an understanding of the interface between the spectacular and mundane in contemporary youth cultural practices (Bennett, 2015a; Robards, 2015) by working within and beyond the field of youth studies. This is not a call to *abandon* these divisions.

My research material, gathered during ethnographic fieldwork, shows that, while goths frequently assert that 'goths are normal people who happen to like certain things', they also reproduce insider-outsider binaries that rely upon divisions between the 'ordinary' or 'mainstream' and the 'spectacular' (goth). Such distinctions are often embedded within participants' classifications of the authenticity and legitimacy of certain people, practices, and things that are associated with goth as a cultural practice or as a label. These evaluative

categorisations are demonstrated in the following vignettes from my fieldwork which I conducted in Adelaide, South Australia between 2012 and 2014.

‘You Can’t Sit with Us’ & ‘Testing Mode’

During the winter of 2013, I sat with a small group of my participants in the beergarden of a pub in Adelaide’s CBD. We came together to see Cities in Dust[1], a local goth band. This was my first time seeing the band after discovering them (and the Postpunk scene of which they were a part) a few months earlier. They were a relatively young band and I was excited to see them after hearing about their origins and goth influences from Rosa, one of the band’s founding members. It was not until later on that I realised how significant this night would become for my personal understandings of goth as well as for my analysis in this dissertation. In both of these ways, the events of this night highlight many of the underlying dynamics and divisions within goth, which are central to this thesis.

In between bands’ sets, we discussed a wide range of topics, including my research, goth, and the bands playing that night. The others in our little group, who had been goth since at least the 1990s, also reminisced among themselves about their time in Adelaide’s ‘old goth scene’ and spoke of how their memories were hazy due to the volume of alcohol they had imbibed. While we waited for Cities in Dust’s set, Alice, one of the women in our group, who I was meeting for the first time that night, engaged me in a round of ‘20-questions’. She asked me what I had learned about goth from my research and was eager to know what I thought of goth, especially the music. She asked me about goth bands I had discovered and liked listening to most and about what parts of goth or styles I liked and disliked. I stumbled through my responses, not expecting to be grilled in this manner. I was hesitant to claim to have the ‘right’ answers to her questions because I knew I still had so much to learn about goth and how people in Adelaide understood and practiced it. I was relieved to see everyone’s attention shift from me to the band as they began their set.

---

[1] I have changed the band’s name at the request of its members.

The hypnotic sound of Cities in Dust's guitars and synthesiser, and driving drum beats, captivated everyone in the beergarden as their sounds melded beneath the singer's powerful voice. I jotted down notes about the goth influences I could identify in their music—a little Siouxsie and the Banshees here, some Birthday Party there, with undertones of The Cure in the guitars. I hadn't noticed these influences on their recordings, but they jumped out at me as I felt the music reverberate in my ears and chest. I felt proud of myself for identifying these influences, even if I couldn't confidently answer Alice's questions. As I thought about this, misty vapour from the band's smoke-machine swirled around the stage, catching the stage lights and then drifting over the audience, eventually reaching us at the back of the crowd and completely obscuring the band from my view.

For me, the overall experience of this night was distinct in many ways from what I had encountered during my fieldwork so far, which had centred on Dark Alternative (Dark Alt) club nights. I was struck by these differences, not only in event format, but the atmosphere and aesthetics, the venue, the music styles, and the intensity with which the crowd engaged with the music and the people who played it. At the same time, I noted several overlaps to myself: the smoke machine, the dark/gothy aesthetics and presence in the crowd, and the different types of people in each of the diverse scenes. The stark contrasts and subtle overlaps that I observed ignited questions in my mind about how both experiences could be related to the same practice (goth), be traceable to the same international and even local roots yet be so distinct and separated from one another in practice. My flexible approach to my research field, discussions with key research participants, and my reading about goth had prepared me for some differences and minor overlaps, but it was something else to experience these for myself, in the flow of practice. I have drawn these differences, overlaps, and questions into this thesis, where I explore goth as a distinct and dynamic cultural practice.

My experiences at this Cities in Dust gig were valuable for my understanding of goth in practice, especially the links between goth's musical past and its musical contemporary in the practices of goths in Adelaide. However, what happened after Cities in Dust's set, alongside Alice's 'interrogation', provided vital

impetus for my focus on issues of definition, authenticity and legitimacy in this thesis.

After Cities in Dust finished their set, I watched the band pack up as most of the crowd filed out of the beergarden. As I sat watching the band, Steven, a prominent DJ and event organiser from the Dark Alt scene, sat at the table opposite me. I had noticed him hovering around us (me?) but had not seen him talk to anyone else. Apart from the black military cap that he wore, I thought he fitted in well with the other goths in the Postpunk scene. To me, his well-worn black jeans, black combat boots, black t-shirt and DIYed jacket, his black painted fingernails, and thinly lined eyelids with subtle 'wings' flicking out to the outer sides of his lash-line (not unlike the others I was sitting with) were 'standards' of style for many goths in the Postpunk scene. As he sat down, Steven complimented me on my Peter Murphy tour t-shirt. All of us had seen the former front man for '*the* original' and iconic goth band Bauhaus when he toured Australia (including Adelaide!) in 2013. Steven and I spoke briefly about Murphy's performance and the excitement of being able to see him live and in-person. We exchanged brief comments about Cities in Dust's set and both mentioned how we really liked their sound. I felt honoured, Steven had always ignored me at his club nights, but there he was, not only acknowledging me but talking to *me*, out of all the people in the room.

As Steven and I spoke, I noticed Alice in my peripheral vision dramatically roll her eyes before turning her back on us to lean in close to the others in the group; they huddled together and began whispering among themselves. They made a point of shutting Steven and, by association, me out of their conversation. As I glanced between the group and the man opposite me, I got the feeling that he predicted their reaction, even when I did not, and he went uncomfortably quiet. When the next band began their set, Steven silently left the table and joined the tightly-packed crowd in front of the stage. Alice and the rest of the group returned to their previously welcoming and casual stance, again acknowledging me as though nothing had happened.

I later worked out from other areas of my research that Steven and the people in the group I was sitting with had conflicted on many things over the years,

personally and professionally (as event organisers and DJs). For example, when talking to the people in Alice's group about a rare dedicated 'goth night' that Steven was running in the Dark Alt scene, they quickly dismissed the event, scoffing that there wouldn't be any 'actual goth music' played and saying they were busy before knowing the date. I also drew strands of their relationship together from other aspects of my research, which suggested that many of these clashes centred upon their conflicting ideas about goth (what it is and what could be categorised as goth) and about the significance and relevance of certain types of music and styles to goth.

While Steven and I only spoke briefly, about things all of us at the table had experienced and could talk about, and while he sat opposite me for less than ten minutes, this incident and the night overall speaks to some of the dynamics of goth in Adelaide. As I discuss throughout this thesis, alongside other aspects of my research, such experiences also highlight the impact of issues of authenticity, legitimacy, and definition upon how, when, where, and *who* can practice goth in different contexts. The significance of this night is further highlighted in the context of other aspects of my research, including conversations with Adam, another research participant, who talked with me about testing people's 'gothness'.

Adam was another 'old timer' who, like many of the individuals discussed above, had been in and out of different goth-related scenes since the mid-1990s. During an interview, Adam explained how goths judge the authenticity of others' associations with goth based not only on their image, but their knowledge and understandings of goth. He discussed three aspects of this process that were of particular importance: how individuals defined goth, their knowledge of its diverse history and associated music, and how they combined such knowledge with their personal tastes, style, and worldviews to demonstrate a personally-nuanced interpretation of goth. This personal interpretation needed to be distinct, yet it also needed to be recognisable to other goths.

Alice's questioning of me is a prime example of this testing process. She not only questioned my knowledge of goth, especially its music, but the motivations behind my interest in it. At the same time, she positioned herself and her

friends—who all had extensive experience in goth—as authorities who could judge others' knowledge, understandings, and motivations. By contrast, the group's exclusion and dismissal of Steven suggested that he 'failed' their test. For Alice and the others, Steven was not a goth. His understanding of goth, the music he listened to and promoted through his Dark Alt events, his style and association with goth were inauthentic. They thus viewed his attendance at a single Cities in Dust show and his efforts to talk to 'the goth researcher' about a foundational, yet well-known goth musician, as empty gestures, intended to 'prove' his gothness to an audience rather than genuine displays of interest and taste. In this way, these gestures did nothing to improve their judgements about his legitimacy to run 'goth events' or his association with goth.

Consistent with the competitive character of these processes, Adam referred to them as both 'intellectual "gother than thou" one-upmanship' and 'poseur tests' when explaining them to me. I later discovered that he had also written about such behaviour on his blog, where he described them as part of a process he called '"So you think you are goth? Time for testing" mode'. In both forums, Adam explained that goths regularly test new or unfamiliar people who claim association with or interest in goth. However, I discovered through my research that anyone who claims association with goth—explicitly or implicitly—is judged by such criteria, regardless of the duration of their association. This means that individuals not only have to establish the authenticity of their gothness among goths but maintain and reaffirm it (e.g. through ongoing commitment to goth) even if the visual spectacularity of their gothness decreased as they age or because they needed to 'survive in society'. I therefore argue in this thesis that issues of authenticity and legitimacy are an ongoing and evolving part of the everyday experience of being goth, in particular shaping how, when, and where goth is practiced and, perhaps most importantly, by whom.

In line with the above sources from my ethnographic fieldwork in Adelaide, these 'testing' processes can be understood to have four key functions. Firstly, they are used to test people's knowledge about and understanding of goth and judge their authenticity relevant to the 'standards' of goth (and the knowledge and understanding of the individual doing the testing). In this sense, goths also

use 'testing mode' to interrogate the sincerity and motivations of individuals who associate their tastes, style and/or identity with goth. A third function of such testing processes relates not to specific individuals but to the practice as a whole, where committed participants seek to ensure a relatively consistent definition and image of goth as a distinctive and legitimate thing to do and be. These first three functions speak to *why* goths make these judgements. The final function identifiable in Adam's descriptions echoes Pierre Bourdieu's point that taste distinctions are used to classify but they also classify the classifier (1984: 6). 'Testing mode' therefore holds a mirror up to individuals who enact it, potentially reinforcing or raising questions about their own 'gothness'. When a person engages in this process of classification, they also seek to assert the authenticity of their own identity and their legitimacy as a knowledgeable 'insider' who has both the competence and experience (and therefore the 'right') to judge the authenticity and sincerity of others' claims to goth.

Although many of these points highlight the functions of 'testing mode' for individuals, I contend that this is only part of the equation. Goths, through their actions and words, frequently demonstrate that processes of 'testing mode' and associated classifications are also vital for marking goth as a distinct and legitimate practice. I show in this thesis that such judgements are a necessary part of participants' efforts to frame goth as a 'normal, ordinary, and acceptable' thing to do and be (Ingram et al., 2007: 14). This approach to goths' evaluative practices builds upon existing interpretations of 'authenticity', wherein issues of legitimacy tend to be understood as matters of individual or 'cultural authenticity' (Lindholm, 2008). In the following section, I discuss some of the key ways that scholars have written about this concept and outline my argument for how issues of legitimacy should be understood as intertwined with, yet distinct from, authenticity rather than as one and the same.

AUTHENTICITY & LEGITIMACY

Writing about authenticity in country music, Richard Peterson (2005) argues that it is not a single person or group that determines the authenticity of a country musician, their music or performances. Rather, he suggests, authenticity is a socially-constructed and polemical concept that is the result of the

evaluative assessments that are carried out by everyone within a given field of practice. In this way, authenticity is not an inherent characteristic of an object, person, or practice but is interwoven with judgements about the value and/or truth of claims to 'realness' (Trilling, 1972; Bourdieu, 1984). As noted in the above vignettes, such evaluations are frequently carried out in the flow of practice. They are often used, for example, to erect boundaries between 'insiders', whose claims are judged authentic, and 'outsiders', who do not pass the 'test'. I therefore contend that such processes have a central role in goths' negotiations of the boundaries of their cultural practice.

I am not alone in making such a claim.[2] Paul Hodkinson (2002) notes how goths make distinctions between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' in clubs. He suggests that these distinctions are based upon an individuals' performance, their demonstrations of knowledge about 'real' goth, and their relative commitment to the practice. He writes, for example, about how goths tended to denigrate individuals who were perceived as 'part-timers', who he suggests are considered to only 'take part in the goth scene for individual nights out and hence [lacking] a permanent subcultural appearance' (Hodkinson, 2002: 78).

Drawing on her ethnographic research in the 'Dutch gothic subculture', Agnes Jasper (2004, 2006) describes how goths demonstrate an 'unspoken morale of authenticity' in their negotiations of identity and consumption practices. Of particular note for Jasper is their simultaneous claiming and rejection of the label of goth. She maintains that goths seek to both assert that their identification with goth is 'natural' to them, it is 'something that one simply *is*' rather than something that one can become or that can be explained using words (Jasper, 2004: 106). This understanding relies on a romantic ideal of authenticity that is often espoused by members of 'youth cultures' and is bound up with an idealised vision of authentic and unique selfhood that is beyond the influence of external social processes and rules (Lewin and Williams, 2009). For Jasper,

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[2] Others have also made such claims about other youth cultures, for example: Thornton (1995) considered the role of authenticity within club cultures such as rave; McLeod (1999), Maxwell (2003), Rodger (2011) and Harkness (2012) discuss authenticity and authentication within hip-hop; Haenfler (2006, 2012) and Williams (2003, 2006; Williams and Copes, 2005) explore processes of authenticity in straightedge; and Muggleton (2000) and Lewin and Williams (2009) have discussed authenticity within punk. My focus here is on goth.

goths' use of authenticity is paradoxical: to be an authentic goth, individuals are expected to resist being labelled goth; yet goths 'can only be real if [they are] identifiable, which makes authenticity in itself a void' (Jasper, 2004: 112).

While I disagree that goths' resistance to what my participants described as 'the g-word' turns their practices and their use of authenticity into a paradox, Jasper's assertion that such usage of authenticity connects to issues of power and power-relations within goth is important here. This association of authenticity with power is also evident in Sarah Thornton's (1995) work on 'subcultural capital'. Building on Bourdieu's (1984) conceptualisations of cultural, symbolic and social forms of capital, Thornton explains that subcultural capital is a means by which individuals gain status within a 'subculture': it 'confers status on its owner in the eyes of the relevant beholder' based on demonstrated possession of 'correct' stylistic sensibilities, goods, knowledge, and embodied know-how (1995: 11–2). It is also a marker against which so-called insiders classify and make judgements about other individuals with reference to 'a conscious and mutually agreed set of standards' (Hodkinson, 2002: 81).

Individuals who successfully demonstrate that they possess the relevant criteria for subcultural capital often have greater degrees of status and authority within the 'subculture', including, I argue, the 'right' to represent the group in public forums such as on social media and within associated scenes. It is important to note, however, that such interpretations of authenticity and the associated forms of status are primarily concerned with individuals and their prestige within the practice.

To broaden this perspective beyond individuals, it is useful to look to Bourdieu (1984, 1990). For him, capital is tied to what he calls 'struggles for distinction'. These symbolic struggles intersect not only power-relations but status within a given social milieu. Of key importance to this dissertation is the relationship between struggles for distinction and legitimacy. In this model, legitimacy may be understood as the 'right' to define the boundaries around a practice and to have a say in determining the criteria against which authenticity is judged. Crucially, this interpretation of legitimacy does not confine power and status to

individuals but links individual practices and judgements with the status of the practice in relation to other cultural groups within a society, in particular with the 'dominant aesthetic' (Bourdieu, 1984: 41) or 'the mainstream', which is often set in opposition to 'the subcultural' (J. Clarke et al., 1976; Thornton, 1995).

This relationship between the individuals who carry out practices (Reckwitz, 2002), the cultural entity that they practice (i.e. the practice), and other practices within the social milieu is, I argue, important to goths, whose practices are often associated with the 'dominated' rather than the 'dominant' aesthetic. I demonstrate throughout this thesis that goths make distinctions between 'authentic' and 'inauthentic', 'real' and 'imitation', 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' to promote a positive image of goth as something that is not only legitimate to do, but legitimate to be and to spend time, money, and energy on. Within this framework is a secondary type of legitimacy that pertains specifically to individuals and links to matters of authenticity.

In an article titled 'Have I the right? Legitimacy, authenticity and community in folk's politics', youth scholars Steven Redhead and John Street (1989) write about 'a musician's *right to speak* for a community'. This 'right to speak' for others—which I suggest is also a right to act as the 'part' that 'stands in for the whole' (Becker, 1963)—is tied to their authenticity as an individual, that is, on their 'integrity' as an individual who thinks and acts for themselves rather than being a puppet of other interests (see also Lewin and Williams, 2009). It is this integrity that is 'lost' when a musician is accused of 'selling out', where they are seen to compromise their artistic integrity, for example, for financial gain or fame (Maxwell, 2003; Rodger, 2011) or when they fail to 'be in touch with "real" people and "real" experiences' (Redhead and Street, 1989: 179; cf. Peterson, 2005).

Redhead and Street compare a musicians' legitimacy to the position of an elected politician in a democratic society:

> Musicians function like elected politicians; they represent their audience/constituency. Their authority is dependent on their ability to claim to speak for those who follow. For this, they need to be deemed *legitimate*.…The validity of the music [they make] is measured by whether

> it strikes a chord with those who hear it: is it *authentic*—is it representative, does it provide an accurate picture of their audience.
>
> (Redhead and Street, 1989: 178–9)

I suggest that while such legitimacy is vital for musicians and other notable figures within a practice, such as event organisers or YouTubers, legitimacy and authenticity are a pivotal part of the dynamics of the practice more generally. From this perspective, it is not only those in the spotlight that represent goths through their words and actions. Rather, anyone who claims association with or is associated with the practice by others, for example in media characterisations, represents or 'speaks for' the practice and those who do it, though participants do not always agree they should occupy such a position. I argue that this is why goths employ processes such as the 'testing mode' Adam describes in the above vignette. I suggest that exploring how goths enact these evaluative judgements in the flow of their practices, particularly when they are directed toward the definition and maintenance of goth's boundaries, helps to understand the dynamic character of practices in contemporary society as well as how goths negotiate these boundaries within their everyday lives.

Writing about Goth

Since the late-1990s and early-2000s—a period which I describe in this thesis as a time of evolution and transition within goth—there has been a growing body of work concerned to understand goth as a youth cultural phenomenon. This attention is arguably part of goths' enduring interest in the nature and history of their own cultural practice. This non-scholarly fascination is demonstrated by the prevalence of questions such as 'what is goth?' in my research field and the number of publications written about goth 'by goths for goths' (Hodkinson, 2002: 173; such as Mercer, 2002, 2009a; Kilpatrick, 2004; Venters, 2009; Scharf, 2011; Harriman and Bontje, 2014). It is also marked by the prevalence of 'insider-researchers' (Hodkinson, 2005) who produce academic accounts of goth. While colloquial accounts of the cultural practice are useful to understand how goths historicise and negotiate goth in their discourses about it, my focus here is on scholarly analyses of goth as a so-called 'subculture'.

Paul Hodkinson (2002) wrote one of the first sustained analyses of goth as a 'subculture'. His work, based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted during his PhD, is a sustained critique of both modernist analyses of 'subcultures' as homogeneous reactions to experiences of structural inequalities and postmodern notions of youth culture as fragmented, ephemeral and individualistic phenomena. He argues for a reworking of earlier notions of 'subculture' in a way that acknowledges the more substantive characteristics of 'subcultures' such as goth, which he maintains do not fit the individualistic frame of so-called post-subcultural theories of youth cultural practice. He demonstrates this through an analysis of goths' practices in the UK during the late-1990s, focusing on their social gatherings, use of various media, and engagements with commodities such as fashion. He also builds upon Thornton's (1995) work on 'subcultural capital', suggesting that individuals frequently engage in acts of judgement and strive to gain greater degrees of capital among goths through, for example, their demonstrations of ongoing commitment to their goth identities and practices.

Central to his argument is his model of 'subcultural substantiveness', which I introduce here and explore further in Chapter 3. This model rests on four overlapping 'indicators of substance': 'consistent distinctiveness', 'identity', 'autonomy', and 'commitment' (Hodkinson, 2002: 28–33). He approaches each of these aspects with the view that goths are simultaneously individual actors and social beings. In the language of this thesis, he concludes that goths produce and reproduce goth through their actions and interactions, in which they negotiate a shared practice through their engagements with one another, with media, and with fashion in social spaces. Despite the age of Hodkinson's research, I argue that such an understanding of goth remains relevant. However, not everyone would agree with this conclusion.

In their recently published analysis of goth, Spracklen and Spracklen (2018) are highly critical of Hodkinson's work, suggesting that his attempt to 'rework subculture' leaves the question of whether goth is or is not a substantive 'subcultural' entity unanswered (2018: 11–2). These authors also take issue with the age of Hodkinson's research, suggesting that both goth and wider society have changed dramatically in the last twenty years. While I do not deny that

such drastic changes have taken place, I disagree with their suggestions that Hodkinson's work is 'too dated' and that goth has become a pale shade of its formerly distinctive and 'authentic' character. Both assertions were inconsistent with my research field, despite the marginalised position that goth has within Adelaide and Australian society more generally.

With this critique in mind, however, Spracklen and Spracklen (2018) do address areas of goth that are similar to those I explore in this thesis. For example, they begin with the question, 'What is goth?'. They seek to answer this question with reference to goths' collective constructions of the history and evolution of goth. Their analysis is based on information they have gathered from their personal experiences of goth in Leeds in the UK, interviews with a small group of goths who were 'associated with the scene in the north of England' and had a 'long history of being goths', 'archival research' and 'content and semiotic analysis of relevant internet sites' (Spracklen and Spracklen, 2018: 4). For the authors[3], goth is a transgressive 'sub-culture' characterised by 'alternativity' and marginalisation. They argue, however, that the characteristics of goth that make it distinctive—including its 'alternativity', 'transgressive politics' and fashion styles—have been increasingly co-opted and reconfigured by popular or 'mainstream' commercial industries. This commodification, they suggest, has 'endangered' goth by alienating it from its roots as a 'musical subculture' and reshaped it into a 'subculture' defined by a loose idea of darkness and transgression that is accessible online and through commodities.

I note a similar trend within participants' discourses about goth in this thesis. Unlike Spracklen and Spracklen, however, I maintain that such discourses *do not* indicate that goth is being subsumed and bled-dry by 'the commodity culture' of late capitalism. Rather, I suggest that these interpretations are tied to participants' feelings about the delegitimising impact of the popular imagination and 'mainstream' commercial markets. I also link such reactions to goths' desire

[3] The authors claim a 'long-standing interest in goth as participants' despite periods of 'shifting interests' (Spracklen and Spracklen, 2018: 8ff); it is unclear how they negotiate the "'goth" and the "researcher"' parts of their identities (Brill, 2008: 2) or whether they balance them to take a critical and reflexive position as researchers, or whether they downplay this critical vantage point in favour of the goth aspects of their identities. I discuss the necessity of this critical perspective in Chapter 2 (see Bennett, 2003; Hodkinson, 2005).

to maintain ideological distance between their own practices (which goths see as intentional and 'natural') and those of 'normies' or 'the mainstream' (which goths frequently characterise as 'sheep-like' and unreflexive) (Lewin and Williams, 2009). My work again overlaps with Spracklen and Spracklen's arguments regarding participants' active role in the collective construction of goth through these boundary-marking practices (including their discourses).

In *Goths, Gamers, and Grrrls*, Ross Haenfler (2010) similarly sees youth cultures, including goth, as constructed. Focusing on the stigmatisation and 'stigma management' of goth and goths, Haenfler suggests that goths 'revel in their difference, constructing themselves as "freaks" who consciously reject the mainstream' (2010: 86). He clarifies that goths often engage in acts of 'stigma management', selectively embracing and concealing their goth style to manage how they are treated by those around them. Such selective decisions, he notes, may incite questions about the authenticity of an individual's claim to goth. Hodkinson suggests that such behaviour is characteristic of 'part-timers' (2002: 78).

Both Haenfler and Hodkinson suggest that goths' negative assessments of such individuals are tied to the emphasis that goths place on demonstrating commitment to goth. Hodkinson (2002, 2007a) therefore noted that participants in his research field 'frequently celebrated their level of dedication to the goth scene as an identifiable set of shared styles and practices [which] was often contrasted with the perceived trend-following fickleness of mainstream youth' (Hodkinson, 2007a: 323). This interpretation is supported by my research: participants frequently denigrated individuals who they perceived to lack commitment toward goth. As I discuss in Chapter 7, participants also acknowledged that it was sometimes 'necessary' to down-play or conceal the most overt aspects of their style to 'survive' in their day-to-day lives, especially at work or school.

At the same time, as I discuss throughout this dissertation, goths in my research field also suggested that an over-emphasis on fashion and style perpetuates reductive characterisations of goth within the popular imagination, which frame goth as a fashion trend that can be selectively worn and cast aside (see Chapter

4). Research participants argued that one's preference for 'goth music', rather than 'the fashion', was the 'true' marker of an individual's gothness. This is something that seems to be missing from the work of many scholars who write sustained analyses of goth. For example, both Paul Hodkinson (2002) and Dunja Brill (2008) acknowledge the foundational role of music within goth, and highlight the centrality of music to goths' practices, but their analyses are primarily concerned with the stylistic practices of their research participants, which are expressed through a variety of practices and material engagements.

Brill uses these stylistic aspects of goth to investigate issues of sexuality and gender within goth in her multi-sited ethnography in the UK, USA, and Germany—three countries that my research participants highlighted as highly-influential hubs of goth music and 'culture'. She concludes that, whilst goths espouse an ideological commitment to transgressions of dominant norms of style, sexuality and gender, they habitually 'replicate deeply conservative gender discourses, thinly veiled by a rhetoric of subversion and transgression' (Brill, 2008: 182). For her, this idealistic view of goth is demonstrated most overtly through style and bodily performances of goths rather than through their engagements with music.

Isabella van Elferen and Andrew Weinstock (2016) argue that this focus on style underemphasises and often neglects 'the *musical* aspects of goth music and, with that, its hybridity, its on-goingness, and its centrality to the goth experience' (2016: 3). Taking a musicological approach and drawing on personal experiences with goth music and practice, these authors seek to redress the relative marginalisation of the musical aspects of goth in scholarly literature through focusing not on goth as a 'consistently distinctive' practice as Hodkinson does, but on the heterogeneity that the authors see in the music and its associated scenes. This musicological analysis further separates this recent work from others discussed in this section, which take an ethnographic approach to researching goth (Hodkinson, 2002; Brill, 2008; Spracklen and Spracklen, 2018).[4]

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[4] I use the term 'ethnographic' with caution regrading Spracklen and Spracklen's work. It is not clear how their research was ethnographic.

These ethnographic accounts—utilising participant observation, participant interviews, and content analysis as I did during my fieldwork, with some also using data from questionnaires or surveys—have been largely conducted by researchers who have at least a history of participation in goth. While Hodkinson's (2002) research was a continuation of his personal participation, both Spracklen and Spracklen (2018) and Brill (2008) note that their participation had waned in the years prior to their research (although the former pair do not define a specific period of 'fieldwork'). As I discuss in Chapter 2, I entered my research field as a 'babybat', who learned how to be a goth over the course of my research.[5] I suggest that this positionality enabled me to glean new insights into how individuals build their competence within this practice (see MacRae, 2007). As such, this thesis is in part a reflexive account of goth that critically considers and draws upon my own positionality in the field.

My analysis also deviates from existing accounts of goth through my focus on the practice of goth in Adelaide. Existing literature on goth has been conducted in areas that are often considered to be 'cultural hubs' of goth. This is particularly the case for the UK, which goths frequently associate with the development of goth as a distinct 'subculture' during the late-1970s and 1980s, though Micah Issitt (2011) has suggested that goth has a parallel origin in the USA's Californian 'deathrock' and 'horror punk' scene. I suggest that this focus on such 'centres' further marginalises the practices of goths who are already peripheral within these oft-repeated transnational narratives, particularly those outside of Europe and America. Importantly, however, these international narratives remain central within the discourses of goths in Adelaide, who drew upon these narratives and the 'cultural products' of these international 'goth scenes' in their practical engagements in goth, including their negotiations of goths' definition and its boundaries.

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[5] I explore this further in Chapter 2.

Theoretical Framework: Dynamic Practice Theory

I draw from a broad theoretical base in this thesis, from anthropology, to multidisciplinary studies on 'youth cultures' and 'subcultures', and explorations in the field of practice theory, 'dynamic practice theory'. This latter body of work, rooted in the work of Theodore Schatzki (1996, 2002; Schatzki et al., 2001) and Elizabeth Shove and colleagues (Shove et al., 2007, 2012; Hui et al., 2017a), takes a dynamic approach to everyday life and provides a useful base from which to understand the complexities and iterative nature of goth. This approach is rooted in an anthropological endeavour to explore and understand the inherently dynamic nature of everyday life in which people interact with one another and with the world around them in meaningful ways (Shove et al., 2012; Miller et al., 2016). I use this approach to demonstrate that goth is defined in and through its successive performances—when people talk about it, write about it, and when they 'do' it, they are defining, redefining, and negotiating goth. In this section, I outline the theoretical framework that I use in this thesis with reference to earlier practice theories and dynamic practice theory.

Practice Theories

Practice theory is not a cohesive or singular theoretical perspective but rather an amalgamation of perspectives that take practices as the central feature of everyday life (Everts et al., 2011: 323). Practice theories sit against the backdrop of philosophers such as Wittgenstein and Heidegger but emerged as a school of thought during the late-1970s through the work of theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens, whose work had a significant impact upon the work of dynamic practice theorists. Despite their disparate approaches, practice theorists maintain several central propositions: 'that practices consist in organised sets of actions, that practices link to form wider complexes and constellations—a nexus—and that this nexus forms the "basic domain of study of the social sciences"' (Hui et al., 2017b: 1). These practices—*Praktiken*—are always 'social practices': they include both the shared elements of social realities, including meanings and 'conventions', and what individuals say and do, including their behaviours and understandings (Wenger, 1998: 47; Reckwitz, 2002: 250).

Sherry Ortner, identifies Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), Giddens's *Central Problems in Social Theory* (1979), and Marshall Sahlins' *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities* (1981) as three foundational texts in this field (Ortner, 2006: 2). She maintains that these texts laid the groundwork for 'a general theory of the production of social subjects through practice in the world, and…the production of the world itself through human practice' (Ortner, 2006: 16–7). This dialectical approach both moved beyond debates about 'the system'/'structure' and (individual) 'subjectivity'/'agency' and 'grounded' cultural processes in the actions of 'ordinary people' (Reckwitz, 2002: 261ff; Ortner, 2006: 3).

I have already noted Bourdieu's approach to these grounded processes with reference to 'struggles for distinction' within society. Bourdieu also seeks to understand everyday life through the concept of 'habitus', the 'internalised sense of the world' that, he suggests, shapes individuals' dispositions and actions and is renewed and reshaped through their practices in the world (Bourdieu, 1990; Ortner, 2006: 78, 5). Sahlins' takes a similar approach to understanding practice in his historico-anthropological perspective. He focuses, however, on the historical impacts of people's practices through examination of eighteenth century interactions between Captain Cook's exploration party and 'native Hawaiians' (Sahlins, 1981).

Sahlins draws two key conclusions. Firstly, actions and objects take on different meanings in 'collective symbolic schemes' and may represent different 'interests' for different subjects (Sahlins, 1981: 68–9). He thus distinguishes between the 'conventional' and 'intentional' value of actions and things. Secondly, Sahlins observes that people may act according to the conventions of their own 'cultures', but 'the world is under no compulsion to conform to those conceptions' (Ortner, 2006: 10; Sahlins 1981). Despite their seeming opposition, Sahlins sees a reciprocal relationship between convention and intention, between people's practices in the world and the structural elements of a practice, which are always historical. Sahlins' interpretations of practices are a significant undercurrent running below the surface of the practice framework that I develop in this thesis.

Giddens takes a different, 'post-traditionalist' approach to practice centred on his 'theory of structuration'. Fundamental to this theory is the idea that social science should focus on 'social practices ordered across space and time' rather than 'the experience of the individual actor [or] the existence of any form of social totality' (Giddens, 1984: 2). In this understanding, everyday life is reconfigured as 'a mosaic of interpenetrating, interdependent and shifting practices', and societies are viewed as 'intersections of multiple sets of recurring practices' within a milieu that is 'rarely cleanly demarcated in space and time' (Schatzki, 1996: 4). These practices intersect with one another in a 'web' or 'nexus' and 'are shaped and enabled by structures of rules and meanings [that] are…reproduced in the flow of human action, [which] is neither the conscious, voluntary purpose of human actors, nor the determining force of given social structures' such as class (Shove et al., 2012: 3). Like many practice theorists, Giddens is concerned with the recursive and dialectical relationship between 'structure' and 'agency' in the flow of human activities and argues for a transcendence of the traditional anthropological notions of 'culture' and 'society' which frame social realities in terms of structure *or* agency, collective *or* individual.

Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991; Wenger, 1998) also seek to understand the relation between collectivities and individuals through their analysis of 'communities of practice'. While not in Ortner's list of foundational texts, their approach is significant to this thesis, particularly their discussion of the positionality of individuals within practices. In this framework, individuals, who have their own interests and biographies, collectively produce a practice through their engagements with one another in practice (Wenger, 1998). Importantly, these communities of practice are structured by power-relations between different categories of participants, in particular, between 'old-timers' and 'newcomers' (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Within this structure, newcomers are positioned at the bottom of the hierarchy because they lack the requisite knowledge and competence to fully engage in the practice and its shared enterprise. Over time and through ongoing participation as a 'legitimate participant', and by learning from more established participants, these individuals move along a trajectory to become 'old-timers'.

Such 'first-generation' practice theories particularly Lave and Wenger's work on communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) provide a solid foundation for the practice-centred framework I develop in this thesis. However, these earlier theoretical models do not account for some of the complexities and nuances of my research subject and field site due in part to the efforts of many of these earlier theorists to construct a holistic and generalisable account of 'society' and structure. The theoretical framework that I develop in this thesis is instead rooted in the work of 'second-generation' practice theorists such as Theodore Schatzki (1996, 2002; Schatzki et al., 2001), Allison Hui (2013, 2017; Hui et al., 2018a) and, most centrally, Elizabeth Shove and colleagues (Shove et al., 2007, 2012) who explore the dynamic and 'elemental' nature of practices, which is central to my analysis of goth in this thesis.

Dynamic Practice Theory

Following Schatzki's (1996: 89) explanation of practices as 'temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed nexus[es] of doings and sayings', Shove, Pantzar and Watson (2012) identify two interdependent dimensions of practices: the 'entity' and the 'performance'. The performative dimension refers to not only the act of carrying out a practice, but to 'successive moments of performance' through which the practice-as-entity is sustained and reproduced or reconfigured over time by successive generations of participants. In this perspective, a practice endures as an identifiable mutable entity *only* if it continues to be performed (reproduced) by those who do it (Shove and Pantzar, 2005: 49). The practice-as-entity is the recognisable pattern or combination of elements that participants use to speak about, and draw upon as a set of resources for doing a practice (Shove et al., 2012: 7). This interpretation of practices as entities links back to Reckwitz's understanding of practices as routinised 'blocks' or patterns of behaviour.

Routinisation and patterning are key aspects of practices in this framework: practices are recognisable patterns of actions and knowledge in the form of understandings. The patterning of practices makes them intelligible over time and space, and across different contexts. For example, the patterned nature of goth allows for the recognition that goth in Adelaide during my research is part of the same cultural practice studied by Hodkinson (2002) in the UK in the late-

twentieth century, and by Brill (2008) in the UK, USA, and Germany earlier in the twenty-first century. Taken in isolation, this view of the patterning of practices is potentially misleading and risks portraying them as homogeneous and static entities.

While the practice-as-entity is composed of standardised patterns—material configurations, meanings, understandings and competencies—this in no way guarantees consistency; to view practices as homogeneous or spatially/temporally static is to ignore their recursive and dynamic character. Reckwitz clarifies that patterns of a practice 'can be filled out by a multitude of single and often unique actions reproducing the practice': 'a certain way of consuming goods can be filled out by plenty of actual acts of consumption' (Reckwitz, 2002: 250). There are multiple ways of doing the same practice. Wenger makes similar observations about communities of practice. He explains that people's practices within the shared enterprise of the community of practice need not be uniform or homogeneous, 'individual situations vary, from one person to the next…from one day to the next' and participants must find ways to co-ordinate and negotiate these differences in their shared practices (Wenger, 1998: 78–9). Although Wenger refers to specific goal-oriented practices within businesses or classrooms, the negotiated and dynamic character of 'shared practices' is noteworthy here as it highlights the fact that variation is a 'basic feature' of practice (Hui, 2017: 55).

Variation within (and between) practices is of key concern for Hui (2017), who explains its centrality through reference to the mundane practice of 'making lunch':

> Even if I make ham and cheese sandwiches every day for lunch, this routine precludes exact repetition. Despite my best efforts, I will never get the same amount of mustard on the bread in exactly the same pattern. Some days the toaster might make the bread more or less crispy, in response to the latter's age and texture. There may be more significant irritations or disruptions—the store not stocking my normal bread or receiving a text in the middle of the sandwich-making process—that alter the performance [of the practice] further.
>
> (Hui, 2017: 55)

Despite their patterned and routinised nature successive performances of a practice, even habitual ones, are necessarily dynamic and unpredictable. Hui

proposes this internal variation extends beyond the practice-as-performance to the practice-as-entity in two key ways. The first echoes the variation observed by Reckwitz (2002) and Wenger (1998). This manner of variation, Hui argues, 'involves the establishment of meaningful boundaries within which practices are conducted and understood' and the discernment of categories to 'distinguish different types of involvement and levels of knowledge' (2017: 56). When a practice is performed, this 'tolerable variation' or 'tolerable flexibility' forms a meaningful boundary through which participants ("practitioners") acknowledge *and* limit the shared meanings, understandings, and goals that are (and can be) (re)produced.

This variation within the practice-as-entity is imperative to this thesis: it helps account for the dynamic character of goth's 'boundaries', which are frequently and often contextually acknowledged, limited, and (re)negotiated by different individuals, groups, and institutions. It is here, I suggest, that goths seek to assert the legitimacy of goth as a distinct practice, for example, by 'policing' these boundaries through practices of inclusion and exclusion and through assignations of legitimacy. Such variation is also significant because, much like Hodkinson's work on goth, it recognises the changing and changeable character of cultural practices over time and space without discarding its potential for a relatively 'stable core' (Adam) or 'substantiveness' (Hodkinson, 2002).

The second form of internal variation that Hui describes 'relates to the varied sets of elements that can be integrated into any one performance' (Hui, 2017: 56). Here, she draws upon Reckwitz's explanation of a practice as 'a routinised type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one [an]other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, "things" and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge' (2002: 249). In this understanding, a practice-as-entity only exists through specific interconnections and configurations of the specific elements (within the limitations of 'tolerable flexibility') that comprise a practice.

While Reckwitz's list of elements is comprehensive, Shove, Pantzar and Watson refine his definition, grouping the elements into three key categories:

- *materials*—including things, technologies, tangible physical entities, and the stuff of which objects are made;
- *competences*—which encompasses skill, know-how and technique; [and]
- *meanings*—in which we include symbolic meanings, ideas and aspirations.

(Shove et al., 2012: 14)

I draw extensively on this model throughout this thesis, in particular I utilise their conceptualisations of the elements of meaning and competence. These two elements figure more prominently in goths' evaluative judgements and definitions than the material elements (though these are also vital). Shove et al's (2012) understanding of meaning extends beyond traditional theories of meaning and symbolic aspects of practice by suggesting meaning is also tied to a practice's 'image'. From this perspective, participants and other stakeholders in the practice are seen as seeking to foster a positive image of the practice as a 'normal' and legitimate thing to do.

Throughout the thesis I add to this understanding and suggest that participants' efforts to assert the legitimacy of the practice is intertwined with their efforts to frame goth as a 'normal' thing to identify with and to 'be'. In this sense, I propose that the image of the practice *and* of those who do it is significant for participants, who seek to perpetuate a positive image of goth to legitimise their tastes and identities as 'normal, respectable and not particularly silly' (Pantzar and Shove, 2010: 456). This is seen, for example, in many goths' efforts to distance themselves from people who perpetuate negative or trivial characterisations and stereotypes about goth, and in goths' (often public) derision of individuals who they believe to 'lack originality' in their engagements with goth. While such judgements are often demonstrated within a variety of so-called youth cultures, including EDM club-cultures (Thornton, 1995), punk (Muggleton, 2000; Lewin and Williams, 2009), and hip-hop (Maxwell, 2003; Rodger, 2012), my focus here is on the practices and negotiations of goth.

In Chapter 7, I also explore how one's capacity to be 'original' links to individual competencies and capacities for understanding, which they develop over time and through repeated engagements with goth(s) in practice. Such competence depends upon individual participants acquiring the relevant know-how,

background knowledge and understandings for participation. Importantly, this understanding of competency highlights the expectation that 'real' goths not only understand 'what goth is' but how to practice it and negotiate it within their own lives. For example, they know not only what items of clothing are consistent with the standard or 'shared repertoires' (Wenger, 1998: 8) of goth style but also how to assemble them into a 'goth outfit'.[6]

In part, my interpretation of competence differs from that of Shove and colleagues. I draw here on Bourdieu (1984) and Lave and Wenger (1991) to suggest that these competencies both belong to individuals *and* the collectively-negotiated practices in which they engage. I return to this idea throughout the thesis, for example with reference to dancing at club nights (Chapter 4) and goths' knowledge of goth's transnational history and its 'standard narratives' (Maxwell, 2003)(see Chapters 3 and 7). While this interpretation deviates from Shove et al's framework, their contention that 'what really matters is the way in which the constituent elements [of a practice] fit together' in a recognisable and configurable pattern (Shove and Pantzar, 2005: 61) is significant for understanding how goths produce goth through their practices.

It is how participants integrate these composite elements together in their sayings and doings to collectively (re-)produce the recognisable pattern or 'entity' dimension of a practice, which provides the iterative foundation for their performances. For a practice to endure over time and across space, constitutive elements must be brought together in successive enactments by participants, who actively configure it through their negotiations of the requisite elements in the flow of their actions and discourses. This does not necessarily mean that they faithfully reproduce the practice in a way that is as close as possible to 'an original' template for practice. As I explore throughout this thesis, the specific configurations of elements that participants draw into their performances of a practice sit along 'a spectrum of possibilities' (Shove et al., 2007: 77), and within the limitations of 'tolerable flexibility' (Hui, 2017) for the practice. Individual participants have a key role to play in this regard.

[6] See discussion of 'Outfit of the Day' blog posts in Chapter 5.

Many of the second-generation practice theorists discussed here view individuals as hosts who 'carry' and 'carry out' practices. They not only carry (out) given patterns of behaviour but also certain routinised ways of understanding, knowing how and desiring according to the practices in which they are engaged (Reckwitz, 2002). Dynamic practice theorists suggest that an individual's bodily and mental behaviours and characteristics are not qualities of individuals but belong to the practices in which individuals participate (Reckwitz, 2002: 250). This is not to view individuals as mere conduits for practices or to suggest that they merely 'use' or appropriate practices and their elements. Individuals are 'active and creative practitioners' who actively engage in reproducing practices and triggering evolutions in practice through their negotiations of its elements in their performances (Shove and Pantzar, 2005: 45). Individual participants are therefore understood to *collectively* produce and reproduce their practices in the flow of their actions and interactions.

This returns to a basic assumption of practice theory: practices are necessarily social. They are produced, reproduced, and evolve through collective negotiations of elements of individuals who come together in performative contexts. Practices are always performed by individuals at certain moments and in certain places (Pantzar and Shove, 2010: 457) but they also exist beyond the *specific individuals* who engage in these performances. Accordingly, practices connect to individual performances—which, following Sahlins (1981), are always historical—but the practice's conventions and boundaries are independent of the specific practitioners who engage in any single performance. Shove and Pantzar (2007) suggest that another way to understand this perspective is to conceive of practices as 'vampiric': they need suitably devoted participants who invest in the practice so that it may survive. This survival is not linked to any one individual, social group, or generation; a practice requires at least someone to practice it, thereby ensuring its perpetuation. This accounts for the endurance of the practice even after specific individuals disengage from it, and it helps conceive of goth as both connected with and independent from individual participants.

I modify this approach in this thesis and suggest that individual participants are both connected to and independent from the practices that they carry and carry

out. Dynamic practice theorists often disregard or side-line this in their analyses, choosing instead to focus on the practice and its properties in their endeavour to understand how practices are configured in the process of their practice. This approach is evident in Reckwitz's oft-repeated claim that practices are routinised 'blocks' or patterns 'in which bodies are moved, objects are handled, subjects are treated, things are described and the world is understood' by individuals, who carry and carry out multiple practices, sometimes simultaneously (2002: 249, 250).

I see this aspect of dynamic practice theory as problematic due to its intentional side-lining of the identities of the individual actors who are characterised as 'practitioners'. In this thesis, I maintain that the relationship between an individual and the practice with which they identify is imperative to our understanding of practices as they are experienced by the people who negotiate them in the flow of everyday life. The significance of this perspective was frequently demonstrated during my research, especially in regard to 'the g-word'. I return to this critique of dynamic practice theories throughout the thesis, in particular in Chapter 7, where I focus on goths' identity practices. However, dynamic practice theory remains a useful framework for understanding how practices are recursively constructed by participants as they reproduce the recognisable patterns and elements of a practice in the flow of their everyday lives.

Outline of Thesis Chapters

Chapter 2 centres on my research fieldwork, its contexts and my research design. I consider the classificatory practices of goths and note some of the key terms they use to categorise people according to their perceptions about their differing levels of commitment and authenticity. I also outline how understanding such classificatory practices helped me to position myself within my research field as a 'babybat'. Referencing on-going debates about reflexivity, I consider how I sought to position myself as a relative 'insider' while also seeking to retain the critical 'distance' of a researcher. In the second section of the chapter, I introduce some key contexts of my research field. Here, I outline the two local scenes in which I conducted most of my participant observation and

demonstrate that goth was not a distinct 'scene' but one cultural practice within two nexuses of practice that participants called the Dark Alternative and Postpunk scenes. In this section, I also consider the wider context of Adelaide, suggesting that certain characteristics of this fieldsite impacted both how goth was practiced in Adelaide and how I conducted my research. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of my research methods.

Due to its focus on goth, this dissertation straddles a blurry line between the anthropological endeavour to understand cultural practices as everyday phenomena and the interdisciplinary effort to comprehend 'youth cultures' as distinct types of cultural phenomena. In Chapter 3, I shift focus from my ethnographic fieldwork to these theoretical foundations. I explore this literature through the lens of five theoretical traditions within the broad field of 'youth culture studies'. I focus in particular upon the theorisations of the Chicago School, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), and 'Postsubculture' scholars, as well as literature that seeks a balance between the approaches of earlier bodies of work, a body of work that I describe as being 'after postsubculture'. In the final section of this chapter, I consider theorisations about 'popular discourses of moral concern and panic' and begin to introduce the complex relationship between media and the everyday lives and practices of goths that I explore in further detail in Chapter 4.

In this chapter, I focus on the relationship between 'the popular imagination' and goth. Following on from Chapter 3, and drawing on Thornton's (1995) work on 'club cultures', I argue that members of so-called youth cultures frequently seek to legitimise their practices against 'the mainstream' and 'the media' and assert the comparative authenticity of their practices against such 'non-subcultural' entities (Hodkinson, 2002). I also suggest that existing considerations of the relationship between goth (and youth cultures) and 'the media' have tended to focus upon 'media coverage' rather than the mediated characterisations of goth(s), which I suggest are highly influential upon the popular imagination. I go on to explore some of the key ways that research participants negotiated the boundaries between popular characterisations and 'stereotypes' and what goths understood to be 'real' or 'actually' goth. I conclude that, despite the overlaps between the popular imagination and goth's everyday

lives and practices, such boundaries were an important point of distinction for goths because it was the source of much misunderstanding and overgeneralisation that, they claim, 'cheapens' goth and reduces it to a shallow and fleeting practice.

I continue my focus on goths' interactions with media in Chapter 5, where I explore goths' online negotiations of goth's boundaries and definition, in particular I consider their use of social media. Here, I suggest that, while the internet has increased the accessibility of goth for many people, made various facets of the practice easier to access and facilitated participants' interactions across temporal and spatial boundaries, it has also altered participants' expectations about an individual's 'basic knowledge' of goth. I use the example of goths' 'standard narratives' to suggest that individuals who claim an authentic and/or legitimate status within goth are not only expected to know these standard narratives. They must also be able to build upon them with reference to their personal experiences, knowledge and understandings of goth. I also discuss how Australia remains marginal within these discourses, which are reproduced online as well as locally. In this chapter, I also explore goths' use of social media to practice and engage in transnational discourses about goth's definition and the 'standards' by which individuals, objects, and representations may be judged as 'real' or 'fake'.

In Chapter 6, I shift focus from these sites of transnational negotiations of goth, where goths in Adelaide interact with discourses, individuals, and images beyond their local area, to the local practices of goths. Here I consider goths' public performances of goth within local scenes. I first consider how various scholars have utilised the concept of 'scene' in their work and suggest that these conceptualisations differ from how I understand the scenes of my research field. I also consider the historical foundations of Adelaide's Dark Alt and Postpunk scenes, which both have their origins in what participants called the 'old goth scene'. I suggest that this older scene underwent a period of schism and evolution from the late-1990s into the mid-2000s and explore the different ways that this historical schism is implicated in research participants' judgements about the relative authenticity and legitimacy of goths in the respective scenes. I go on to explore the significance of scene events as sites for the public

performance of goth, negotiations of goth's conventions, and demonstrations of competence through the case study of the dancefloors at Dark Alt club nights.

In Chapter 7, I explore individuals' identity practices and negotiations of goth and suggest that these practices intersect both their performances of goth and their evaluations of others. Here, I consider how goths maintain that goth is an extension of their 'inner self' and use the perceived 'naturalness' of this association to claim authenticity of self and within goth. I go on to examine how goths negotiate the goth and non-goth aspects of their everyday lives and interests to construct a personally-nuanced interpretation of goth. Using myself as a case study and discussing how I learned to be 'just a regular goth', albeit one who was also a researcher, I suggest that individuals' ongoing commitments, and the associated developments of competence that result from longevity of involvement and interactions with other goths, are important for both individuals and the practice which is the product of such ongoing performances and negotiations. I note how such personal negotiations of goth frequently leads to a protective desire and consider how goths' who invest significant resources into their practices seek to guard against the potential delegitimised images conveyed through the practices of 'posers' and others they see as inauthentic.

In the final chapter, titled 'The Fuck is Goth Anyway?', an expression of frustration made by one of my research participants when struggling to define goth to me, returns to the problem at the heart of this thesis, 'what *is* goth?'. I bring the different strands of the thesis together to conclude that goth is a distinct cultural practice that is defined by participants in and through their practices.

CHAPTER 2 - CONTEXTS & METHODS

> In practice the researcher follows hunches. Things happen. Things change. The unplanned character of ethnography is *precisely* its value. Anthropological practice is open to change through its duration…The researcher embarks on their project with multiple skills, talents and resourceful imagination. Otherwise she or he is lost. Those with rigid approaches may never come up with anything memorable, precisely because they have felt obligated to keep to their straight-and-narrowed initial path.
>
> (Okley, 2012: 48–9)

A central tenant of anthropology rests on the notion that anthropologists utilise a range of skills, talents and 'hunches' to explore the 'messiness of everyday life' (Willis, 2000). This is what Malinowski described as the 'imponderabilia of actual life,' which are an 'imponderable yet all important…part of the real substance of the social fabric' of daily life (Malinowski, 1922: 18, 19). When discussing goth in the Netherlands, Jasper (2006) refers to this as the 'dust' (i.e. 'messiness') that objectivists brush away, which includes mechanisms by which goths assert personal and 'cultural authenticity' and autonomy. As I argue throughout this thesis, such 'dust' or 'messiness' is also a vital part of the dynamism that is embedded within the everyday lives and practices of goths. Importantly for this chapter, this messiness and dynamism not only shaped goth's practice, but also my fieldsite and research methods.

In this chapter, I discuss both the contexts of my research—including details about the nature and shape of my research field, my relationship to it—and my research methods. I note in this chapter that this was not necessarily the easiest context in which to study goth and I encountered many challenges related to the nature of Adelaide and how this shaped how goth was reproduced in this environment. I suggest, however, that this context provided opportunities to understand certain nuances of goths' practices that would commonly be obscured in larger cities with 'goth scenes' that were more vibrant. I view these challenges not merely as obstacles that disrupted my fieldwork or as impediments to understanding but as opportunities for comprehending the dynamic character of goth in practice. As I note throughout this chapter, a flexible research approach was necessary for my research, especially in Adelaide where my participants often reminded me that there was only a small and

relatively reclusive population of goths. I return to this later in the chapter but first situate myself within my participants' systems of classification.

Terms of Classification

Writing about practice, Hui (2017) observes that participants use diverse techniques to make sense of the dynamic character of the practices in which they participate, including making meaningful distinctions between different 'categories' or groups of participants. These categories refer to differing types of involvement, forms of commitment, and associated levels of knowledge (Hui, 2017: 55–6). Many goths used categories such as 'babybat', 'mallbat'—sometimes called 'goffs'—'(regular) goth', and 'eldergoth' to articulate different forms of meaningful participation as well as identify differing degrees of individual authenticity and legitimacy. I explain some of these terms in the vignette below, where I also note my positionality respective to these categories in the early stages of my fieldwork. Many, but not all, goths used such categories during my research to classify people with differing levels of involvement, commitment, and knowledge. While not all goths used these specific terms, all goths engaged in such classificatory practices, especially when discussing boundaries between 'real' goth and 'not goth', and between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'.

It was also common for goths to identify different types of 'outsiders'. For example, many used the term 'poseur' to describe outsiders who were seen as trying to 'pose' as a goth or as a member of a similarly 'alternative' cultural practice without demonstrating any 'real' or 'actual' interest. In many ways, this makes them the 'inauthentic' to goths' desired 'authentic'; I discuss such individuals throughout this dissertation. Goths used classifications such as 'normie' and 'outsider' to designate individuals who are not members of 'alternative' cultural practices such as goth and were therefore commonly associated with 'the mainstream'. Importantly, many goths often clarified that normies who were sympathetic to the sense of difference and alterity sought by goths and people in other 'alternative' practices were considered 'okay' or 'chill' due to their accepting attitude. Individuals such as my partner fit such classifications: he regularly participated in goth activities with me and listened

to some goth music with me, but remained true to his own tastes and interests, never claimed to be goth (or goth-by-association) and acknowledged goth's legitimacy as a cultural practice and an identity.

The line between these two types of normies is usually dependent upon the classifier's relative familiarity with the individual concerned (e.g. resulting from their regular attendance at relevant events or through casual socialising with goths) and their behaviour toward goths (e.g. not harassing or victimising them for their different looks or interests). In this sense, 'sympathetic normies' often earned this classification over time and through repeated interaction. This highlights the dynamic and changeable character of classifications in practice. I keep this dynamism in mind in the following section, where I define the terms 'babybat', 'mallbat', 'regular goth' and 'elder goth' with reference to a conversation I had with Rik, a young rivethead.[7] In doing so, I also consider where I sat within participants' terms of classification and note my desire to position myself in a manner that would help me learn about goth for myself and build rapport among goths in Adelaide.

Before I delve into this discussion, however, I wish to highlight a key point that impacts the use-value of these classificatory terms in practice: goths frequently use these classifications to describe different generations of goths. This is in part tied to the levels of experience, knowledge and competence participants associate with each category and with the different age groups or life stages concerned. As I highlight elsewhere in the thesis, particularly in Chapter 7, when discussing goth, research participants often expressed a particular opinion that teenagers and many young adults were less 'mature'. In these discussions, participants regularly implied that such younger individuals lacked the general emotional and mental maturity, social awareness, and cultural competence of older individuals such as themselves. Older goths, particularly those who are more experienced in the culture, can therefore be understood as having a tendency to automatically categorise these younger individuals as 'babybats' or 'mallbats' based upon their preconceived ideas about 'teenagers' and youth in

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[7] A term used to describe people who were enthusiastic about industrial music and often dressed in a style that merges militaristic and industrial elements with post-apocalyptic/futuristic, punk, and goth influences. Rivetheads were common in the Dark Alt scene.

general as well as upon their own past and experiences with members of these age groups (see section 'Goth as a Teenage Phenomenon' in Chapter 4).

Babybats, Mallbats, 'Regular Goths' & Eldergoths

During our interview, Rik described different individuals and groups using labels such as 'babybat', 'mallbat', 'regular goth', and 'eldergoth'. Being new to the field, I was unsure what types of people he meant by each classification, so I asked him if he'd mind explaining these unfamiliar terms. Obliging, he clarified that 'eldergoths' were 'the people who have been in the scene for a long time [and] know what is going on' in their scene and in goth more generally. As such, he added, their knowledge of goth is extensive, and they have encountered many different types of people, ways of practicing goth and stereotypes, and understood the various ways that goths had been treated by 'outsiders'. To many younger or newer participants, the extent of eldergoths' experience and knowledge made them rich sources of information about goth, especially when they spoke of how 'things have changed' over time and how it overlaps and clashes with other 'cultures' and tastes. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Rik explained, sat babybats and mallbats.

Some goths use the term 'babybat' to refer to people who are new to goth, who only have a 'basic' or naïve understanding of goth. In this sense, he explained', babybats are 'newbies who try to get it [goth] right'; they try to learn about goth by 'doing their research' and 'going out and participating' in their local scenes as well as online.[8] An important characteristic of being a babybat—something that distinguished it from less authentic categories—was their intention to 'become just a regular goth' rather than using goth to 'look cool', 'edgy' or 'alternative'. Seeking to both confirm my understanding of his explanation and voice my sense of identification with the category of babybat, I asked, 'Kind of like me?'. I felt I fit this category: despite my long-time interest in 'goth things', I was relatively new to 'real goth'; I wanted to understand how goths practiced goth and what they were interested in, personally and as a researcher. I was trying to learn how people made distinctions between the 'right' and 'wrong' ways of being goth. Rik paused momentarily then responded politely, 'Yeah. Me

[8] 'Newbies' are individuals who are new to a practice.

too, really,' before continuing to explain how babybats differed from their less 'genuine' counterparts, 'mallbats'—who were also commonly referred to as 'goffs' by others in my research field.

He described mallbats as individuals, often teenagers or younger adults, who have a similarly naïve interpretation of goth to babybats. However, Rik stressed, the term 'mallbat' referred to individuals who use goth as 'more of a fashion accessory than anything else', and make it seem like 'just a teenage phase' rather than a legitimate cultural practice or identity. Accordingly, he explained, mallbats go out of their way to be labelled 'goth' without an interest in becoming a 'regular goth'. That is, rather than demonstrating a genuine interest in moving beyond their naïve understandings they were seen as being content with retaining a surface understanding and conforming to 'what the mainstream thinks goth is'.

Akin to a uniform, mallbats' clothes intentionally 'fit the goth stereotype' and, Rik continued, they 'only listen to music that is stereotypically goth' and popular music that fits a popularised ideal of goth—music that research participants regularly described as 'what the mainstream thinks is goth' (see Chapter 4). Many goths believed mallbats' sense of style and musical tastes were therefore not the result of a genuine taste for these things but suggested that they dressed *this* way and liked *this* music 'because that's what goths are supposed to look like' and 'what they're supposed to listen to'. Rik noted that this is why many goths see mallbats as not only 'fake' but problematic for goth: their adherence to popular stereotypes trivialised goth and implied that it was merely an 'edgy costume' or teenage phase that one 'got over' as they aged. As Rik continued to describe mallbats, I made a mental note to avoid projecting such an image, to actively work toward being seen as a babybat who was genuinely interested in becoming, as Rik had said, 'just a regular goth', albeit one who is also a researcher.

Being classified as a genuinely interested babybat was important to me on multiple levels. As a researcher, I wanted participants to view me as someone who was truly interested in goth and did not want to mis-represent or simplify goth in my interpretations of their doings and sayings. That is, I wanted

participants to see me as not only authentic in my interest and identification with goth but legitimately entitled to represent their practices and identities in my writing. By clarifying with Rik that I felt I fit with his category of 'babybat', I was making a claim about the authenticity of my interest in goth and hoping that Rik and others in my research field would verify this claim (Peterson, 2005).

Achieving this positionality in the eyes of research participants was not only important for my research, it was also important to me on a personal level. I had been interested in goth since I was a teenager, where I first encountered the 'g-word' as a label for many of my 'darker' tastes and interests, but I knew I was yet to move beyond goth's surface even as I began my research. For some goths, this pre-existing interest and intention to move beyond goth's surface made me a babybat. In this sense I was already an 'insider' or 'native' in my research field. I demonstrated this to others in this setting over the course of my fieldwork, in particular by sustaining my participation on a personal level after I concluded this ethnographic research.

It is important to note that, while I was an 'insider' in many ways during my research—for example, I learned about goth in the same way as most other babybats—I also remained a relative 'outsider' for many people in my research field.[9] For the purposes of this thesis, such positionality highlights the potential for contextuality in assessments' of individuals' authenticity and legitimacy; positive evaluation by one individual does not assure that others will come to the same conclusion. This is also demonstrated in the vignette in Chapter 1, where Steven was not considered authentic in his association with goth by the group I was sitting with despite his authentic position and associated legitimacy (as an organiser of 'goth nights') in the Dark Alt scene. At the same time, Alice and her friends' accepting behaviour toward me when Steven was not around, as well as their involvement in my research, suggested they accepted the authenticity of my interest in goth as a babybat and relative, yet critical, 'insider'. In this role, I sought to maintain a degree of reflexive distance or perspective from the social world that I was researching.

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[9] This is akin to what Rhoda MacRae (2007) has described as 'outsider-in' position, where the researcher begins as a peripheral participant but becomes a full 'insider' over time.

Being a Critical Insider: Balancing Research & Personal Interest

While early ethnographies cautioned against researchers 'going native' (Johnson, 1975), where the researcher 'forgets they are conducting research' (O'Reilly, 2009: 87), it has been suggested that there is no inherent reason that a 'native' cannot research their own lifeworld (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007). This argument is sustained by the many youth cultural researchers who are also 'insiders' within their research field (Muggleton, 2000; Hodkinson, 2002; Haenfler, 2006; Brill, 2008; Gololobov, 2014). Bennett (2003) explains that 'the ethnographic turn' within the field of youth cultural studies during the 1990s (see Chapter 3) saw an increase in researchers who have at least a background in the settings of the cultural practices that they research. Bennett characterises these individuals as 'fan-researchers' due to their enthusiasm for the practices they researched. Having occupied such a position in his research field, Hodkinson suggests that they are 'critical insiders' (2002) or 'insider-researchers' (2005), revealing their position as 'insiders' in their participants' social worlds and 'researchers' who seek to maintain a critical gaze throughout each stage of their research.

This critical distance is a valuable part of ethnographic research, which necessitates high degrees of immersion in the research setting. An essential part of ethnography is the researcher's close proximity to the object of their research, who they observe as they participate, enabling an embodied understanding without relying solely on others' explanations and interpretations alone (Hine, 2015: 19). This criticality is especially important for insider-researchers, whose initial subjective positioning is close to that of their informants (MacRae, 2007). This is noteworthy because such close association and the depth of their feelings of affiliation with the subject of their study and the people within that setting may lead to an over-reliance upon their insider experiences and produce a tendency take certain aspects of that practice for granted (Hodkinson, 2005). This is one of the key issues that Bennett (2002, 2003) raises with regard to insider ethnography to argue that there is a tendency among fan-researchers to produce uncritical and unreflexive accounts which often seek to celebrate the authenticity and high degree of individuality within the practice.

Some insider-researchers fall into the trap of reproducing 'subcultural ideologies' rather than critically appraising and interpreting the processes and meanings behind these ideologies and practices (Hodkinson, 2005). Such uncritical insiders may not even 'attempt…to assume a critical distance from the research setting and respondents, the descriptive authority of the researchers concerned becoming a one-dimensional voice which echoes the self-assumed "rightness" of the movement' that they seek to describe (Bennett, 2002: 457). Bennett adds that such researchers also tend to rely on their existing 'native knowledge and experience[s]' of research settings to produce accounts that seem to 'uncritically celebrate' the distinctiveness and authenticity of the practice (Bennett, 2003: 193).

Hodkinson (2005) identifies further potential issues in 'insider accounts' and outlines several key points that insider-researchers should keep in mind. He recommends, for example, that they consider *who* defines them as 'insiders' and the criteria used to define such status. Accordingly, he advises insider-researchers to be mindful of the need to negotiate their dual role as 'insider' and 'researcher' and reflect upon their positionality within their research settings. By adopting such a reflexive and critical stance—during their research, as well as in their interpretations—their initial proximity may offer significant benefits 'in terms of practical issues such as access and rapport' whilst also being an additional resource resulting in a potentially richer understanding of their research field (Hodkinson, 2005: 146; see also Taylor, 2011). This scholarly reflexivity differs from the day-to-day reflexivity of participants in such practices (Giddens, 1984; Shove et al., 2012).

During my research, I observed a tendency among goths to analyse and engage in reflexive discussions about the nature of goth, its practice, and, most prominently, its boundaries. While some of these discussions degraded into what one individual called 'shit-slinging matches', where people sought to assert the 'rightness' of their understanding by insulting those who contradicted them, some goths engaged others in serious debates about these topics. I frequently observed these debates on social media during fieldwork, particularly in the comments sections of posts and videos that individuals made and shared wherein they defined goth and on people's statuses on social networking sites

like Facebook (see Chapter 5). Alongside the range of publications about goth written by and for goths (Kilpatrick, 2004; Venters, 2009), these discussions suggest there is a high degree of reflexivity among goths. This reflexivity and critical debates are distinct from the reflexivity and critical distance required of an academic researcher.

Such scholarly reflexivity remains a contentious issue within anthropology, in which ethnographic methods are common research tools. Arguing for the ongoing relevance of ethnography as an anthropological methodology, Madden (2010) summarises this position as follows:

> The act of cultural translation, be it across perceived cultural gaps or some other communication divide, relies on ethnographers never losing sight of their own etic perspective…Proper ethnographic reflexivity requires that we must not forget that we will always maintain some sense of the 'outsider' despite the fact we may be or become very familiar with the people we choose to study.
>
> (Madden, 2010: 20)

He adds that reflexivity is not the same as acknowledging one's subjective positionality vis-à-vis one's research field. Subjectivity is akin to what George Marcus calls the 'null form' of reflexivity: 'the self-critique, the personal quest, playing on the subjective, the experiential, and the idea of empathy,' which most often incites 'dismissals of reflexivity as dead-end self-indulgence, narcissism, and so on' (1998: 193). Such introspection is important in ethnography, but it does little to further our understanding of the people and social practices being studied. This 'null form' of reflexivity contrasts with the other forms of ethnographic reflection Marcus describes, including Bourdieu's 'sociological reflexivity'; 'anthropological reflexivity'; and 'feminist reflexivity'. While the first of these centres upon a commitment to analytical objectivity in an effort to maintain a degree of scientific validity and rigour (Madden, 2010: 20–4), I am concerned here with the latter two forms of reflexivity that Marcus describes.

Anthropological and feminist reflexivity interconnect with the positionality of the researcher and the politics of representation in which a researcher engages. Anthropological reflexivity entails a reflective consideration of how ethnographic insights are produced in relation to 'a complex matrix of already existing alternative representations' (Marcus, 1998: 197). The insights produced

from such reflection are derived from awareness of the representations and existing understandings that a researcher brings to bear in their analysis. Feminist reflexivity is similarly concerned with such positionality but also with the 'situatedness and partiality of all claims to knowledge' that essentialise ideological binaries of 'otherness' and the associated power dynamics (Marcus, 1998: 198–9; cf. Ackerly and True, 2008). Those who pursue this form of reflexivity maintain that researchers must remain aware of the partiality of their accounts rather than seeking to develop a totalising account.

Each of these forms of reflexivity, especially the latter two, have remained central to my approach to my research field, analysis, and interpretations of goth. As indicated above, I did not come to the research field as a blank slate: I was not only an 'Adelaidean' who often patronised venues that became central research sites, I also had a long-standing interest in things often associated with goth in popular media, in books, by retailers, and in 'the goth community' online (see Chapters 3 and 4). While I entered my research field as a babybat, my feelings of affiliation with goth grew deeper over my fieldwork, especially as I began to understand the practice for myself and felt comfortable claiming association with the label and the practice.

This is vital in my research field, where demonstrations of authentic association with and commitment were important factors influencing participants' judgements about the authority of an individual to make claims to goth. This positionality is crucial to the interpretations of goths' practices that I elaborate in this thesis, for example, with regard to Chapter 7, where I discuss my own experiences of learning how to be goth in my own way over the course of my fieldwork. As I discuss below, my pre-existing (yet basic) knowledge about goth and Adelaide's 'alternative' scenes also influenced my research design; for instance, my awareness of the need for a flexible and accepting attitude to participant recruitment and analysis. The nature of my research field and goths' position within it was also a vital factor that impacted my research design and the data that I collected during fieldwork.

Nature of the Research Field

Going into my fieldwork, my background encounters with goth and similar 'dark' aesthetics, and my knowledge from my academic studies on 'youth cultures' had left me expecting to find a diverse yet relatively bounded social group that I could identify as 'the goth subculture,' despite my awareness of the diversity and multiplicity of taste groups within goth. It was not long after I began my fieldwork that I realised that I was not going to find 'the goth subculture' accompanied by a relatively autonomous social scene. As I started to talk with participants and participate in the social activities that I had always assumed were part of 'Adelaide's goth scene', I began to realise that this kind of image of goth, one that is often conveyed in the literature on goth, was inconsistent with how goth was practiced in Adelaide during my fieldwork. Such research and writing was based on European and American experiences and contingents of goth, where there are more people who identify with goth, as well as a larger and more stable range of 'specialist' resources (Hodkinson, 2002) available to them.

Existing scholarly accounts of goth have therefore painted an image of goth as a complex and multi-levelled 'subculture' that is immediately identifiable and relatively consistent in its material and practical expressions. In this way, they were more aligned with what participants frequently referred to as 'the old goth scene', which was, I am told, more cohesive until the mid-2000s.[10] Such notions of 'the goth (sub)culture' as a transnational phenomenon that is a diverse yet immediately identifiable group (cf. White, 2015) did not translate so cleanly in to my research field. During my fieldwork, I faced a very different context, one that was peripheral to these international 'centres' of goth.

In Adelaide during my research, goth was not immediately identifiable as a relatively cohesive cultural entity with its own spaces and functions. In this period, it was often practiced within two distinct scenes alongside other practices that were similarly characterised by their association with dark- and horror-tinged themes and aesthetics. In this context, goth was frequently practiced in relation to these distinct nexuses of practices which I, following

[10] I discuss this period of transition in detail in Chapter 6.

many research participants, call the 'Dark Alt' and 'Postpunk' scenes respectively. This is how I 'found' goth in Adelaide, identifying it initially as a young adult through the visually spectacular styles of people that I had initially assumed to be part of 'the goth subculture' at a local 'alternative' bar that my friends and I had frequented. After beginning my fieldwork, I discovered a more dynamic cultural practice.

Two Scenes

Different elements of goth, such as fashion and live performances by local bands, were more significant in the public practices of participants, who reproduced goth through their performances in these distinct local scenes. Rather than being part of a substantive scene with 'specialist' goth events (Hodkinson, 2002), participants negotiated their goth practices and tastes in conversation with the different cultural practices, sounds, and aesthetics within these scenes. During my fieldwork, with few exceptions, these two scenes remained separate from one another. This was not only evident in the divergent styles, sounds, and aesthetics that were highlighted most overtly by goths in the different scenes. They were also separated by the formats of scene events, the music played at these events, the venues where events were held, and scene participants. Other than myself, there were no individuals during my research that regularly participated in both scenes, and the goths in each of the scenes frequently defined goth in different ways despite the consistencies that I observed between how goths in each scene practiced goth. This separation endured despite the similarities and overlaps that I observed between the two scenes.

Despite their relatively parallel existence, I found that both scenes had a strong association with the history and evolution of the music genres and fashion styles of youth cultures such as goth, punk, and industrial. Accordingly, I encountered people in both scenes who were fans of bands such as Siouxsie and the Banshees (the Banshees), Bauhaus, and The Birthday Party, who are all considered important to goth's history. This is consistent with two ideas discussed in Chapter 1: that there are multiple ways of doing the same practice and that participants find different ways to negotiate this variation in the flow of their practices (Wenger, 1998; Reckwitz, 2002; Hui, 2017). The two scenes that I

introduce here are two distinct contexts in which goth was practiced in Adelaide, indicating that, while goth is recognisable as a single yet dynamic practice, it is carried out in various ways as goths in the respective scenes emphasise certain meanings, knowledges, and material configurations over others in their performances.

In this section, I outline some of the distinctive features of these scenes and consider how they were separated in practice before discussing some of the ways that contextual factors in the city of Adelaide shaped these scenes and my fieldwork. My descriptions of these scenes and Adelaide in this chapter is intended as introductory. I go into more descriptive and analytical depth regarding the scenes and how participants negotiate goth within them in Chapter 6, where these scenes are central areas of concern.

The Dark Alternative Scene

The Dark Alt scene was an agglomeration of practices that were linked by their shared appetite for 'dark' and, sometimes, horror-tinged aesthetics and themes.

Figure 1: Dark Alt DJs on the stage at Proscenium's "Vampire Masquerade Ball" (B. Morrison, 2012).

Figure 2: The dancefloor at Dark Alt event, Necromancy, with people dancing in front of the DJ and others standing on the edge of the dancefloor talking (B. Morrison, 2013).

Despite this complex and often dynamic nature, the Dark Alt scene remained relatively consistent at a grounded level, where participants negotiated this variety in the course of their practices. This relative consistency was commonly demonstrated at social occasions such as club nights: organised events held in a darkened room of a venue in the CBD where participants came together to hear (and sometimes dance to, see Figure 1 showing people dancing at 'Necromancy') recorded music played by DJs. There was a strong 'dark electronic' dimension in this scene, which was dominated by 'dark EDM' (Electronic Dance Music), 'electro-industrial' and 'alternative' electronic music.

These styles of music were often characterised by a strong and somewhat abrasive and pounding, almost militaristic, beat, and often crossed the more aggressive style of metal with the dance music common in club settings. These harsher, pulsating sounds stood in stark contrast to the older 'gothic rock' and '80s and 90s alternative' songs that DJs regularly included in their set lists at club nights. Some of the most iconic tracks from these nights included The Smiths' 'How Soon is Now?', the Banshee's 'Cities in Dust' or 'Spellbound', 'Tainted Love' by Soft Cell, and 'The Safety Dance' by Men Without Hats.

As this short list of tracks suggests, music at these events was comprised of recorded tracks made by international artists; Australian artists such as The Birthday Party or Angelspit were only played on rare occasions. This was an important difference from Postpunk events, where most of the music that scene participants heard at events was performed live by Australian artists who often came from Adelaide. Despite this international focus, DJs at club nights were usually locals and most of them had been part of the scene (or its predecessor, see Chapter 6) since the 1990s. Similar to the bands in the Postpunk scene, and as demonstrated in Figure 2, DJs were often the focal point of club nights, providing the music for people to dance or just listen to. These local DJs were not only important figures at events. They also played a vital role within the scene by organising and running events, thereby contributing to the intermittent 'liveliness' of the local Dark Alt club scene. The significance of these individuals is demonstrated by the lists of DJs that appear on most of the event flyers in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Selection of flyers from Dark Alt events I collected during my fieldwork (B. Morrison, 2014).

Partially due to this small pool of organisers, club nights followed a relatively consistent structure, with most nights centred upon a theme that usually called for patrons to wear costumes, and, as Adam explained, sought to appeal to as large an audience as possible. To do so, event advertisements such as posters, flyers, and social media posts listed an array of music genres such as 'Alternative', 'Electro', 'Synthpop', '80s', and 'Goth', with minor variations depending on the event and the theme for the night (see Figure 3). The themes for these nights drew on certain aesthetic features common to many of the different cultural practices within Dark Alt scene and were often connected with different eras of the scene's history locally and internationally. For example, it was common to have an annual 'Halloween Ball' around the end of October to celebrate Halloween. Another common theme was '80s alternative', which centred on music and styles from the 1980s, when a myriad of post-punk genres and fashions emerged in the wake of punk.

Irrespective of the theme, these events often focused on catering to a general 'dark' and 'alternative' crowd, and there was a strong emphasis on aesthetics and fashion, demonstrated for example by the prevalence of prizes for outfits, fashion retailers who sponsored these nights, and the 'fashion shows' at some of the club nights. Consistent with this emphasis on clothing and visual image in the Dark Alt scene, some goths argued that so-called goths who participated in this scene favoured the aesthetics of goth rather than goth music. They held the perception that goth music was not frequently played by DJs at such club nights. As a demonstration of this, Evony, one of my key participants from the Postpunk scene, commented that she had attended several Dark Alt events and, to her horror, 'actually had to request a goth song' to be played. I consider such value judgements in Chapter 6.

The Postpunk Scene

The Postpunk scene differed in many ways from the Dark Alt scene. Some of the starkest contrasts can be linked to the Postpunk scene's emphasis on more 'traditional' punk music, attitudes, practices, and styles, which participants trace to the early days of punk, goth, and other such practices. Musically and aesthetically, this scene was closer to the Punk and Post-Punk music scenes that emerged in the U.K. and spread around the world in the mid-1970s and early-

Figure 4: Blurry photo of Cities in Dust's vocalist (B. Morrison, 2014).

Figure 5: Photo of author before leaving a Cities in Dust gig (B. Morrison, 2014).

1980s. While people in both scenes demonstrated a fascination with this past, such history had differing significance in contemporary practices. In the Dark Alt scene, for example, DJs used popular tracks from goth's past to break up the harsher and more aggressive beats of the EDM and electro-industrial music, and played 'trad goth', new wave and post-punk music on '80s nights'. In the Postpunk scene, this aural history was instilled in the music that bands wrote and performed to live audiences. This resulted in music that was contemporary and often innovative, but also rooted in these early sounds and practices.

Consistent with its association with this past, Postpunk events offered a wide variety of music styles, often from very different genres in a single night. In these contexts, bands whose sound, one research participant suggested 'harks back to the goth and punk music that came out in the late-1970s and early-1980s' shared the bill with bands who preferred electronic experimentations and synthesised styles of new wave, with bands who played more aggressive 'hardcore punk' music, and bands whose sound fit with early 'industrial' music.

Alongside contemporary goth music, this musical history was part of the musical repertoire played on Cascading Light, a radio show hosted by Kate and Evony, two of my research participants from this scene. A similar array of styles was evident in the aesthetics and fashion tastes of the Postpunk crowd; many people in this scene dressed in styles that were reminiscent of 1970s and 1980s Punk and Postpunk scenes from which goth and other relevant cultural practices were borne. Unlike the Dark Alt scene and with the exception of Halloween events, however, scene members' outfits rarely catered to a set theme; people often wore their 'normal' clothes rather than styling their outfits to fit certain themes (see Figure 5).

The emphasis on live music held in small, multi-purpose venues in the Postpunk scene also tied this scene to its historical roots. These events were organised by three different types of people: musicians; small-time, independent record and/or distribution labels; or by the small venues that hosted them. They also commonly involved contributions from people that fulfilled more than one of these positions in the scene. Most, if not all, of these gigs took place in bars and pubs around Adelaide's CBD. These venues usually had small stage set-ups—with PA systems and soundboards, basic stage lighting, and areas set aside for bands to use—that were set apart from the main areas of the venue, where non-gig going patrons could access the bar and facilities without attending the gig.

This positionality within venues—a positionality similarly characterising the Dark Alt scene in Adelaide—helped me understand the marginality of these scenes, and thus of goth, in my fieldsite. It reflected research participants' statements about the difficulties that goths faced in Adelaide as they frequently re-iterated that while goth was a distinctive practice, it 'cannot survive on its own' in a small city such as Adelaide. In this sense, goth relied upon the Dark Alt and Postpunk scenes and their diverse crowds in Adelaide for relevant events and practical resources such as music and clothing retailers. It should be noted there that this is how participants defined these scenes and not everyone in these scenes was or claimed to be goth.

This suggests that, while there is goth in Adelaide, there is no 'local goth scene' or a specifically Adelaidean version of goth that caters exclusively to the tastes

and styles of goth in Adelaide. This does not preclude a fundamentally local experience of goth nor does it mean that local goths do not or cannot contribute to larger discourses about and practices of goth, as I demonstrate throughout this dissertation. This local context shaped how goths in the different scenes experienced goth, and their opportunities for regular, shared public enactments of goth; both factors, in turn, impacted my research, especially in terms of how and where I could access public performances of goth in Adelaide.

Adelaide

Throughout my research, I was often asked why I chose Adelaide as my primary research site. Many people, especially participants, suggested I try my luck in other states, in particular along 'the East Coast', where the populations were larger and there were more people interested in goth, events and resources. They suggested it would have been easier to find research participants in these states and explained that there would have been more regular and goth-centred events to attend and therefore more data. Throughout my fieldwork, particularly when events were few-and-far-between, I also questioned my choice. In such moments of doubt, I reminded myself why I had chosen this fieldsite: Adelaide was a unique context that needed to be explored and where processes that often went unnoticed in larger scenes were made visible.

My initial decision to conduct research in Adelaide had to do with my personal association with and knowledge of local environments due to growing up there and going out with my friends as a young adult to many of the spaces of my fieldsite. Despite my familiarity with the city, however, I was unaccustomed to nuanced aspects of goths' practices in Adelaide until after beginning my fieldwork. In this sense, the distance between my everyday life and the lives and goth-centred practices of my participants was not measurable by geographic space. Distance and difference, as Judith Okley writes, 'need not be measured by geographical mileage' between 'the West' and 'the rest' for example, but is observable within our own complex and multi-cultural societies (1996: 4–6). It is for this reason, she argues, that anthropologists must also look within their own societies to understand different social groups from their own, rather than seeking out the 'exotic other' in geographically isolated places (see also Passaro,

1997). Goths were one such 'other' in Adelaide, and Adelaide was an 'other' within discourses about goth as well as within Australia.

Adelaide is commonly considered a marginal city within Australia and is often peripheral within the field of youth cultural research.[11] Such peripherality was my second reason for sticking with Adelaide as my primary fieldsite. While there has been little-to-no research on goth conducted in Australia, there is a significant volume of research emerging on other similar practices around Australia (e.g. Stafford, 2006; Strong, 2011; Overell, 2014; Bennett, 2015b; Bennett and Rogers, 2016), meaning that goths are relatively absent from this wider image of youth cultural practices in Australia. While I cannot say why this is the case, I suggest that the peripheral nature of Adelaide, and the difficulties that I encountered during my research may be significant factors, especially those related to the size and density of the population and 'night-time economies' (Chatterton and Hollands, 2002).

As a young adult living in Adelaide and during my research, I found that while there were periods of quiet and seeming inactivity in the city's nightlife, there were also times of vibrancy and activity. In some cases, there were events and venues that made little profit from gigs or club nights and often had to find other ways to make up for the monetary losses. In some instances, they simply stopped happening, as happened with several events in the Dark Alt scene during my research. Participants suggested that these cycles of boom and decline were more dramatic in Adelaide than in other capital cities. This is a feature that I, along with many other Adelaideans, suggest characterises Adelaide and re-iterates the intensity and commitment of the people that stick with and actively participate in such scenes. While the challenges of maintaining profitable or financially feasible scenic events is not unique to Adelaide or even to Australia, my research and experiences suggest that it is more intensified and appears to

[11] Several scholars have begun to address this gap, including two studies of Hip Hop (Arthur, 2009; Rodger, 2011), a history of dance music in Adelaide (Adamek, 2016). Bennett and Rogers (2016) also consider the perspectives and experiences of Adelaideans, they do not explore this in a substantive manner as they do Perth, for example.

have more dramatic impacts upon the comparatively smaller population of goths and other so-called 'dark alternative-types' in Adelaide.

I propose that Adelaide is an important site for research because of its marginality within Australia and because it is often characterised as 'ordinary' rather than 'special'.[12] It is neither a remote capital city like Perth in Western Australia, or Darwin in the Northern Territory. It is not in direct competition with other city-hubs in the state like Brisbane and the Gold Coast in Queensland. It is not a thriving hub of activity like Melbourne (Victoria) or Sydney (New South Wales). I suggest that Adelaide's unspectacular character is what makes it a valuable site for understanding the processes and practices that I consider in this dissertation. This is not to suggest that a study of goth in these other sites around Australia would not be insightful, as I observe in Chapters 1 and 3, Australia remains marginal within discourses about goth, especially scholarly research. My point is, however, that Adelaide provided a valuable fieldsite in which to research the practices and evaluative judgements of goths and understand the complex, dynamic and negotiated characteristics of goth.

My experiences of Adelaide during my fieldwork suggest that Adelaide's size plays a key role in the way that goth is experienced and practiced in this context. This includes but is not limited to: how goth *can be* and *is* experienced in social contexts; where it is located within wider local environments; participants' access to relevant and often specialist resources locally and from national or international sources; the expense of such access; and the perceived legitimacy and authenticity of the social and cultural practices and those who claim affiliation with them. One circumstance where I found this to be evident is in the geographic area utilised in the Adelaide scenes in comparison to larger Australian cities that I have observed, such as Melbourne.

Most of Adelaide's night-time economy takes place over weekends and within a limited radius centred on 'Adelaide's square mile', which includes the central shopping and business district and the surrounding parklands and which

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[12] This assertion was reiterated by the many individuals from my research field who moved to Melbourne in 2017 and 2018, who commented on social media that Adelaide was 'sleepy' in comparison to Melbourne.

participants commonly referred to as 'in town'. Other than private get-togethers at people's houses—of which I was aware but never attended—Dark Alternative and Postpunk events were 'in town'. By contrast, in Melbourne, the city-centre was substantially larger, and some events were held outside of this centre. As such, Melbourne's goths did not always have to 'go into town' to attend specialist or (general) 'alternative' events such as club nights or gigs. This difference meant that there were comparatively fewer venues in Adelaide that hosted events that were relevant to my research participants.

The impact of this was felt most strongly in the Dark Alt scene where most club nights were held in the same rooms of one venue. The one other venue that hosted the second club night I attended went out of business shortly after the event, which was interrupted by the Metropolitan Fire Service due to the smoke machines triggering the building's alarm system. Such spatial restrictions impacted the regularity and duration of events that took place. A majority of the club nights and gigs during my fieldwork opened their doors after 8 or 9pm on a Friday or Saturday night, or on other days for special occasions such as New Year's Eve. The two scenes managed these difficulties in different ways, for example, participants in the Postpunk scene took the opportunity to create DIY venue spaces (Bennett and Rogers, 2016), which were often difficult to find if you were not 'in the know' (Thornton, 1995) or were unfamiliar with the layout of the city.

This was one area where my existing understanding of Adelaide was useful for me, enabling me to find this venue with only minimal difficulties when attending the gigs held there. As I noted above, my basic awareness of my research field led me to take a flexible approach to research design, using a range of methods that could account for the changeable circumstances of my fieldsite and for the 'messiness' of participants' everyday lives.

Research Design & Methods

In this section I outline my research design and methods, which I group into three sections: participant observation, online research, and conversations with key participants. Under each of these headings I outline my approach to each

of these methods, highlighting some of the challenges that I encountered and how I dealt with them.

Participant Observation

Textbook definitions of ethnographic research suggest that an ethnographic approach relies upon a researcher's sustained engagements with the people in their research setting (O'Reilly, 2009; Madden, 2010; Okley, 2012). Such engagement often utilises the embodied experiences of the researcher seeking to understand life from the point of view of people who 'habitually populate that setting' (Hine, 2015: 19). This approach helps to generate an interpretative account of the everyday lives and practices of research participants via sustained engagement centred on a researcher's 'participant observation' (Bennett, 2003). This was one of the primary methods I utilised during my fieldwork.

Throughout my research, I carried out most of my participant observation at relevant social occasions (events). The majority of this was conducted in the Dark Alt scene, where I attended club nights, recording my observations and thoughts in my scratch-notes (Sanjek, 1990). Only two of the Dark Alt events claimed specific association with goth, and these events had the smallest crowds out of all of the events I attended during my fieldwork. This scene was the first place where I encountered goths in Adelaide, which I had discovered as a young adult when going out with friends to Enigma Bar, an 'alternative' venue that was central to both the Dark Alt scene and my fieldwork. The second place where I encountered goth during my fieldwork was the Postpunk scene.

I discovered this scene after a discussion with a long-time participant in the Dark Alt scene, who explained that his early engagements with goth during the 1990s had been supported by a local radio show Deathly Mystique, which played music that the hosts considered to be 'goth music'. After our discussion, I searched for the show online, finding that it was still running, though it had changed its name and its hosts, and had moved from local radio station 3D to an online goth and dark alternative radio station. After further digging and listening to several previous episodes of the show on their blog, I contacted Evony and Kate, the show's hosts and asked if they were interested in participating in the research project. This is also how I discovered Cities In

Dust, and the associated live music scene that is central to the local Postpunk scene. I attended several gigs in this scene, often writing my scratch-notes on the drive home due to the format of these nights, where I had to stand for most of the night. In some instances, I also wrote quick notes into a notepad on my mobile phone and later transferred these into my notebooks.

Other than participating in these scenes, I also attended several other related events during my research, including a music festival in 2013, at which several international acts liked by many people in the Dark Alt scene performed. Alongside many of the people who became key participants in my research, I also attended a performance by 'the godfather of goth', Peter Murphy, whose first Australian tour took place in the first few months of my research. As I hinted in the vignette in Chapter 1, this latter event was particularly important

Figure 6: Outfit worn to one of the Dark Alt goth nights, complete with the Peter Murphy t-shirt from his Australian tour in 2012. It is the shirt Steven commented on in the vignette in Chapter 1 (C. Groves, 2013).

for my fieldwork. It was not only an experience that I had directly shared with these participants—it had also been their first time seeing Murphy live—my attendance at this pivotal event served as a marker of capital when I wore one of the t-shirts that I had bought at the show (see Figure 6).

My participant observation also extended to other areas of goth's practice that went beyond events and local scenes, for example, I engaged with a range of resources that supported my participation in these face-to-face contexts online. This was not only necessary to keep my research going during 'quiet' periods within local scenes, where there were no events happening before a flurry of events within the same few weeks or months. It also supported other areas of my research such as my interactions with research participants and my learning about goth's various facets. In particular, this online fieldwork reflected goths' own use of the internet and its various digital resources.

Online Research

As I discuss in Chapter 5, the internet has long been an important resource for goths and it was also an indispensable part of my fieldwork. Much of my time online was spent going through posts, media, and archives on social media and networking sites like Blogger, Tumblr, YouTube and Facebook. Facebook was one of the most important resources for exploring local resources and practices of goth, with many local stores, events, and associated groups sharing a wide range of content on the platform. Blogs on Tumblr and Blogger were less specifically about goth in Adelaide, though I used them frequently to explore different facets of goth and to gather inspiration and online resources for my own goth practices. In this way, online material was a vital yet supplementary resource for other aspects of my fieldwork.

When speaking with key participants, they frequently discussed the impact of digital technologies on how and where people accessed goth and observed the marked impact that such accessibility had had on goth and its practice in Adelaide and globally. Participants also suggested several practical resources and digital spaces they frequented and used to support their practices of goth in local scenes and online as well as in their everyday lives. Similarly, research participants gave me lists of terms, sites, or music to look up online, often

referring me to YouTube or blogs for music. As noted above, I also listened to the archived and new episodes of Cascading Light and discovered other online radio stations such as Deathrock Radio, an online radio station that introduced me to a broader range of goth and associated music from international artists (past and present) than I encountered in Adelaide. Such engagements with digital content helped me develop my understanding of goth and supported other facets of my practices (as it did for research participants) and my fieldwork. In particular, I used it to engage with my research field and key participants beyond club nights or gigs.

Key Participants

As part of my research, I also engaged with several key individuals, whose words I frequently cite throughout this thesis and who I refer to by their given name or a chosen pseudonym, these individuals include Tee, Rik, Adam, Rosa, Evony, and Kate. Many of my interactions with these individuals were casual and occurred in the flow of our practices, at events and over social networking sites. Other interactions include 'interviews', which took several forms. The first of these centred on semi-structured interviews, where we arranged to meet in-person and I would come prepared with a range of open-ended questions or topics to discuss. The comparatively formal character of these discussions was, in part, a product of time: key participants often fitted these interviews around other areas of their lives such as work, and family responsibilities and they expected me to come prepared with a clear idea of what I wanted to discuss.

This expectation was problematic in terms of ethnographic research, where a researcher seeks not to speculate in advance what will be most interesting to explore and remains 'open to novel discoveries' (Hine, 2015: 25). I sought to mitigate the effects of this through creating links between these contexts and shared experiences of goth and of the Dark Alt and Postpunk scenes in Adelaide. In this way, these semi-structured conversations linked the everyday lives and practices of these individuals with the content discussed in interview settings.

For some key participants, it was not possible to meet for face-to-face interviews due to other aspects of their lives. These individuals preferred to

converse over the internet, either through instant messaging services on Facebook or through email. I also used such digital communication technologies to follow up information with key informants, if needed, afterward. These digital conversations differed in important ways from the face-to-face interviews that I conducted. For example, participants could take anywhere between a few seconds or minutes, to hours, days, or, as in some cases, weeks to respond to my questions or remarks. While this often made for disjointed conversations, this flexibility was a necessary compromise that enabled me to continue to collect 'the native's point of view', which remains an integral dimension of ethnography (O'Reilly, 2009), and bring these 'insider voices' into my analysis of their practices and experiences (Muggleton, 2000).

While the nature of the platforms that we used to communicate during these 'interviews' made it easier for these key participants to respond in their own time, it also allowed both participants and me to carefully draft, edit, and read-over questions, responses, and previous discussions before sending. Such conversations therefore involved carefully considered responses and often included links to other media and resources online.

These key participants came from a range of backgrounds and had vastly different experiences of goth and its practice in Adelaide, with some having grown up in rural areas of South Australia or elsewhere in Australia and others living their whole lives in the suburbs surrounding the South Australian capital. One of the most notable divisions among these key participants was their association with the different scenes of my research field. Rik and Adam, who both professed a taste for the music and tastes of the Dark Alt scene (and Rik identified as a rivethead rather than a goth), actively associated with the Dark Alt scene. While Tee also associated with this scene, it was an historic association; her only interaction with this scene was through friends who still participated in the scene. Kate, Evony and Rosa were all active within the Postpunk scene during my research, especially Rosa, who was one of the founding members of Cities in Dust. While they participated in different contemporary scenes, Adam and Kate were historically the most active of my key informants within Adelaide's goth related scenes, which positioned them as

'eldergoths' in the eyes of many younger goths, though these terms were not always used to describe them.

Age was one of the most significant characteristics of research participants, especially in regard to the different experiences and knowledge of goth 'before the internet'. When I first met them, for example only two of these key participants were younger than me—I was 25-years-old when I began my research in 2012—and most of these individuals were in their late-30s or early-40s. This is of particular note as youth cultures have long been understood as the domain of adolescence, with older individuals expected to 'age out of peer group' (Thornton, 1995: 3; see also Bennett and Hodkinson, 2012; Bennett, 2013; White et al., 2017). The prevalence of older individuals among my key informants and within the local scenes more generally calls into question this idealised characterisation of such cultural practices. This is also significant throughout this thesis: goths frequently seek to distance their practices, which they see as characterised by authenticity and as part of a legitimate and enduring cultural practice, from misinterpretations of goth as something that was limited to teenagers. I consider these issues in the next chapter, where I outline the significant theoretical foundations that I build upon in this thesis.

Chapter 3 - Theoretical Foundations: Youth Cultures

This dissertation straddles a blurry line between the anthropological endeavour to understand cultural practices as everyday phenomena and the multi-disciplinary effort to comprehend so-called 'youth cultures' as distinct types of cultural phenomena. The dynamic practice framework that I use in this thesis is useful for traversing these boundaries. In particular, it is a valuable tool for moving beyond enduring debates about the nature and usefulness of the 'subculture' concept. This approach accounts for the dynamism that post-CCCS scholars identify in youth cultures (e.g. Muggleton, 2000), whilst also acknowledging the more substantive and 'stable' characteristics exhibited by cultural phenomena such as goth (Hodkinson, 2002).

In this endeavour, I build upon the work of Hodkinson (2002), who argues that focusing upon the shifting, fragmentary, and ephemeral characteristics of participants' practices risks misrepresenting or excluding substantive features of such 'subcultural' groupings. Unlike Hodkinson, however, I do not seek to 'rework subculture'. Rather, my intention is to move past prevailing conceptual debates within this field to understand goth as a distinct *cultural* (as opposed to 'subcultural') practice. These debates about subculture as a concept have their roots in criticisms of early work on the 'subcultural' groupings of working-class youth in the early and later twentieth century. I focus in particular here on the extensive criticisms of so-called 'postsubcultural' scholars of the analyses and conclusions of scholars from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), a body of criticism that began in the late-1980s and early-1990s and continues to dominate Australian research on youth cultural phenomena (Bennett, 2015b; Buttigieg et al., 2015).

In this chapter I explore some of the key theorisations of youth cultures, including the deviance-centred models of the Chicago School; the style-centred neo-Marxist framework of the CCCS; 'postsubcultural' approaches, which focus on the growing sense of 'hyper-individualism', ephemerality, and fragmentation in the late-twentieth and twenty-first century; and work that seeks a balance between earlier approaches from the period that I call 'after postsubcultures'. I

do not offer a comprehensive summary of this literature but provide a theoretical background for my analysis of goth in this dissertation.[13]

Chicago School: Deviance, Labelling & 'Imaginary Solutions'

Some of the earliest theorisations of youth culture come from the 'Chicago School'. Scholars such as Frederic Thrasher (1927), Albert Cohen (1955), Howard Becker (1963), and Stanley Cohen (1972) utilised both quantitative and qualitative research methods to describe and analyse the experiences and motivations of young people in so-called 'youth gangs'. 'Delinquent' groups and deviance were key concerns for these scholars. Many researchers working within this tradition proposed that young people's deviance was caused by their experiences of social and economic marginalisation and disadvantage. They thus maintained that deviance was socially-constructed and rooted in structural factors such as class (Williams, 2011: 22). In this section, I introduce two key perspectives developed by Chicago School scholars that are relevant to this thesis: 'labelling theories' and the 'imaginary solution' model. In particular, I note how Chicago scholars used these models to explore issues of power and legitimacy in their analyses as both are important issues for my discussion of goth here, particularly matters of the legitimacy of goth as a distinct and legitimate cultural practice.

Labelling theories

Labelling theorists propose that society creates deviance: it is not inherent to individuals or youth cultures but the product of social structures and culturally-constructed rules. This is done through labelling certain people, groups and actions 'deviant' (Haenfler, 2010). Prominent label theorist Howard Becker summarised thus explained that

> s*ocial groups create deviance by making the rules whose infractions constitutes deviance*, and by applying those rules to particular people and labelling them as outsiders.…The deviant [or outsider] is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label.
>
> (Becker, 1963: 9, 14)

[13] For more comprehensive summaries of youth cultural theories, including the perspectives highlighted in this section, see Williams (2011), White, Wyn and Robards (2017) and the edited volumes *Youth Cultures: Scenes, Subcultures, and Tribes* (Hodkinson and Deicke, 2007), *Youth Subcultures and Subcultures: Australian Perspectives* (Baker et al., 2015).

This labelling involves a range of institutional and non-institutional contexts, including social and legal classifications, legislation, and media discourses (Stanley Cohen, 1972), as well as, I suggest, word-of-mouth and various day-to-day interactions in which individuals engage and their personal experiences and observations. Within these contexts, certain 'rules' are used to justify value judgements about certain people and social groups. These 'rules' are not only formalised in law, wherein deviance usually equates to 'crime'; they include informal or 'unwritten' social and moral codes perpetuated within a society and reinforced by various institutions (including media), individuals, and social interactions.

Furthermore, the creation, enactment, and enforcement of rules and labels are inseparable from power-relations within a society, meaning dominant groups often impose rules and labels upon those who belong to perceived subordinate groups within a society (Becker, 1963). As such, people and groups in dominant social positions not only have the requisite power and authority to make rules and successfully label certain individuals and groups as rule-breakers/outsiders but and certain practices as 'deviant', they are also better situated to enforce these rules and labels. Within the Chicago tradition, working-class youth and their youth cultures are often seen as sitting on the lowest rungs of this hierarchical ladder.

Stanley Cohen (1972) suggests three reasons why these youth cultures and their members make ideal (but not the only) targets for regulation and labelling as deviant (Stanley Cohen, 2011: viii–xxvi). Members of these groups, who Cohen calls 'folk devils', lack the social (and economic) power to successfully dispute the oft-exaggerated claims made about and against them (Haenfler, 2010: 65). They are therefore vulnerable scapegoats, blamed for a myriad of social problems and are subsequently targeted by regulations and monitoring. Secondly, the visually spectacular appearances of members make them easily identifiable: making them visible reminders of 'what we should not be', should not emulate, and should avoid (Stanley Cohen, 1972: 10). Finally, Cohen argues, youth cultures are seen to share a disdain for conventional rules and ideals—though, as I explain in the final section of this chapter and elaborate in Chapter 4, this can be based on popular misconceptions and partial truths taken out of

context and reproduced in the popular imagination. This understanding of youth cultures and power inequalities underlies the second proposition of labelling theory, which frames deviance as a self-fulfilling prophesy.

From this perspective, labelling a group, individual or activity as deviant is seen to cause a chain-reaction, leading to the acceptance, reproduction, and reinforcement of such characterisations (Bennett and Kahn-Harris, 2004a: 4). Becker (1963) therefore suggests deviance and labelling are cyclical—and to a lesser degree iterative—as they move between different people and groups, including the labellers or 'moral entrepreneurs' ('rule-makers' and 'rule-enforcers') and the labelled ('rule-breakers' or deviant social 'outsiders'). Rule-makers perceive social problems and create new rules or laws to re-establish 'social order'; they define and label deviance and identify 'outsiders'. Rule-enforcers implement the rules, monitor those at risk of breaking them, and reprimand those who do (Haenfler, 2010: 66). Media, both journalistic coverage and popular entertainment media, are important means through which these labels are disseminated to 'the public', a position which speaks to the power of mediated representations. The third group is diverse but includes those individuals and groups who share the label and the experience of being labelled deviant (Becker, 1963: 9–10). My focus here is on this latter group as this is the position often, but not always, occupied by goths.

Becker observes four potential responses from 'outsiders' to the rules, labels, and 'moral crusades' of dominant society. Outsiders may accept the classification and reform, or they may accept the label and remain deviant, reproducing and 'justifying' their treatment in the eyes of many moral entrepreneurs. This second response may reinforce public concern about the group, paving the way for 'symbolic crusades' against the group and its members, and occasionally for 'moral panics' (Becker, 1963; Stanley Cohen, 1972: 11). I discuss such instances in the final section of this chapter. Thirdly, they may embrace and internalise the label, justifying its application and reproducing the deviant behaviour.

Alternatively, they may reject the categorisation and/or rule(s) that led to their labelling and continue to act in opposition because they do 'not regard those

who judge [them] as either competent or legitimately entitled to do so', subsequently ignoring their classifications, rules, and any potential disciplinary actions. This understanding of deviants' reactions to rules and labelling are significant points for my argument in this dissertation in three key ways. In one sense, goths often contest characterisations of their identities and practices as 'deviant', preferring instead to claim these things as expressions of 'difference' and personal authenticity, which they maintain is rooted in 'being yourself'. In another sense, goths frequently assert that many people, things and activities that non-goths label 'goth' are not 'actually' goth. I return to this attitude throughout this dissertation. As noted in Chapter 2, goths also have their own systems of classification and 'rules' about who and what is 'authentically' goth.

Goths, especially those who are new or inexperienced and trying to learn, may accept the judgements or 'feedback' of others and 'reform'. Individuals may also reject others' rules and measures of authenticity/legitimacy, continuing as they had been. I argue that this does not always suggest 'incorrect' behaviour or understandings in such contexts, but may imply conflicting interpretations, experiences, expectations, and understandings. Some may reject others' assessments of their authenticity and/or legitimacy because they have made their own judgements: they do not, for example, see their 'judges' as possessing the competence, authenticity, or legitimacy to make such assessments.

I observed a fifth response to labelling and categorisation in my fieldsite beyond those identified by Becker: one of compromise or *contextual* modification of practice or attitudes. Here, individuals acknowledged others' judgements and contextually adjusted their behaviour to appease those with greater levels of status or power in a given context(s) but did not truly reform outside of such contexts. For example, many goths discussed how they tended to 'tone down' their non-normative appearances in certain contexts. Writing on a blog post, Adam discussed being harassed on the way to club nights, he wrote about how he had often worn 'plain' clothes when catching public transport to events, changed into his outfit for the event after arriving at the venue and changed back for his return trip. In the post, he explained that this was a defensive move aimed at avoiding negative responses, including verbal or physical harassment and victimisation because of his appearance. In many ways, this was also a

contextual modification of his behaviour and image, which he temporarily altered to appear more 'normal' and thereby temporarily accept the rules of non-goths who often out-numbered him on his trips to and from events. I engaged in similar contextual negotiations of my practice and image during my fieldwork, particularly when moving between the different scenes. Rather than reforming my tastes and interests to suit goths in one scene over the other, I altered my behaviour and topics of conversation when among people from the different scenes.

The prevalence of such judgements and behaviours within goth suggests that evaluative processes and labelling are not only enacted across barriers between 'dominant' and 'subordinate' groups in society-writ-large or between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' as labelling theorists propose. They also occur *inside* the boundaries of a given group or practice and may be contextually accepted, rejected, counter-judged, or subject to contextual compromises. For Chicago School scholar Albert Cohen (1955), such 'internal' systems of classification and status suggested that so-called 'deviant subcultures' or 'gangs' sought to construct a social group that was independent of dominant society, in which they could 'resolve' their marginal and disadvantaged socio-economic position.

The 'Imaginary Solution' Model

Albert Cohen (1955) proposes that working-class boys/youth sought to renegotiate their place within society through gangs and 'delinquent subcultures'. In this view, working-class youth sought to 'resolve' their problematic socio-economic position through non-normative, deviant subcultures, where they collectively renegotiated dominant norms and values. In line with Chicago School thought, Cohen argued that working-class youth lived in a society governed by the values and rules of the middle-classes. This system disempowered the working-class, demeaned their values and aspirations, and reinforced inequality so that it was near-impossible for working-class youth to escape their subordinate position (A. K. Cohen, 1955; see also Willis, 1977). He therefore proposed that youth joined subcultures to gain a sense of status and self-respect that was otherwise unavailable to people of their subordinate status, which was the product of their low socio-economic position *and* age.

These subcultures centred on 'alternative' (working-class) norms, rituals and values, which legitimised their disadvantaged position, 'working-class abilities', aspirations, and attitudes, rendering them status-worthy and achievable (A. K. Cohen, 1955: 65–6; Hodkinson, 2007b: 4). Thus, Cohen argues, rather than struggle to meet middle-class goals, subcultures inverted them in an attempt to legitimise *not* achieving them (Williams, 2011: 25). For Cohen, the collective actions of such groups are 'imaginary' because they neither change the youths' circumstances in any substantial way nor endure beyond their youth. I find this conclusion to be especially problematic because Cohen views these phenomena as both specific to adolescence (thereby not sustainable into 'adulthood') and motivated by a desire to escape structural issues. This interpretation of such practices is all the more problematic as it provided a structuralist framework that was sustained by many scholars in the CCCS during the 1970s, a body of work that continues to inform contemporary studies of youth culture (Williams, 2011: 36).

Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies: Class, Symbolic Rebellion & Style

Chicago School scholars' attention to structural factors and their view of youth cultures as collective phenomena endured in the neo-Marxist analyses of the CCCS. Similarly, Albert Cohen's proposition that youth seek 'imaginary solutions' to structural problems through collective inversions of dominant norms is evident in work of CCCS scholars. They posited that members of subcultures engaged in collective acts of 'symbolic resistance' with the intention of 'solving' their problematic and marginal socio-economic status. For example, Paul Willis (1977) explored how working-class youth appropriated conventional meanings of cultural resources such as clothing to resist educational systems within which their academic 'failure' was 'inevitable'. At the same time, Willis suggests, these youth celebrate their own (collective) aspirations and competencies, which are devalued by the hegemonic classes to whom the education system was directed[14] (White et al., 2017: 22–3).

[14] Bourdieu (1984) makes a similar argument about the link between formal education and dominant norms and systems of value. He similarly identifies a socially recognised hierarchy that is reproduced through formal education, which caters to the values and interests of the dominant or 'legitimate' classes in a society.

Within this framework, subcultures have a 'subversive power', which subculturalists use to resist dominant values and expectations of the hegemonic middle-classes as well as the working-classes into which they were born. They are seen to do this through spectacular reconfigurations of convention and meaning, expressed most overtly through style (J. Clarke, 1976). The visual spectacularity of subcultural style was central within CCCS interpretations of youth culture. Importantly, these styles were not seen to be merely 'appropriated and worn' by youth; these scholars maintained that they were part of *active* reconfigurations or stylisations of materials and meanings:

> despite their visibility, things simply appropriated and worn…do not make a style. What makes a style is the activity of stylisation—the active organisation of objects with activities and outlooks, which produce an organised group-identity in the form and shape of a coherent and distinctive way of 'being in the world'.
>
> (J. Clarke et al., 1976: 54)

Thus, subcultural style was not seen as simply 'happening' but, John Clarke suggests, it involved collective negotiations of 'alternative' meanings and elements that formed the overarching subcultural style and systems of meaning. Clarke (1976) develops this understanding in his chapter on subcultural style in the seminal CCCS collection, *Resistance through Rituals* (Hall and Jefferson, 1976). Borrowing Lévi-Strauss's concept of 'bricolage', Clarke explains that subcultures selectively appropriated 'symbolic objects' from their sociocultural environment—'the matrix of the existent'—and reordered and recontextualised them to communicate 'fresh' ('subcultural') meanings (J. Clarke, 1976: 177–8). Despite their 'oppositional intent', however, these meanings remained tethered to existing social meanings, conventions, and discourses. Dick Hebdige (1979) reiterates this interpretation in his analysis of subcultures such as punk and mod.

Hebdige's (1979) *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* is one of the most notable (and well-critiqued) works from the CCCS. Expanding upon Albert Cohen, Hebdige sees youth as caught between 'parental expectations' to live working-class lives and the hedonistic pressures of the consumer-driven society that he saw as characteristic of post-war industrial societies. Hebdige proposes that the 'solution' to this contradictory position lay in subcultural bricolage or 'semiotic

guerrilla warfare'. Subculturalists, he argued, re-position material artefacts, symbols, and meanings within subcultural systems of meaning, intentionally subverting dominant meanings and values for subcultural ends (Hebdige 1979: 105). 'Ordinary' objects were thereby given alternate meanings and incorporated in often-spectacular ways into subcultural systems of signification wherein a safety-pin is redefined as a fashion accessory. Interpreted through the dynamic practice framework that I employ in this dissertation, Hebdige purports that subculturalists disrupted the value structures of 'dominant society' by 'breaking' the links between materials and their meanings, reconfiguring the connections between these elements in the flow of their stylistic practices.

Like Cohen (1955) and Willis (1977), however, Hebdige concludes that these subversive practices are ultimately ineffective: working-class youth remain tethered to their working-class lives, neither improving their status nor escaping the hedonism of post-war society. Their stylistic rebellions merely reinforced the ideological dominance of the hegemonic classes and 'commodity culture', inevitably establishing new style-conventions that exploit the 'myth' of the rebellious and authentic subculturalist (Hebdige, 1979: 99). Subcultural styles and lifestyles become commodities to be mass-produced, marketed and sold to 'the masses', drained of their 'subversive' spirit and 'originality' (see also J. Clarke, 1976); their 'authenticity' undermined by their marketability. Hebdige concludes that what begins as 'a crime against the natural order' is inevitably incorporated back into the system it subverts, 'brought back into line', sanitised of its subversive intentions, and sold as the latest fashion (Hebdige 1979: 3, 94, 130). I explore this two-step process of 'diffusion' and 'defusion' (J. Clarke, 1976: 185–7; Hebdige, 1979) in Chapter 4.

For the moment, I note that these conclusions are significant to my argument in this thesis about goths' efforts to sustain goth's image as a legitimate practice. Hebdige implies that so-called subcultures are inexorably *illegitimate* because they produce new commodities that exploit the so-called 'myth' of subcultural 'authenticity' and because, Hebdige proposes, subcultural practices are 'pointless' and trivial when compared to the enduring structural problems that motivate subcultural rebellions. I maintain however that such ideas about youth cultural practices 'cheapen' (Adam) the practices of committed participants by

delegitimising them. Hebdige's approach frames them as the domain of the 'popular aesthetic', which is associated with a society's 'subordinate classes' (Bourdieu, 1984). I contend that goths and members of other similar cultural practices frequently seek to counter such framing by demonstrating that goth is a legitimate practice. That is, they assert that their cultural practice is a substantive and distinctive cultural entity that is 'normal' to do, 'normal' to be, and is 'not for everyone' (Adam). This latter assertion is reminiscent of one of the key criticisms of early structural-centred approaches to youth culture: they frame subcultural phenomena as *collectively* sought 'solutions' to *collective* experiences disadvantage and marginality caused, or at least exacerbated by their subordinate positionality within society as members of the working-classes (or other marginalised groups) and youth.

Throughout this dissertation, I note the marginality of goth and goths in Adelaide, suggesting that participants frequently felt that they were 'at home' among other goths because of their shared feelings of 'being outside of the main society or norm' (Rosa). I do not see such shared sentiments as the result of structural conditions such as class, that all individuals who experience such feelings respond to in the same manner, or that all goths are drawn to goth for a uniform reason. Critics of these perspectives argue that such interpretations overlook the more fluid and ephemeral aspects of subculture, including: individual and internal diversity, cultural and social overlaps, differing levels of commitment among their members, and changes over time and place (e.g. G. Clarke, 1981; Muggleton, 2000; Hodkinson, 2002). Some of the most prominent criticisms of these approaches, particularly those of Hebdige (1979) and his CCCS colleagues, have been sustained by scholars from the 'postsubcultural' tradition, which emerged during the early-1990s.

Postsubcultures: Individualism, fluidity, & heterogeneity

Postsubcultural studies emerged in the late-twentieth century as a critical response to CCCS-centred 'subcultural theories' that had previously[15] dominated youth cultural studies. Scholars working in this tradition sought to

[15] This is relative, as I noted earlier, some have argued that CCCS approaches continue to dominate Australian research on youth cultures (see Williams, 2011: 36; Bennett, 2015b; Buttigieg et al., 2015).

redress some of the key flaws in the Chicago and Birmingham approaches to these cultural phenomena. Part of this sought to close the gap between theoretical analyses and the everyday lives of members of these groups. As such, they sought to account for subculturalists' experiences, motivations and understandings of their behaviour and (sub)cultures (Muggleton, 2000). As I noted earlier, this led to what Bennett (2002, 2003) identifies as an 'ethnographic turn' in youth cultural research, which saw an increase in ethnographic accounts of youth culture, especially by 'cultural insiders' who were members of the groups they researched.

Ethnography provided youth cultural researchers with a means by which to fulfil their commitment to understanding youth cultures from participants' point of view (Muggleton, 2000). Bennett (2003) suggests that this interest in empirical accounts of youth culture is partly motivated by researchers' raw enthusiasm for the topic. He thus explains that, 'Many of those pursuing field-based research on music-based youth cultures have backgrounds in those same youth cultural settings (see, for example, Malbon, 1999; Muggleton, 2000; Weinstein, 2000; Hodkinson, 2002), some retaining that connection and becoming, in effect, fan-researchers' (Bennett, 2003: 186). The turn toward empirical methods for researching youth culture has also been driven by a perception that such practices are often 'best researched from the "inside"' (Emond, 2003: 104), or at least that cultural 'insiders' can provide more detailed interpretations of their own practices and lifeworlds (Hodkinson, 2005). In particular, such researchers frequently argue that 'insiders' are better able to account for the heterogeneity and individualism within their own cultural groupings.

Muggleton (2000), for example, outlines how such heterogeneity is largely absent from earlier theorisations of subculture, which focused upon homogeneous and structural features of youth cultural practice because they were commonly composed from a position of 'objective distance' from subculturalists. Postsubcultural researchers such as Steven Redhead (1990), Andy Bennett (1999), and David Muggleton (2000) also maintain that youth cultures should be understood through their increasingly heterogeneous and individualised nature. Such postsubcultural researchers have thereby sought to highlight the emergent reflexivity and fluidity that that they see as characteristic

of young people's identity, style, taste and consumption practices. This perspective reframed 'subcultures' as reflexive projects carried out by individuals who are actively engaged in shaping their own lives and identities through their subjective engagements with youth cultures, associated commodities and lifestyles.

This 'postsubcultural turn' in youth cultural studies, outlined in edited collections such as *The Clubcultures Reader* (Redhead et al., 1997), *The Post-Subcultures Reader* (Muggleton and Weinzierl, 2003), and *After Subculture* (Bennett and Kahn-Harris, 2004b), saw the development of a critical dialogue about the usefulness of 'subculture' for describing and understanding youth cultural practice and taste. Part of this dialogue resulted in the proposition of several concepts to account for the flexibility in contemporary youth cultural identity and consumption and replace the problematic concept of 'subculture'. Some of the key proposed alternatives include 'neo-tribe' (Bennett, 1999, 2005; Malbon, 1999; Robards and Bennett, 2011), 'lifestyle' (Chaney, 1996; MacRae, 2007), 'clubculture' (Thornton, 1995; Redhead et al., 1997), and 'scene' (Kruse, 2003, 2010; Bennett and Peterson, 2004; Kahn-Harris, 2007). I explore the last of these in more detail in Chapter 6. In the following section, however, I introduce 'scene' and briefly outline how I use it in this thesis before considering critiques that have been raised about these conceptual alternatives to 'subculture'.

Scene

Originally a colloquial term used to refer to local communities, styles and sounds that developed around different music genres, 'scene' has also been embraced by popular music scholars and youth cultural researchers (e.g. Straw, 1991; Bennett and Peterson, 2004; Kahn-Harris, 2007; Bennett and Rogers, 2016). Scholars who use this concept highlight the diversity and taste-centeredness of *music-centred* youth cultural practices in what are often local spaces. Academic usage of scene often refers to the clustering of musicians, fans and relevant institutions, such as record labels and distribution networks, around particular music genres (Peterson and Bennett, 2004: 3; Kahn-Harris, 2007) or local musical identities (Sara Cohen, 1991; Shank, 1994). In many of these interpretations scenes are understood to be 'music scenes', with associated styles of clothing and recreational activities viewed as supplementary to the

musical and extra-musical aspects of the scene. I explore these theorisations of the scene concept further in Chapter 6.

It should be noted that my use of 'scene' in this thesis differs in many ways from these conceptualisations. Instead of understanding goth as a distinct 'scene', my understanding of the term reflects its usage among my research participants, who saw the Dark Alt and Postpunk scenes as 'umbrellas' under which various 'sympathetic' cultural practices were practiced. To phrase it differently, neither the Postpunk nor the Dark Alt scene encapsulated the practice of goth. For participants, these were primarily public contexts in which they could come together with a group of 'likeminded' others, who were not necessarily goth, and to access resources that supported other aspects of their participation in goth. Further, it is worth clarifying two points: that these scenes did not have the same significance for the lives and identities of all goths in my fieldsite; and these scenes constituted two distinct umbrellas under which different aspects of goth's practice were emphasised and downplayed. I use scene in this way to not only account for participants' understandings of their practices and experiences but overcome some of the limitations and issues of 'the scene concept' and the other proposed alternatives to 'subculture' I identified above.

Criticisms of Alternative Concepts

While such alternative concepts have sought to counter the rigidity and fixity of earlier interpretations of youth cultural practice and their structural determinism, they have been critiqued on a number of grounds. David Hesmondhalgh (2005, 2007) has been highly critical of these concepts and how they are often applied in the sociology of popular music and the associated collectivities. In particular, he takes issue with how scholars tend to use 'neo-tribe' and 'scene' to describe these practices. While he shares postsubcultural scholars' critique of 'Birmingham subculturalism', Hesmondhalgh (2007) questions the cogency and usefulness of these proposed alternatives to subculture because they are often used in a way that is conceptually hazy or ambiguous. Hodkinson raises a similar criticism in his work, noting that their tendency to over-emphasise postmodern individualism and for these terms to

be used in vastly different and often confusing ways across the available literature (2002: 23–4, 2007b).

In his critique of these concepts, Haenfler (2010) also highlights how these postmodern interpretations of youth cultural practice have tended to focus upon individuals' subjectivity and consumption practices. He suggests that such attention to individuals' selective uses of commodities has tended to imply that people can 'buy into' these groups given the relevant funds and possession of particular commodities (Haenfler, 2010: 8). Like Haenfler, I argue that this frame contrasts greatly with my participants' emphasis upon authenticity and commitment within goth, demonstrated for example through the distaste for individuals who contextually 'donned and discarded' (Bensman and Vidich, 1995: 239) goth depending upon their mood or desire to 'look cool'. Such behaviour was often seen by research participants as 'inauthentic' and potentially 'harmful' to goth's image as a legitimate practice.

Research participants were similarly critical of individuals who sought to claim association with goth based upon the possession of relevant consumer-products alone. They took issue with the notion that one's stylistic consumption practices are the only or primary marker of membership in a cultural practice, particularly when it was not consistent with their musical tastes. For my research participants, such attention to fleeting appropriations of style and commodities 'missed the point of it all' (Evony). For these participants, such a frame, which was commonly reproduced in popular representations of goth, tended to trivialise goth by reducing it to a temporal or fleeting collective assemblage. I return to these ideas throughout the dissertation.

Hodkinson (2007b) takes a similar issue with postsubcultural analyses and concepts that focus attention upon the flexible and selective practices of individuals in relation to youth cultural practices. Such 'anti-subcultural explanations' remain tethered to critiques of 'the subculture concept' that prioritise the subjective and non-structural aspects of youth cultural practice over and above the more stable features (Hodkinson, 2007b: 15; see also Williams, 2011: 37). In his work, Hodkinson has sought to counter this tendency by reworking and updating subculture 'to capture the relatively substantive,

clearly bounded form taken by certain elective cultural groupings' (2002: 9). Throughout this thesis, I use dynamic practice theory to build directly upon Hodkinson's ideas about the substantiveness of goth as a distinct cultural practice and consistently distinctive source of identity for goths. I discuss this model of youth culture in the next section of the chapter alongside other work that I have grouped together under the heading of 'after postsubcultures'.

'After' Postsubcultures: Everyday Practices, Negotiations, & Subcultural Substantiveness

Youth culture scholars such as Hilary Pilkington (1994, 2004), Paul Hodkinson (2002), Ian Maxwell (2003), Ross Haenfler (2006) and J.P. Williams (2011, 2018) have built upon the foundations of the approaches discussed throughout this chapter. Importantly, these scholars do not celebrate youth cultures as collective *or* individualistic but see these aspects as two sides of the same coin and seek to understand the relationship between these factors in the lives and identities of youth cultural participants (Hodkinson, 2007a: 323). This dissertation sits firmly within this body of work: I highlight the substantiveness and malleability of goth as a distinctive and 'customisable' cultural phenomenon and observe participants' nuanced and often subjective understandings and customisations of this cultural phenomenon. In this section I summarise some key points about this body of work before outlining Hodkinson's (2002) model of '(sub)cultural substantiveness', which I draw upon extensively throughout this thesis.

Scholars who seek a balanced understanding of youth cultural practices frequently argue for an understanding of youth culture that focuses attention on the *everyday* lives and experiences of their members, especially on members who have less spectacular or overtly 'subcultural' appearances, lifestyles, and musical tastes. Laughey (2006: 3) proposes that one means of doing this is to avoid the presumption that all music-related tastes and practices of youth fit into the 'spectacular systems of signification that are opposed to dominant social and cultural forces'. This extends Gary Clarke's (1981) criticism of early subcultural theories: these analyses were too focused on 'card-carrying members of spectacular subcultures' (see also Bennett, 2015a). This continuing spectacularism within many postsubcultural analyses undermined these scholars' efforts to close the distance between the reader and the text

(Muggleton, 2000) and fetishizes the material culture of these practices as commodities just as the CCCS scholars that postsubcultural scholars critiqued (Lewin and Williams, 2009: 68). This approach ultimately *reinforced* the alienation of theoretical analyses from the everyday lives and experiences of a majority of youth cultural participants that postsubcultural approaches sought to avoid (Laughey, 2006; Hodkinson, 2007b).

This opposition between the 'spectacular systems of signification' and 'dominant social and cultural forces' is often characterised in terms of a binary between 'subcultures' and *'the* mainstream'. I argue that this binary often reflects youth cultural participants' desire to stress the authenticity and legitimacy of (relevant) youth cultural practices and identities as distinctive or 'non-conformist'. In this manner, it draws a line between 'us' and 'them': 'the mainstream' is envisioned as 'the masses', a perpetually 'conformist' and 'denigrated *other*', and subcultures imagined as inherently heterogeneous, open-minded, and 'authentic' alternative to 'the mainstream' (Thornton, 1995: 5; Hodkinson, 2002). In practice, such distinctions may reinforce cohesion within a youth culture (Locher, 1998: 101). My research suggests that they are also commonly used unreflexively by participants and replicated in many subcultural (e.g. Hebdige, 1979) and postsubcultural (e.g. Muggleton, 2000) analyses. For many youth cultural researchers who seek to move beyond postsubcultural criticism of earlier theoretical traditions, the relationship between these categories is more complex in practice than implied by their polarisations in discourse.

Extending early postsubcultural work on the subject, recent scholars have highlighted the malleability and *negotiated* nature of these categories in theory and practice. J.P. Williams thus observes that individuals and groups negotiate the boundaries between 'mainstream' and 'subcultural' in 'ongoing process[es] of (re)classifying certain tastes and behaviours as legitimate or illegitimate, critical or passive, "highbrow" or "lowbrow", decent or immoral, and so on' (2011: 9–10). I contend that members of youth cultures similarly negotiate the boundaries between youth cultures, for example, distinguishing between goth and 'club' or 'rave' (Thornton, 1995). Further, these processes of (re)classification are not exclusive to youth cultures but, as Bourdieu (1984)

remarks, are everyday processes that have pragmatic functions in society-writ-large. Such distinctions are part of the processes of authenticity, legitimacy, and definition that I explore in this dissertation. I therefore suggest that participants use such processes to assert the legitimacy of goth as a distinct cultural practice. This understanding overlaps in many ways with Hodkinson's proposition that goth is a substantive practice based on its relative consistency, tendency to encourage feelings of shared identity and commitment among goths, and its relative autonomy as a distinct subcultural entity.

Subcultural Substantiveness

Throughout much of his work on goth, Hodkinson outlines a model of 'subcultural substance'. One of his key intentions is to account for what he sees as the 'substantive' character of goth and other youth cultural groupings that do not fit the postmodernist ideals of fluidity and individualism. He remains mindful of both the relative consistency of the collective or shared aspects of goth *and* individual goth's subjective negotiations of these shared characteristics. By accounting for the collective and individual dimensions of the (sub)culture, Hodkinson aims to offer a theoretical understanding that considers the dynamic interplay between the social and the individual in the everyday lives of participants while acknowledging the substantiveness of goth as an enduring cultural phenomenon. In the language of dynamic practice theory, this approach acknowledges that flexibility and variation are a 'basic feature' of everyday life (Hui, 2017) whilst also noting the more stable and substantive aspects of such collective phenomena that are (re-)produced in the practices of participants. Hodkinson organises his model not on dynamic practice theory but on four 'indicators of (sub)cultural substance' that he identifies: 'consistent distinctiveness', 'identity', 'autonomy', and 'commitment' (Hodkinson, 2002: 28–33).

'Consistent distinctiveness' acknowledges that, despite internal diversity, subcultures often have an overarching set of tastes and values that is distinctive, *relatively* consistent from one participant to the next and over distances of time and space. Participants often celebrate this distinctiveness, using it to justify opposition to other cultural groupings such as 'the mainstream', which they often characterised as more consistent than distinctive. This contrasting

associations with distinctiveness is also important to what Hodkinson (2002: 31–3) calls the 'relative autonomy' of the subculture.

This autonomy is a multifaceted indicator that brings together participants' feelings of distinction with the relative autonomy of the set of the (sub)culture's shared tastes and values from wider social and economic infrastructures. Autonomy therefore draws attention to participants' active involvement in the productive and organisational activities that form the centre of the subculture, highlighting the 'high levels of grass-roots insider participation'. As such, it recognises the relative control that participants have over the production and distribution of subcultural products (music, clothing, magazines) and the organisation of subcultural events (live gigs, 'meet ups', club nights). This is significant for this dissertation: it recognises the active role of participants in creating, sustaining, and modifying the subculture through their active engagements with one another and with the materials of the cultural practice. Furthermore, it highlights how a practice's definition as a distinctive entity intersects with participants' identities and engagements in practice.

The third element of substantiveness—identity—refers to the sense of affiliation that participants feel relative to practice and other participants. Hodkinson adds that this sense of identity is accompanied by sustained 'feelings of distinction from those regarded as outsiders' and a relatively high degree of importance given to goth in the everyday lives and identities of participants (2002: 31). This highlights the everydayness of such identification and the associated processes of identity and identification and moves away from previous concentration on the spectacular practices of visually distinctive participants.

The final element of Hodkinson's model pertains to the sense of commitment fostered by substantive subcultures such as goth. In this model, commitment refers to the relative prominence of the youth culture in participants' everyday lives, identities, and relationships. This marker of substantiveness extends from his observation that, 'even for those goths who were reluctant to explicitly locate themselves as members,' substantive youth cultures are 'liable to account for a considerable proportion of [members'] free time, friendship patterns,

shopping routes, collections of commodities, going-out habits and…internet use' (Hodkinson, 2002: 31). Although this suggests a highly individualistic commitment to a substantive subculture, it also underlies collective commitment and shared sense of distinctiveness which participants often regard as 'more important to them that any other element of their lives, often resulting in the expression of fierce feelings of loyalty, especially when the subculture or its members were felt to be under attack from the media or from members of the general public' (Hodkinson, 2007a: 324).

Sitting between the second and third markers of substance is an important conflict observable across many youth cultures: while the subculture may figure prominently in an individual's life and identity, many participants are reluctant to openly identify themselves by the associated label, for example, goth. This hesitancy was evident in my research field, where some participants referred to goth as 'the g-word' as though it was a curse-word. Hodkinson acknowledges this hesitancy and recognises the problematic nature of labels, which may also be used to stereotype participants and accuse them of the 'sheep-like' behaviours they rallied against (Hodkinson, 2002; see also Muggleton, 2000; Haenfler, 2006: 159–62; Jasper, 2006). Despite any potential misgivings about labels, however, Hodkinson observes that goths often demonstrate a relatively high degree of commitment to goth in their everyday lives, even if this is only through their choice of music rather than through identification with a label.

While Hodkinson acknowledges the variability of commitment among members of substantive youth cultures and focuses on the differing levels of status gained/lost by those who demonstrate greater ('authentic insiders') and lesser ('part-timers') degrees of commitment, and the associated social rewards and consequences. I propose that Hodkinson's model can be usefully modified with reference to Haenfler's (2004, 2006) analysis of straightedge.[16] Haenfler observes a continuum of commitment among straightedgers rather than a tiered model that relies on distinctions of 'full-time members', 'part-timers', 'trendies' and 'total outsiders' (Hodkinson, 2002, 2005). Instead, Haenfler acknowledges

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[16] Straightedge is a subculture based on 'clean living' (no drugs, alcohol, or promiscuity) and is often associated with 'hardcore' punk music scenes (cf. Haenfler, 2006; Wood, 2006); participants are often called 'straightedgers' (sXers).

the dynamic nature of participants' commitment relative to a distinctive 'cultural core', and identifies other elements, which he calls 'secondary' and 'peripheral', that contribute to an individual's personal interpretation of the practice and thus demonstrate their commitment to the practice.

As I discuss in Chapter 7, this kind of identification does not discount other biographically meaningful aspects of participants' lives; individual experiences, tastes, and interpretations of the practice are often intimately intertwined with collective values and practices. I observed such customisations in my own field, which participants used to both demonstrate their own commitment to their subculture and make judgements about the identities, commitment, authenticity, and legitimacy of others who similarly claimed association with the subculture. These customisations and assessments are vital to the analysis of goth that I develop in this thesis, especially with reference to participants' judgements of their own and others' legitimacy (authority) within the cultural practice.

Haenfler's continuum thus draws out how participants' who do not engage in the less core aspects of the practice, or do so in a less routine fashion, may still be seen as authentic participants. Similar to 'full-timers' in Hodkinson's model, those who demonstrate greater levels of commitment, include individuals who also engage in secondary behaviours, such as actively participating in an associated social/music scene and regularly paying to attend events. Individuals who also participate in peripheral behaviours—such as supporting an associated scene by going out of their way to organise and/or run events—demonstrate even greater levels of commitment. Together with Hodkinson's model of substantiveness, this indicates that certain practices and tastes are essential or 'prerequisites' (Haenfler, 2004: 794) to being a member.

Members of these groups may also make references to these core features when making claims about the legitimacy of their subculture against claims of superficiality and shallow following of trends—which I explore in Chapter 4. In a broad sense, the necessary aspects of a subculture promotes mutual recognition of members and are indispensable to the identity of the cultural practice. The secondary and peripheral dimensions, however, may be understood to have a more intimate function for individual members.

Individuals may use their possession of these non-core characteristics to make claims about their authenticity and legitimate right to 'speak for' their practice and to make judgements about the authenticity of others.

Both Haenfler's continuum and Hodkinson's model of substance seek to explore and understand the negotiated character of subcultural identities and practices and attempt to account for variations and changes that occur over temporal and spatial distances. They do this in such a way that they also account for those aspects of meaning and subculture that remain relatively constant despite changes in the practice and specific individuals who engage in it. I account for such continuity and variation, consistency and difference, dynamism and distinctiveness throughout this dissertation. While this is partly due to a scholarly desire to account for these aspects of participants' lives and practices, it is also to contrast participants' experiences with the often-problematic ideals of popular characterisations that I consider in Chapter 4. In the following section, I consider a final way that such youth cultural practices have been framed, using the lens of 'moral concern' and 'panic'. This section bridges my discussion of theoretical foundations with my analysis of the relationships between the popular imagination, 'the media' and goths' practices in the next chapter.

Popular Discourses of Moral Concern & Panic

In the introduction to his book on subcultural theories, traditions and concepts, Williams (2011: 1–2) notes his desire to prevent the term 'subculture' being used 'as a journalistic tool' to link 'deplorable acts of violence', to stop it being 'dragged through the mud [and] reduced (as it often is anyway) to an attention-grabber in the Sunday paper.' This desire reflects the enduring classifications of youth cultures as dominant society's 'deviant other' that Chicago School scholars highlighted in their analyses and that remain part of many popular discourses about youth cultures. When discussing labelling theories above, I highlighted how Stanley Cohen (2011) suggested that such cultural groupings and their members were ideal targets for such labelling and regulation. He adds to this that such groups are also frequently the subject of moralist social discourses which may lead to 'moral panics'.

Such moral panics centre on the escalation of public fears into highly publicised, symbolic crusades against certain actions, groups or individuals in a society. They often rely upon reductive labelling of their targets as threats to societal values and interests, as well as to the moral welfare of society as a whole. Importantly, however, they are often based upon overgeneralisations that view the extreme actions of a few members of youth cultures to be representative of the whole 'subculture' (Stanley Cohen, 1972: 9). Moral panics are, however, not merely acts of labelling. At their heart, they appeal to dominant social morals and order to demand *immediate* intervention and strict(er) management of their targets. These demands are often supported by exaggeration, misunderstandings and 'surface-level assumptions' about the perceived 'problem' or 'threat', which exceeds 'actual' dangers and overlooks many contextual details that do not support their (hyper)moralist stance (Haenfler, 2010: 62).

'The media'—most overtly news media—have a vital role in moral panics: they not only report on issues of moral concern but frequently fan the flames of moral panics. Cohen (1972: 31) therefore argues that media tend to grossly and habitually exaggerate the seriousness of the alleged 'problem' through 'sensationalist headlines', 'melodramatic vocabulary', and 'deliberate heightening' of the most spectacular aspects of a group or situation in their reports. He explains that this is a business model employed by media: news sources regularly sacrifice accuracy and specificity for higher sales and viewership, especially during moral panics (Stanley Cohen, 1972; Williams, 2011: 111).

Whether or not they are intended to generate profit, moral panic reporting reflects broader social anxieties and issues (Springhall, 1998; Williams and Smith, 2007). Cohen (2011) thus describes several seemingly oppositional characteristics of moral panics that support this claim:

> They are new (lying dormant perhaps but hard to recognise; deceptively ordinary and routine, but invisibly creeping up the moral horizon)—but also old (camouflaged versions of traditional and well-known evils). They are damaging in themselves—but also merely warning signs of the real, much deeper and more prevalent condition. They are transparent (anyone can see what's happening)—but also opaque: accredited experts must

> explain the perils hidden behind the superficially harmless (decode a rock song's lyrics to see how they led to a school massacre).
>
> (Stanley Cohen, 2011: vii–viii)

Some of the greatest social anxieties behind moral panics centre on youth and children as 'vulnerable innocents', and adults as 'moral guardians' who are responsible for the socialisation of future generations and, therefore, for the moral stability of society (Stanley Cohen, 2011: xv; Willett, 2015). From this perspective, youth are labelled 'impressionable', as more prone to deviance and the moral corruption of society's 'outsiders' (Becker, 1963) and the rules that moral guardians make to protect youth *and* society. In this model, youth 'naturally' occupy a subordinate social position, and, as youth cultures continue to be associated with adolescence in popular ideals, so too are their cultural practices. Such an interpretation frames youth cultures as potential threats to the social and moral order of society, and frequently leads to calls for their 'containment' and/or 'elimination' (Hebdige, 1979: 79). Importantly, however, scholars such as Springhall (1998), Haenfler (2010) and Williams (2011; Williams and Smith, 2007) demonstrate that such conceptions of youth cultures and their participants do not remain at the heightened state of moral panics, but endure within general moralist discourses about youth and 'subcultures'.

Such everyday moralist frames commonly demonise and stigmatise these cultural practices and their participants, an image that is often perpetuated in the popular imagination. Such discourses therefore contribute to the popular and often sensationalist image of goth, for example, as a youthful, violent, and harmful 'cult', 'preying' on so-called 'innocents' (i.e. youth) and 'corrupting' their innocence by exposing them to amoral practices and interests. For the remainder of this chapter, I consider a recent example of such discourses being applied to goth through the example of media coverage of what many goths called 'the *Lancet* study', and outline goths' response to media perpetuations of discourses of moral concern about goth(s).

Published in psychiatric journal *Lancet Psychiatry*, this study—which bore the title 'Risk of depression and self-harm in teenagers identifying with goth subculture: a longitudinal cohort study'—concluded that young people who self-identified

with the 'goth subculture *might* be at an increased risk for depression and self-harm' (Bowes et al., 2015: 793, emphasis added).[17] Importantly, the study's authors stipulated that the results of their study '*cannot* be used to claim that becoming a goth increases risk of self-harm or depression,' and clarified that '*other factors* such as stigma and social ostracising *might represent the underlying mechanisms of increased risk*' despite the potential for 'peer contagion' among self-identifying goths (2015: 799, emphasis added). Despite these clarifications within the study's published findings, various media sources embraced the study's moralist tone. Some of the headlines that goths in my research field shared on social media include:

> Goth teens three times more likely to suffer depression and five times more likely to self-harm: researchers
>
> (*Australian Broadcasting Corporation*, Sami, 2015)

> New Study Shows Goth Teens Three Times More Likely to Suffer Depression[18]
>
> (*Music Feeds*, Feltscheer, 2015)

> Goth teenagers at higher risk of depression, study suggests
>
> (*The Guardian Online*, Agence France-Presse, 2015)

> Teenage Goths At Higher Risk of Depression, Study Says
>
> (*Time USA*, Bajekal, 2015)

> Goths at risk of depression or self-harming, research says
>
> (*Independent UK*, Cooper, 2015)

Many of these articles summarised the study's findings, even noting the study's assertion that their findings did not mean there was a correlation between goth and depression. The language of these headlines—in particular those from *The Guardia*n, *Time USA*, and *Independent UK*—imply that the study affirms long-standing social fears about goth and its association with negative behaviours such as depression and self-harm. Within this coverage, only the *Independent UK*

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[17] While this example is from after my fieldwork, it speaks to enduring concerns among goths about the tendency of goth to be characterised in a certain way by moral entrepreneurs who participants argue do not even attempt to move beyond these myths about goth and goths.

[18] This online article was accompanied by a photograph of popular musicians Kanye West and Lorde dressed in black and not smiling for the photographer, and an embedded music video from the band Evanescence's, who research participants frequently cited as an example of 'what the mainstream thinks goth is'.

sought the opinion of a goth, citing Paul Hodkinson. In the concluding lines of the article, he is cited as saying that, 'To assume purely from the fact that someone looks a particular way that they need to be assessed for depression or self-harm seems excessive to me, when there are presumably other indicators one could find that are far more definite' (Hodkinson cited in Cooper, 2015).

While this statement is not reflected in the article's headline, Hodkinson's words echo those of other goths that shared such media coverage on social media in my research field. This response from goths is consistent with Hodkinson's earlier statement regarding goths' reactions to misrepresentations and scapegoating in mass media coverage of the Columbine high school shooting in the late-1990s:

> the media association of the goth scene with violence and intolerance [in sensationalist coverage of the Columbine shooting] did appear to reinforce the sense of collective identity of goths. It was apparent that their sense of being misrepresented and scapegoated by the mass media served to unite them and engender reinvigorated camaraderie. As well as discussing the accuracy and implications of the media coverage, many goths took it upon themselves to write to newspapers in defence of the subcultural lifestyle they so cherished.
>
> (Hodkinson, 2002: 159)

While goths in my research field did not write to newspapers defending goth, they did take to social media to defend goth against media accusations that goth put youth 'at risk'. For example, popular goth blogger, The Everyday Goth,[19] wrote an 'open letter to parents' on her blog, a lengthy post that was published before some of the above news stories. She stated that 'this kind of study prompts all kinds of ill-informed, scare-mongering articles from various news publications' before explaining that,

> The moment I heard about this article I knew what was going to happen. Firstly, I was going to get an e-mail from a young goth reader saying "I'm a Goth and my parents think I'm depressed so they're not letting me be a Goth anymore, but I'm not depressed. What do I do?" Or, even worse, "I'm a Goth and I do have depression but my parents are blaming my depression on being a Goth, so they're not letting me be a Goth but my

[19] The Everyday Goth is a popular American goth blogger that I followed during my research. Her online posts have often led other goths in my research field to cite her as a useful source of information about goth. As her online moniker suggests, her content emphasises the everyday or 'ordinariness' of goth.

> depression is still going untreated. What do I do?" You can imagine my distress with these kinds of e-mails….So, I wanted to write this letter to parents of Goth teenagers directly.
>
> (The Everyday Goth)

In the remainder of the post, she defined goth and acknowledged, like Hodkinson in the article in the *Independent UK*, that some goths *do* suffer from the conditions described in the study, reiterating that the study *did not* determine a causal link between goth and these negative social behaviours. She also explained that the negative stereotypes perpetuated by such studies and their coverage by journalists have 'caused a lot of negativity towards Goths which has some unpleasant side effects', including depression, negative self-image, and, importantly, bullying, which may also exacerbate 'certain depressive conditions and self-harm'. In this manner, The Everyday Goth linked media coverage to persistent public discourses about goth that frames it as a dangerous cultural practice due to the prevalence of 'sombre, depressing angst' and macabre themes, which are woven throughout various areas of the practice (Hodkinson, 2002).

In the post, The Everyday Goth sought to defend her 'subculture' against enduring discourses of moral concern, as did Hodkinson (Cooper, 2015) and Williams (2011: 1–2), and other goths who spoke out against 'the *Lancet* Study' and subsequent media coverage. In particular, however, she uses her position as a prominent goth blogger to address the concerns of her younger readers and their parents: 'if you try to stamp your child's Gothness out of them *you are just going to become another bullying, oppressive force in your child's life*'. Her attitude toward the regulation of young peoples' associations with goth as a result of broader discourses about the impressionable character of adolescents and the protective desires of parents echoes the work of insider-researchers such as Hodkinson (2002; Garland and Hodkinson, 2014), Haenfler (2006, 2010) and Williams (2007; 2011). Through their work, these scholars have sought to understand not only why youth cultures are subject to such moral concern, but how members of these practices resist, accept, and negotiate such images in their practices.

I take up this endeavour in this dissertation. In Chapter 4, for example, I explore how goths negotiate popular characterisations of their identities and practices. In particular, I note how goths frequently seek to disassociate their practices from the images of the popular imagination, especially those perpetuated through 'the media' in an effort to legitimise goth and their associations with it in their everyday lives. This discussion builds upon the theoretical background that I have developed in this chapter. For many Chicago Scholars, particularly those working with theories of labelling and moral panic (Becker, 1963; Stanley Cohen, 1972), the media played a central role in constructing and labelling youth cultures and their members. For scholars such as Albert Cohen (1955), however, these mediated discourses were less significant than the intentions of the members, who he argued were trying to escape the demonising gaze of society by embracing alternative social values and norms of 'success'.

Hebdige (1979) and many other scholars at the CCCS picked up this 'imaginary solution' model to propose that members of subcultures sought to resist dominant cultural norms through style, inverting hegemonic meanings of objects and recontextualising them within a subcultural lexicon. Importantly, as I explore further in Chapter 4, these rebellions were 'pointless', because dominant media and cultural industries took these subversions and manipulated them into a product that could be marketed and sold to 'the masses'. In the process, Hebdige (1979) argues, these cultural products are stripped of their subversive intent and subcultural 'authenticity'.

In this chapter, I also discussed the analyses of scholars working within less structure-centric approaches to youth culture. I first considered postsubcultural approaches, which propose that contemporary youth cultures are less attached to shared experiences of socio-economic class than suggested by Chicago and CCCS scholars. For many scholars working within this framework, individual choice and preferences were key factors that governed subcultural consumption practices. In an effort to counter the overemphasis on individual choice and shifting affiliations that is conveyed in many of these approaches, I turned to the work of scholars working 'after postsubcultures' such as Paul Hodkinson and Ross Haenfler.

Rather than proposing that youth cultures should be understood as a product of structural factors *or* individual agency, these scholars sought to account for the more dynamic character of youth cultural practices and identities by acknowledging the negotiated nature of these practices. In the final section of this chapter, a point I will explore further in Chapter 7, I suggested that such negotiations between the broader youth culture and an individual's identity may lead to a greater desire to protect a culture from what participants frame as delegitimising moralist discourses. Focusing on what participants called 'the *Lancet* study', I noted how goths such as Hodkinson and The Everyday Goth are often acutely aware of popular discourses about them and the cultural practice that they identify with. This is an important point that I consider in depth in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 - Goth & the Popular Imagination[20]

> [In] my early days of high school, you knew that like- there were *never* many goths at my school- there was a group of metalheads that were arguably goth, and that was it. And then emo became a thing and they are like, 'oh, I'm a goth'. I was just like, "I might be fifteen, but I know you are not [goth]!"…Especially in Adelaide, since there isn't really *that* much of a presence of 'goth subculture', when other cultures that seemed similar came along, and were very prevalent, everyone assumed that it was 'this goth thing' that they had heard about.
>
> (Rik)[21]

As Rik indicates in the above quotation, when most people encounter the word 'goth', or other similar cultural or stylistic phenomena, certain images and associations come to mind. For some, these come from personal experience: experimentations with 'goth' or 'dark' tastes, usually from their teen years, or through music or people encountered in their day-to-day lives. These images and associations may also draw on a range of less intimate sources that are filtered through various mediated and social discourses that extend beyond the boundaries of goth as participants defined them. These sources include movies and television, news coverage, word-of-mouth, and marketing campaigns. These images form a recognisable pattern of materials, meanings, and practices that are linked together to form a 'popular' image of 'goth' represented in 'the popular imagination'. Despite a relative degree of accuracy of *some* aspects of these popular interpretations, many goths maintain that 'real' goth is *more complex and substantive than* the popular imagination purports it to be. In this chapter, I consider the relationship between goths' practices, particularly in my fieldsite, and the images of goth and goths promoted in the popular imagination, focusing in particular upon those conveyed through assorted media representations.

Much like Hebdige's interpretation of punk (1979), these characterisations and representations are rooted in information gleaned at a distance from goths' practices, as well as their understandings of their own practices and tastes, and

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[20] I presented a condensed version of this chapter in a paper at the AAS/ASA/ASAANZ conference, 'Shifting States' in December 2017 (Morrison, 2017).

[21] Excerpt from a conversation between Rik and his friend.

the meanings that they associate with different aspects of goth (Muggleton, 2000). In this chapter, I consider participants' suggestion that the distance of the popular imagination from the lives of goth has led to a 'surface' interpretation of goth. I explore their claims that this image discounts the complex and dynamic character of goth, which is reproduced by 'authentic' goths in their practices and identities, and that goth is *more than* its popular characterisations.

I have followed research participants' lead in determining which aspects of the popular imagination are worthy of consideration here. However, it would require a whole volume to pursue every aspect of the popular characterisations and representations—which participants call 'stereotypes'—that my participants discussed. I have selected three of the most common aspects of the popular imagination to discuss here: goth as an 'edgy' and visually spectacular fashion trend or costume; goth as an obsession with Halloween; and the perception that it is a 'teenage phenomenon'. I first consider how scholars have understood the relation between 'the media', 'the mainstream'—which are central to the popular imagination—and 'youth cultures'.

Relations Between 'The Media', 'The Mainstream', & 'Youth Culture'

Research participants frequently drew lines around 'the goth subculture', distinguishing it both from other youth cultures such as (hardcore) punk or rivet, and from 'the mainstream'. Rosa described, for example, how goths regularly felt drawn to other goths because of their shared tastes and interests as well as feeling 'outside of the mainstream society'. Such distinctions are also demonstrated in the practices of participants. In Chapter 6, I note how participants in my research field tended to frame Dark Alt club nights and Postpunk gigs as 'safe spaces', where normies were the 'outsiders' and where they felt more comfortable and 'safe' to 'be themselves'. These kinds of spatial boundaries frequently reproduced a binary between 'insider' and 'outsider' and between popular images of goth ('goth') and 'real' goth. They often marked these boundaries through overt distinctions between 'what the mainstream thinks is goth' and 'what's actually goth'.

Thornton (1995: 6) argues that such distinctions between '*the* mainstream' and '*the* media' are historically framed as markers against which youth cultural credibility has been measured; an opposition that she maintains is far from 'natural'. Rather, it is rooted in 'subcultural ideologies', which characterise youth cultural practices as the 'authentic' and 'underground' other that is 'outside' of media and commercial interests. Thornton proposes that clubbers in the 1990s used these ideological distinctions to elevate their cultural practices above the realms of 'mass culture', media and commerce. In so doing, they imagined their own practices as distinct from 'the mainstream' and affirmed their desire to assert collective difference, reproducing their perception that their subculture is authentic and 'real', which 'the mainstream' is vehemently not (Thornton, 1995: 31, 121; Lewin and Williams, 2009). Based on my research, I suggest that such individuals also employ these ideological discourses to encourage perceptions of their cultural practice and identities as legitimate and acceptable rather than merely a fashion trend, 'teenage phase', or sources of moral concern.

Correspondingly, what initially appears as a binary opposition between 'youth cultures' (as representative of authenticity and 'non-mainstream') and 'media' (as representative of 'the mainstream') may be understood as part of participants' personal and collaborative struggles for distinction. Their ideological contrasts therefore intersect systems of capital and status and processes of cultural legitimation and credibility that are central to Bourdieu's (1984) 'struggles for distinction'. Contrary to subcultural ideologies and some academic accounts of youth culture, Thornton (1995) argues that 'the mainstream', via 'the media' are intimately and inextricably involved in identifying, labelling, and shaping youth cultural practices from the start, not just after they become the subject of moral concern or commodification. This contrasts with the interpretations of many CCCS scholars, who propose that, when 'subcultures' come into contact with media, they are subsumed into 'the commodity culture' and stripped of their authenticity (e.g. J. Clarke, 1976; Hebdige, 1979). I consider this latter argument—which centres on twin processes of 'diffusion' and 'defusion'—in the next section, before reviewing how other scholars have discussed the relationship between goth, 'the media' and 'the mainstream'.

Diffusion & Defusion

'Diffusion' refers to the expansion of a practice beyond its roots as it spreads across geographic and sociocultural borders and is 'picked' up by 'mainstream' or 'popular' media and consumer markets. As it branches out, the visual style is adapted and modified with each degree of separation, at the same time becoming commodified and manipulated as a product geared toward profit in various commodity markets. In its original usage, diffusion was viewed as part of a process of expansion that led to the 'death' or 'reincorporation' of subcultural practices and tastes into the 'dominant' or 'hegemonic' order (J. Clarke, 1976; Hebdige, 1979). This latter stage is part of the process of what Hebdige (1979) calls 'defusion': the style's subversive intent is defused like a bomb, 'domesticated' and transformed into a 'relatively harmless', mainstream-palatable product with an ultimately hollow 'subcultural mystique' or 'edginess' used to market it to people that participants classified as 'outsiders' or 'normies'.

From this perspective, the recognisable 'lifestyle symbols' are converted into 'novelty items' (Williams, 2011: 84), a process that was often perceived by goths to have a trivialising or delegitimising effect on both the practice and participants' identities. During this process of conversion or appropriation, 'cultural objects' and styles become alienated from the experiences, sentiments and investments of their originators. Research participants suggested that these appropriations take the authentic practices and tastes of 'real' members and uncreatively reassemble them into 'meaningless', pre-made outfits and 'kits' designed to exploit its alternativeness and potential 'shock value' for profit. Research participants also held similar sentiments about the representations of the popular imagination, which Spracklen and Spracklen (2018) suggest have compromised the essential 'transgressiveness' and 'alternativity' (that is, the alterity) of goth.

In this thesis, I push away from the neo-Marxism of Birmingham scholars and their contention that niche practices and styles 'die' after being co-opted and defused by 'outsiders'. I instead propose that these mainstream-friendly interpretations and styles run parallel to what participants see as 'the real thing'. Goths' ongoing practices—including asserting the boundaries between what 'is' and 'can be' goth and what 'is not' and 'cannot' be goth—keep it alive, acting

as a marker against which participants legitimate and define their practices. Such distinctions are important to participants' negotiations of goth, which is reproduced as they define and practice it and reconfigured over time as it 'evolves' to counter the perceived trivialising or demonising impacts of popular characterisations. At the same time, as I argue in this chapter, participants' ideological separation between 'what the mainstream thinks is goth' and 'real' goth may be interpreted as part of their active efforts to assert that goth is a legitimate and distinctive practice rather than a 'fad' or superficial product of consumer markets (Maxwell, 2003). This is most clearly demonstrated through goths' practices and discourses, wherein they seek to demonstrate and reiterate that goth is *more than* its style, *more than* a commodity to be bought and sold, and *more than* the 'edgy' and 'domesticated' depictions of the popular imagination.

Participants' emphasis on goth being 'more than' the popular imagination has important ramifications for the legitimacy of goth as a substantive cultural entity. In the process of asserting this legitimacy, participants often seek to distance their style, practices and identities, from the popular imagination. Building upon Thornton's (1995) model of 'mass', 'niche', and 'micro' media, Hodkinson (2002) explored the complex relationship between goth and media and distinguishes between 'specialist subcultural' and 'non-subcultural' media. While he is concerned to demonstrate the particular significance of 'specialist' goth media such as fanzines, flyers, posters, and goth websites and online discussion forums to goths' practices, my focus in this chapter is on 'non-subcultural' media due to their centrality in the construction and dissemination of the popular understandings of goth.

Goth & 'The Media'

Hodkinson (2002) demonstrates that 'the media' played a vital role in the early development of goth and contributed to the recognition of goth as a distinct 'subculture' during the 1980s. He therefore claims that the music press and 'journalists working for…publications such as *New Musical Express*, *Melody Maker*, and *Sounds* were probably most instrumental in the crystallisation of a disorganised handful of sporadic stylistic similarities into an identifiable, coherent cultural movement' that came to be known as goth (Hodkinson, 2002: 111). This is evident in an article from *New Musical Express* (NME) that was

commonly referenced online and in publications about goth (North, 1983). This article used the term 'positive punk' to describe the music that would form part of the diverse base of 'goth rock' in the UK. The author's words support Hodkinson's assertion about the significance of media in framing goth as a cohesive subculture ('a new movement') in the early-1980s, he writes:

> It's these fans, reacting against the devaluation of punk, and fired by the spirit of the above-mentioned mentors [including Bauhaus and Theatre of Hate], who are acting now. They've created a colourful and thriving nationwide scene—resplendent in their individuality but still linked by a progressive punk idiom, one that says go instead of stop, expand instead of contract, yes instead of no. A new, positive punk.
>
> (North, 1983: 15)

Although the 'positive punk' label did not endure, many of the bands and styles discussed in this article are cited by goths as key to the formation of goth as a distinct and recognisable cultural entity, despite variations of style and attitude. Interestingly, North also frames this 'movement' as a reaction to the 'devaluation of punk' that had taken place in the years 'after punk'.[22] Hodkinson suggests that, following the lead of the music press, 'mass media' took great interest in goth into the late-1980s and early-1990s (Hodkinson, 2002: 111–2). During the late-1990s, however, mass media fascination with goth had all but ended until the moral panics following the shooting at Columbine High School in America in the late-1990s. In the late-1990s, music media coverage of goth also waned, and goth was only of occasional interest to music journalists. Hodkinson proposes that this relative marginalisation of the subculture in non-subcultural media encouraged a growing sense of autonomy within goth. He ties this autonomy to the plethora of specialist media created by 'goths for goths' that emerged during this period and suggests that this sustained the vibrancy of goth a substantive subculture (Hodkinson, 2002: 173).

Spracklen and Spracklen disagree and suggest that, 'the mainstream music industry and media…decided that goth had died in the 1990s [and] consigned it to the past' (2018: 89–91). Like Hodkinson, they propose that goths retreated from the spotlight, supporting their subculture through their own practices.

[22] My focus here is on goth, but the decline of punk is often cited by participants as part of the impetus for goth in the UK and deathrock in the USA, which are both rooted in punk.

However, Spracklen and Spracklen maintain the view that goth has not thrived but has withered and fallen prey to the plundering (defusion and diffusion) of dominant commercial industries. Thus, while they clarify that 'Goth is not dead; but, it has changed so much that it is in danger of losing its meaning and purpose' (2018: 183) they conclude that the marginalisation of goth music in non-subcultural media has not lead to increased autonomy. They suggest that, goth is increasingly 'in danger of being co-opted altogether by capitalism' and consumer markets (Spracklen and Spracklen, 2018: 4).[23] As such, they echo what communication scholar Joshua Gunn (1999) calls the 'assimilation thesis' of the CCCS, and reproduce the ideological binary between 'the mainstream' as appropriator, and goth as an 'authentic' and endangered 'subculture'.

In an article titled 'Marilyn Manson is not goth', Gunn (1999: 415), like Thornton (1995), maintains that the relationship between these two is a symbiotic relationship. He thus argues that 'mainstream representation—perhaps even appropriation—may contribute to [goth's] continued survival' rather than causing its diffusion or death. Gunn concludes that goth remains 'in constant conversation' with popular representations and 'mainstream' markets, which affects both the cultural practice and goths' constructions of self-identity (1999: 410, 415). From this perspective, it is not only goths who create goth through their practices; Gunn sees a cycle between media rhetoric and goths' identities and practices, that is, between goth and the popular imagination as represented through media coverage.

While these interpretations are useful for understanding the historical *coverage* of goth and goths' practices in 'mass-media' and the 'music press', I argue that they focus too tightly on 'media coverage' and journalistic writing about goth. Even Gunn (1999) focuses on media coverage of Marilyn Manson and other things that goths perceive as 'mainstream' misrepresentations of goth. This concentration on media coverage is also evident in Brill's (2008) analysis of gender and sexuality in goth. Like the authors discussed above, Brill notes the significance of the music press in the representation and evaluation of musical

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[23] As I note throughout this thesis, I vehemently disagree with both the idea that practices *can* die while people continue to practice them in meaningful ways and the suggestion that goth is on its death-bed.

genres and musicians within goth. She states that 'the mise-en-scène of recording goth musicians is not solely guided by personal or subcultural tastes, but also influenced by commercial concerns and by the deeply entrenched standards of "Alternative" music promotion and writing' (Brill, 2008: 148). However, her attention remains on gender discourses and the machinations of 'subcultural media' industries.

While participants in my research field commented upon the interpretations of goth that extended from media coverage, they were more concerned with mediated representations of goth in films, on television, and in the celebrity-centred tabloid media. It is through these media that they felt goth was most demonstrably misrepresented to 'the mainstream' and where the 'g-word' was habitually misused. This suggests that broader mediated perceptions of goth—for example those reproduced in entertainment media—rather than merely 'media coverage' are important to goths' struggles for distinction. Thus, while I argue, like Gunn (1999), that the relationship between popular representations and goth retains a degree of reciprocity, and, like Hodkinson (2002), that media coverage played an important role in goth's emergence, I move away from these analyses in this chapter. I contend that other types of media also impact goths' practices, especially when it comes to their distinctions of meaningful boundaries between 'real' goth and the popular imagination. In the remainder of this chapter, I focus on the popular imagination and its representations of goth and goths; I begin by defining the popular imagination.

The Popular Imagination

Many scholars who use the term 'popular imagination' often use it uncritically, assuming that its meaning is 'common sense' (K. Howley 2017, personal communication, 2 December). I argue that it is valuable to unpack how the popular imagination is constructed and its complex relationship with the people and practices that it is alleged to represent. In this section of the chapter, I break down this reified image of the popular imagination to consider what it is, how it intersects goths' practices and distinctions between 'real' goth and 'goth', the latter of which they maintain is a 'fake' and 'shallow' misrepresentation.

The definition of the popular imagination that I use here is, in part, drawn from Sherry Ortner's 'public culture', which she develops in her examination of anthropological representations of 'Generation X' (2006: 80–106). She defines 'public culture' as: the 'bodies of images, claims and representations created to speak to and about' the people in a given social group (Ortner, 2006: 80). For Ortner, 'public culture' is rooted in the representations and products of 'the media' and includes characterisations generated by ethnographers and anthropologists in their analyses. My focus here is primarily on media characterisations of goth and goths.

I understand the popular imagination to be the 'popular' images and representations of a particular practice or group and of the individuals who belong to, or are seen as belonging to, that practice or group. These characterisations are perpetuated in 'news media' coverage and 'entertainment media' such as film and television. The popular imagination is a frame through which non-goths—who only desire (or require) a basic awareness of goth—interpret goths' practices and material configurations. From this perspective, it is a socially-constructed category into which certain people, things, and practices are grouped and 'dealt with' according to socially-dictated norms. To put it another way, it is a view of goth that takes certain patterns of style, behaviour, and interests as 'standardised patterns' that are recognisable as belonging to the category of 'goth'. In this capacity, it is as a guide by which 'outsiders' imagine goth(s) and influences how they treat and perceive individuals who are seen to fit its characterisations in some way, even if only superficially. This definition is comparable to the 'outsiders' and 'folk devils' discussed by Howard Becker (1963) and Stanley Cohen (1972) respectively.

Becker and Cohen maintain that society and the media impose these characterisations onto certain groups and individuals and suggest that members of labelled groups tend to internalise and reproduce the associated behaviours to different extents in their practices. Such interpretations assume that these externally contrived images, which frequently ignore the recursive and dynamic aspects of the labelled practice and individuals, shape participants' behaviours as well as their self-conceptions and understandings of their practice. They position 'outsiders' to these practices, rather than their participants, as the

arbiters who define a practice through stereotyping and regulation. This interpretation is valid to some extent: goths' practices are liable to be influenced by how 'outsiders' characterise them. For example, I discuss below how Evony explained that she had 'gone off The Cure' due to the popular insinuations that 'all goths like The Cure' and that, if one listens to the band, they become a goth. I also note how, Kate was not dissuaded from liking The Cure but hesitated to play their music on Cascading Light for fear of reinforcing popular misconceptions.

Given these overlaps and conflicts between popular images and goths' practices, I suggest that while there is a degree of mutual constitution between popular characterisations and goths' practices and interests, the popular imagination is not merely imposed from 'outside' upon a passive group of individuals. It both shapes and is shaped by goths' as they practice it and as they negotiate goth's definitions and police its boundaries. These overlaps between goth and the popular imagination suggest that the latter is not merely born from external categorisations but extends from and is drawn back into the diverse practices and tastes of 'insiders'. Sociologist Paul Lopes (2005) raises a similar discussion regarding jazz, and suggests that the 'cultural tropes' and symbolic codes from within jazz have diffused into the popular imagination via various narratives and sources.

Lopes argues that these tropes—recognisable patterns of elements that make jazz identifiable—have become archetypes by which all jazz musicians and music are judged and classified by both 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. He adds that 'once a myth [i.e. archetype or stereotype] is placed in circulation in the popular imagination, it has a life of its own, [and is] rearticulated in a variety of fashions depending on its field of production and the perspective and purpose of whoever is expressing it' (2005: 1471). While I disagree that such characterisations are liberated from the practices in which they originate, Lopes' comments highlight two central points about the popular imagination that I speak to in this chapter. Firstly, it may have its roots in goth's lives and tastes, but the popular imagination is frequently parallel to what goths do and say outside of these mediated representations. Secondly, Lopes' words highlight how the 'myths' of a practice that become embedded within the popular

imagination continue to overlap with the contexts and perspectives in which they are perpetuated and maintained. That is, they are tied to who is reproducing or reconfiguring them through their practices and their intentions in doing so.

This latter point begs further explanation. The popular imagination is largely a collective characterisation, negotiated in and through various media and relying on intersubjective understandings and interpretations. However, it also has a subjective dimension that relies upon the experiences, opinions and values of those who engage with and perpetuate its 'myths'. From this perspective, popular imaginings of goth rely upon social categorisations and mediated images, but also involve multiple individual interpretations (Klinkmann, 2002; Pettersson, 2002). How people interpret and respond to goth(s) has as much to do with their own experiences, interpretations and personality as it does with the popular imagination. Parents, for example, who know little about goth beyond the popular discourses that frame it as a moral concern, will seek to shield their children from the perceived 'danger' of goth by restricting their association with people and things as associated with 'goth' in the popular imagination.

Equally, people who are attracted to the popular images of goth will seek out 'goth things' or at least things that are characterised as such by 'the mainstream' or marketers. A prime example of this is the collection of badges and iron-on patches in Figure 7, which I bought as a young adult from Borders[24] in the early-2010s, (naïvely) drawn to the imagery and 'edginess' of the accessories, I return to the imagery of these badges below. Research participants maintained, however, that individuals who have a genuine interest in being goth move beyond seeking such commodities and push past the popular imagination to explore goth beyond these things.

This raises another point that is crucial to my argument in this chapter: goths are usually well-informed about the tropes and images of goth that are perpetuated in the popular imagination. While their understandings of goth grow as they participate, individuals will often encounter popular

[24] A now defunct American chain book and music retailer.

Figure 7: Badges and iron-on patches that are labelled both 'goth' and 'emo' (which is frequently confused for goth) featuring skulls and suggesting that goth is a fashion trend ("Choose your trend")(B. Morrison, 2018).

characterisations before they begin this learning trajectory and retain this knowledge after they move beyond such 'surface' images. This was most evident during my discussions with research participants, who frequently referenced popular perceptions about goth and goths and candidly distinguished between 'what the mainstream thinks is goth' (the popular imagination) and 'real' goth as they understood and practiced it. This indicates that the popular imagination is likely to have a greater impact upon how participants understand and practice goth as babybats. Over time, however, participants' attitudes toward and relationship with the popular imagination changes. As they participate in goth and learn more about the nuances of the practice, its boundaries and its material and symbolic elements—especially aspects that are routinely overlooked or exaggerated in the popular imagination—many participants pushed past the popular imagination toward 'real' goth.

Given these intersections between goths' practices and the popular imagination, it is possible to identify a degree of reciprocity between goth and how it is framed in the popular imagination (Pettersson, 2002: 24–5). I unpack this idea

throughout the chapter. It is notable, however, that goths tend to deny that such overlaps exist. This is, in part, intertwined with the 'subcultural ideologies' outlined above, which goths use to mark goth's distinctiveness in contrast to the perceived 'herd-mentality' of 'the mainstream'. Many goths believe that one of the main means of enforcing these distinctions, especially when it comes to popular characterisations of goth, is through denying *any* links. In so doing, goths simultaneously assert the distinctiveness of goth as a substantive practice and seek to legitimate it as an 'ordinary activity for ordinary people' (Shove and Pantzar, 2005: 52–3) who are also distinguishable from 'the herd'.

Despite participants' evaluations of the various aspects of the popular imagination or the relative 'truth' of some dimensions of these characterisations and stereotypes, popular perceptions persist as 'basic' understandings that cycle in and out of visibility in different types of media and discourses. This is not to imply that the popular imagination is static or wholly comprised of recycled material. Like goth, the popular imagination's characterisations have evolved over the last forty years, sprawling out in many different directions. Furthermore, although specific details of the popular imagination change depending on the types of media that it is perpetuated in and the trends of the time, such perceptions can have enduring impacts on goths' practices. Such influences are particularly notable in the ongoing significance of evaluative processes such as 'testing mode' within goth.

The effects of popular characterisations are also evident in participants' preparedness to counter the sensationalising tendencies of moralising discourses, such as media coverage of 'the *Lancet* study'. At the same time, the idea that the popular imagination can influence participants' negotiations of goth's boundaries and their practices is valuable for my discussions of goths' public performances within local scenes in Chapter 6 and for Chapter 7, where I consider individuals' claims to authenticity and personal legitimacy within goth. In the present chapter, however, I focus upon the direct impacts of the popular imagination upon goths' struggles against trivialisation, popularism, and non-substantiveness.

Goth in the Popular Imagination

The elements of the popular imagination that I explore in the remainder of the chapter are drawn from research participants, who rejected, claimed, or had ambivalent feelings toward these characterisations; feelings which changed with context and over time. Many goths maintained that the popular imagination tended to be overly-generalising; it took things that were selectively popular among goths and assumed *all* goths enjoyed or did these things, and that one *must* like/do these things to be goth. Some enduring examples include Tim Burton's *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993), Marilyn Manson, and black lipstick and attire. Participants felt these images 'misrepresented' what goth '*really* is' and framed it as a novel (fashion) trend or 'phase' associated with teenagers and 'pointless rebellion' (Hebdige, 1979) (I discuss these stereotypes below). Using this as justification, goths tended to distance their practices and identities from 'superficial' interpretations, even if they did like such things.

Kate, for example, likes The Cure, whose status as a 'goth band' has been a topic of heated debates among goths for many decades. These debates commonly overlap popular classifications of the band as 'goth', which partly extends from certain band members' involvements with early goth rock bands such as the Banshees, as well as from aspects of the band's image, which is characteristic of the images that accompany the *NME* article about 'positive punk' that I described above (North, 1983). Despite liking The Cure, Kate explained, she was reluctant to play them on Cascading Light. Evony, her co-host, commented however that she disliked the band because of the stereotype. Both of these perspectives come through in the following interview excerpt where I had asked the two of them about goth stereotypes.

> Kate: Ummm, people who (.)
> Evony: (.) who listen to The Cure!
> Kate: Listen to The Cure, --that's a big one--
> Evony: --And Depeche Mode (.)--randomly--
> Kate: ---Well, it happened to me at work the other day, actually. One of the guys said to me "Oh, well, um, [[imitating sassy attitude]] The Cure?"—because we were talking about goth music—and I said, [[plainly]] "The Cure aren't goth." And he said, [[imitating snarky attitude]] "Well, I have got friends who are into goth and they like The Cure", and I said, "Yeah, you can *like* The Cure"--
> Evony: --Lots of goths LIKE The Cure --but it doesn't make them goth--
> Kate: --***I*** like The Cure--

Evony: Yeah, exactly!… [[both chuckle]]
Kate: Yeah, The Cure: that is probably a really, *really* big one…--
Evony: --I have gone off them because people keep asking if I like them.…You kind of think, [[frustrated snap through gritted teeth]] "*No!! I don't!*"

While Evony rejects the band, Kate admits liking them but clarifies that this 'does not make [this] stereotype…correct'. Crucially, although they both accept that there is an element of truth to the popular image of goths liking The Cure, they also clarify that being a goth was about more than this. They disputed the idea that just liking *one* pop band who are commonly associated with goth in the popular imagination and who, as Evony frequently remarked, 'only have a few actual goth songs' in their sizeable catalogue, makes someone goth. Like many goths, Evony and Kate, felt that the relative accuracy of such things was too confusing for 'people who do not know any better'. They felt that such overgeneralisations and assumptions based on the popular 'myths' about goth(s) were too often confused with 'the real thing'. Importantly, goths frequently disparaged those who endorsed such characterisations through their behaviour and image, which research participants felt erroneously validated popular stereotypes.

Participants were not always negative toward the popular imagination and its categorisations, they could also be ambivalent. Occasionally, this uncertainty about stereotypes came from their partial accuracy, such as with Kate's taste for The Cure. In other cases, it was caused by the frustration Evony expressed at the end of the above excerpt; frustration fuelled by popularised overgeneralisations, misrepresentations and misinterpretations. In some contexts, their frustration also came from causal claims made *as the result of* the popular imagination rather the characterisations themselves. That is, the assumption that one must embody the 'goth' stereotype in order to be goth, regardless of the truthfulness of certain tropes, irritated many research participants. Demonstrating this, Rosa explained that her band's self-identification with the goth genre was received with confusion by the 'Australian music scene':

> When we first started playing in the band, everyone [in the band] was like "Oh yeah, we're going to be a goth band!"…and other people were like

> [[replicating sarcastic tone]] "Oooooh, you're a goth band, hey? What does *that* mean?". Like, all the expectations that come with the label....I think it was more of a music scene thing in Australia saying, 'why would you call yourself a goth band if you want to be taken seriously?'....Another sort of take on that [was]: 'you can't just call yourself a goth band, you would have to...have been dressing up like a goth since you were this age' or 'you should be like this because this is what goth culture is'....I like one or two Marilyn Manson songs, but they're more pop songs than anything else.

The initial reaction of the 'Australian music scene'—"why call yourself a goth band if you want to be taken seriously"—reflects the tendency for 'the g-word' to be associated with novelty and ephemeral trends in the popular imagination. As such, there was a perception that 'serious' musicians would not claim to be goth to legitimate their music and band to the music press and industry (see Negus, 1997: 179; Brill, 2008: 148). Cities In Dust not only had to prove their legitimacy as musicians, they also had to overcome such misconceptions and demonstrate that goth was not a novelty label but a legitimate musical tradition and cultural practice that they unashamedly claimed. The other reactions Rosa mentions illustrate how the popular imagination influences non-goths' expectations of what a goth is, and what goths look and act like. Like Kate, Rosa remarked that she likes some Marilyn Manson songs, which accorded with the popular imagination, but clarified this has nothing to do with goth.[25]

A more broadly applicable example of assumptions made on the basis of the popular imagination is the presumption of an exclusive link between goth and black clothing. Research participants openly accepted that a majority of goths wear a lot of black, as in the following exchange between Kate and Evony when discussing stereotypes:

> Kate: Always wearing black (.) because that's not always true--
> Evony: --No--
> Kate: --well, the majority of the time it is true (.)
> Evony: *You* wear black a lot.
> Kate: Yeah.
> Evony: I wear black less than you do!

[25] This assertion reflects the comments of one of Gunn's (1999: 418) respondents about the assumption that goths listen to Marilyn Manson being one of the most annoying assumptions of the popular imagination.

Here both women acknowledge the relative accuracy of the popular image of the 'black-clad goth'. Evony also explained that, while they are both goths, she wears less black than Kate. This indicates that popular idealisations are not accurate to the same degree for all goths nor was it applicable in all situations, for it was Evony rather than Kate who was wearing an entirely black outfit to our interview that day. Importantly, Evony and Kate's almost instinctual clarifications about such things reflects a common desire among goths: to stress that there is not a causal relationship between 'gothness' and black clothing as the stereotype implies.

Adam made a similar point about the assumption that black clothing equates to being goth:

> the wearing black thing is the worst stereotype in spite of it being true because people assume anyone in black is goth when it's not the case…hell, priests wear black!

During our conversation, Adam also commented that dominance of black clothing was nothing new to him when he discovered goth: 'I was an RPG gamer[26] so I was no stranger to people wearing black'. Like Kate and Evony, he accepts the underlying truth of the stereotype, yet is vexed by it because he does not see a causal link between 'being goth' and 'black clothing', especially when there were other cultural practices in which the colour was a recognisable feature.

No matter how participants felt about popular constructions of goth, or the extent to which these fit or misrepresented the realities of goths' lives and tastes, such images have real-world effects. Before and during my research, for example, I was asked countless times if I 'was a goth or something' when buying clothing due to the predominance of black in my shopping basket. Based on my interviews and ethnographic material, and discussions with others in and outside of my research context, this was a common experience for many people, no matter their association with goth. The specific content of stereotypes is, however, less significant (at least for the present discussion) than the way goth is constructed through these stereotypes and how these constructions are

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[26] Someone who plays a genre of game called 'Role Playing Games'.

brought into everyday contexts like talking to co-workers or buying clothes. Importantly for my discussion in this chapter, assumptions such as '*all* goths like The Cure' and 'black clothing' equals 'being goth' were perpetuated in popular portrayals of goth across a variety of media. Such imagery is recognisable in films, television, and other media, where it is commonly embodied through 'goth' characters, celebrities, and 'fashion trends'.

Goth Characters & Fashion: Goth as an 'Edgy', Visually Spectacular Fashion Trend

The 'black-clad goth' has become an archetypal figure in the popular imagination, partially aided by the dominance of the colour in the attire, personal belongings and spaces of 'goth' characters. While there is an 'overwhelming and consistent emphasis' on black within goth (Hodkinson, 2002: 42), 'goth' characters in popular media tend to have an exaggerated and (usually) irrational attachment to the colour, sometimes to the point of (overdramatically) 'forsaking' all other colours. While not every 'goth' character has such dramatic attachments to black clothing, many of them embody the 'goth' stereotype—identifiable in their visual style and overall aesthetic tastes—simultaneously epitomising most, or all, of the elements discussed in this chapter and more.

The 'goths' in the *South Park* television series (1997-present), the vampires in the film *The Lost Boys* (1987), the 'teen witches' in *The Craft* (1996), Eric Draven in *The Crow* (1994), Lydia Deetz in *Beetlejuice* (1988) or, one participant claimed, 'pretty much any character in a Tim Burton film', were some key 'goth' characters identified by research participants. It is noteworthy that, despite the on-going use of goth characters in popular media, for example Abbey in the American crime-drama series *NCIS* (2003-present), and Marceline the Vampire Queen in the popular animated television series *Adventure Time* (2010-2018), these characters and media are primarily from the 1980s and 1990s.

Whether old or new, 'goth' characters personify the stereotypes discussed here: they are black-clad 'weirdos', 'freaks', quirky, antisocial, and/or 'rebellious outsiders' who audiences are encouraged to love, pity, want to 'make normal', or maintain their distance from. Many of them habitually listen to bands like

The Cure, Depeche Mode, and Joy Division, or to 'black' metal, Marilyn Manson, or to what Adam identified as 'dark EDM' bands or music that straddled various dark alternative genres. These tastes were often most prominently displayed visually—on characters' t-shirts or posters on their walls and/or locker doors—but was also tied to them aurally, through diegetic and nondiegetic soundtracks (Van Elferen, 2012). They are teenagers (shy and inquisitive or aggressive and overtly 'deviant') or adults (who are 'misunderstood' and/or 'refuse to grow up') who hang out in dark laneways or nightclubs, in 'malls' and coffee shops, wear black clothes all the time, smoke cigarettes and drink and are regularly portrayed as having 'loose moral standards' when it comes to drugs, sex, and sexuality. No matter what archetype these characters represented, they fit the routinised patterns of goth as imagined by their creators, making them recognisably 'goth' even when the g-word was not used to describe them or their practices.

Research participants, like many other (aging) goths, have grown up with such stereotypically 'goth' characters. The types of 'goth' characters, the values or immoralities that they embodied, and how they are portrayed in their respective narratives has much to do with the cycling of goth into and out of popularity. 'The goth trend', as it is commonly called, rotates into notoriety every few years or so due to the fashion industry's 'recurring fondness' for 'borrowing'—though maybe 'purloining' is a better description from my participants' perspective—from 'subcultures' (Venters, 2009: 189). This trend is generally identifiable by the prevalence of black clothing, certain fabrics (lace, fishnet, and velvet), and 'dark' makeup, especially black or 'blood' coloured lipstick.

In more recent years, some variations of the trend have incorporated more colourful elements and kitsch imagery, such as in 'pastel goth' fashion, one of the most contentious appropriations of the g-word during my research. These different styles often integrated symbols that were branded 'goth' by 'the media' or other industries, including pentagrams, inverted crosses, skulls, blood and other horror-influenced imagery. This is notable in the accessories in Figure 7 above, where the buyer is encouraged to 'choose [their] trend' and if they have 'got goth', despite the badges being emblazoned with the word and 'emo'.

Appearances of this trend are often aided by the appearance of a 'goth' character(s) in popular films or television shows, or by celebrities, especially (female) musicians and actors who casually 'went goth', and the journalists and fans 'reporting' on their style practices. Much of this coverage of celebrities dabbling with so-called 'goth fashion' either celebrates or scoffs at their attempts to (temporarily) 'go goth' or 'bring goth back into style'.[27] For participants, so-called 'goth' fashion styles of such celebrities and characters is moulded to popular ideals rather than accurately representing goth. When discussing Taylor Momsen[28] Adam remarked that,

> She doesn't look goth to me…[I]t's right up there with associating bands like Evanescence [with] goth. A lot based on image. Her look is more what the mainstream thinks goth is. At least, that's how I see it.

Participants frequently argue against media-fuelled representations that prioritise style over more substantive features of goth. For them, the visual and 'fashion' aspects of goth were less distinctive and important elements, arguing that they were not as enduring as the music or an individual's attitude and values, which they traced directly to goth's origins.[29] Despite this ongoing emphasis on music and value-systems, many goths felt that visual elements of goth have become increasingly prominent within the practice. In a blog post, Adam proposed that the prevalence of photographs of goths who were 'dressed up' and content focusing on style and 'goth clothing' that were accessible online contributed to popular misconceptions about goth being a fashion trend. In his characteristically tongue-in-cheek manner, he wrote:

> So many dreaded #selfies! From before (to capture your look at its best), during (zomg we're having so much fun. sucks to be you not being here), after patting everyone on the back and thanking [event] organizers (or people who turned up if you are an organizer) and then late photos from official and other photographers where you hope they deemed you worthy to put your mug online.

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[27] Such phrases frequently appeared in media coverage of these celebrities' fashion choices.

[28] A young actress and pop musician who had gained notoriety in 'the media' for her so-called 'goth' fashion sense in the early-2010s.

[29] Spracklen and Spracklen contradict this and suggest that, 'by the 2010s goth had become another fashion choice in the late-modern hyper-real shopping malls, devoid of resistance and politics' (2018: 3–4). This runs counter to the views of my research participants, despite some of them observing that goth *had* 'grown to be more' than the music over time.

Adam also suggested during our discussions that these images fed back into goth via new participants:

> New people have an idea in their head of what [goth is] meant to be from what they've heard or maybe even seen in pictures. If you look at pictures from any Wave Gothik Treffen it paints a picture that most people are dressed to the nines and over the top.…But these are just the things that tend to get the most attention from photographers. [30]

Hellsquookie, another goth blogger[31] made a similar comment and blamed older generations of goths, who, they argue, tend to over-represent the visual aspects of goth on social media. Like Adam, hellsquookie suggests that people who are new to goth see the plethora of visually-focused content and assume that is what goth is about:

> I blame my generation, specifically those that pride themselves on having a blog, YouTube channel or whatever. We constantly (and sometimes smugly) fault the next generation for being superficial in Goth culture. Hell, we get pissed at them for not having to hunt for things like we did…But here's the thing, people in my age group grew up [alongside] social media. We had Twitter accounts before Twitter used hashtags, learned basic html code for fucking Myspace and were having conversations about goth influences on LiveJournal. Now when everyone has a Facebook, a YouTube channel, an Instagram, we [older goths]…don't need these conversations again. So we post selfies, lunches, cute clothes, market our content for baby bats in the most general of ways and the next generation thinks that that is all there is.

Despite the noticeable increase in photographs and videos emphasising the stylistic aspects of goth over the last two decades, at least in terms of their accessibility, Adam and hellsquookie make clear that these images were part of a larger picture. The growing emphasis on goth as a fashion trend extends further than the growth of social media. A cursory glance over the historical ephemera that I collected during my fieldwork, including several goth magazines from the UK, USA and Germany, indicates that much media coverage of goth bands and practices since the late-1970s has included images and/or descriptions of bands' style as an important identifying characteristic. With a

[30] An annual dark alternative festival held in Leipzig, Germany.

[31] Hellsquookie is a self-identified 'black goth' who maintains a blog and YouTube channel and general social media presence, including interacting with online goth media network 'The Belfry Network', a group that Adam also frequently contributes to.

few exceptions, this coverage *included* these descriptions and images, but they were not generally the central focus of the article or they shared the spotlight with other elements of goth.

It is not the existence of such visual media, however, that is of primary concern to most goths. As Adam and hellsquookie suggest, the primary issue is that style has become increasingly dominant in a range of sources, something they suggest has accelerated in recent years, aided by the internet (see Chapter 5). Whilst this shifting balance may be partly to do with the increased accessibility and prevalence of visual content, it is equally likely that the primacy of the visual aspects of goth has been aided by media attention, in particular, stories about celebrities 'going goth'.

In the view of many goths such stories tend to frame goth as little more than a 'fashion trend' that could be worn and cast-off *ad libitum* like a costume.[32] Consistent with this, a post on the 'Goth Confessions' blog suggested that the

> ever-changing fashion industry's influence is distracting people from other bases of [goth]….I feel, although individuality and self-expression are a good thing, identifying one-self [by] tentative subcategories [allows] Goth as a whole to be looked at as "just some fad"

Upon sharing this post on his own blog, Adam added that this 'goth trend' not only 'homogenises' goth into 'the mainstream' but 'cheapens' it by reducing it to a fashion trend before reiterating that, 'Goth was and always will be a music-based subculture. That is the one constant and the core'. Like many other goths I encountered during my research, Adam's comments in this post seek to reinforce goth's legitimacy by arguing that its core—music—makes it substantive.

By contrast, the fashion and style elements, which were only central to a popular and shallow idea of goth, did not have the same distinctiveness and were more easily cast off, left in a metaphorical pile on the floor, and put back on when one wanted to be 'edgy' or 'dark'. Muggleton (2000) identified a similar

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[32] This idea echoes Ted Polhemus's (1997) idea of the 'supermarket of style', where, in the postmodern era, individuals select from a wide range of fashion items and identities, and don and cast them off according to context and mood.

sentiment among punks and mods, noting that members of such cultures often emphasise the difference between the 'punk appearance', for example, and the values that underlie this image. He adds that subculturalists ultimately privileged the latter (values) over the former (appearance and style) and writes that, 'Those who merely "adopt" an unconventional appearance without possessing the necessary "inner" qualities are regarded by [authentic insiders] as "plastic", "not real"' (Muggleton, 2000: 87, 90). I return to this idea that individuals who prioritise style over the values behind the style (or 'substance') are perceived as inauthentic in Chapter 7. The important point here, however, is the significance placed upon the non-stylistic aspects of the culture, which members regard as more conducive to personal authenticity—and therefore a legitimate image of the practice-as-entity—because these underlying values are less easily cast off at a whim.

For my research participants, the underlying values of goth were signified by 'the music', which many described as not only more distinct than its stylistic aspects but more enduring. By placing emphasis on the musical dimensions of goth, goths bolster their claims to the substantiveness and legitimacy of goth as both a distinct cultural practice and legitimate source of identity. Accordingly, despite the shifting significance of the visual and stylistic aspects of goth, participants maintained three key assertions: that music remained at the heart of goth (see also Gunn, 1999: 417); that all other elements of goth came from and linked back to its musical aspects; and that it was one's taste for and knowledge about 'goth music' that 'made you a goth'.

Consistent with this emphasis on music, many participants reasoned that the popular imagination's fascination with the visual aspects of the practice diminished goth's legitimacy. It side-lined goth's rich and consistently-dynamic roots in favour of its most visually spectacular features and elements, and ignored the meaningful boundaries that goths erected. As such, the popular imagination was seen to detract from their claims about goths' distinctiveness and legitimacy. Such overemphasis on style fetishized goth and de-emphasised its more substantive elements (Lewin and Williams, 2009: 68) At the same time, it also 'distracted' from the most enduring and salient feature of goth, which participants felt showed its substantiveness as a cultural practice. They believed

that popular conceptions of goth frequently diminished their efforts to demonstrate that goth was a legitimate and 'not completely silly' thing to participate in (Shove et al., 2012).

Despite their best efforts, however, the popular characterisation of goth as a visual subculture or 'the by-product of…the fashion industry' (Tait, 1999: 16) persists in popular myths about goth. Importantly, such constructions affected goths' everyday lives, in particular through how others—especially non-goths and those who sustain a surface interpretation of goth—understand, classify and treat them. In many circumstances, this provoked accusations of immaturity and suggestions that goths were simply 'wasting their time' by investing in their goth identities and practices.

Such a dismissive attitude was furthered by the increasing availability of what participants called 'pre-packaged goth'. Such pre-assembled version of goth outfits are akin to music compilations, marketed as 'easy' and sold off-the-rack without the need for the individual to invest the time or effort in finding, selecting, co-ordinating, or customising it to their own personality and taste—processes that are essential to developing competence and relevant forms of capital (Hodkinson, 2002), which could endorse an individual's claims to authenticity within goth. For participants, these pre-assembled ensembles were conducive to a pastiche in which style is privileged over substance (Jameson, 1983; Muggleton, 2000) and goth is merely a fashion trend rather than a legitimate cultural practice as it is characterised by Tait (1999). I explore the idea of goth being framed as a pastiche more fully in Chapter 7, but it is important to note that such pre-packaging of goth styles supported popular misconceptions about goth as a costume. This sentiment and its impacts upon goth's image and practice is addressed by blogger and author Jillian Venters in her social media posts[33] and book, *Gothic Charm School* (2009).

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[33] Venters is a goth content creator and advice blogger. Her social media posts, which are central to her book (Venters, 2009), frequently focus on being goth without being rude or reinforcing stereotypes, especially negative or trivialising ones, through one's practice. She also answers many questions about accessing goth resources.

In her discussion of goth's 'dress code'—in its most informal sense—Venters advises her readers that 'Your goth wardrobe should not look like a costume, [especially] like a costume you can buy in a plastic bag at a Halloween superstore' (Venters, 2009: 184). She clarifies that appearing as though one is wearing a 'costume' or pre-packaged outfit gives the impression that 'you're being indulgent' rather than being dressed to fit your tastes and personal sense of style. Following a similar line of thought when discussing 'the goth trend', Venters notes a 'subtle and unmistakable distinction' between individuals who follow the trend and those who are authentic:

> [J]ust because someone is wearing head-to-toe Gothic [fashion] doesn't mean her disguise is perfect. People dressing that way because it's the latest trend never seem quite comfortable with it; they have the faint but unmistakable air of someone wearing a costume, someone who is following what the media tells her to do instead of dressing that way because that's who she is.
>
> (Venters, 2009: 190)

Lewin and Williams (2009: 73–7) suggest that such distinctions are part of participants' reflexivity about their own authenticity, which they use as a measure by which to judge the authenticity of others. Drawing on their research with punks, they note that individuals frequently distinguished between people who were 'being themselves and those who were merely performing roles for instrumental purposes' (2009: 73). This is central to goths' distinctions between 'real' and 'fake' goths relative to the popular imagination. From this perspective, an 'inauthentic' person is someone who follows 'what the media tells them is goth' (i.e. the fashion trend) wears a costume, a disguise that they are never truly comfortable wearing despite their efforts to claim goth. Research participants often called these individuals 'trend-hoppers' because they were not interested in committing to the practice but exploited its material aspects without integrating its deeper meanings, acknowledging its more enduring and substantive qualities, or acquiring the associated competences. Someone who perpetuates this kind of inauthentic interpretation of goth is often seen by participants to invalidate any claim they make to 'speak for' or publicly and legitimately represent goth. This is because participants view these individuals' inauthenticity and instrumental exploitation of goth's image as projecting an inaccurate picture of goth(s). As such, they were deemed illegitimate 'in the eyes

of their relevant beholders' (Thornton, 1995: 11; see also Redhead and Street, 1989).

In contrast, someone who follows their own tastes and sense of style, is seen by their peers as comfortable when dressing in a style that is recognisably goth, because, Venters suggests, it is aligned with 'who they are'. The same was evident in their assessments of people's music tastes, where an individual who listened to goth music because they liked it rather than because 'that's what goths do' is more likely to be seen as authentic in their claim to goth If they were to claim the 'right' to speak for or represent goth—on social media, within a local scene, or by writing a book about goth—this would likely be supported by many other goths. This is because of their demonstrated sense of 'fit' between their selves and their image and practices. That is, they are more likely to be seen as authentic because of the perceived 'naturalness' of their association with goth, a position that supports their claims to legitimately represent goth(s) through those actions.

On another level, such sentiments and judgements are also central to matters of goth's legitimacy as a cultural practice. In particular, goths make such distinctions about the legitimacy of individuals' to demarcate meaningful boundaries between 'real' goth and the popular imagination. When goth is represented as a (pre-packaged) fashion trend or costume, via media characterisations or through the practices of inauthentic/illegitimate individuals, it is framed as a non-legitimate practice, especially for an 'adult' who remains committed to goth beyond their youth or beyond Halloween, when costumes were commonly considered socially acceptable.

Goth as an Obsession with Halloween

One of the most common misconceptions about goth that participants reiterated throughout my research was that goths were unaware of the temporal conventions of Halloween. Halloween is often considered a time when it was socially appropriate to don 'spooky' attire and decorate one's home with skeletons and assorted macabre-themed decor. In contrast goths demonstrated during my research that they were acutely aware of when Halloween was. This is corroborated by the entry for Halloween in *Encyclopedia Gothica*:

> HALLOWEEN October 31. Goth Christmas. Please buy us presents, preferably in the shape of bats.
>
> (Ladouceur, 2011: 132)

As with the interpretation of goth as a fashion trend, this interpretation was rooted in goth's practices. Months before Halloween goths' social media feeds would fill with posts referencing Halloween, sometimes culminating in multiple posts a day from the same individual during October. There was also an expectation that goth YouTubers and bloggers created Halloween-related content during this period. While much of this social media content came from goths in the USA—where Halloween is an established annual event for goths and 'normies' alike—the celebration received similar attention locally. In Adelaide, Halloween events regularly drew the largest crowds of the year, especially in the Dark Alt scene where the events' comparatively open-ended theme encouraged the most diverse array of costumes.

For many goths, this was a period when they were 'allowed to be themselves' and 'embrace their dark side' or was at least a time when it was more socially acceptable to do so. This was a period when goths tended to feel 'socially comfortable' (Miller, 2012: 98) because what was 'normal' from their perspective was temporarily 'normal' to many non-goths, and they experienced a brief reprieve from Halloween-related remarks and mocking from people around them. Halloween was also a time when goths could stock up on decorations and ephemera that was difficult to find or too expensive to buy throughout the rest of the year. For many goths, Halloween decorations were mundane objects that they used to decorate their personal spaces and belongings. Importantly, while these were everyday objects for many goths, they are popularly classified as specific to celebrations of Halloween.

In Adelaide during my fieldwork, the presence of these decorations outside houses in late-October had become a common signal that a particular house was celebrating Halloween. In some instances, goths' use of Halloween decorations as mundane objects in their front gardens and on their houses could cause confusion, as one research participant discovered. They explained in a brief post on Facebook how they had been startled by a group of children in costumes

knocking on their front door that Halloween, a visit prompted by the skulls in their front garden. Such differences of taste in yard and home décor and goths' frequent reconfigurations of the meanings of Halloween props and accessories also fed into popular imaginings of goth as a year-round Halloween obsession.

While some goths do obsess over Halloween and its associated ephemera, research participants emphasised that it is a misnomer to assume that goth revolves around Halloween. Many aspects of goth draw inspiration from and overlap with the gothic and horror themes, which also overlap with Halloween. Such connections between the gothic is commonly cited by goths as part of goth's origin myth, as various musicians during the 1970s and 1980s are claimed to have described their music and style as 'gothic'. Participants acknowledged the potential for those 'who did not know better' to assume a correlation between Halloween and goth, particularly if one only knows about goth through 'the media' or from observations made from a distance. For them, such an image was furthered by the content of social media posts made by babybats, who were still learning about goth, and by 'goffs, for whom their participation in goth is (or will be) a 'phase' in their lives.

Most participants saw these individuals as lacking the legitimacy to represent goth due to their lack of competence and understanding. While many of them acknowledged that babybats would 'stick with goth' long enough to move beyond the popular surface due to the genuineness of their interest in goth, babybats' emphasis on visually spectacular and cliché aspects of goth made them illegitimate to many goths. This is why many research participants habitually sought to distance themselves and 'real' goth from even babybats. Such distinctions also intersected participants' desire to avoid being accused of immaturity because of their association with goth, which has been routinely portrayed in the popular imagination as a teenage phenomenon.

Goth as a Teenage Phenomenon

The popular imagination often characterises goth as the proclivity of youth, as a 'phase' associated with adolescence, driven by an immature desire to rebel against authority and experiment with different identities and tastes in a process of self-discovery. This characterisation is evident, for example, in the prevalence

of 'alternative and gothy character[s]' in television shows and films 'geared at kids and teenagers' (The Everyday Goth) and in discourses of moral concern. Some participants also explained that such perceptions were supported by the suitability of certain aspects of goth to teenagers.

Rosa described her teenage years (between the ages of 15 and 16 years) as 'the most "traumatic" years' and explained that this period was an emotionally-charged time of transition into adulthood. Accordingly, she suggested that this time was often fuelled by strong emotions and hormonal surges (where 'everything is sort of unkind and exaggerated') that suited the decadence and drama of goth. Other participants suggested that this popular trope was supported by idealisations of youth as a time of experimentation and rebellion associated with 'self-discovery' and social 'rites of passage', which marks the transition from childhood to being a (socially-responsible) adult (see Springhall, 1998).

As suggested earlier in the chapter, popular imaginings of goth frequently rely upon the most visually spectacular and shocking aspects of the practices of so called 'goths', who are often adolescents or young adults. Goths in my research field usually linked these behaviours and imagery with 'kids' who either claimed association with goth (babybats, mallbats and goffs), or were classified as such by non-goths. Adam explained this association to me, commenting that, 'A lot of young people are in it [goth] for the shock and rebellion value,' something that often changes with age and experience. Some goths in my research field supported this perception, noting that that they *were* initially drawn to goth 'to be all rebellious and stuff' but they no longer understood it this way, and felt they had moved beyond this 'mainstream' assumption as they had matured as a person and gained more experience with goth. In so-doing they framed this popular misconception as a by-product of the inexperience and inauthentic actions of some individuals, who research participants and other goths were adamant did not represent all goths or the cultural practice of goth.

Such distinctions are also intimately intertwined with goths' struggles for distinction. By making such judgements, they make claims about their own authenticity, which they associate with long-term commitment and their

competence as goths as well as with their process of maturation from naïve and emotional teenager to mature and rational adult. By emphasising this 'trajectory' from 'newcomer' to 'legitimate participant' (Lave and Wenger, 1991), these individuals create meaningful distinctions. They erect boundaries between their 'maturity' and 'genuine commitment' and the 'shallow' immaturity of those who reinforce popular classifications of goth as the domain of the young alone, as something to be left behind when one transitions into adulthood. At the same time, they imply that their behaviour as adults reinforces goths' legitimacy as a substantive practice, a status that they feel is undermined by the overly visual representations of so-called 'kids' who they see as relying too heavily upon 'the media' and commercial entities to tell them what goth is. I return to this idea in Chapter 7, but it is important to note research participants' insistence that individuals are actively engaged in forming their own understandings of goth from personal engagements with and explorations of the culture in practice.

Similar processes are also identifiable within goths' discussions of the 'edgy' tendencies of 'kids' whose behaviour reproduced portrayals of goth as a source of social and moral concern. Participants often cited the film *The Craft* (1996) as one popular reproduction of this kind of behaviour. In the film, the four main characters practice 'witchcraft' by summoning and exploiting the power of a demon to deal with various 'troubles' in their lives. In an effort to distinguish between 'real' goth and such 'edgy' portrayals of goth, Adam explained to me that many of these things belonged to other practices, or, at least, to popular characterisations of other groups:

> Most goths aren't into [witchcraft] or maybe dabble in New Age stuff. Laveyan Satanism is probably a little more common [in goth] than people [goths] assume but that involves no devil worship. Devil Worship in the anti-Christian sense seems more a metal thing to me.

When discussing popular stereotypes, Evony and Kate noted that young people's conflations between the symbols and practices of 'the occult' (commonly referred to as 'witchcraft'), Satanism, and even Christianity, and goth was likely to irritate genuine practitioners of these belief systems:

> Evony: [The stereotype that goths are] into the occult (.) See, I am [into the occult] (.) But that is *nothing* to do with being goth.

Kate: No. That's right. --It's *completely* separate and I think…that would probably piss off people that *are* occultists that *aren't* goth. [[looking to Evony for confirmation]].
Evony: Well, I have been in occult groups since 2000 and I have usually been the *only* goth…usually they're a bunch of hippies!
Kate:…Expanding on that, is that whole thing about…using a lot of, you know, Satanic (and I use that term very loosely) *imagery*. You know, inverted crosses and--
Evony: --Which are *Christian* in nature--
Kate: --Baphomet and all that sort of stuff….People immediately assume goth…and I think that gets picked up by younger people--
Evony: --Absolutely!--
Kate:--First getting into it, they think--
Evony:--they think that they have to wear a massive crucifix [to be goth]

Like Adam, Evony and Kate suggest that young people convey the 'wrong message' about goth and these other practices to 'outsiders' through their naïve, or perhaps ignorant, appropriations of symbols and iconography from other common sources of moral concern. In this sense, the popular imagination does not only extend from the practices of authentic participants, but upon the practices of those who fit these popular characterisations, and who, participants suggested, are often teenagers. During the above discussion, Kate and Evony also explained that 'most actual goths' ('adults') tended to avoid such iconography—or, like Evony, clearly distinguished between their non-conventional belief systems and goth—because they were 'more mature' and aware of the image that such behaviour conveyed to non-goths. Goths frequently erect boundaries between their 'authentic' practices and the 'immature' practices of 'kids'; the popular imagination has a pivotal role in this process and its significance for goth(s).

In terms of the argument that I have made in this chapter, such distinctions are part of goths' struggles for legitimacy. Desiring to establish meaningful boundaries between their practices and identities, Evony and Kate, like many other goths, enact processes of inclusion and exclusion through their judgements, and collectively negotiate the boundaries of the practice. These boundaries are marked as 'walls' between goth and the popular imagination, designed to ward off misrepresentations and put distance between the practices and tastes of inauthentic individuals and so-called 'real' goths. In the process of building these walls, goths also assert the legitimacy of their own identities,

which they maintain are neither a 'waste of time' nor immature, because they remain committed to a practice beyond their youth, when it is stereotypically 'okay' to experiment with non-normative identities and consumption practices.

In this chapter, I have considered the contentious relationship between the popular imagination and practices and meanings of goths, including those individuals who, goths maintain, are only associated with goth in media representations. For these individuals, taking the popular imagination's view of goth to be an accurate reflection of 'real' goth not only 'misses the point' (Evony) but 'cheapens' it (Adam) by reducing it to a fashion trend or costume, a Halloween obsession, or an adolescent 'phase' that only immature people committed to into adulthood. Goths therefore maintain that goth is 'more than' what it is purported to be in the popular imagination and that 'real' or 'authentic' goths understood this and sought to represent this in their practices, for example, by exploring beyond popular characterisations or downplaying those aspects of their tastes, lives, or practices that have become part of the tropes of the popular imagination.

I used this frame to suggest that goths often refute claims about the accuracy of popular characterisations, whether they are 'true' or not. Goths establish these meaningful boundaries around goth in a way that supports their claims about the legitimacy of goth as a distinct and substantive practice. These processes of distinction are also important for goths' argument that they are neither 'wasting their time' nor immature by participating in goth. I considered these negotiations of goths' boundary with reference to three popular stereotypes and explored the relationship between the popular imagination and goths' practice. Central to this chapter has been the idea that goths often refute claims about the accuracy of stereotypes promoted in popular media to assert that goth was 'more than' the image presented in the popular imagination. Research participants indicated that these struggles for distinction have taken on greater significance within goth 'after the internet' because of the increased accessibility of goth beyond the local scenes I discuss in Chapter 6. I review this sentiment in the next chapter, where I discuss goths' negotiations of their cultural practice in relation to online platforms and information.

CHAPTER 5 - GOTHS NEGOTIATING GOTH ONLINE

Over the last twenty-five years, the internet has become an increasingly mundane technology in the lives of many goths. In this chapter, I move away from participants' negotiations of 'external' media representations to focus on how they use online digital communication technologies to negotiate goths' definition and draw boundaries between goth and not-goth. I focus in particular upon their use of social media sites like blogs and YouTube, which were vital resources for many of the goths in my research fieldsite. I also consider how participants' use of these sites involved the exchange of knowledge and understandings between geographically and, sometimes, temporally dispersed participants, a group that was often described as 'the goth community' by many research participants.

Throughout this chapter, I suggest that, through their engagements with and participation in this transnationally dispersed 'community' of goths, the practices of goths in Adelaide come into conversation with transnational discourses and struggles for distinction. While research participants' lives and grounded practices were peripheral to the transnational narratives of goth that are reproduced in goths' discourses, such technologies facilitated their active engagements with broader negotiations of goth within and beyond Adelaide. This is one way in which research participants' evaluations and judgements of gothness and their efforts to sustain an authentic goth identity tie into broader struggles for distinction and negotiations of practice. These individuals are actively engaged in the production and circulation of relevant media, in the sharing and production of 'subcultural' knowledge, opinions and tastes.

These digital media are also important to the practices of goths in Adelaide, not only in terms of interactions between goths in Adelaide or Australia. They are also key resources for goths' practical engagements with goth in local spaces, offering access to a range of practical resources, narratives, materials and meanings that aid their grounded practices (Morrison, 2016a). I note this significance throughout this chapter and highlight how these media have become indispensable resources for many goths, especially babybats, who are

now expected to have a 'basic knowledge' of goth before they participate in local scenes and practices. In this sense, I argue that digital social media have become a vital resource for learning about goth's history, its practice, and about how to be a 'real' goth.

Goth & The Internet

The significance of the internet to goth's practice in Adelaide was frequently highlighted during my research. Throughout my fieldwork, for example, when there were few organised social events to attend, I turned to the internet to gather data and explore goth, especially in the early stages of my research. The internet was also a useful resource in my own participation and development as a goth. I took to the internet when: finding and purchasing goth and related music; finding information about Australian and international events and bands; searching for information about goth's history and practice; looking for ideas about what might be considered acceptable to wear to events; and for inspiration for the goth-influenced clothing and accessories that I made and wore.

Many research participants spoke of the internet as an essential resource for participating in goth, especially in Adelaide where practical resources could be difficult to find. The internet helped them explore goth beyond local scenes and communicate with others with similar interests and tastes, irrespective of geographic location or time-zone. All of my key participants discussed the impact of the internet on goth and many of them stressed the increasing prominence of the technological assemblage as a portal through which they could access and contribute to a widening web of goth media and knowledge, including information about its international-centric history. For some, however, the internet's accessibility had undermined the hands-on character of goth as it was 'before the internet' despite its potential use-value (Morrison, 2016a). Whether they believed it had a positive or negative impact, most research participants at least acknowledged the significance of the internet to goth's practice. This significance is supported by scholarly literature.

Goodlad and Bibby observe that the internet quickly became 'the most important channel for the dissemination of goth', breaking through many geographic and temporal boundaries in the process (2007a: 9). They add that, since the 1990s, 'thousands of goth websites, produced by goths around the world, provide access to information, song lyrics, fiction, poetry, illustrations, photographs, humour and zines. Websites not only provide conduits for the sale and exchange of goth paraphernalia but also provide important sites for self-legitimating narratives' (Goodlad and Bibby, 2007a: 11). I extend this argument in this chapter, suggesting that it has also been valuable for practice-legitimating narratives, which goths use to mark goth as distinct within the messiness of contemporary society.

Hodkinson (2007a) also points to the function of the internet in perceptions of goth's substantiveness. He suggests that the increased accessibility to relevant specialist and practical resources has enabled new modes of collectivity among goths, facilitating connection across physically and temporally dispersed communities (see also Hodkinson, 2002: 187–91; White, 2015: 34). By connecting such dispersed populations of goths, Hodkinson concludes that, while the internet is an important resource for goths locally, it has also contributed to a growing awareness of goth as a relatively consistent transnational cultural practice (2007a: 328–9). This is consistent with my research participants' characterisation of the online network of goths as 'the goth community'. Although many goths recognised the existence of international contingents of goths 'before the internet', these had been understood as relatively autonomous communities.

Digital communication technologies such as the internet fostered a sense of affiliation across geographic and temporal boundaries that contributed to an understanding of goth as a global phenomenon grounded in dispersed local practices and communities. In connecting such dispersed populations, the internet has facilitated the development of a globally meaningful 'etiquette of goth' (Whittaker, 2007: 37) that is negotiated among goths with dynamic understandings and grounded experiences of goth. This sense of goth as a global cultural phenomenon was further encouraged by the 'bustling cross-fertilisation'

between different regional variations of goth that was enhanced by the growth of the internet (Brill, 2008).

While this cross-fertilisation pre-dates the internet—Kate, for example, learned much about international goth music from exchanging hand-written letters and music with a pen-pal in Germany—online communication technologies have increased the relative speed and breadth of such regional exchanges. My research participants indicated that the effects of this regional cross-fertilisation have been most influential in the musical and stylistic repertoires of goth, which underwent significant changes in the late-1990s and early-2000s as EDM and dark industrial music and 'cybergoth' clothing styles saw a spike in popularity in goth communities. These shifts had other ramifications for goth's practice locally especially those who maintained a more 'traditional' understanding of goth and felt the need to distinguish between these 'new' styles and 'real goth'.

This cross-fertilisation has also occurred over temporal boundaries, providing more opportunities for contemporary participants to access and engage with goth's past. For many goths, the internet has become one of the most prevalent means of accessing both contemporary expressions of goth and its history. Importantly, goths often stress that this history consists of more than the high-profile aspects of goth's past, centred on bands like the Banshees, Bauhaus, and the Sisters of Mercy (the Sisters), and their members. The internet also offers opportunities for goths to access less well-known facets of goth's history and practice, and to bring these into their contemporary practices and interpretations.

Individuals' engagements with less prominent aspects of goth's history may pave the way toward greater levels of status among their goth peers, and lead to greater comprehension through accessing parts of goth that require greater effort and dedication to uncover. For example, Rosa expressed her joy at being able to use the internet to access rare goth music that was released before she was born:

> There are *sooo* many old, old bands that you can find out about and—especially with the internet now—you can listen to mp3s of a 7-inch [record] of a band in Sweden from [19]83. And that could've been the only

> thing that they've put out, but you love it so much, and it's a really great example of the subculture.

As Rosa's comments suggest, the internet retains much of the significance for goth that authors such as Hodkinson (Hodkinson, 2002, 2007a), Whittaker (2007), Goodlad and Bibby (2007a), and Brill (2008) observed in the early-2000s; it remains a vital source of information, practical resources, and interaction among goths locally and globally. By 2012, the internet and its effects on and usefulness for goth were 'old news' and the internet had lost much of the novelty for goths. Writing almost fifteen years after the publication of his original study of goth, Hodkinson (2017) comments on the increasingly mundane character of the internet, which has evolved much since his original research:

> For most contemporary users…the internet does not comprise an alternative world, but a set of communication tools that they integrate increasingly seamlessly with their existing identities. For all the excitement about it, most of us use the internet to do mundane, everyday connected with all sorts of aspects of our off-line lives: shopping, searching for jobs, researching essays, engaging with the news, checking railway timetables and…sharing media content and conversing with people we know.
>
> (Hodkinson, 2017: 275)

This ordinariness was observable within my fieldsite. I therefore do not view goths' use of the internet to be unique or as focused as in Hodkinson's (2002) initial study. The internet has increasingly become a mundane aspect of goths' everyday lives, where their engagement with 'the goth community' is one part of a diverse range of activities that they carry out online and where their practices on the internet are intertwined with other areas of their lives and practices. This interpretation moves beyond early scholarship on computers and the internet, which drew distinct lines between 'online' and 'offline' worlds and identities (e.g. Rheingold, 1995; Turkle, 1995; Boellstorff, 2008). These earlier theoretical positions framed the internet as a space or place set '*apart from* the rest of social life', where 'new forms of sociality' and new identities—individual and communal—take shape (Miller and Slater, 2000: 4).

Discourses about the existence of these digital-only identities rely on an understanding of the internet as a 'virtual world' that is separated and separable

from people's 'offline' or 'real' worlds and experiences. As noted above, this interpretation conflicts with the grounded realities of participants' lives and practices, where 'the online is just as real as the offline' (Miller et al., 2016: 7). When we 'stream' a song to our computer or mobile phone from a website or digital application, we hear with our ears, digest the sound with our brains, and interpret it as a particular type of 'music' using a range of sociocultural systems of meaning, classification, and taste. Following this logic, we need to treat these digital media and people's use of them as continuous with and embedded in social spaces and experiences rather than as part of 'self-enclosed cyberian' spaces that are independent from the 'real' world (Miller and Slater, 2000: 5).

Whittaker (2007) takes a similar approach to goth, arguing that it is misleading to conceive of goth as a 'virtual community' alone. By framing it in this manner it overlooks the tendency for goths to participate in goth online as well as in face-to-face contexts, which Whittaker calls the 'physical socius: the environment of clubs, music stores…and friends' houses that underpinned Goth lifestyle in the 1980s remains as important today' (2007: 36–7). Writing about straightedge, Williams (2006) discusses how straightedgers also made such distinctions. He observes that these digital media became entrenched in debates about whether individuals who *only* or *mostly* practiced straightedge online could be considered to be authentic participants. In this context, straightedgers engaged in debates about whether the internet was 'competition' for 'offline' practices, or whether it worked in tandem with the 'physical socius' that Whittaker (2007) describes. As a result of these debates, Williams suggests that these technologies are changing how many individuals participate 'in what have traditionally been considered ["offline"] music subcultures', consequently placing greater emphasis on issues of authenticity among participants (2007: 106–7).

As I discuss below, this is supported to some extent by my research. However, the internet has 'matured' beyond its early community-bound, networking format (Van Dijck, 2013) and as the percentage of people that have grown up accessing and interacting with these technologies in their daily lives has

increased.[34] A comparative 'maturation' is evident within goth. Through their interactions with and discourses about the internet, goths have reconfigured certain aspects of their practices of goth to accommodate these 'new' materials, associated competencies and meanings. While this is an ongoing process, carried out as goths reproduce the practice through their successive performances, some participants implied that much of the 'hard work' has already been done by older participants. Among my research participants, this was used by many older goths to claim that their practices were more 'authentic' because these technologies were not available. They felt justified in claiming this because they believed that many younger goths took the internet for granted because, as several individuals commented, 'everything was just *there* for them' to access (Morrison, 2016a, 2016b).

Drawing a distinct line between goth 'before the internet' and goth 'after the internet', many of older research participants maintained that this ease of access has encouraged laziness among younger generations, leading to an over-reliance on pre-assembled information, styles, and (online) communities. Some also maintained that this increased digital accessibility has led to a declining need for face-to-face communities and 'physical stores'. This view echoes earlier scholarly conceptions about the internet's tendency to encourage 'virtual' rather than physical participation in a cultural practice or community.

When discussing the subject, Rosa acknowledges that the internet is often seen to make it easier to be a passive 'consumer' who '*just* looks and…*just* listens', without the need for face-to-face interactions with other goths. In making this comment, Rosa was not suggesting that the internet has replaced face-to-face interactions and scenes. As I explore in Chapter 6, local face-to-face scenes remain vital sites of interaction and active participation. Rosa's point is that the internet makes it *easier* to access information and resources, and other facets of goth for yourself, without relying solely upon physical media (such as magazines), word-of-mouth (which relied upon having the relevant social capital) or face-to-face interaction.

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[34] A report on the internet in Australia in 2013-2014 found that an 'overwhelming majority of Australians are internet users, and uptake is still growing' with 91% of Australians surveyed using the internet in the last three months, compared with 81% in 2011 and 73% in 2007 (Ewing et al., 2014: v).

Adam made similar points as Rosa when discussing how goth has changed since he was a young adult in the 1990s and early-2000s. He explained that it is now easier than ever before to access goth 'without leaving the house', which makes it 'a totally different game':

> Before the internet took off the only way to learn was to experience things for yourself and talk to people. Back then people would sometimes share mix tapes or…burnt audio CDs with music (if you could afford a CD burner and if you could find anything on MP3). Now all the information about the goth subculture, its history, photos and music (YouTube is an excellent source for that) is all out there. You can learn about goth without even leaving the house now.

In calling it a 'totally different game', Adam is not only commenting on the increasing accessibility of goth in the 'digital age' (Pertierra, 2018). He also references an underlying expectation among goths that individuals have 'done their research' before participating in goth discussions and activities and before claiming any association with goth. There is now a general expectation that everyone has a rudimentary understanding of goth's origins and history, its overall aesthetics and relevant music before attempting to claim association. Whilst this existing understanding does not need to be encyclopaedic, someone claiming to be goth without at least knowing 'the basics' is often the target of ridicule among goths. Reagle (2016) describes this phenomenon as an 'obligation to know'.

For Reagle, the expectation that participants have at least rudimentary or '101 knowledge' about the practice or social group one wishes to be part of is common in many practices with online facets.[35] He explains that within the geek and feminist communities he studied, the availability of information online, especially through 'FAQ' sections—lists of 'frequently asked questions' and answers used to avoid repetitive posts and discussions—has led to a social expectation that participants are familiar with such basic information (2016: 696). Increased access to 101 and other information through the internet and other media has thus led members of these communities to establish different

[35] '101' is borrowed from the higher education lexicon, where it denotes introductory courses (Reagle 2016: 693-694).

boundaries for acceptance and exclusion. This has also meant that the standards for judging the authenticity of an individual's interest in a cultural practice and their legitimacy as a participant have also changed. In turn, this prevalence of information about goth's history has led to an expectation that new participants possess higher levels of initial competence and understanding. I explore this further in Chapter 7, but for the moment, it is necessary to note that this sentiment is often reflected in how established participants respond to and judge the authenticity of new participants.

Accordingly, I argue that goths often base their initial judgements of others on whether these individuals have an awareness of 'the origins of goth'—especially 'where the music came from'—as well as other significant moments in goth's history, which has been extensively documented online. In the next section, I discuss this history and suggest that this information has become part of the 'standard narratives' (Maxwell, 2003) of goth.

STANDARD NARRATIVES & ORIGIN STORIES ONLINE

Standard narratives of goth are not the same as the narratives about goth recounted by individuals discussing their nuanced understanding of the practice's history and evolution; for example, as recounted in many 'What is goth to me?' vlogs on YouTube. These latter narratives are contingent upon an individual's 'research' and interests. Standard narratives, on the other hand, are chronicles about goth's origins and early history, and are more likely to be part of a 'Where did goth come from?' blog post or vlog. These narratives are often comprised of standardised 'origin stories' about where goth comes from, how it got its name, who were the key figures, and the general styles and sounds commonly associated with these early evolutions.

It is important to note that, although these narratives are often relatively consistent across a practice, this was not the case in goth. The standard narratives that participants recounted online and in-person, were not always the same narrative. There were several different versions; Adam and I tallied approximately 5 distinct 'origin' narratives that are reproduced among goths. Despite this variation, these different historical narratives have become

standardised within goths' discourses about their practice's history and evolution. It is also significant that these standard narratives are primarily about goth's roots in the UK.

Accordingly, the standard narratives reproduced by goths in Australia are not about a regionalised form of 'Aussie goth', nor are they about 'goth in Australia'. Goths' standard narratives centre on international scenes and practices. Australia and its goth musicians are marginal to this history. Only a few Australians (from Melbourne) are acknowledged for their role in goth's history. For example, The Birthday Party[36]—who, Rosa explained, moved from Melbourne to London in early-1980 after feeling under-appreciated in Australia (Bohn, 1983)—are frequently cited for their involvement in the early days of the goth rock genre. Other Australian bands who also made important contributions to goth's history frequently fall to the wayside of these standard narratives.

Dead Can Dance is one such band. They moved from Melbourne to London in 1982 to 'progress their music career' (Scharf, 2011: 34) but they are often merely footnoted in narratives about goth's evolution, with their influence commonly linked to their experiments with folk and post-punk music that contributed to the expansion of the ethereal genre within goth (see Ladouceur, 2011: 68; Scharf, 2011: 34). Australian darkwave band, Ikon[37] who formed in Melbourne in 1988, are also marginal to these international narratives (e.g. Scharf, 2011: 34). During interviews, participants spoke of other Australian bands from the last three decades—such as Melbourne's Snog and Nun, Sydney's Big Electric Cat, and Adelaide's Belle of Chaos, Scissor Pretty, and Rule of Thirds—who were all but absent from the standard narratives about goth's history. Importantly, when they were included, this knowledge of more 'obscure' music often supported an individual's claims to authenticity: this demonstrates that they know more than the 101 of goth and that they have explored beyond the popular imagination.

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[36] Formerly Boys Next Door.
[37] Formerly Death In The Dark.

The relative marginality of Australian bands within the standard narratives of goth is thus not due to a lack of goth music or practice in Australia but speaks to the dominance of the UK within these oft-recited narratives. I return to this in Chapter 6 when discussing the history of goth in Adelaide, a narrative which is arguably 'invisible' within local goths' narratives about the origins and evolutions of goth. My focus here is on the standard narratives that are reproduced online. These narratives not only encourage an interpretation of goth as a relatively consistent, transnational phenomenon (Hodkinson, 2007a). They also link contemporary practices to an identifiable and substantive history which is framed as the 'authentic' or 'pure' source (Maxwell, 2003: 52–4) of goth.

As I noted in Chapter 4, goths draw on these socially negotiated narratives and temporal linkages to support their claims that goth is a legitimate cultural practice that is 'more than' the superficial façade that the popular imagination often purports it to be because it has stood the test of time. The standard narratives that I outline in the next section come from sources that are made by goths; accordingly, I have not considered narratives that appear on websites or social media sites that goths frequently consider to be illegitimate sources of information about goth or that they associate with inauthentic individuals like mallbats.

The Digital Standard Narratives of Goth's Emergence & Evolution[38]

> The question of when goth started as a definite subculture is generally unanswerable, but I'm going to try.
>
> (Scathe, n.d.)

The standard narrative of goth is often outlined in posts or content with titles such as 'What is Goth?' or 'Where Does Goth Come From?'. While some of these narratives tie the so-called 'youth culture' to the Germanic Tribes (the Visigoths and Ostrogoths), or to gothic art, architecture and literature movements from Europe's history, many of the goths I interviewed argued that

[38] I have intentionally focused on the standard narratives reproduced online. For further details about goth's history and 'origin stories' see, for example Kilpatrick (2004); Goodlad and Bibby (2007b); Scharf (2011); Van Elferen and Weinstock (2016) and Spracklen and Spracklen (2018).

there was a distinct difference between this 'capital-G Goth' and 'gothic' history and the 'subculture' that evolved around goth music during the late-1970s and early-1980s (cf. Spracklen and Spracklen, 2018). This interpretation, linking contemporary goth practices to its musical past, are the most common form of standard narrative and often begin with 'the British punk scene' during this era. Within these narratives, bands such as Joy Division, the Banshees, UK Decay, or Sex Gang Children are cited as 'the origin of the goth subculture' and are frequently touted as early pioneers of 'the goth sound' and 'fashion style'.

In other versions of these narratives, these bands were punk pre-cursors to goth, which is proposed to have begun with Bauhaus's release of 'Bela Lugosi's Dead', a time that Hodkinson identifies as 'the most important starting point of goth' (2002: 36). In other versions, the Sisters' rise to popularity alongside bands such as The Mission are claimed to be the root of contemporary goth, with The Banshees and so on characterised as something akin to proto-goth. For others still, bands like the Sisters and The Mission belonged to 'the second generation of goth'. In this version, bands such as the Banshees, The Cure, Bauhaus, and The Birthday Party are touted as 'the first generation' of goth, whose sound and style caught the attention of the music press and major record companies and paved the way for goth's second-generation musicians. Within these narratives, fans of these first two generations of goth musicians are seen to coalesce into the first generations of 'the goth subculture', with their enthusiastic participation leading to the emergence of specialist resources that catered to their range of stylistic and aural tastes and interests. In these standard narratives, the decade following the 'punk explosion' in the UK (circa 1978-1979) was the era in which goth took on its distinctive shape, which remains a core feature of contemporary goth.

It is at this point, however, that most of these digitised standard narratives trail off. Many of these narratives jump from the mid-1980s to the 2000s, an era characterised by the rise of 'electro-goth' and various musical 'revivals'. They glaze over or completely discount details about the growth of darkwave music, and 'revivals' of 'trad goth' (early goth rock styles of music and dress) and deathrock, which Evony explained evolved beyond its American roots and had been reinvented by European goths. When such narratives fast-forward to the

2000s, it is often to point out how goth is considered to be something altogether different because of industrial and 'dark EDM' influences or to note how goth is now a global phenomenon. Other standard narratives simply end in the mid-1980s, leaving the user to fill-in the gaps for themselves. Yet other versions turn into individual narratives, linking to the narrator's personal interests and practices of goth. This highlights the importance of individual knowledge.

The Obligation to Know: Standard Narratives, Evaluations, & Practice

Earlier in the chapter, I noted how the availability of information in the digital age has led to an expectation that a genuinely interested individual has 101 knowledge before they participate. While this expectation is important for individuals, it is also significant for participants' negotiations of goth's boundaries and definition as a distinct and legitimate cultural entity. Writing about 'cultural authenticity', anthropologist Charles Lindholm (2008) suggests that 'authentic cultures' are often perceived to have knowable and verifiable roots and have stood the test of time. Making a similar point about hip-hop, Maxwell argues that hip-hoppers use standard narratives to make claims about substantiveness of their 'culture' by asserting that it has endured over time, against commercial or mainstream incursions (Maxwell, 2003: 54). In the process of establishing these narratives, he suggests, participants seek to forge links between their contemporary practices and the roots of the culture, asserting the authenticity of their own practices. Maxwell notes that this is particularly important for younger generations, who were incapable of 'being there' as this history played out. At the same time, Maxwell argues, establishing this link supports participants' arguments that hip-hop is a substantive cultural practice and not a 'fad' (2003: 59).

This understanding was supported by my research. Despite the relative absence of Australia and Australians from the standard narratives that Australian goths access online, goths in my research field sought to demonstrate a consistency between their contemporary practices and the roots of goth. Most participants linked their tastes back to music and styles from this period, but also noted their use of non-standard aspects of goth's history. Rosa, for example, described the influence of The Cure, The Birthday Party, and the Banshees on her tastes, but

she also cited less prominent facets of goth's history that she also 'loved so much'. This process of linking contemporary practices with goths' standard narratives was not just significant for individuals. In the Dark Alt scene, club DJs sought to forge such links via the music that they played. Adam explained that DJs and event organisers would use songs such as the Banshee's 'Spellbound' or Bauhaus' 'Bela Lugosi's Dead' to encourage goths to dance at club nights. For individuals who criticised the Dark Alt scene, however, this practice had led to an over-use of these tracks, making them clichés which some participants argued had led to a degree of stagnation in this scene, which did not support more contemporary musicians nor expose goths in the scene to newer goth music.

I discussed in Chapter 4 how goths sought to distance their practices from popular understandings due to a desire to assert that goth is 'more than' 'clichés' promoted by the popular imagination. These criticisms of the Dark Alt scene, however, imply that some goths are highly critical of those who promote such an image of goth from within. This reaffirms the idea that goths draw meaningful boundaries around 'real' goth as they understand it, and practices that they interpret as promoting a novel image of goth. This emphasises the significance of participants' judgements about the legitimacy of 'public figures' who claim the right to represent or speak for goth(s).

Similar boundary-marking practices are demonstrated in goths' uses of the above standard narratives on social media sites. Goth 'vloggers', for example, are expected to recount this history in at least one of their videos. To support their claims to be authentic and legitimate in their association with goth, these individuals needed to 'fill in the blanks' in these narratives. They are therefore expected to do what key participants did during conversations with me: recite some version of the standard narrative and demonstrate that their knowledge and practices extend beyond this.

Having access to such standardised historical information and content, and associated discourses, has therefore become a vital part of contemporary goth's practices. As noted above, goths have renegotiated the linkages between the requisite elements of their practice, reconfiguring it to account for the

accessibility and interconnectivity that is facilitated by the internet. Increasingly, social media platforms such as blogs, YouTube, and social networking sites like Facebook have become integral sources for such information and other practical resources. They are also key sites in which goths negotiate the limits of goths' 'tolerable flexibility' in contemporary contexts and engage with one another as they reproduce goth online. In the next section of the chapter, I turn my attention to social media to explore how goths use these online portals to negotiate goth in their everyday lives. I am particularly concerned with how goths in Adelaide utilise these transnational platforms to support their grounded practices of goth.

Social Media

The term 'social media' describes a myriad of online sociotechnical tools and platforms that have emerged since the late-1990s and early-2000s that facilitate the creation and sharing of digital content, interactions, and social connection among users (Van Dijck, 2013). In their transnational study of social media, Daniel Miller and colleagues (2016) suggest that social media tend to be characterised by different forms of sociality.[39] This 'scalable sociality' operates on a scale from 'private dyadic' sociality, which, like a telephone conversation, takes place between two users or between small groups of authorised users, through to 'public broadcasting'. This latter sociality centres on posts and uploaded content that is accessible to wider audiences, which spiral out from an individual's 'friends', through 'friends of friends' and 'followers' or 'viewers', to the broadest audience comprised of 'anyone with access to the social media platform'. I emphasise social media that are catered to such public sociality, where content is accessible to audiences of various sizes, who have differing degrees of intimate access to necessary meanings and competences. I do not, however, focus on the more 'private' forms of social media such as email and personal messaging as I am primarily concerned with more public performances of goth.

[39] This concept is also useful to understand the differing degrees of publicness in scenes, I discuss this in Chapter 6.

This focus on public social media is consistent with the relative publicness of the other spaces of practice in my research field, such as club nights and gigs. As I discuss in Chapter 6, these events are crucial sites for goths' public engagements with goth and with others who share similar tastes and interests. However, like the online spaces that I consider in this chapter, this does not mean that they are unmoderated, or that they are palatable to all who might have access. In the first regard, participants employ a range of practices to meaningfully mark their spaces and exclude 'outsiders' and those who they see as 'disruptive' (Reagle, 2016). I have already highlighted, for example, how participants regularly use pre-requisite knowledge to mark these kinds of boundaries. Miller and colleagues (2016) observe that people also use more visual and implicit means to demarcate symbolic boundaries online, for example, by posting images with references that are comprehensible to some viewers and not others. While this could lead to misinterpretations and cause concern for some 'overhearers'—who are not the intended audience but who nonetheless take meaning from what they see—participants often used these techniques to moderate the publicness of these social media spaces (Miller et al., 2016: 175–6).

Participants also took advantage of the visual character of social media to mark otherwise public content as 'specialist' (Hodkinson, 2002). Just as members of youth cultures tend to mark youth cultural space with music (Thornton, 1995: 19), goths mark 'goth spaces' on blog sites like Blogger or Tumblr, or on video-streaming sites like YouTube, by using goth aesthetics and imagery, and through their discussions of 'goth things'. Such delineations were also the product of goths' practices and their 'niche' interests, which were largely of little interest to non-participants. As in the case of the 'cybergoth dance party' video discussed below, these boundaries and boundary-marking methods did not guarantee exclusivity. Despite the potential for intrusions by non-goths, these symbolically-marked spaces were often identifiable as 'goth spaces', with varying degrees of exclusion and differing levels of publicness (Miller et al., 2016). This is consistent with the view of goths' use of social media as a continuation or extension of their 'offline' lives and practices.

In the remainder of the chapter, I discuss several social media platforms that were important to my research field, including Facebook, blogs, and the video-streaming and sharing site YouTube. In particular, I focus on how goths in my research field used these social media, especially YouTube, to support various dimensions of their practices, including teaching babybats about goth music and learning dance moves to perform at events (Maxwell, 2003).

Social Network Sites

One of the social media platforms that participants habitually used during my research was Facebook. This site is often categorised as a 'social networking site', where users present themselves to others and share content such as photos and videos with their friends (Hansen et al., 2011: 25). Participants in my research field used the site in diverse and often practical ways. Many participants used Facebook to share photos, images, and other content (not always a product of their own creative practices) with their Facebook networks; to interact with people in their networks and interest-groups, forging and maintaining diverse relationships, posting updates about their day or a thought they had; and to support a range of more practical activities and interests, including participation in local scene(s) and in 'the goth community'. In this sense, goths may be seen as using Facebook like most other users of the site, supporting their day-to-day lives and social interactions.

Beyond these 'normal' uses of the site, some goths also used the site like older forms of social media such as blogs or discussion forums, initiating and participating in discussions about goth with other users in their networks. In some instances, these discussions revisited topics and issues that were the subject of regular debate among goths, including conversations about what goth was and what it could be. Many of these debates also operated across different social media platforms, for example in response to someone sharing a YouTube video about goth, or links to a blog or blog post, or to other media such as articles and books that mentioned goth. This highlights how goths' do not only engage with goth through a single platform, but often negotiate a diverse web of social media and interact across platforms (Mayr and Weller, 2017).[40]

[40] See also Madianou and Miller (2011)and Miller et al (2016) on 'polymedia'.

In this sense, goths also used the site to engage in discourses about goth's definition, and debate whether or not certain sources/individuals had the appropriate authority to speak about and/or represent goth. While such debates and discussions did take place on Facebook, they are more commonly associated with other forms of social media such as blogs, which I examine in the next section.

Blogs

Many of the goth blogs I followed during my research can be compared to personal journals or the practices of 'life writing' discussed by Douglas and Poletti (2014). Since the early-2010s, blogs have become an increasingly prominent website format, with some blogs and bloggers able to build audiences that rival followings of 'predigital media' and which have been established as important sources of current information about particular topics or activities (Hansen et al., 2011: 22–3). While blogs have previously been characterised as the digital 'diaries' of individuals, filled with introspective and private thoughts and feelings, Hodkinson (2006) highlights how they are also *social* media. In this capacity, blogs are often oriented toward collective discussions and practices and may be seen to facilitate participation and interactions. I add to this understanding of blogs and suggest that they are also key online spaces where goths write and read about goth and interact with others in the transnational 'goth community'. Their engagements on this platform are part of their negotiations of practice. Of particular importance here is their use of these platforms to negotiate and demarcate the boundaries of goth as a distinct and substantive cultural practice, engage in 'testing mode', as well as practice goth.

Accordingly, I argue that, although goth bloggers often document their thoughts, everyday lives, and experiences on their blogs, many also regularly address aspects of goth, local scenes and online communities in their posts, especially if they have large audiences. Many bloggers, for example, have posts or designated FAQ pages that seek to answer the question 'What is goth?' or 'Where does goth come from?'. On these pages, bloggers often outline one or many of the standard narratives discussed above and elaborate upon these narratives using their own knowledge of goth and its history. Other posts often

contained discussions or photo-essays about certain aspects of the author's life, practices, and interests. Two of these categories of post are relevant here: posts about 'music' and 'fashion'.

Posts about music were often about the blogger's music tastes or explorations, often featuring recommendations, discussions and photographs of their musical ephemera such as physical copies (cassettes, CDs, or vinyl) of music. These posts not only demonstrated the interests (or authenticity) of the author; they added to the pool of information about goth that was accessible online. Some of these music-centred posts were responses to queries from other users; for example, on Adam's Tumblr, he has a lengthy post responding to an anonymous user's question about how much music an individual need listen to before they can be considered 'a true goth'.

Here, Adam discusses not only why music is core to goth but explains why many goths use music as a marker of gothness and outlines a variation of the standard narrative, adding the clarification that, despite the frequent association between goth and Marilyn Manson, Manson is not 'goth music'. He concludes the post by answering the second part of the anonymous user's query, which was about how often an individual must listen to goth music:

> There is no set amount but I believe it should feature well in your overall tastes in some form. The beauty of goth music is there is a lot of variety within goth, deathrock and darkwave. There is no 'you must love this band to be goth' band but even if you don't like an iconic band its worth knowing how they fit. I'm not big on The Cure but I appreciate Robert Smith's influence….Do you have to listen to goth daily? No….A goth doesn't need to listen to goth music all the time but it should feature among their favourites….

Throughout the post, Adam's explanations draw together the standard narratives of goth with recurring debates about categorisations of goth and not-goth. While his post implies that there is no physical ruler against which goths mark gothness, he simultaneously engages in evaluative processes by suggesting that one must at least know iconic bands to be a 'real' goth. This indicates that there are certain standards by which individuals are judged: one does not need to like archetypal goth music such as The Cure (despite their controversial association with goth) but must appreciate their contributions and influences.

By making such assertions and qualifying statements, Adam highlights the negotiated nature of goth. Meaningful boundaries are often constructed and reconfigured in the flow of practice and with reference to certain standards of the practice that sit within a range of tolerable flexibility. On the one hand this supports Hui's (2017) assertion that variation is a basic feature of practice; on the other, it highlights the potential for participants to customise their participation within relative distance from the core features of the practice (Haenfler, 2006).

Also of key significance, is the seeming arbitrability of these standards. While participants maintain that there is a recognisable core of goth, which is based on the routinised patterns of the practice-as-entity, variation between individual understandings and interpretations of goths' boundaries can lead to conflicting evaluations of individuals' authenticity. I suggest that such potential conflicts are central to the recursive and dynamic character of goth, which can be carried out in a multitude of often unique ways, all of which reproduce it (Reckwitz, 2002: 250). I return to this in Chapter 7, but it is important to note for the present discussion because goths negotiate these boundaries online. Such posts can therefore be understood as part of larger discourses among goths about not only how goth is and should be practiced and defined, or about its standardised narratives, but also about how one assesses authenticity in the process of practicing.

The second type of post that is relevant here, fashion-centred posts, place greater emphasis on goth's style. These posts often have a pragmatic function because they are part of participants' recursive discourses about how one configures the requisite elements of goth into a meaningful and recognisable pattern. Of particular note here are the daily posts that some goth bloggers made where they showed their readers their 'outfit of the day' ('OotD posts'). As the tag suggests, these posts were characterised by photographs and short descriptions of outfits that the blogger wore on a given day, and often included a list of the items in the outfit, the brands or store where they sourced the different components and, sometimes, the price.

The outfits that bloggers show off in these posts can be understood as the product of their discursive practices. When assembling these outfits and posting them online the blogger draws on their understanding of the conventions of 'goth style' and uses the resources available to them, including 'generic no-brand' items of clothing or accessories, to produce an outfit that is recognisable to other goths as an outfit that would be worn by a goth. By assembling these outfits and sharing them online, the blogger also makes claims about their own competence, and therefore authentic association with goth and legitimacy to represent goth through their stylistic practices. They also reproduce the practice of goth through combining the requisite elements of goth style and sharing it with others, who could then draw inspiration from and reproduce a similar outfit for themselves. I frequently used such outfit posts and videos from YouTube during my research as I was learning about goth style and how to put together outfits that were acceptable to other goths at local events.

While some goths argued that an over-abundance of these types of posts on a goth blog endorsed the image of goth as a shallow fashion style (Chapter 4), others argued that these posts have both practical and 'cultural' value for goth. For these latter individuals, fashion-centred posts merely showed goths' practical negotiations of 'goth fashion'. This makes them valuable resources for babybats who are learning how to 'correctly' assemble outfits, especially when the blogger used second-hand, 'generic' or non-brand-name items of clothing, such as in posts about 'dressing goth on a budget'. Blogs are therefore not only spaces for demonstrations of individual interpretations of goth but had a crucial pragmatic role in participants' negotiations of goth's boundaries and practice.

In his book on street fashion blogging, anthropologist Brent Luvaas (2016) argues that style blogs have historical, social and cultural value because they offer an insight into people's everyday styles and sense of fashion during certain periods. In this sense, he frames style and fashion blogs as historical records of people's 'actual' and everyday fashion choices and tastes, which contrasts with the unrealistic, even artistic, images of fashion that are disseminated by 'the fashion industry'. I argue here that fashion-centred posts on goth blogs fulfil a similar function within goth. They are key sites for the practical negotiation of goth's routinised patterns and for learning about how to practice goth. This is

certainly not to say that anyone who posts these types of posts is automatically authentic, or that all goths will interpret their practices as legitimate representatives of goth. Rather, it is to acknowledge the functional value of such online practices for goths. Video streaming sites such as YouTube also had such functional value for goths.

GOTHS & YOUTUBE

YouTube is a resource with an almost global reach;[41] it is the most popular platform for uploading and sharing video content online (Werner, 2014; Liikkanen and Salovaara, 2015), where relevant music and opinions were readily accessible if one has the right search terms or follows the right links. Much of the academic literature on YouTube analyses the content of videos published to the site or focuses on the platform as a site of production and on content creators' imaginative use of the video medium. This body of literature often emphases the wider socio-political and creative functions of YouTube as a communication tool, on the producers and their active use of the platform to share their media online. What is often missing from these studies is an understanding of how people use the site in their everyday lives and negotiations of cultural practices.

Bennett and Rogers' work on music scenes and memory in Australia (2016) is a notable exception to this. The authors propose that their participants used the site in a variety of ways, both on the site itself and on other social media platforms. They also remark that YouTube's strength as a digital platform is rooted in 'its diversity of content and use' (2016: 148). Similarly, for most people in my research field, YouTube was a resource for practice, exploration, and learning; it was somewhere they accessed music and discussions about goth and other topics of interest, as well as a source of entertainment. These functions are central to my discussion in this section. In the remainder of the chapter, I consider three types of videos that goths pointed to as important resources for their practices: vlogs, music-related content, and dance videos.

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[41] In some instances, videos are 'region locked' meaning they are only available in certain regions or countries, but many participants found their way around these restrictions, making the 'user-uploaded copies' (Liikkanen & Salovaara 2015) of certain videos valuable.

Vlogs

Vlogs, or 'video-blogs', are akin to the text-and-image-based blogs discussed above: users ('vloggers') upload videos of themselves discussing their thoughts on any number of topics or issues. In both formats, the content-creator's posts offer their audiences 'intimate' insights into their day-to-day lives, opinions, thoughts, and practices. One key difference between these platforms, however, is their format. The video format of vlogs allows viewers to establish a connection between themselves and the vlogger, which is often seen to create a greater degree of intimacy (Huh et al., 2014: 18) than the text and still-images of blog posts which had a less personal feel.

In a way, this format facilitates a minimising of distance and time between the content-creator—sometimes called 'influencers'—and members of their audience through what media studies scholar Misha Kavka describes as an affective or 'felt proximity' (2008: 7; Berryman and Kavka, 2017), that is enhanced by the video medium (Huh et al., 2014). Such feelings of proximity and intimacy are important for evaluations of the authenticity and legitimacy of the vlogger, who frequently position themselves as 'ordinary experts' (Tolson, 2010: 286). While these individuals claim these roles for themselves by creating and uploading such content, this does not guarantee that their claims about the authenticity of their goth identity and knowledge, or their authority to 'speak for' goth, will be accepted by other goths.

This was demonstrated by a research participant, who uploaded a vlog titled 'What is goth?' to YouTube. In the video, he discussed goth's 'origin story' and defined goth based on his own understandings and experiences. The video opened with the instrumental introduction to Bauhaus' "Bela Lugosi's Dead", which he phased out and remarked,

> If you are a goth *and* you call yourself a goth, you *should* know exactly what that song was. (.) For those who don't know, that was "Bela Lugosi's Dead" by a band called Bauhaus, one of *the* (.) quintessential goth bands (.) there ever was.

In the remainder of the video, he called out people who promoted an illegitimate and shallow version of goth in their practices and explained how goth was 'first-and-foremost about the music, which came from punk', but there were also

other aspects of goth, including the clothing. The vlogger argued, however, that people should not see goth as primarily about the fashion because this made it seem like 'an empty shell' clad in black clothing.

In the comments below the video, people posted mixed reactions to the video. Some asked him to elaborate upon his views, asking about certain bands or trends within goth. These commenters sought to engage the vlogger and other commenters in a conversation about goth music. Other commenters, however challenged both the vlogger's authenticity as a goth and his legitimacy to make such a video. Many of these latter commenters suggested that the vlogger did not know what he was talking about, condescendingly correcting his views and accusing him of inauthenticity, naïveté, elitism and falsely claiming to 'speak for all goths'. The vlogger sought to defend themselves against some of these accusations in the comments. He engaged in a form of counter-judgement by going to the YouTube profiles of those who claimed to have a better (and more legitimate) understanding of goth and, as Adam would say, engaged 'testing mode'. He replied to their comments, stating that nothing on their profiles, including their playlists and 'favourited' videos, indicated that they had any 'right' to judge him because he saw no evidence supporting their claims to authenticity.

While this video remained relatively peripheral within YouTube's international goth community, it highlights how goths used YouTube in their negotiations of goth's definition and of authenticity and legitimacy. Such videos and the ongoing interactions between users in the comments sections below the videos, and across social media platforms, therefore, reflect broader trends of knowledge exchange and negotiations of goths' practice, definition and boundaries.

Music-Related Videos

Participants often referred me to YouTube during interviews, especially when discussing how they defined goth and 'goth music'. They shared links to videos or suggested keywords band names, albums, and songs to 'look up'. YouTube was a tool that participants used to communicate details about goth that they found difficult to convey verbally or in text-based discussions, and to provide

examples to support their discussions. In the following excerpt from an email interview, Evony uses YouTube in both ways: providing examples for me to search for to help me understand her interpretation of the 'sound' of goth.

> Briony: What defines goth and goth music for you?
> Evony: Hmm, it's a hard one to put into words, it's more of a 'sound'.…Music is pretty hard to define [in words]. All I can do is give you some songs to listen to on YouTube, and see if you can figure out what I mean:
> - Vendemmian "Masquerade"
> - Screams For Tina "In Her House"
> - Big Electric Cat "Red Roses"
> - Rosetta Stone "An Eye For The Main Chance"
> - The Wake "Locomotive Age"
> - X-Mal Deutschland "Incubus Succubus II"
>
> For starters ;-)

In the same conversation, Evony also discusses the difference between 'stadium goth'—music she describes as 'more rock sounding than goth'—and '"real" goth', using the well-known Sisters of Mercy as an example. She urged me to search YouTube to hear the difference between their popular tracks like "Temple of Love", "Dominion/Mother Russia" or "This Corrosion", and "Alice", one of their earlier songs. For her, only "Alice" was an example of 'goth music'; the others were 'more mainstream and not really all that goth' despite many goths liking them. Adam also referred me to YouTube to illustrate the differences between 'what some people associate with goth' and 'what is actually goth'. He used two different versions of the same Sisters' song to demonstrate his point:

> When you ask the average person to name a Sisters track they usually say something like "Temple of Love" and with that they usually refer to the 1992 version.…That's if they can name a Sisters track at all. Here are both for comparison. The 1992 version: <link> And original extended version: <link>

For Adam, the 'original extended version' was preferable and, he maintained that, like "Alice" and other tracks from the band's early catalogue, this earlier version sat 'more firmly in the goth genre' than the 'more pop sounding' version released almost a decade later. Such comparative discourses are part of the process of defining goth and are often closely connected with personal understandings, influences, and experiences, and with processes of authenticity and legitimacy. In both of these examples, Evony and Adam align themselves

more closely with those tracks that they see as 'truer' to goth and its 'sound'. At the same time, they draw a line between their understanding of goth music and the band's 'more mainstream' tracks/sounds, though Adam noted that he 'didn't mind' the 1992 version of "Temple of Love" which was frequently played at Dark Alt events. In the process, both also passed this understanding, and the distinctions that came with it, to me, someone who, as far as they were aware, 'did not know any better' but was eager to learn from them. What is important here, however, is their use of the digital platform to both explain the differences between 'goth things' and 'non-goth' things (and, arguably, a third category, that centres on things that are arguably or contextually goth) and align themselves with music on the site that they argued to be 'authentic'. Like the blog posts discussed above, YouTube was also a vital resource for learning about goth's definition, boundaries, and, perhaps most importantly for research participants, goth music.

In previous generations, when older research participants were finding their way around goth, the two main sources of easy-to-access and 'affordable' (i.e. free) music available to them were radio—which they often selectively recorded to cassette tape—and the music videos on television shows like the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's *Rage* (1987-present). Since it aired in April 1987, *Rage* has been Australia's primary free-to-air alternative to MTV. Traditionally broadcast overnight on weekends (ABC, 2016), *Rage* plays back-to-back music videos from a wide range of artists and genres. Depending on the era, this catalogue has included music that many have labelled 'goth music', and other 'dark' styles that several participants described as 'sympathetic' with goth music as well as a variety of music from other genres.

For Kate, who grew up in regional South Australia where such music was less common than in the state's capital, *Rage* was a precious resource for her. During an interview, she spoke of how she learned a lot about 'dark' music through *Rage* during her teenage years:

> When I was a teenager, probably in my early teens…I would watch *Rage* really late at night on a Saturday and they would have the 'guest programmers', and they would play- not 'goth' but 'darker' tracks. So, they would be playing The Smiths, and The Cure, and Siouxsie, and stuff like that. And that just sort of resonated with me.

Despite not always being what she would consider to be goth music, the music and general aesthetics contained in these music videos 'resonated' with her tastes and interests, and the dark aesthetics appealed to her in a way that other styles and sounds did not. Despite not always being what she would call goth, these music videos sat well alongside Kate's early explorations of goth music and style. During another of our interviews, Kate further reminisced, describing her first encounter with Bauhaus's music video for "Mask"[42] on *Rage*. This video focuses on the dramatic and ritualistic resurrection of a corpse and is punctuated by images and clips of band members surrounded by darkness and other 'gothic imagery' (Van Elferen, 2012). The music and imagery from this video have stayed with Kate into adulthood.

This same clip is now available on YouTube in a variety of qualities, alongside different 'versions' and editions of the track, including multiple live versions from 1981 and later, and from a range of different sources that are both official and non-official. For Kate, seeing music videos like "Mask" on her television screen captivated her; although their appearance on the show was beyond Kate's control, these videos were an important part of her experience of goth in the era 'before the internet'. *Rage* was Kate's primary means of accessing these often artfully designed videos, though she could only watch them at a scheduled time, if the programmer decided to play them, or if she recorded them to video cassette, a process that often involved a great deal of emotional and physical labour (Bennett and Rogers, 2016: 150). With these music videos—as well as alternate versions, remixes, and, in some instances, recordings of live performances—now available on YouTube, this experience is accessible almost on demand, given access to relevant technologies and search terms.

Like many other traditional music video television shows, *Rage*'s playlists of music videos have been selected according to a traditional (radio) broadcast model, where broadcasters, 'guest programmers', and music industry partners select the content that audiences see. In this model, industry figures regarding the popularity of artists and genres function as the main guide influencing what

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[42] Recorded in 1981 at Playground Studios and Jam Studios, London. Label: Beggars Banquet.

music videos are played and when. The growth of online media-streaming sites like YouTube has seen these music videos and other related content become more accessible for audiences. Edmond (2014: 311) thus remarks that one of the most significant changes to 'music video culture' has been its transition from old industry-controlled broadcast models to a model centred on the customisable, 'searchable, on-demand nature of Internet browsing'. In this context, audiences have increased control over what music videos they see, when they see them, and how many times they watch them—a process that is simplified with the use of browser add-ons that enable automatic 'looping' of videos. Audiences now have the ability to 'search, watch, rewatch, skip, and develop personal playlists' of music videos, that draw on the extensive range of music videos—and their remixes, remakes, and parodies—in a similar manner to how they enjoy other music recordings (Edmond, 2014: 311).

This shift to online and on-demand accessibility has also meant that audiences can also access content that was previously unavailable. This includes behind-the-scenes footage from music videos and live performances, as well as music videos that did not satisfy the popularity and/or programming requirements of broadcasters, such as videos from niche music genres and artists, and DIY music videos created and released by artists and fans. In many ways, sites like YouTube have given individuals increased autonomy when it comes to finding, consuming and sharing music videos. As research participants pointed out, one is no longer required to sit through myriad other videos from various genres in the hope that a programmer will play a certain music video or music that resonates with one's tastes and interests.

However, this increased accessibility and greater autonomy of access says little about the value of these music videos to those who search for, watch, and share them. When discussing the 'cultural impact' of music videos in the early days of MTV (in the 1980s), Kinskey (2014) observes that, for audiences these videos have long been more than simply promotional tools used by the record industry to sell records. This is supported by Vernallis (2004, 2013) who regards music videos as audio-visual 'experiences' that combine music with images in meaningful and sometimes dialectical ways. Vernallis focuses on analysing music videos as cultural texts. This view understands music videos as firstly

'ideological apparatus' that rely on dominant social codes and discourses to represent race, class, gender, and sexuality, and secondly as 'artistic practice', guided by the commercial imperatives of the music industry (Vernallis, 2004: x). While this approach can provide useful information about the potential of music videos as ideological intermediaries, music videos are more than simply (popular) cultural texts, especially for their audiences.

This is demonstrated by Bennett and Rogers (2016), who found that survey respondents frequently used YouTube to engage with music from their past—and thus with the associated memories—and to sample 'brand new and/or completely unheard music' (2016: 151). Writing on the significance of Malcom McLaren's music video for 'Buffalo Gals' for Australian hip-hop, Maxwell (2003: 50–2) notes how several hip-hoppers had used the video to learn about the dance styles, art, and music of hip-hop, which they then incorporated into their own day-to-day practices. These examples highlight an important practical value of music videos for those who consume them: exploration and discovery.

Following a similar line of thought, Kinskey describes how the growth of 'music television' during the 1980s and 1990s saw music videos merge with other cultural industries and processes that inspired 'musical and subcultural discovery' in many parts of the world (2014: 10). In this context, she suggests that music videos were 'instructionals', combining music and imagery for audiences, including key information about the aesthetics, mannerisms, and argot of associated music subcultures (Kinskey, 2014: 10). Kinskey's analysis takes on a humanist tone, shifting the focus from social ideologies and categories of representation to explore how people encounter and engage with music videos in their everyday lives. This interpretation is important for understanding the significance of these media for my research participants. On one level, it reflects Kate's comments about the melding of 'dark' music and aesthetics in the music videos she watched on *Rage* as a teenager. For her, these two aspects were not semiotic or ideological devices but resonated with her dark tastes and interests, and with goth more generally. Such music videos have therefore played a key role in her practice and definitions of goth music and her practices as a goth DJ and radio presenter.

On another level, framing music videos in this manner acknowledges how people use them in their day-to-day lives, especially in an era of on-demand services of social media like YouTube. As I noted earlier in the chapter, it was common for goths to share links to music videos on YouTube. When Evony suggested music for me to search for on YouTube, she sought to *show* me and help me 'figure out' what she meant when she spoke about goth and about the music that was central to her understanding of goth. When I searched for these tracks on YouTube, I was able to gain a clearer understanding of Evony's interpretation of goth and its music, especially its relation to contemporary interpretations of the style and sound that are often associated with 'European deathrock'. Upon typing any of the band names and song titles into YouTube's search box, the site returned an array of videos to watch, a list that also included related videos by the same band or similar artists, as well as a small number of unrelated (music) videos that were promoted by the site.

Many of my searches returned results with videos of the bands performing the song live, with some footage dating to the 1980s. While the quality of these videos was not necessarily high, their availability on the platform allowed me to compare my personal experiences seeing bands like Cities in Dust, or Peter Murphy with these historical occasions. My searches also returned results of other fan-made videos, where recorded audio tracks were played over still-images of the bands or relevant album covers. In some videos, these images were arranged in a slideshow so that the images changed after a set delay. Other videos included in the results followed a similar format, but the video creator had set the audio to play over a slideshow of 'gothic' or 'dark' images that did not have any direct relation to the band, its members, or the music recording.

Many of these videos do not fit the traditional industry definition of what a music video is. Rather, they fit what Liikkanen and Salovaara (2015) classify as music-related videos or content. Music-related content includes videos where music is the primary and central focus of the video. This type of content not only included official and unofficial uploads of music videos but also recordings of live performances and music recordings played over still images. Videos where music was reviewed or discussed, including interviews with relevant bands and musicians, also fall into this category.

The significance of music-related content to goths should not, by this point, be surprising: I have sought to reiterate that participants emphasised the centrality of music to goth, in matters of distinction and continuity, as well as in processes of authenticity and legitimacy (for goth and for individuals). As discussed above, music videos have also played an important role in the dissemination of goth's music and aesthetics since the 1980s; 'resonating with' the aural and visual tastes of those interested in the cultural practice. This transposes well into YouTube's digital environment, where music-related content has 'proven to be the most popular[43] content type' on the site (Liikkanen & Salovaara 2015).

Dance Videos

Another type of music-related content that goths accessed on YouTube are 'dance videos'. This subcategory includes videos that focus on goth, industrial or 'cybergoth' dance(rs) (see Figure 8 and 9) and videos that parodied or made light of the dance styles and/or the associated cultural practices and their participants (see column on right-hand side of Figure 8). Although they were shared across a range of social media platforms by goths in diverse international scenes, during my fieldwork dance videos were moreso used by people in the Dark Alt scene than the Postpunk scene.

These videos were filmed in various locations and often featured edited versions of groups and occasionally individuals who were identified as 'goths', 'cybergoths', and, occasionally, 'industrial dancers' dancing in styles characteristic of Dark Alt clubs. Dancers were commonly dressed in what research participants described as the 'cyber' or 'cybergoth' style, though many elements overlapped with 'industrial' clothing styles that were popular locally. The dancers in the original versions of these videos danced to music—at least when the footage was filmed—that was similarly characteristic of the music played at Dark Alt events.

43 Popularity determined by user engagement with the video and view counts collated by YouTube.

Figure 8: 'Original' Cybergoth dance video uploaded to YouTube in 2011. (Screen capture taken from youtube.com, June 2016).

In some variations or parodies of these videos, uploaders dubbed other music over the video footage, removing the so-called '(cyber)goth music'[44] and replacing it with anything from comically sped-up versions of the '*Benny Hill* theme song' or the theme to the children's television show *Thomas the Tank Engine* (cf. Figure 8), to gangster rap or psytrance tracks. While some of these parodies were intended as light-hearted jokes, others sought to ridicule the dance styles and dancers, and, as a result, the associated practices and individuals who the mockers associated with these practices. This is indicated, for example, by the inclusion of the video on another user's playlist of 'good quality memes' in the column to the right of the image in Figure 8.

Whilst most of these latter examples were intended as parodical or self-conscious acknowledgement of how 'outsiders' viewed people whose dance style was reflected in the video, the dance videos themselves had a more pragmatic function for some members of the Dark Alt scene. Several comments on YouTube and posts where these videos were shared suggested that, in

44 Accompanying captions, tags, and video titles referred to it as 'goth music'. Most research participants would however identify it as 'cyber' or 'industrial'.

Figure 9: 'How Goths Dance' by YouTuber It's Black Friday (Screen capture taken from youtube.com, June 2016).

addition to being entertaining, these videos also had an 'educational' role. This was especially true of the 'original' dance videos.[45] Perhaps their most important function in this regard was as visual guides that participants could use to learn dance moves and styles that they could reinterpret and customise—that is perform (Maxwell, 2003: 51)—on dancefloors at club nights.

Other dance videos that performed a similar function were those that were explicitly educational; aiming to teach viewers 'how goths dance' (e.g. Figure 9). Many of these videos were self-consciously humorous, often taking a satirical tone that emphasised and encouraged personal customisation and engagement with goth's practice and aesthetics through music and dance. During my research, dance videos were not only shared between participants but also on the social media pages for upcoming events where these styles of dance were commonplace.

In 2016, It's Black Friday, a goth YouTuber, also made a video demonstrating goth dance moves for her viewers. Her video was based on what she regularly sees on the dancefloors of 'traditional [goth], batcave, darkwave, 80s…nights'.

[45] These videos were often uploaded by different users at different times, here I refer to the original footage made by the dancers with its original music.

In the video, she addresses the camera to introduce nine of the most popular moves she has encountered—including: 'Elbows nailed to sides'; 'Back and forth'; 'Mopey Two-Step'; and 'Slow-Motion'—and demonstrates each move in between explanations.[46] It's Black Friday ends her dance video with a clip showing how she dances at these nights 'after a few drinks'. Despite the temporal distance between her video and my fieldwork, these dance moves were very familiar to me. I could hear goth music, close my eyes and see people on Enigma's sticky dancefloors performing these moves, somehow managing not to bump into people who were standing around the dancefloor talking or waiting to be served at the bar (see Figure 1). This familiarity was furthered by It's Black Friday's use of goth music in her video.

It's Black Friday demonstrates each of the moves to the same audio track, a song called "You Bleed Me" by the 'nineties goth/darkwave' band Suspiria. This band was familiar to me and, a quick perusal of the comments below the video suggests, to many of the video's other viewers as well: not only had I heard the band played on various DJ's playlists at events and on 'radio shows' like Cascading Light, several research participants suggested I get hold of their music when we discussed goth music. In comparison to this video, another dance video, which was more satirical in nature, ended with the dancers performing various dance moves to the song "This Corrosion" by the Sisters of Mercy. This song was more familiar than the Suspiria track that It's Black Friday used, especially for goths who participated in the Dark Alt scene because there were few club nights during my fieldwork where this song was not played. The music and the dance styles shown in the original 'Cybergoth dance party' video were recognisably consistent with those encountered at Dark Alt events. These videos can therefore be understood as having a pragmatic function for many goths, especially for those who participated in the Dark Alt scene, where dancing was often a central activity.

In this chapter, I have focused on some of the ways that goths use online digital media, particularly social media sites such as blogs, Facebook, and YouTube to

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[46] Other moves she names include: 'The Tree', and its variant 'Picking curious fruit'; 'The startled chicken'; 'Almost falling over but not'; and 'Trying to stomp something under the feet that isn't there'.

negotiate goth's definition and practice, and engage in evaluations of authenticity and legitimacy. I have also discussed how participants' perception that 'anyone' can now access information about goth's history and evolutions has led to an expectation that people who claim association with goth have basic knowledge of this history. Those who are not able to demonstrate that they have this knowledge and that they have an understanding that extends beyond '101' information, are automatically accused of inauthenticity and denied any form of authority to legitimately represent goth in public. I have also argued that these online practices should therefore be understood as part of participants' everyday practices of goth, through which participants' grounded, local practices, intersect transnational interpretations and practices via 'the goth community' online. In the next chapter, I shift my attention to the local scenes where goths perform these identities and practices within local contexts.

Chapter 6 - Scenes & Public Practices of Goth[47]

In Chapters 4 and 5, I focused on the interplay between goth and mediated practices and interpretations. One of my central aims in these previous chapters was to outline how the understandings and practices of goths in Adelaide, including their assessments of authenticity and legitimacy, are intertwined with transnational definitions, meanings and materials, and discourses about goth. In Chapter 5, I also explored how participants negotiated goth's definition through online social media. While these contexts have become increasingly important resources for participants, I argue in the present chapter that local events and the surrounding scenes have remained essential to goth though their significance has been reconfigured (Williams, 2007). I therefore shift from the broader contexts of these earlier discussions to concentrate on how participants negotiate goth in Adelaide, focusing my attention on the two scenes that I described in Chapter 2.

I argue that, in this context, processes of authenticity, legitimacy and definition that participants enact in these contemporary contexts can be used to understand how and why this schism occurred approximately two decades before my fieldwork. I also consider how these practical contexts may be understood as important for both goth's 'survival' in Adelaide and participants' definitions of goth and their perceptions of individual authenticity and legitimacy vis-à-vis goth. I contend that these diverse scenes are important sites wherein goths negotiate these boundaries in their practices within this often-marginalised city (Chapter 2). I argue throughout this chapter that scene events were key social occasions where participants engaged in such negotiations, despite the irregularity of such events and the unpredictable crowds. In the final section of this chapter, I demonstrate this significance with reference to dancefloors, which may be understood as central sites for the negotiation of tacit rules of goth's practice and definition. Before I do so, I outline how I use

[47] I presented an early version of parts of this chapter at a conference on youth and media in 2014 (Morrison, 2014).

the term 'scene' before linking this to academic conceptualisations of 'the scene concept'.

Grounded in local realities, the two scenes of my research field provided what participants often referred to as 'umbrellas' for goth and other similar cultural practices, which overlapped in different ways with goth, including socially, aesthetically, and ideologically. Rik described this context when comparing rivet and goth, noting that rivet is too tightly connected with goth in Adelaide because they are 'very much part of the same umbrella scene' (Dark Alternative). Other research participants also used the umbrella metaphor to explain two key elements of scenes that I consider in this chapter. In one sense, the umbrella alludes to the 'sheltering' appeal of scenes, which participants often viewed as relatively 'safe spaces' where they were 'free to be themselves', ideally beyond the gaze of 'normies'. The umbrella also refers to the juxtaposition of distinctive yet related cultural practices, tastes and aesthetic sensibilities that are practiced 'beneath' the two scenic 'umbrellas'.

Using the language of dynamic practice theory, this means scenes are nexuses in which diverse, yet related practices intersect with one another in performative spaces and through material resources and social networks. Despite participants' emphasis on this dynamic character of scenes, however, when talking about practicing goth in Adelaide, they often referred to their scene as '*the* scene'—though participants from the Dark Alt and Postpunk scene used this phrase to refer to different 'fields' of practice (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984).

The social spaces of events were focal points of the respective scenes, though they were not the only part of 'the scene'. Participants also discussed a range of media (zines, blogs, music press), practical resources (local stores, businesses, artists and craftspeople that catered to the tastes and clothing styles of relevant practices) and networks (personal, musicians/DJs, production and distribution, and social media) as part of 'the scene'. The media, resources, and networks of each scene are identifiable, especially for those with the requisite knowledge (Thornton, 1995), by their relative consistency with the tastes, values and practices of the groups that came under the umbrella of the respective scenes. This is evident, for example, in the range of styles and 'genres' listed on

advertisement material for local Dark Alternative events (see Figure 3) and stores.

The boundaries between the scenic nexuses in my research field are marked by variations in participants emphasising of certain elements of goth's routinised configurations over others. In the Dark Alt scene, for example, there was a strong and overt emphasis on certain visual and stylistic aspects of relevant practices which made it possible to distinguish it from the Postpunk scene—where there was a strong emphasis on goth's punk roots and the music that members created and performed. This distinction remained relatively consistent despite overlaps of history and their shared spaces and resources. As I demonstrate below, these specific, yet variable, configurations within scenes are not only sites of overlap but of change and schism over time. As such, they are often sources of the scene identities and volatility that have been central to scholarly work on scenes since the late-1990s.

Before moving on to discuss this literature, I wish to note that I view the Dark Alt and Postpunk scenes as part of the larger picture of goth's practice rather than as *the* sites of goth's practice. Centred on organised social occasion and networks of resources, they include various spaces in which goths negotiate goth in spaces with varying degrees of 'public sociality' (Miller et al., 2016). Although they are important sites for goth's practice in Adelaide, goth is also reproduced by participants in other areas of their lives, including their engagements with different media and technologies, as well as when they listen to goth music or put together goth outfits. This understanding differs from traditional models of scene, where researchers often focus on participants practices within and related to the perpetuation of 'the scene'. This is evident, in Peterson and Bennett's (2004: 3, emphasis added) summary of this literature: 'Work in the scenes perspective focuses on situations where performers, support facilities, and fans come together to collectively *create music* for their own enjoyment.' I consider this literature in the next section of this chapter.

The Scene Concept

Scene is one of the most enduring concepts proposed as an alternative to 'subculture' during the postsubcultural turn in the 1990s. Since this period, it has gained momentum as a dynamic conceptual and theoretical framework used to understand the multiple and often complex intersections between collective musical participation, space/place, and everyday life (Bennett and Rogers, 2016). While John Irwin (1970, 1977) wrote in the 1970s about the possibility of using the 'folk term' scene instead of subculture, the concept's academic usage is often traced to Will Straw (1991)—and Straw credits American Studies scholar Barry Shank (1991: 373). Straw pitches scenes as nexuses of musical practice: spaces in which various musical practices converge, interact, and develop in climates of increased musical cross-fertilisation, mobility, and globalisation (Straw, 1991: 373).

Consistent with Straw's explanation of scenes as 'cultural spaces' (1991: 373) and journalistic and colloquial discourses, many early explorations of the concept examined scenes as local phenomena that were clustered around specific geographic foci (Peterson and Bennett, 2004: 6). Sara Cohen's (1991, 1997) work on rock music in Liverpool, England and Shank's (1994) study of rock music in Austin, Texas are two foundational examples of these early empirical studies of local music scenes. Both authors discuss the spatiality and temporality of the respective music scenes, highlighting their contested, dynamic, and volatile nature (Shank, 1994: 192; Sara Cohen, 1997: 32–3). Shank builds upon Cohen's analysis of the interconnections between scenes and location, noting the existence of concomitant music scenes, each with their own hierarchies, locations (venues and neighbourhoods), histories, and discourses on local identity, experiences, and attitudes (Peterson and Bennett, 2004: 7).

Later work on local scenes develops this literature, noting the increasingly dynamic and mobile character of local musical practices as they interconnect with transnational processes and networks toward the end of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. Scholars such as Holly Kruse (1993, 2003), and Geoff Stahl (2004) focus on local music scenes, for example, highlight the growing impact of globalisation and other 'external' processes that

intersect local scenes. Local scenes, Stahl argues, are affected by a 'diversity of conditions…that are constituted and inflected as much by local circumstance as…by translocal demands and desires' (2004: 53). Following a similar argument, Kruse contends that earlier researchers' focus on scenes as exclusively local neglects the multifarious broader interconnections that are key for local scenes. She thus notes that particular local scenes are interconnected by social and economic relationships that tie them to broader (national and transnational) entertainment industries, which disembed the local, shifting it from a particular space to a non-particular space (Kruse, 1993: 38). Kruse also adds that while these broader processes are vital, researchers should look to '*local* music scenes…to understand the relationship between situated music practices,' identities and histories (Kruse, 1993: 38, 2010: 628–9).

Writing in 2010, Kruse updates her earlier account, stating that, while local contexts and identities endure as important grounded spaces for scenes, it is now impossible to understand scenes in isolation from their translocal and global contexts (Kruse, 2010). This suggests that, while participants' grounded practices in local scenes are vital to understanding scenes as entrenched in local spaces and places, researchers cannot ignore broader processes that intersect and influence local contexts and practices. The growing influence of the global on the local has led scene researchers to increasingly analyse scenes as intrinsically 'translocal' (Peterson and Bennett, 2004). For example, Thornton (1995) and Malbon (1999) view electronic dance music scenes as fluid and translocal phenomena that are 'scenes within scenes' (Bennett and Rogers, 2016: 30).

Hodkinson likewise characterises 'the goth scene' as translocal. In his chapter in Bennett and Peterson's (2004) edited volume *Music Scenes: Local, Translocal, and Virtual*, he describes goth as a 'small distinctive music scene' that transcends boundaries of geographic space through translocal 'specialist networks of travel, commerce and communication' (2004: 132, 133). Keith Kahn-Harris's[48] (2007) book on the 'global extreme metal scene' is one of the first sustained examples

[48] Formerly Harris.

of this nested approach beyond dance clubs (see also Kahn-Harris, 2000, 2002, 2004).

Kahn-Harris portrays the extreme metal scene as a 'global music scene that contains local scenes within it' (Kahn-Harris, 2007: 22). Initially, this nesting implies social formations characterised by the postmodern fragmentation, ephemerality, and volatility that early postsubcultural scholars explored. Kahn-Harris maintains however that 'the considerable musical and institutional overlap between [local] scenes allows us to talk about the extreme metal scene as a totality' despite its fragmented appearance (Kahn-Harris, 2007: 22). This 'totality' includes more than multiple local scenes interconnected with global flows and processes. It incorporates a wide range of local and global institutions that operate within and adjacent to scenes, as well as smaller scenes that develop around specific genres of metal music, including 'heavy metal', 'thrash' and 'power metal'.

This interpretation of the extreme metal scene as a nexus of scenes aligns with my usage of the concept in this thesis in many ways: as an umbrella under which multiple genres, styles, taste-oriented practices, and institutions are negotiated by participants in the flow of their everyday (e.g. conversations with friends, listening to music) and spectacular (going to events, 'specialist shopping') practices. This paradigmatic understanding envisions scenes as 'master categories' (Blum, 2001: 8), consisting of a range of interlinked practices, tastes, and networks. As I discuss below, this perspective accentuates the growing sense of eclecticism in contemporary scenes. Kahn-Harris therefore finds it unsurprising that scene members' 'musical taste is frequently expressed as a musical "omnivorousness"' (2007: 51–2; see also Peterson and Kern, 1996; Peterson, 1997). The potential for omnivorousness of taste within scenes is arguably amplified by the growth of digital media technologies and networks. Some youth culture researchers have proposed that these technologies have provided the opportunity for 'virtual communities' (Rheingold, 1995) or 'virtual scenes' (Bennett and Peterson, 2004) that are primarily enacted online.

Recent studies have viewed virtual activities of participants as extensions or overlays to local/translocal scenes and identities (Bennett and Rogers, 2016:

32). However, the concept of ‘virtual scenes’ was initially intended to describe instances where ‘fan clubs dedicated to specific artists, groups and subgenres…come together in a single scene, making conversation via the Internet’ (Peterson and Bennett, 2004: 10). This is the definition Williams draws on in his work on straightedge and the internet (2003, 2006; Williams and Copes, 2005). Williams’ work raises important questions about the viability of virtual scenes as self-contained entities that are distinct from (local) ‘face-to-face scenes’. He concludes that internet technologies such as message boards have made it possible for ‘net-straightedgers’ to interact with their geographically and temporally dispersed peers without the need for face-to-face interaction in a music scene.

Williams also observes that the possibility for online-only participation has intensified debates about the authenticity of individuals who do not participate in local straightedge (hardcore punk) music scenes. While some of Williams’ participants used the internet as their primary or only source of participation, others used the internet to supplement their participation in face-to-face scenes (Williams, 2006: 175). This supports Peterson and Bennett’s (2004: 3) assertion about scenes being conceived as contexts ‘where performers, support facilities, and fans come together to collectively create music for their own enjoyment’. This interpretation supports Peterson and Bennett’s (2004: 3) assertion about scenes being conceived as contexts ‘where performers, support facilities, and fans come together to collectively create music for their own enjoyment’. However, Williams also finds the focus on scenes as rotating on ‘an axis of music production and consumption’ problematic. He suggests, while music is often an important feature of scenes, straightedgers’ use of the internet indicates that there are other aspects of scenes that similarly facilitate members’ participation and identification (Williams, 2006: 175).

In keeping with goths’ emphasis on music, I focus here on the music-centred practices of goths in Adelaide’s Dark Alt and Postpunk scenes. However, I also acknowledge that these scenes are not merely about the music. For some research participants, fashion and style were core elements of their practices within their scene. As I discuss below, individuals who claimed to be goth and prioritised style over the music were often considered to be inauthentic. I raised

a similar idea in Chapters 4 and 5 when discussing how goths tended to be critical of people who emphasised goth style over its more substantive aspects. I have also sought to account for these other aspects of participants' practices in other chapters, for example by considering: the use of blogs to engage in negotiations about goth's definition and fashion aspects (Chapter 5); their considerations of other aspects of goth in relation to popular characterisations (Chapter 4); and their use of goth in other aspects of their identities (Chapter 7). In the present chapter, however, my focus is on scenes and the music-related practices of goths within these public contexts.

Moving Beyond 'the Scene Concept'

Alan Blum's (2001) work on scenes is a useful tool for exploring goth beyond 'the scene concept'. For Blum, scenes are collectively generated phenomena. akin to Anderson's 'imagined communities'. They are interlinked with notions of (urban) public space, performance, and the possession of specialised knowledge and understanding. Central to his examination of scenes is 'the grammar of scene as a social phenomenon'. This includes: the spatio-temporality and mortality (volatility) of scenes; scene politics (e.g. distinctions between 'idle onlookers' and committed participants); demonstrations of 'love' for the scene and its activities (e.g. through active investments or 'sacrifices' that ensure the perpetuation of the scene); specific knowledge(s); and the necessary collectivity or communal nature of scenes (Blum, 2001: 7-10). The understanding of scene that I use in this thesis draws on this scenic grammar in several ways. In particular, his classification of scenes as reliant upon the coming together of committed individuals in 'public spaces', whether they are 'musical' in nature or pertain to another interest or social activity.

From this perspective, scenes are marked by the reciprocal engagement of individuals who publicly demonstrate 'a certain kind of solidarity' through collective engagements with their scene and its various facets (2001: 13-4). There are two dimensions to this understanding of scene. First is the engagement of participants with the scene. This centres upon their interaction with the material and spatial aspects of the scene such as the music, dancefloors, and relevant retailers. The second aspect is the public and collaborative performance or reproduction of the scene through activities such as shopping

(Hodkinson, 2002: 131-151) or participating in scenic occasions such as small live performances and club nights. In participating in these social activities and occasions, particularly on a recurring basis, members of the scene are also actively creating and recreating their scenes *and* the cultural practices that come together within these scenes. As Shove and colleagues (2012) have noted, it is through such successive performances that a practice endures over time, even as it evolves.

The processual nature of goth is an important strand running through this thesis: goth is not only created but recreated, altered, and policed as it is enacted by those who participate in its practice. Scenes are important in this process because they constitute practical circumstances where diverse people and practices intersect relevant resources, from the co-ordinated social spaces of events such as gigs and club nights to the stores and artisans that cater to the tastes and interests of the people in 'the scene'. Like goth, however, these scenes are not homogeneous enterprises. Rather, they are part of the 'mosaic of interpenetrating, interdependent and shifting practices' that form the basis of nexuses of social practice (Schatzki, 1996: 4).

This perspective acknowledges scenes as sites of change and schism over time. I consider this in the following section, where I discuss the transition between what research participants called 'the old goth scene' or 'the Adelaide goth scene' and the dual scene format that I experienced during my research. Before I continue, it is important to reiterate that the emergence of these local scenes from 'the old goth scene' in Adelaide was neither spontaneous nor the result of a definitive moment marked by the instantaneous shift of this older scene into Dark Alt and Postpunk. This schism is tethered to a range of transitory developments that occurred over at least fifteen years before I began my research in 2012. A wide range of local, national and transnational factors influenced this process, including but not limited to changing trends in fashion and music, technological innovations, and accessibility of material and cultural resources such as clothing, music, and information. The nature of this transitory process is expressed by Shove, Pantzar and Watson (2012) who observe that,

> there is no break in the stream of daily life: no moment when social arrangements start over afresh. Each new combination of elements and practices is in some sense an emergent outcome of those that went before.
>
> (Shove et al., 2012: 125).

Importantly, this interpretation of the nature of scenes calls into question Thornton's (1995) explanation of the cyclic nature of music scenes and club cultures. For Thornton, scenes and youth cultures such as acid house 'die' and are 'replaced' by newer, less-exposed scenes/youth cultures like the rave scene that she suggests 'replaced' acid house. In contrast to this model of succession, I argue for a model of continuum wherein the old goth scene did not 'die' but evolved and diversified over time into two distinct performative contexts. Further, the 'old scene' endures as a shared historical background for contemporary participants' practices in Adelaide, whether or not they are familiar with this local history or are able to recount it in the present. Older participants such as Alice and Steven are also a part of this historical transition and their differences of opinion about goth, among other factors, led them to participate in different scenes as these scenes 'split off'. I turn to this history in the next section.

Scene Schism: From 'The Adelaide Goth Scene' to the Dark Alt & Postpunk Scenes[49]

Before I outline this local history of goth, I want to pause to acknowledge the necessarily composite and partial nature of the following narrative. In a similar sense that there are multiple 'standard narratives' of goth that form a composite 'origin story' (Chapter 5), I have pieced together the divergent experiences relayed to me by research participants and a small collection of ephemera that I collected during my research. In some cases, I have also drawn upon my experiences in contemporary scenes, alongside these other sources of information to infer details about the aspects of this history, especially when

[49] Adamek (2016) discusses the 'electronic dance music culture' in Adelaide during the 1980s and 1990s, while it is not the same scene I discuss here, there are many overlaps between the history and transitions that I note here and the subject of her research. In particular she discusses 'Le Rox', a club that was similar to Proscenium nightclub and catered to a similar crowd but which my research participants never mentioned. This club and its associated history are therefore absent from the account I present in this chapter.

these were consistent across sources. Crucially, the information that I *can* recite is, in some senses, as important as the information that I *cannot*, because it sheds light on the relative peripherality of this narrative within goth, even in Adelaide. One can be a legitimate goth and *not* know this history; the same cannot be said for those who do not know at least some aspects of the standard narratives discussed in Chapter 5.

Throughout my fieldwork, despite their differing experiences, both older and younger research participants referred to the history of goth in Adelaide, especially to the vaguely-defined period between the late-1990s to early-2000s, which they identified as a period of transition within the 'local goth scene'. Central to this history was a nightclub called Proscenium, which had run since the late-1980s. The club—a venue rather than the club night I attended during my research, which was intended as an occasional 'revival' of the former club—catered to a range of 'alternative' tastes.

This diversity was most evident in the music played at the club (by live bands or DJs), which included punk, indie rock, (alternative) new wave, darkwave, and different styles of industrial and electronic music. Despite this diversity, the Proscenium nightclub is most commonly remembered for its association with goth music and practice and is often highlighted as *the* place to go to find goth(s). Reflecting this reputation, Adam explained that, while several other goth-centred events existed,

> Back in the mid-90s Proscenium was the main thing going. Thursday nights wwas goth night, Friday nights was Indie night and Saturday was a combination of the two with alternative 80s/90s and some industrial/EBM music thrown in.

The Proscenium nightclub also played an important role in Kate's participation in 'the old scene'. After moving back to Adelaide in the late-1990s, one of Proscenium's goth DJs—and then host of the Deathly Mystique radio on the local radio station 3D—invited Kate to come to Proscenium to see local goth band Scissor Pretty perform:

> I never went to Proscenium when I first moved here [but] within probably a week or two of moving back [to Adelaide]…I was randomly listening to- I think I might have even looked up 'goth in Adelaide' because I wanted

to find out what was happening here, and I found out about Deathly Mystique—the radio show—and so I listened in. And that is when I heard Andrew…on the show, and he played some awesome music—music that I was like 'Wow, this is a good show!' because, often I had looked up 'goth' [online] and they had said The Cure, or The Smiths and you know, things that weren't really…what we call 'goth music', and, even though I liked them, they weren't really what I was after. And I listen to the show and he played Children on Stun, so I was like 'Wow! This is really cool!' So…he had a website at the time—and this is where the internet started to come more into play because more people had it and more people having websites, and stuff—and I emailed him through the website and said, 'I really love the show, and I really love the song you played.'…And he emailed me back and said, 'No-one has ever emailed me about the show before…You need to come out to Proscenium'….I think a few weeks after that he mentioned that the local band Scissor Pretty were…playing at Proscenium, releasing their new album (.) and, so [my sister and I] went to Proscenium.

Kate soon joined Andrew on the radio show—which Evony and Adam also pointed to as another formally decisive fixture within the scene—and joined Andrew as one of Proscenium's resident DJs. During this time, Proscenium transformed from its genre-themed nights to a multi-room format, with Kate playing what she described as 'more dark-ambient goth/darkwave' in the venue's basement room, and Andrew (and/or his wife) playing other styles of goth, punk, and post-punk in other rooms of the venue.

During this early period, there was also a small range of what participants called 'local alternative stores', that sold relevant styles of clothing and/or music. Participants also used interstate mail-order catalogues to buy music that was inaccessible locally. Although participants seldom discussed these resources during interviews, some participants made regular references to their existence, and talked about them as part of the era when the internet and other digital media technologies were less conspicuous or prevalent:

The world has changed so we change with it. Back then record stores were more plentiful. They've been replaced by the internet.

(Adam)

Then [when I was younger] I bought lots of CDs…I always liked buying CDs and this is, you know, just before mp3 players and everything went super-digital.

(Rosa)

> Back then internet was in its infancy—so we ordered mail order from Heartland Records…Most of my CDs and records came from there, many of which I still play on Cascading Light ;-)
>
> (Evony)

The above quotations suggest these technologies challenged not only niche retailers—which were often 'independent' or 'underground' in nature—but also the sense of relative cohesion that participants often associate with 'the Adelaide goth scene'.

Many of the other events that ran concurrently to Proscenium into the early 21st century focused moreso on the increasingly popular electronic styles that eventually became the staple of the Dark Alt scene, dominating club nights during my fieldwork. In a radio interview at the time, Kate predicted this transition; during our interviews she associated the growth of EDM and industrial music during this period with the decline of 'the goth scene' that she had been part of. Proscenium closed its doors in the mid-2000s, as club nights like Necromancy—which ran on a semi-regular basis until its closure in 2015—gained popularity within the scene. Other events did exist in the years following Proscenium's closure, including the club night The Attic, and the local sister-events Parlour and Fright Club. These other club nights continued to play the more goth rock and punk music that had been popular at Proscenium, but Adam explained, they were much less enduring than Proscenium. This period is significant in the schism process.

The period of volatility following the closure of the Proscenium nightclub in the 2000s and the endurance of events like Necromancy are crucial here. This is especially notable with the separation of 'club nights' from 'gigs', a separation that is often one of genre as well as format (Thornton, 1995). In her discussion of the rise of 'club cultures', Thornton cites a chain of events during the 1990s that led to a decline in 'live music cultures'. Some of these changes stemmed from the venue spaces themselves, with open dancefloors becoming a more popular choice for local venues due to reduced running and licensing costs, and extended possible trading hours of club venues (Thornton, 1995; Chatterton and Hollands, 2002). Other changes, she argued, were tied to transitions of taste, popularity, and interest.

Some participants in my research characterised this as the result of 'trends'. Tee remarked during an interview, for example, that 'alternative types' such as goths were as susceptible to trends as they believed 'normies' to be. Tee added that goth 'evolves with what's in fashion—like any culture really—with what's the trend at the time.' I observed such trends during my fieldwork: certain styles and tastes became more or less popular over time in the different scenes. Participants' tastes evolve and as venues and other consumer markets shift, some genres and event styles cycle into and out of fashion. The same may be said of definitions of goth, which were another factor that contributed to division within Adelaide's 'goth scene'. These changes in definition and scene can be heard in the playlists from Deathly Mystique. (see Appendix A).

During the mid-2000s, several episodes of the radio show featured sets curated by one of the resident DJs from Necromancy, which was built on the foundations of industrial-EBM and what DJs during my fieldwork referred to as '80s and 90s alternative' music. In many ways, these playlists also fit with what Evony refers to as a 'weird phase' of the show, where Andrew played more darkwave and electronic-based music that was in stark contrast to the show's previous playlists which were largely comprised of goth rock and dark post-punk music. Evony explained:

> I wasn't really into that stuff…at the time. I remember Kate telling me a lot of [music] being put out [around that time]—a lot of electro-industrial kind of stuff—was coming out of Melbourne and Sydney….Obviously Andrew was getting into that as well and he was playing a lot of that…and [the show] sort of lost its goth- completely 'goth focus' then, and then it kind of went back into it when- later on.

The show returned to its 'completely goth focus' during this period of schism (circa 2004), with a different name (Cascading Light), different hosts, and, eventually, an online-only format. In this renewed format, it catered to local and international audiences; locally, it became firmly entrenched in the Postpunk scene, with its musical repertoire appealing more to people in this scene than many in the Dark Alt scene. As music is a core element of goth, these kinds of evolutions and shifts in its spaces of music-related practice (events) and scenic resources (e.g. the radio show), point to moments of temporal and material

transition that led to the division of the scene. They also highlight potential fuel for 'scene politics', which include judgements of authenticity and legitimacy.

Perceptions of Scene (Il)Legitimacy & Participant (In)Authenticity

Throughout my research, some participants made comments that questioned and/or denied the legitimacy of 'the other scene' in relation to goth and its evolutions. These assessments were often—though not exclusively—expressed by 'hardcore'[50] goths, who held a firm definition of what goth was and what it could be. Their criticisms fall into two strands: some criticisms echoed condemnations of 'the mainstream'; others centred on accusations of 'elitism' and/or being 'stuck in the past'. I explain these criticisms in the following section before considering their significance for perceptions of 'the other scene's' legitimacy and their relationship with assessments of the legitimacy and authenticity of scene participants who claim association with goth.

The first criticism is commonly levelled at the Dark Alt scene; the transition to club nights and electronic music, for example, are viewed as conforming to what 'the mainstream' thinks goth is rather than remaining 'true to goth' and its punk rock roots. For example, one participant levelled the following criticism at the Dark Alt scene's two main club nights:

> As far as I've heard, they don't really play 'real' goth music at either Proscenium [the club night] or Necromancy, and if they do it's…more 'rock' or 'pop' sounding rather than goth.

The music that this individual is describing here includes the Sisters' track, "Temple of Love" and songs by The Cure. This distinction ties into Kate's comments that I quoted above, where she described being dissatisfied when her internet searches for 'goth in Adelaide' in the late-1990s routinely referred to bands like The Cure and The Smiths who 'weren't really what [she] would call goth'. This list grew over time to include bands such as Marilyn Manson, Rammstein, and Nine Inch Nails—whose music was played frequently at Dark Alt events, including at the revamped (post-2010) Proscenium.

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[50] In this context, 'hardcore' is a term used to describe participants who are most involved in goth, which often leads to greater levels of status and influence within the local scene (cf. Fox, 1987: 350; Thornton, 1995: 155).

This penchant for more 'popular' and 'club' music was an important factor that contributed to the schism of 'the goth scene' in Adelaide. For many goths who did not agree with this transition, the characterisation of such music as 'goth music' indicated that goths in the Dark Alternative scene misunderstood what 'real goth' was. From this point of view, these Dark Alt goths were inauthentic in their association with goth because their 'version' of goth was 'incorrect'. As Evony, an unapologetic critic of the Dark Alt scene, commented:

> I only went to Proscenium [the club night] a few times, I actually hated it—they were playing all 80s [music], and I had to actually request a goth song!! At least they played it—it was Suspiria's 'Swine'…there you go, some electro-goth to look up on YouTube!

This quote highlights how Evony distinguishes between Suspiria's 'electro-goth', which she characterises as 'goth music', and the EDM and '80s music' at the revamped Proscenium event. In this way, individuals such as Evony often distinguish the electronic goth music of 'darkwave', which remained relatively consistent with goth's themes, aesthetics, and 'philosophy' despite its electronic style, and the cyber-industrial EDM and '80s' music that were common to Dark Alt events. The growth of industrial artists such as Rammstein and shock rockers like Marilyn Manson in the Dark Alt scene was therefore viewed by the scene's critics as trying to force goth to be something it was not: a club culture with EDM and '80s/90s alternative' music and fashion as its core. Many critics of this scene also argued that people who followed this interpretation of goth misrepresented it through their practices and their definitions. For many goths in the Dark Alt scene, this attitude was archaic, and was most often put forward by 'traditionalists' or 'elitists' who they saw as holding an anti-progressive mindset.

This second criticism levelled between scenes—elitism—was often aimed at the Postpunk scene because of its 'old school' format, partly referencing its close association with punk. Accusations of elitism are often directed at individuals who maintain an uncompromising, 'purist' stance in their definitions of goth. Some 'hardcore' individuals viewed much of the goth and 'goth adjacent' music being created and played in the Postpunk scene as consistent with older styles

such as goth rock, post-punk, and American deathrock. This also applied to the scene's aesthetic and stylistic aspects, which were similarly reminiscent of goth's early days. For the Postpunk scene's critics, however, this penchant for 'traditional' goth music and aesthetics demonstrated a refusal to 'move on' and progress, suggesting the scene was 'elitist' and 'stuck in the past', and therefore not an accurate reflection of contemporary goth or its practice.

Participants in *both* scenes levelled accusations of being 'stuck in the past'. As demonstrated in the following comments from different individuals:

> A: There's a lot of resistance in both scenes to experimentation or natural progression of music, [there] needs to be way more flexibility.

> B: There's *soooo much* stuff available! I mean…we were talking about the Dark Alternative clubs in Adelaide, right?…Why are they still playing '80s stuff? Why are they still playing 'Temple of Love' by Sisters of Mercy…when there is so many other- Why aren't they playing Cities in Dust?! Why isn't *EVERY.* ADELAIDE. CLUB. playing Cities in Dust?! Why isn't every Adelaide club playing Belle of Chaos from the 90s? Even when you look at their playlists, you hope to see at least some interesting things dotted in amongst the hits, but DJs don't want to take a risk, or they're not interested themselves in exploring new music because most goths [in that scene] don't actually really want to hear 'real goth music', they just want to hear the hits that they hear in all the other clubs.

Some identified similar flaws in international iterations of the Postpunk scene:

> C: The UK sound of today is stuck in the past. Bands like Angels Of Liberty are great, but they are trying to be a 90s band, rather than a product of their time. This may sound harsh, but the UK struggles to get past their '80s and '90s roots, there aren't many new sounds coming from there anymore, which is a shame really.

Each of these criticisms question associations between the respective scenes (and their participants) and goth. In this way, they dispute the legitimacy of the opposing scene and those within it who claim association with goth and argue that their respective interpretations of goth are too far from 'real goth' to publicly represent it. These criticisms contain within them many of the issues discussed in Chapter 4 regarding the image of goth and goths. The public character of scenes positions them as important sites of (re)presentation. As such, the image of a scene that is associated with goth in the popular imagination

or in public spaces may have important and far-reaching ramifications for goths. A scene that perpetuates popular imagery such that this becomes the public image of goth, whether tethered to its punk roots or club-centred evolution, is often viewed to have an inauthentic connection to goth by those in opposing scenes. This is similar to how individuals who perpetuate negative or 'shallow' aspects of the popular imagination are characterised as inauthentic and illegitimate by many goths. Similarly, a scene that is seen to be 'stuck in the past' can be interpreted as conveying an image of goth as stale and unoriginal.

For those who came to these unfavourable conclusions, the scenic practices (public performances) of goths in the opposing scene tarnished or compromised goth's reputation. For those in the Postpunk scene who saw the Dark Alt scene as perpetuating the misinterpretations of the popular imagination, the Dark Alt scene was not a legitimate representation of goth. Consequently, they felt that members of the Dark Alt scene who claimed association with goth were neither legitimate nor authentic because of their public affiliation with an illegitimate scene. This affiliation, these critical members of the Postpunk scene argued, meant that these 'goths' possessed neither the legitimacy to represent goth in such a public fashion, nor the requisite competence for their claims to goth to be authentic. Sticking with this example, these members of the Postpunk scene also viewed the Postpunk scene as comparatively legitimate and its goth members as (more) legitimate and authentic in their claims to goth.

They believed their scene to be legitimately aligned with goth because it perpetuated an authentic image of goth through, for example, its emphasis on (creating) music—over fashion or 'being spooky'—especially when that music was innovative yet consistent with goth's history and practice. At the same time, these individuals viewed Postpunk events as authentic representations of how goth should be practiced in public spaces. Thus, Dark Alt events are not authentically goth because of their perceived distance from goth's punk rock roots and participants' tendency to favour spectacular fashion and popular music that is commonly associated with goth. Following this logic, people in the Postpunk scene who claimed goth were seen by these individuals as possessing the requisite knowledge and competence to be authentically goth, and their

public representations of goth were more likely (than their Dark Alt counterparts) to be legitimate.

This explanation simplifies what is in reality a much more complex, dynamic and often contextual process; my intention has been to highlight the interlinking of scene legitimacy and the legitimacy of those who participate in them and associate themselves with goth. These distinctions are perhaps better demonstrated by reference to practical circumstances—such as events—where they are enacted in the flow of practice. In the remainder of this chapter, I turn my attention to these public contexts.

Scenes, Events & the Necessity of Scene Hybridity

Earlier in the chapter, I discussed Blum's (2001) argument that scenes had an occasional character that included recurrent public enactments of collective 'solidarity', 'scene politics', and 'questions of qualification'. In my research field, events like gigs and club nights were such occasions. Despite the often long and jarring periods of 'nothing to do in between' scenic occasions (Rik), these events had a recurrent and communal character that offered insights into goths' negotiations of the practices definition and boundaries. This significance is highlighted, for example, by Kate's discussion of her introduction to 'the Adelaide goth scene' when she recalls how Andrew told her she 'needed to come to Proscenium', where she could meet others who similarly sought 'goth in Adelaide'. In this section, I unpack key aspects of Blum's framework, before discussing the necessity of scenic eclecticism in the Postpunk and Dark Alt scenes in Adelaide.

It is first worth noting that, while events were important occasions, they were not equally significant for all goths and their significance to individuals often changed over time. For many participants, as they aged, other interests and responsibilities like raising families and full-time work took priority over attending events, these events often took a backseat in their lives and participation.[51] Further, not all scene participants attended every event; not even

[51] Others have discussed the changing relation of participation and events as participants age, for example Davis (2006, 2012), Smith (2012), Bennett (2013, 2018), and Hodkinson (2016).

me, despite my eagerness to understand these scenes, was able to attend all events. I make these clarifications to avoid presenting an overly generalised or static view of goths' involvements in and passion for events. In part, I also seek to avoid the perception that I make assumptions about goth(s) based on the most overt and spectacular examples. Although events are occasional rather than daily experiences, they remain important social and performative occasions. They therefore offer a window into participants' negotiations of goth's definition and boundaries, and their assessments of authenticity and legitimacy at the different levels discussed in this thesis, which overlap in different ways.

Blum highlights the significance of these assessments in scenes in a way that is relevant to understanding the overarching importance of scenic occasions and the associated scenes to goth. Most notable to my discussion in this thesis is Blum's attention to the ongoing appraisals of personal authenticity that are both part of the lived experience of scenes and publicly enacted at events. In this context, discernments between those scene participants judge to be 'friends of the practice' and those who are merely 'idle onlookers' are central to the ritualised coming-together of participants at scene occasions (Blum, 2001: 21). As Blum explains, these distinctions play a vital role in scene participants' efforts to sustain the reputation of their scene (or practice) as a whole, which is potentially tarnished by accusations of lacking the kind of 'substance' that Hodkinson (2002) observes, especially when they come from 'outside' of the scene (cf. Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1990).

A scene that is portrayed as being comprised of individuals who retain an uncommitted or 'passive' affiliation with the scene, who treat it and its various aspects as though it were part of Polhemus's (1997) 'supermarket of style', is thus problematic for committed members. Such perceptions about a scene's substantiveness are often bolstered by the prevalence of idle onlookers at events, whose priority, Blum argues, is not the scene's survival but a voyeuristic desire to 'be seen' (2001: 25. For those who retain a high degree of commitment to a scene or, as in the case of goth, a cultural practice, often seek to assert that such idle onlookers are not representative of the 'real' scene or culture. Assertions about the authenticity of individuals and their perceived legitimacy

to represent the practice are therefore frequently about more than what was frequently categorised as 'petty scene bitchiness' for committed participants.

These 'authentic' participants may therefore be understood as fighting for the survival and legitimacy of goth or their respective scene by encouraging active and authentic commitment 'rather than spurious' participation (Blum, 2001: 10) as well as passing judgements about the authenticity and legitimacy of those who portray an image contrary to this. Blum links these kinds of accusations of inauthenticity to the desire to avoid suspicions that *all* scene participants are 'unwitting dupes of capitalist exploitation' (2001: 25). This is evident in Chapter 4, where I explored how participants distinguish between those who rely on the popular imagination for their understanding of goth, and those who go beyond this surface to develop a deeper understanding of goth.

Something that lies behind such distinctions is a desire to present a sense of solidarity among participants. What many participants identify as 'scene politics' may therefore be part of an effort to create or maintain the authentic and legitimate reputations of the scene and its participants. Using 'the writing scene' as his example, Blum suggests this reputation ties into participants' desire to convey collective solidarity 'among those who love' doing the practice that sits at the scene's centre. He thus writes, 'The scene demands a certain kind of solidarity not necessarily among those who practice writing…but among those who love writing' (2001: 13). This idea of having a 'love' or passion for one's scene or practice intersects discourses about authenticity at various points (see, for example, Maxwell, 2003; and Rodger, 2011 on hip-hop; and Williams, 2006 on straightedge). A scene or cultural practice's image ties into collective displays of 'love' or passion through recurrent demonstrations of collective public practice (Blum, 2001: 13–4).

Such recurrence is central within dynamic practice theory—practices only exist if people are willing and able to do them. Blum's emphasis on the collective nature of such practice and its collective solidarity extends this. For Blum, scenes cannot exist based on the practices of a single enthusiastic individual but rely on the recurrent engagements between multiple individuals who share a passion for the practice and its longevity. He thus notes that scenes rely on

collective negotiations of taste and style rather than the eccentricities and particularities of individuals: events are not a 'sanctuary for the exercise of peculiarity', a means to private and individual ends, but a public and collective engagement between scene participants (2001: 28).[52] Without such collectivism on any scale, Blum argues, scenes, or more accurately their members, must accept their mortality. This comes back to the idea that committed groups of individuals seek to avoid the scene's demise, thereby ensuring that both established and new participants have a 'safe space' in which they may experience goth 'for real' (Adam).

For Blum, this experience is necessarily a public experience. The publicness of this experience is important and can be conceived in two ways. The first is opposed to the 'privacy' of participants' homes—goths practice goth in a range of contexts. While this includes their homes (where Evony explained goth was often practiced in Adelaide) participants' engagements with scenes are most commonly enacted in public spaces such as on social media and in stores, bars, and clubs. The second form of publicness is akin to the 'scalable sociality' discussed by Miller and colleagues (2016) regarding different levels of publicness for people's activities and posts on social media (see Chapter 5). In the present context, this scalable sociality designates a form of publicness that is also bounded and 'exclusive', despite the occasional transgressions of its boundaries by 'outsiders' and 'normies'. Within my research field, events were often characterised by this form of exclusionary publicness. Scene members demarcated these boundaries through their aesthetic practices, music and behaviour.[53] Due to this sense of 'exclusivity', participants commonly described events as 'safe spaces' for their public performances of goth.

As public experiences events demand public performances—of tastes, identities, belonging, social relationships, and identifications—and (inter)active negotiations of meaning and cultural and stylistic conventions. These performances are not only public because they were enacted in public venues.

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[52] Importantly, this view is not to be confused with early theories of youth culture from the Chicago School and CCCS that framed these sociocultural phenomena as homogeneous and collective *reactions* to collectively experienced social and economic disadvantages.

[53] Bennett and Rogers (2016: 168–9) use a similar characterisation when referring to the exclusiveness of DIY spaces.

As I noted above regarding Blum's category of scenic occasions, events are public because they are social occasions for doing, seeing, being seen, and being seen seeing. They are therefore simultaneously sites of participation and learning; where individuals learn by participating and observing others. This makes them important spaces where individuals gain a pragmatic and collectively-generated understanding of goth and of how it can be and is practiced in Adelaide.

Hodkinson raises a similar point in his work and argues that 'going out to events and socialising with other members of the subculture' were among the 'most important practical activities' for goths during his research (2002: 85). He maintains that 'subcultural events' (which my participants called 'goth nights') were of particular importance because they 'provided a space for [directed] collective consumption and appreciation of a shared range of tastes, through listening, dancing and a somewhat competitive sharing of one another's versions of [goth] style and behaviour' (2002: 92). At these relatively exclusive goth events goths came together, 'got frocked-up' or 'gothed-up' (as Tee described it), danced, listened to 'goth music', and interacted with one another and others in the respective scenes.

Hodkinson discusses how goths in his research field also frequented '"goth friendly" non-subcultural events' that were sympathetic to the general tastes and aesthetics of goth despite their non-specialist or non-subcultural character. He explained that these types of events had a 'mixed', 'alternative' atmosphere that accommodated 'fans' of a range of 'alternative' genres and cultures including goth, punk, and indie (2002: 86). Despite the general 'alternative' nature of these events many of Hodkinson's research participants found them to be preferable to 'mainstream' events and venues.

While the nightlives of respondents in Hodkinson's study were dominated by subcultural events, especially by the late-1990s, this was not the case in my fieldsite. Many people in my research field were adamant that Adelaide 'did not have the numbers' (of goths) to support 'pure goth' events, or at least not sustain them on a regular or even semi-regular basis. These individuals' comments were supported by my own experiences in these scenes. The relative

emptiness of not only the dancefloor but the designated room during the few club nights during my research that sought a 'goth only' format was reflected in no more than 15 people, including the event DJs and myself attending across the entire night. Cascading Light DJs Evony and Kate were met with similarly small crowds when they hosted 'goth nights' at a small local venue despite the many enthusiastic comments from members of the Dark Alt scene about 'finally having a real goth night' in Adelaide. This further emphasises that, while there was the potential for overlaps between these two scenes, they remained largely separate in practice during my fieldwork. This separation was not only evident in the scene-specific participation of goths in the different scenes, but also in their personal social networks and friendships.

Even when considering the influence of inter-scene politics on the low attendance rates at each of these events, Adelaide's small and divided population of people with an interest in goth was not substantial enough to sustain 'subcultural events' of the kind Hodkinson describes. Taking inter-scene politics out of the equation, however, Adelaide's goth-related scenes 'survived' largely because of eclecticism. This is evident, for example, at Cities in Dust's local gigs, where they shared the stage with a range of bands that played other styles of music from post-punk and hardcore punk to 'experimental electronica', but, rarely with other goth bands.[54]

Similarly, despite there being a few 'goth DJs' in the Dark Alt scene—identified by the frequency of traditionally 'goth music' in their setlists including, the Banshees, Bauhaus, the Sisters, The Cure, and Depeche Mode—this music remained marginal at club nights. Crowds were similarly diverse. In this way, events, like many other facets of local scenes, were necessarily eclectic spaces. For my research participants, this was a necessary compromise that meant that they still had social occasions to publicly participate in goth as a group who shared relatively consistent tastes and sense of style. That is, compromising on the 'purity' of events and other relevant resources allowed them to continue to reproduce and negotiate goth as a substantive, if marginal, practice in Adelaide.

[54]The band played gigs with goth bands in other locations, including overseas, but these shows were notably scarce in Adelaide, even when they played a show in Adelaide supporting Belgrado, a Barcelonan goth band, they shared the bill with two other bands that were not goth.

Acknowledging the necessity of this diversity and compromise, Evony remarked that the crowds at Cities in Dust gigs, 'may be full of hipsters, but at least they're coming out and supporting the bands that play'. Speaking in a similar vein, Adam regularly explained during our conversations that goths had sacrificed 'purity' of events, but it had meant that they still had a local scene to be part of, where they could, he noted elsewhere 'experience goth for real'. In this sense, hybridity had meant that there were people attending events, paying the cover-charge and potentially buying from the event bars and, at Postpunk gigs, the merchandise table. Adam added that, in his professional opinion, 'Right now, a successful night is considered one that doesn't lose money', clarifying that there was a fine line between being 'too open' and 'too exclusive', a shift either way could be detrimental and result in a financial loss for organisers.

A 'reasonable' degree of diversity at events and catering to audiences that participants considered to be 'non-subcultural' in local scenes was therefore important for the 'survival' of goth and other similarly niche practices in Adelaide. While events retained similar performative, social, and practical significance as the specialised events discussed by Hodkinson, they were also necessarily 'eclectic spaces' where people with different but 'sympathetic' tastes and stylistic interests came together (Laughey, 2006: 159) and fought for the perpetuation of their scenes (Blum, 2001). In other words, scenes, particularly events, remained important sites for goths' public enactments of their culture, for learning about goth and how it can continue to 'survive' in places such as Adelaide, and for experiencing a shared sense of affiliation and identity (Hodkinson 2002). Additionally, research participants argued that these kinds of compromises within their scenes also meant that local and visiting goths still had a relatively 'safe space' where they could have a 'night out' without expecting to be harassed by 'normies'.

Scenes as 'Safe Spaces' for practice

Many goths in my research field commonly expressed a feeling that the spaces and places of the scene, especially events, were 'safe spaces'. They were public contexts within which they felt relatively secure in their difference and often

described these environments as places where they and other 'weirdos and outsiders' could 'just be themselves' with people who 'understand'. In these spaces, the discourses of participants also outweighed popularised discourses of moral concern or panic and de-legitimisation discussed elsewhere in the thesis. The transformation of these spaces—which were often 'borrowed' by the scenes—from 'general use' spaces to the 'safe spaces' of the scene(s) necessitated a process of differentiation.

Crossley and Bottero (2014: 489) argue that it is 'not only differentiation from non-musical spheres of activity [but] entails the differentiation of one musical space from another'. In this context, such distinctions begin with the designation of 'scene spaces' as 'not mainstream clubs'. A process that is often set in motion even before an event begins or the organisers decorate the rooms for the occasion, before they set up a table from which they collected the cover-charges that further marked the transition from 'open' public zones of the venues to the 'safe spaces' of events. After an event had officially 'opened', the lines between scenic occasions and their exterior were further emphasised through music and the frequently distinctive outfits of event patrons—something that was more overt in the Dark Alt scene than in the Postpunk scene.

It should be evident by this point of the thesis that, while many goths commonly express a desire for goth to be accepted as a normal thing to be (part of), they continue to identify as 'outside the norm'. This feeling of 'being an outsider' was frequently exacerbated at 'mainstream' events, which goths often felt left little, if any, room for their 'alternative' tastes and lifestyle choices beyond the occasional kitsch themed night which drew heavily on the popular imagination. Moreover, goths commonly viewed these 'more mainstream' spaces as offering 'standardised' experiences (Chatterton and Hollands, 2002: 102) that inspired the sheep-like behaviour that participants argued was characteristic of 'normies'. As such, they were not only comparatively hostile—and sometimes physically dangerous—spaces, but perpetuated tastes, values and behaviours that were seen as being in opposition to those expected of scene spaces.

Many goths viewed the relative exclusiveness of Dark Alt club nights and Postpunk gigs–as spaces where they were among 'friends', who shared their sense of 'outsiderness' as well as their 'alternative' and often 'dark' tastes and values. Due to this shared sense of otherness, there was a common perception that people who came together within these spaces, especially at events, were more likely to treat them 'normally' and be accepting of their quirks of style, taste, personality, and appearance. As such, there was an expectation of open-mindedness to the 'unconventional' tastes and aesthetics of most, if not all, the different cultural practices within the scenic nexuses. In this manner, participants often felt 'safe' in these scenic spaces; they claimed to feel a general sense of belonging to a 'supportive community' that was (perhaps idealistically) accepting, even encouraging, of their difference and 'unconventional tastes'. This sentiment was often expressed despite the tendency for 'scene politics' and 'bitchiness' in these social spaces, which could dampen the supportive feelings participants felt in these contexts.

Putting scene politics and interpersonal conflicts aside, scenic occasions and spaces were framed by research participants as key spaces in which they felt comfortable and 'safe' to 'be themselves'. I discuss the significance of being oneself in Chapter Seven, it is, however, also important for the present discussion. As has been observed in relation to many youth cultural phenomena, goths frequently pride themselves on being true to an essential self (Muggleton, 2000), which they demonstrate through participating in the youth culture. Within the so-called 'safe spaces' of their scenes, research participants explained, they could perform this authentic and 'true' self in public and among like-minded others, including other goths. That is, many goths understand the Postpunk or Dark Alt scene as providing a relatively supportive environment for their social practices of goth. Their scene was a space in which they could *publicly* embrace the non-normative aspects of their identities through various practices that would attract negative responses in more 'mainstream' venues and spaces.

People that participants identified as 'normies' or 'randoms' tended to avoid scene spaces in favour of what participants identified as 'more mainstream' and commercially-oriented clubs and stores. The differences between scene and

'non-scene' tastes were a significant factor in this avoidance. If one considers the comments on the YouTube videos of 'goths' dancing and online news articles about goths and many other 'alternative' cultural practices, for example, this avoidance was also partly due to these spaces being popularly characterised as 'weird' and 'full of freaks'. These popular classifications were often applied from a distance, drawing upon the popular imagination and external observations of scene events by 'normies', often based on the visual appearances of scene participants. Occasionally, however, like 'overhearers' on social media (Miller et al., 2016: 175–6), normies crossed the demarcated 'subcultural' boundaries of scene events, alone or in small groups. Kate described these people as wanting to take advantage of the 'cheap alcohol' at events or as 'freak watchers' who came to 'stare at the weirdos in their natural habitat' . In many cases, their attendance was tolerated and simply ignored, so long as they did not compromise the sense of safety that scene participants felt. For some participants, however, the very presence of these 'outsiders' compromised this safety and caused them to be self-conscious of their appearance and behaviour.

This was particularly notable in instances where there were very few people at the event. The sense of unease is heightened when the 'intruder' makes unwelcome and often sexual advances, including 'groping' and threatening physical violence when rejected or asked to leave. Similarly, non-scene participants potentially compromise the sense of safety participants associate with scenes when they turn it into a spectacle. When discussing scenes and spectacle, Blum draws on Baudrillard to suggest that scenes struggle to be not only 'other than a curiosity', but 'more than an object of fascination' (2001: 20). During an interview, for example, Kate described her experience at the Proscenium nightclub, of being viewed as an object of fascination, recalling times that people she called 'freak watchers' took to staring at and touching her:

> You'd be in the toilets with your corset on and your big teased hair-do, doing your make up in the mirror, and people would come in and just stare at you and they would touch you! They'd touch your hair, and it was like '*Not THE HAIR! I'm not public property you can't just touch me!*'

These kinds of encounters not only threaten the sense of scenes as 'safe spaces', they also counteract scene participants' efforts to legitimise their identities and

their participation in the scene as 'something normal'. With few exceptions, when 'randoms' did not respect the relative exclusiveness of Dark Alt/Postpunk events, crossing the threshold between 'non-scene' space and 'scene' space, they were seen as trying to colonise these spaces in the same way they were seen to appropriate 'goth fashion'. As they viewed goth, its participants, and its spaces as a fascination, participants argued that normies—especially 'freak watchers'—reduced it to a novelty that they believed they could claim and use as fodder for conversation, or, as Evony noted, to 'gossip to all their friends about that one time they went to a goth club'. Participants thus tended to avoid or ignore these 'outsiders' in the hopes that they would 'take the hint [that they were not welcome] and leave'. Dancefloors were one of the central sites where participants enacted these distinctions; I explore this in the final section of this chapter.

Dancefloors, Cultural Conventions & Unwritten 'Rules' for Practice

> [The] clubbing milieu constitutes a distinct lifeworld, with its own rules, norms and expectations of behaviours, styles, body techniques [(Mauss, 1973)] and social interactions…Patrons internalise strategies for clubbing 'correctly', such as ways of dancing, dressing and interacting…By conforming to these performative codes, club-goers enact social and spatial competence.
>
> (Cantillon, 2015: 184–5)

> Dance has a central role in the lives of goths. During the performance of goth dance, style and goth practices are intertwined…individuals exchange ideas and make judgements about and evaluations of others.
>
> (Karampampas, 2017: 210)

These quotations suggest that spaces of dance such as the Dark Alt dancefloors, and the small area in front of the stage at Postpunk gigs were important areas within scenes. Their significance, as Cantillon and Karampampas note in these quotations, is in part tied to their designation as specifically performative spaces. In this final section of the chapter, I explore the significance of these spaces for participants' evaluations of others and demonstrations of personal competence.

Alongside bars and beergardens, dancefloors are some of the most central spaces at scene events, especially in the Dark Alt scene. While Postpunk events also had spaces akin to dancefloors, they functioned differently to those of the clubs. In some venues used by the Postpunk scene, their 'front' was clearly demarcated by the step-up to the stage, emphasised by the sound equipment and lighting at the front of the stage. In other venues, there was no physical marker of the 'stage' area, here the 'front of the dancefloor was marked on the floor with a line of paint or tape, or even simply by the boundary of microphone stands, musical equipment and miscellaneous cords and leads. At gigs, the dancefloor, as opposed to the stage, was simultaneously a space for crowds to stand and watch the bands play or dance. Often, when a small contingent of the crowd elected to dance, the crowd parted and formed an open circle around them, as those closest to the dancers sought to avoid the flailing limbs and bodies of the dancers who Rosa described as being 'moved by' the music in an almost tribal 'letting go'. This use of space is not specific to Postpunk gigs; it was characteristic of the small live shows held in local venues such as the pubs and bars that occasionally hosted the Postpunk scene. Dark Alt dancefloors, however, differed in many ways from this format.

As someone who does not enjoy dancing under any circumstances—what Attfield (2016) calls a 'non-dancer'—I spent hours of my fieldwork observing actions and interactions of goths and other scene participants on the dancefloors of club nights from the side-lines; they were more than spaces where participants performed dance moves discussed in Chapter 5. They were more than open spaces with tacky floors where people danced—in small groups, in pairs, or on their own. These were spaces where people stood in groups to talk, or where they talked whilst dancing (feeling obligated by the designation of the space as a dancefloor). They were also spaces where one stood in line for the bar engaging in the occasional, short-lived conversation with those around them.

Photographers also spent a lot of time on dancefloors at many events, with their cameras trained on the patrons (or the lights) as they danced, their photos often posted and shared on social media. Dark Alt dancefloors occasionally doubled as stages for fashion parades that showcased clothing and accessories from local

(dark) alternative retailers, or as stages for paid dancers, including a small troupe of dark burlesque dancers. Organisers of club nights also ran competitions centred on the dancefloor, where they awarded prizes for attendance, dancing, outfits or costumes.

The most mundane function of these dancefloors however was as a destination for the expression of taste. In this sense, they were destinations for patrons who enthusiastically leapt up from their couches and barstools around the darkened edges of the room and dragged their friends, partners and even the nearest strangers when the DJ played a favoured song. Mass retreat from the dancefloor was also a poignant statement. People made statements about the music being played, about the DJ that was playing the music, or sometimes even other patrons who joined them on the dancefloor—as in instances where an intoxicated random would stumble clumsily about the dancefloor as though it was a 'mainstream club'. Movements onto and from the dancefloor were laden with meaning. These statements were especially marked in instances where there was only a small crowd in attendance, and when large numbers of people simultaneously migrated to or from the dancefloor.

This is what Crossley (2015: 489) refers to as 'shared valuation', where the patrons' movements onto and away from dancefloors, especially *en masse*, are reflections of their approval and disapproval of the music they hear. For Crossley, this valuation potentially extends beyond the dancefloors themselves, to the appearances, dancing styles, and 'reflexive bodily techniques' that participants cultivate to 'attract kudos in the right places' and demonstrate their belonging to a recognisable (music or style) world (2015: 489). The concept of 'bodily techniques' can be traced to Marcel Mauss's (1973) essay 'Techniques of the body'. Mauss defines bodily techniques as socially-specific ways in which individuals 'know how to use their bodies' (Mauss, 1973: 70). While they are tied to particular societies, they evolve over time and vary between different groups within a society. In this way, those that belong to different gender, status, ethnicity, and taste groups will often acquire different ways of doing, understanding, and knowing-about the same activity in accordance with the norms of their respective group(s). In this way, bodily techniques are simultaneously collective and individual.

Crossley (2015) expands Mauss's conception of bodily techniques in relation to musical practice. He frames them as both multiple and part of reflexive processes of practice and engagement between individuals and material and cultural resources, cultural conventions, and personal competencies and qualifications. This conception of bodily techniques draws Mauss's work together with a Wittgensteinian conception of 'understanding' as a public and intersubjective phenomenon (Crossley, 2015: 482–3). As such, whether an individual is perceived as 'understanding' a particular practice is dependent upon both the existence of socially-agreed conventions and recognition of 'correct behaviour'. In this sense, Crossley's interpretation intersects dynamic practice theory: these conventions and recognitions occur in the flow of practice. That is, when participants come together on dancefloors, for example, they collectively negotiate the conventions of the practice as well as the limits of acceptability. Both Malbon (1999) and Hodkinson (2002) identify a similar function of dancefloors.

Although the club spaces that Malbon (1999) discusses differ in many ways from those of my research field, his understanding of the dancing spaces of clubs offers some insight into the significance of dancefloors and their role in the active negotiations of scene and cultural practice. His analysis suggests dancefloors are performative zones where clubbers continually invest and deploy skills, techniques and competencies they have acquired (and continue to acquire) through participating in clubbing occasions. By dancing in these socially-constructed and personally-encountered spaces, clubbers not only negotiate their own identities (as clubbers), but attain and maintain group identifications and social identities (Malbon, 1999: 92). This highlights the role of these kinds of spaces as liminal spaces of potential solidarity and communality (Blum, 2001: 13). It also points to their potential as sites of negotiation among participants, not only of the physical space—for example between dancers and those in line for the bar—but of the norms and boundaries of the practice.

When discussing dancefloors in goth clubs, Hodkinson (2002) describes them as important places within events where the boundaries of 'acceptable' and 'un-

acceptable' practice were negotiated and reinforced by participants. Moreover, he describes them as spaces where 'unwitting transgressions' of conventions and goth standards 'were revealed' in part through the 'laughing, scoffing or disapproving stares' of onlookers (2002: 89-90). Such behaviours were also present in my field site, though rarely were they (only) reactions to patrons' dancing. The laughing, scoffing and disapproving stares were usually reactions to transgressions of style or musical taste. This is demonstrated in Adam's account of when he was starting to participate Adelaide's goth scene during the mid-1990s:

> When I was young and noobish the local 'elite' hated me because they couldn't work out who or what I was. I'd turn up to various nights out in all sorts of outfits ranging from all black, tie-dyed shirts, collars, fishnets, ankhs, shorts, vests—whatever. I made do with what I had and anything interesting I found (like a gold/brown sparkly cape I found in a secondhand shop which had black satin lining so I could wear it two ways)….For some reason it really irked some of the elite that they couldn't simply put me in a box…I was even attacked on the dancefloor…One time one of them grabbed me by the shirt and shouted 'what the hell are you?' in my face.

Although Adam's experimentations evoked an extreme reaction—perhaps a fitting response to his intentionally dramatic and antagonistic testing of the norms of goth style and taste (and the patience of 'the local elites')—it also highlights the function of events as spaces for negotiations of goth in the flow their 'shared enterprise' (Wenger, 1998). During my research, unless tied to broader interpersonal conflicts, reactions to transgressions of style and etiquette were often subtler and/or fleeting.

One of the main and perhaps most passive strategies participants employed for policing goth's boundaries at events was ignoring those who 'broke' with convention. This was one of the most common strategies that goths used to deal with normies and randoms at events; it was also a way to handle those that went against conventions of goth and/or the respective scene. Early on in my fieldwork, for example, before I had fully grasped how to be a goth, I was often on the receiving end of this kind of response. Hodkinson refers to this as the 'short initial period of being ostracized' experienced by newcomers to the scene (2002: 94).

When I discussed my frustration about being ignored by others in the Dark Alt scene with Rik, he pointed out two crucial factors that contributed to my relative 'ostracization' in the scene during the early stages of my research, despite my prior knowledge of some conventions of goth and scene spaces. I had made several naïve mistakes in my own practices owing to my lack of experience, especially in terms of my dress, behaviour (e.g. not dancing and writing in my notebook), and surface knowledge of relevant music/musicians—something that was assumed by my observers yet was mostly true in the first few months of my research.

At the same time, Rik pointed out that I did not have someone who was already a trusted and competent 'insider' to vouch for me socially and pull me up on any faux-pas. In this sense, my 'outsider' status had led to an automatic assumption of non-legitimacy that was reinforced by my performances at events; I was 'just another random'. Like other randoms, I was ignored because of my perceived naïveté and lack of understanding of some of the nuanced conventions of goth and the scene, leading me to unintentionally 'break the rules'. As I discuss in Chapter 7, this changed over time and through recurrent engagements with these practices throughout my research. It is now easier for me to understand, reflexively and with hindsight, how aspects of my dress and behaviour broke what I would later understand to be the taken-for-granted conventions of this field.

Others, especially those who remained relatively ignorant of the standards and conventions of the scene (and where relevant of goth) were ignored only after their behaviour and naïveté were met with other negative reactions such as scoffing. I recall a moment during my research when a woman I was talking to at a Cities in Dust gig stopped mid-sentence to scoff, 'Is that guy really wearing a poncho!' as a man wearing an olive-green and mustard-brown poncho exited the crowd in front of the stage. 'Looks like it,' I replied before we resumed our discussion. This was a candid moment, an off-hand remark made about someone's attire that only held our attention for a moment. However, the deviation from the relatively loose conventions of the context of not only the

Postpunk scene, but a goth band's gig, was enough to warrant a response from this woman.

Off-hand comments, made among friends and acquaintances, were the most common reactions to transgressions of the loosely defined conventions of both goth and the relevant scenes that I observed. Such scoffed critiques of others' mis-steps invoked reactions from others in the immediate groups and could, on the rare occasion become 'inside jokes'. People rarely openly fixated on these transgressions for long, especially not whilst at events, though some scene members revisited witnessed transgressions over social media and/or among friends. In these cases, they become part of broader discourses about goth and how it 'should' and 'should not' be interpreted or practiced. For some participants, these enduring responses to perceived transgressions of goths' boundaries, conventions, and tastes collided with larger interpersonal conflicts and differences of opinion and carried over into other contexts.

Eye-rolling and the occasional head-shaking were other ways that participants reacted to perceived transgressions. These were common, for example, when seemingly disinterested people flocked to the relatively empty dancefloors when songs like the Sisters' "Temple of Love", or The Smiths' "How Soon is Now?" played. This particular reaction to such occurrences was often enacted by those with a more 'traditional' or 'old school' view, who Adam suggested had become increasingly cynical due to regular disappointment and nostalgia for 'the old scene'. During my research I witnessed many individuals, not just 'old-timers' (Lave and Wenger, 1991), roll their eyes or shake their head when the same people predictably leapt to their feet and bounced to the dancefloor for these songs and immediately leaving the room or returning to the side-lines at the song's end. An older goth explained during an interview that their eye-rolling was often tied to their perception that many of the people running to the dancefloor believed that 'loving' these songs authenticated their 'gothness'. Many experienced goths had come to associate this behaviour and music with the naïveté of babybats and those who never move beyond a surface understanding of goth.

Here, babybats' transgression was less about their musical taste, and more about the tendency for these individuals to complain when DJs played less standard goth tracks at so-called goth nights. This highlights that the negotiations of practices, definitions, and authenticities at events also have broader significance within goth, despite their temporality. At the same time, it points to an important aspect of authenticity for goths: a genuine understanding of both the need for *variation* in practice and taste and that goth is *more than* popular characterisations and stereotypes. While I explore the relationship between individuals and such practical forms of competence and the associated legitimacies in Chapter 7, it is worth noting its significance here. Firstly, this competence combines what Giddens (1984) describes as the practical consciousness—a deliberately cultivated competence—with an abstract form of competence centred upon understandings of what is 'appropriate' and 'good' (authentic) practice in a given practical environment (Shove et al., 2012: 23), and what is 'inappropriate' and 'bad' (inauthentic) practice.

The second noteworthy point here involves two shifts in understanding. First, one must distinguish between the conventions and associated forms of competence and the individuals who negotiate them in practice. Second, one must understand, as I outlined at the beginning of this chapter, that 'the scene' is not goth, nor is goth 'the scene', and thereby differentiate between the conventions and competencies of 'the scene' and those of 'goth' as they are enacted by participants at events. As noted earlier, the necessary hybridity of 'the scene' has meant that some of the conventions and associated competencies that participants police at events are not specific to goth but are standardised aspects of the respective scenes. This leaves questions about whether it is possible to gain insight into the conventions of goth through events and whether individuals' reactions are caused by observed breaches of scene convention or of goth convention.

The response to these questions comes back to matters of scene history, individual competence (as knowledge, know-how, and personal understandings) and experience over time. At a general level, the history of 'the Adelaide goth scene' is also one of Adelaide's Dark Alt and Postpunk scenes, thus, many (not all) conventions of goth persist within these contemporary scenes. However,

the fragmented and partial nature of many people's knowledge of this history does little to alleviate the difficulty of distinguishing between the conventions of goth and those of the scene. Here, individual competencies are important.

Individual competencies in the conventions of a practice develop through the negotiation of various experiences and understandings, collated from a range of sources. It is through persistent and committed participation in the scene—through events and other aspects of the scene—and in reference with other resources, that individuals may develop their understanding of the conventions and behaviours that of goth. In a similar way, participants also develop an understanding of what conventions, behaviours and norms are *not* goth. This is part of the transformation from 'babybat' to 'just a regular goth', as is being corrected by 'the local elites' (as Adam calls them) who have more experience and greater levels of personal competence and legitimacy in relation to 'the scene' and/or to goth.

Negative retorts were among the most common responses to perceived transgressions in both scenes in my research field. My research also indicated, however, that conventions and standards were also negotiated at events through positive reinforcement of 'correct' or 'good' behaviours and tastes. Compliments about outfits or music taste—commonly displayed through the

Figure 10: Gift certificate prize to an event sponsor that I was awarded for my outfit at a "Uniform Fetish" club night (B. Morrison, 2013).

Figure 11: The outfit I wore to the event, complete with customised officer's hat and skirt that I designed and made, and my second-hand 'goth platform' Demonia boots (C. Groves, 2013).

inclusion of band logos in an individual's attire or open enthusiasm for certain music at events—were often exchanged in club bathrooms, beergardens, or when in queues at the bar, bathrooms, or beergarden. I observed these interactions in both scenes and they were often spontaneous. There were, however, other overt occurrences of positive reinforcement at club nights that were less spontaneous. These often came directly from event organisers and DJs.

At many club nights during my fieldwork, organisers arranged event sponsors who donated prizes—e.g. CDs, gift vouchers, posters, make-up, accessories—

that were presented to the 'best dressed' patrons, to people for their dancing, or to those who came to events early in the night (see Figures 10 and 11). For some, these prizes were potential incentives, encouraging them to put more effort into their outfits, spend more time on the dancefloor, or arrive earlier and stay until prizes were awarded.

Some DJs and other prominent figures in the scenes also demonstrated other more enduring forms of positive reinforcement. In several cases DJs, who were often older and/or more experienced scene participants, took on the role of a mentor for younger participants. Sometimes this took the form of encouraging them to take an active role in the scene as DJs or musicians or contribute to the planning and organisation of events. I discuss this behaviour further in Chapter 7, where I discuss its significance for individuals. In the present context it is notable for its significance to the longevity of goth within these local scenes for such relationships often resulted in more enduring and engaged forms of commitment from younger participants (the mentored) and older participants pass on practical information and knowhow to 'the next generation', as they sought to ensure the 'survival' of the scene beyond their own practices. This is where one can distinguish between Blum's 'idle onlookers' and committed scene participants who are 'engaged in the persistence of the form' and prepared to make 'sacrifices' for the scene (2001: 10). In my research field, such sacrifices were not only characterised by 'sacrifices' of time or resources, but were, Adam explained, frequently matters of event 'purity' and money.[55] My participants described these as 'investments' in goth. These are central to my discussion in Chapter 7, in the present chapter, however, they support the idea that participants' engagements with one another at events frequently involve more than socialising, drinking and dancing.

As I have argued throughout this chapter, the social spaces of events are crucial sites where participants of diverse but 'sympathetic' cultural practices negotiate the boundaries of their practices as well as enact processes of 'testing mode'. In this chapter I have focused on scenes, which centre on the coming-together of

[55] Here, Adam refers to the 'purity' of genre at events. 'Pure' events are what Hodkinson (2002) describes as 'specialist subcultural' events.

groups of individuals from diverse cultural practices such as goth to collectively produce a 'safe space' that is 'public' but is also policed by participants' as they mark the boundaries of their space through style and music (Thornton, 1995: 19–20). I also highlighted how the two scenes in which I conducted a significant proportion of my participant observation, and within which goths practiced goth in Adelaide, have a shared history despite their almost complete isolation from one another during my fieldwork. Throughout this chapter, I have also highlighted how goths in these scenes sought to distance their own practices from those of less committed participants—who Blum calls 'idle onlookers'. In Chapter 7, I continue this analysis, focusing in particular upon goths' identity practices and efforts to claim and maintain an authentic and legitimate status as individuals and as goths.

Chapter 7 - Individuals & Goth

> To be honest, you could ask a thousand people to tell you what goth is, and you would get a thousand different answers. It's a really personal thing.
>
> (Kate)

> In reality, if you asked a hundred people [what goth is] you would get a hundred different opinions.
>
> (Evony)

> My opinion [about goth] will be coloured by my experience as will anyone else's opinion.
>
> (Adam)

> Really, everybody has, like, a different starting point in…to goth music or goth culture. Everyone has, like, the first goth band that they listen to, [who] look "this" way, or they sound like "this" and talk about…a certain thing, then that sort of drives you to find more bands or more clothes [like theirs] or more books about that same thing because you like it.
>
> (Rosa)

> Briony: What would you say goth is?
>
> Rik:[[hesitantly, after long thoughtful pause]] Hmmm (.) 'what is goth?' (.) I know the really typical answer is 'it is whatever you want it to be'. And that is SOOO wrong on so many levels. It's just- it's not- …Goth is just- (.) it's- (.) like- (.) it's (.) dark self-expression of (.) a particular sort of- (.) It's something that was borne from music and turned into a way of…expression, of yourself. And then grew into being more…flexible, but it is-…[[frustrated]] I am just trying to think of what it- what it is to me, and that is really hard to do.…it is just, 'the fuck is goth??'
>
> (exchange with Rik)

Despite the myriad ways these individuals spoke about goth as a practice that exists beyond individuals, as I have discussed throughout this thesis, the above quotations indicate that participants also frequently understand goth as having an important subjective character. Even Rik, who self-identified as a rivethead rather than a goth, began by explaining goth as 'dark self-expression' that connects with certain tastes. Every individual has their own 'starting point', their own tastes and interests that they pursue, elaborate upon and develop, and they draw inspiration from and are influenced by a variety of goth and non-goth sources. This chapter draws some of the key ideas discussed in previous chapters together and considers how individual interpretations of goth are

created and maintained, and their significance in the lives and practices of those who identify with goth. Importantly, this discussion pushes the boundaries of my dynamic practice theoretical approach by shifting focus from the practice and its attendant elements to focus specifically on 'practitioners' as individuals.

Rather than focusing on the behaviours, understandings, and identities of individual agents, practice theory seeks to understand how socially patterned and shared practices form, change, and are reproduced. This frame is rooted in an analytical desire to understand practices as external to the bodies and minds of practitioners. Practice theorists therefore maintain that the most persistent practices are those that structure the thoughts and actions of individuals and are anchored in socially negotiated actions, meanings and discourses (Swidler, 2001: 95). In *The Design of Everyday Life*, Shove and colleagues (2007) sustain this top-down interpretive frame. Following Warde (2005), they suggest that, rather than being driven by the desires and subjectivities of individuals ('users'), practices *configure* individual desires, creating wants, and shaping actions. Accordingly, for example, 'consumers "need" new kitchens and new types of equipment to accomplish new kitchen-based practices,' which often extend beyond preparing and eating food. In this understanding, individual consumption practices and ideas about what a 'normal' kitchen is, and what can and cannot be done in this room, relate to the accomplishment of specific (kitchen-related) practices, which are bound to broader discourses about 'home' and 'normal' family life in a given society rather than individual imperatives (Shove et al., 2007: 25).

In their introduction to their edited collection *Demanding Energy: Space, Time and Change*, Allison Hui, Rosie Day, and Gordon Walker (2018b) outline a similar argument. They state that authors in the volume seek to understand energy demand via 'the practices and processes that underpin and ultimately give rise to the consumption of energy from different sources…and the use of various energy services' (Hui et al., 2018b: 2). An essential part of this argument seeks to overcome the limitations of prevailing discourses about energy and sustainability, which largely focus on individual attitudes, behaviours and choices. For these authors, such arguments provide limited insights because of their tight focus on individuals and individual choice as the source of meaning

and action rather than on the socially constituted patterns and routines of practices that individual actors share and reproduce in their actions and statements. This interpretive frame positions individuals as 'carriers' or hosts of practices: individual agents are 'body/minds who "carry" and "carry out" social practices' (Reckwitz, 2002: 256).

Despite the overarching emphasis on practices as inherently social, individuals are still central to the dynamic practice framework. Shove, Pantzar, and Watson (2012) observe that individuals' role as carriers of practices makes them an indispensable part of a practice's survival, growth, and evolution over time and place. Furthermore, they argue, it is erroneous to see this carrying as a passive process in which individuals lack agency. Rather, practice is an inherently active process: individuals actively integrate a practice's elements in specific configurations as they carry it out (Shove et al., 2012: 126). In this sense, individuals have agency, but this agency remains tethered to the patterned structure of the practice, which is located *outside* the bodies and minds of specific practitioners even as it shapes their thoughts and actions (Hui et al., 2018a: 142). Although this approach acknowledges individual variations within a practice, these authors concentrate on the dynamics of the practices that they seek to understand. Individual variation and the everyday lives of individual practitioners remain peripheral in these analyses, meaning that, while individuals are central figures in this framework, they are also side-lined.

Etienne Wenger (1998) maintains, however, that it is possible to narrow the focus of analysis on individuals without losing sight of the social. Such a move expands the analysis beyond the practice and calls attention to broader processes, structures, and identities. This is done by directing attention to issues of identity, which act as 'a pivot between the social and the individual' meaning that the two may be understood in reference to one other. Wenger writes:

> Building an identity consists of negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in social communities. [Focusing on identity] avoids the simplistic individual-social dichotomy without doing away with the distinction. The resulting perspective is neither individualistic nor abstractly institutional or societal. It does justice to the lived experience of identity while recognising its social character—it is the social, the cultural, the historical with a human face.
>
> (Wenger, 1998: 145)

From this perspective, individuality is a fundamental aspect of the practice, and the individual is seen simultaneously as an individual with a distinctive identity, and a social being who identifies with certain groups or practices. I suggest that this also highlights the degree of overlap between participants' identities, actions and words, and how they 'carry' and 'carry out' the practice (Reckwitz, 2002: 256), for example, through seeking to assert its legitimacy as a distinct cultural practice that is 'normal to do' and 'normal to be'. This approach to practices allows greater room for understanding individual dynamics without implying that individuals' actions, interests, thoughts, and even their agencies, are *determined* by a practice. At the same time, it provides the necessary space to conceive of goths as more than their goth practices and tastes without restricting the analysis to these individuals or their individuality.

The central focus of this chapter is therefore on how individuals engage with goth and with other aspects of their lives to be 'authentic' goths and how these negotiations of identity feed back into goth as a cultural entity. I explore how such personal negotiations shape individuals' expectations about how goth should and should not be practiced and understood by 'authentic' *and* 'inauthentic' individuals. These expectations are particularly notable when directed at people who are most 'visible' as representatives of goth and goths more broadly—e.g. goth musicians, bloggers and YouTubers—as it is through these individuals that the practices of goth(s) may be freely subjected to the gaze of not only 'outsiders' but the popular imagination. I therefore also consider how these everyday understandings of how goth should/can be practiced influence participants' perceptions of how those who occupy a 'legitimate' position vis-a-vis goth should behave and the image of goth that should be evident in the legitimate individual's doings and sayings.

I reason that individual interpretations of goth are therefore part of the larger picture of goth as a distinct cultural practice. This perspective frames goth as a dynamic practice that is meaningful to participants in different and subjective ways. As I discuss in the final section of this chapter, individuals' sense of connection with goth motivates them to carry out practices intended, for example, to 'protect' goth from 'corruption', or to frame goth as a 'normal' thing for them to do and be. Individual discourses about their practice and its

simultaneously distinctive and 'normal' character can therefore be seen as central to understanding goth as a dynamic and everyday phenomenon. These discourses are also important features of goths' practices, especially in forums that are aimed at 'educating' or 'helping' babybats learn about goth as a cultural practice (practice-as-entity) and about how goth is practiced (practice-as-performance) by 'real' or 'regular' goths.

Throughout my fieldwork, established goths used several key phrases when giving advice to newer and younger goths about being goth, two of these are important to this chapter: 'Just be yourself' and 'do your own research'. These phrases and their variants stress the importance of both having an authentic identity that is rooted in one's 'natural' self, and an individual's 'understanding' of goth, which combines tacit experience with explicit information from a wide range of sources. These phrases are also underscored by expectations that I have discussed in previous chapters, including the belief that authentic individuals need not 'force' themselves to be goth, and the idea that 'real goths', propelled by a sense of passion, go beyond surface interpretations to understand goth in a deeply personal manner.

'Just Be Yourself'

Throughout Chapter 6, I considered Blum's (2001) distinction between authentic members of a scene and 'idle onlookers', who have little more than a cursory interest in the scene. Fox (1987) observes an analogous distinction within punk and differentiates between 'real punks' and 'pretenders'. 'Real punks' are committed to and passionate about punk but individuals who maintain an uncommitted attitude and are seen as merely using punk to make themselves 'look cool' are classified as 'pretenders' due to the perceived falsity and superficiality of their participation and association with punk (cf. Lewin and Williams, 2009). In these examples, participants' distinctions and the associated levels of status and capital, are on a scale from 'committed' to 'uncommitted' participation. I argue that goths also use such criteria of commitment and participation to distinguish between authentic and inauthentic identities.

Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1990) make similar observations when investigating how individuals make distinctions about authenticity in and across youth cultures. Their study explores two forms of authenticity: individual authenticity, associated with individual identity; and 'cultural authenticity'—which I identify as a matter of legitimacy. These authors understand these identities as intertwined rather than simply matters of individual status. Within this perspective, group members' authenticity and commitment impacts perceptions about the group's or a practice's legitimacy and a perceived lack of commitment or personal authenticity among members: 'a superficial interest' (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1990: 263) exemplifies an illegitimate 'culture'. This understanding overlaps in many ways with my argument in this thesis about the relationship between individual authenticity and the legitimacy of the practice; I return to this later in the chapter.

Relevant to the present discussion, however, is Widdicombe and Wooffitt's observation that participants make 'common-sense distinctions' between 'being' a member and 'doing' things associated with membership (1990: 274; see also Lewin and Williams, 2009: 65). These distinctions, the authors explain, rely upon demonstrations of 'correct' motivations, or the possession of the 'right' attributes, or 'semantic dimensions' (McLeod, 1999), which symbolically mark 'insiders' from 'outsiders' (see also Harkness, 2012). Accordingly, authentic individuals are 'true' to not only the 'subculture' but to their 'inner-self'. Expanding upon Widdicombe and Wooffitt's work, Muggleton (2000) identifies a similar sentiment within his participants' statements about their association with 'unconventional' cultural practices. He explains that his research participants commonly expressed a sense of 'fit' between their inner-self and their 'subculture' that pre-dated their participation or knowledge of the 'subculture'.

For many of Muggleton's participants, this 'fit' relied upon feelings of 'difference' and estrangement 'from the majority' (2000: 87). Citing interview excerpts, Muggleton comments that participants used the pre-existence of such feelings to support their claims about the authenticity of their identities, their sense of style, and their 'subcultural' affiliation. He writes,

> It is…whether or not 'it comes from inside'…that is the marker of authenticity and makes the difference between doing it 'genuinely' or 'falsely'. Those who merely 'adopt' an unconventional appearance without possessing the necessary 'inner' qualities are regarded…as 'plastic', 'not real'.
>
> (Muggleton, 2000: 90)

These individuals framed authenticity as rooted in a 'natural' or 'essential' fit between their sense of self and the cultural practice that they associated with. This is what McLeod (1999) identifies as the 'socio-psychological' dimension of authenticity, which rests upon participants' comparisons between 'staying true to yourself' and 'following mass trends'. Participants use such distinctions to mark boundaries between identities and identifications that are authentic—'real', 'sincere', 'genuine', 'natural'—and those that are inauthentic—'fake', 'insincere', 'ingenuine', 'forced'. For Muggleton, this interpretation of authentic identities as 'natural' and inauthentic identities as 'forced' can be explained with reference to participants' discourses about style. Within these discourses, he suggest, lies a perception that one's style is not merely 'something you put on' but 'part of you' (2000: 93). I observed similar distinctions among goths. I noted in Chapter 4, for example, how goth blogger Jillian Venters (2009) identified a 'subtle and unmistakable distinction' between someone who is comfortable being goth—because it is who they are—and someone that wears goth as a 'costume'.

Such distinctions were common throughout my research field, especially online, where they formed a large portion of the content on goth-related blogs and vlogs that offered advice or shared information about goth with audiences. Here, this sentiment was both implicit and explicit within goths' discourses and actions as they discussed the importance of 'being oneself' and 'fitting goth into your identity' rather than 'moulding your identity to fit goth'. The pervasiveness of this message online is tied, at least in part, to the importance of such resources for many goths, especially for individuals who may be new to goth and therefore lacking the relevant local knowledge necessary for participation in local scenes. This prevalence may also be interpreted as part of experienced participants' desire to help people who are new to goth—whether babybat or mallbat—understand the difference between 'being goth' because it 'is part of who you are' and 'doing things that goths do because that's what goths do'.

Many of the individuals I spoke with during my research also stressed the importance of 'being true to oneself' over-and-above seeking to 'be a goth'. Research participants, especially those who were older and more experienced, regularly discussed the difference between liking or doing things 'because they are goth' and 'liking/doing goth things because *you* like/enjoy doing them', irrespective of their association with goth. The notion that individuals must act in a manner that is consistent with their 'inner-self' as well as their tastes, interests and means was, however, seldom as overt as it was online. Among my research participants, the idea that individuals should 'be themselves' was frequently an undercurrent within their discussions about goth and how it 'should be' practiced.

In many interviews, participants expressed this attitude when talking about goth as an outlet through which they could explore their identities and express themselves in a more 'natural' or 'authentic' manner than they felt was possible in 'regular' or 'mainstream' society. Evony suggested, for example, that many goths and other 'misfits' are often creative people who 'do things differently from other people' and this creativity is often supported by various aspects of goth's sound, style, themes, and aesthetics. In the following quotation, she marks a line between these 'genuinely different' individuals and 'people who *pretend* to belong to particular subcultures to "look cool"'.

> Most…'real goths' do tend to be quite creative and forward thinking (.) that's just something I have found from my own observations and interactions ;-)
>
> …Most people who are genuinely out of the mainstream just tend to be 'different' from other people, they don't quite fit in. Misfits, if you like. Misfits always tend to do things a bit differently from other people. Creativity can be channelled into all sorts of things (.) many people who are into the Goth/Deathrock subculture love DJing, for example, or are musicians themselves.

For Evony—who is an artist, DJ, and frequently customises her clothing—her goth practices and identity are intertwined with her feelings of being a 'misfit', an identity that she proudly embraces and utilises in her everyday life.

Rosa identified a similarly self-expressive character within goth. She highlighted its function as an outlet for creativity and explorations of self-identity and 'the

human psyche' for those who feel 'outside of the mainstream or norm' due to genuine experiences of difference. Importantly, Rosa acknowledged this sense of difference as a common characteristic of most 'subcultures', but noted that, whatever style she has explored in her life, she has always been drawn back to the 'darkness', 'drama', and uncanniness of goth.[56] These characteristics, she explained, were a fitting source of inspiration and expression for her and many other goths. Rosa also described how these dimensions of goth were part of its initial appeal for her as a teenager:

> Everything is sort of unkind and *exaggerated* when you're a teenager.…I think that goth has a wonderful…decadence and aspect of drama, where everything is heightened and- In a way it is like 'do-or-die' or that sort of thing. There is a real sort of *abandon* in the music, which, if you are so inclined- if you can use the energy and those sorts of thoughts about being alive and the people that you interact with and, you know, humanity and the world, then- it's just (.) really good.
>
> …There's a lot of *emotion* and sort of psyche or psychological aspects that get discussed in goth music.…It all depends on the sort of person you are and what's important to you.

As she aged, Rosa continued to use goth as an expressive outlet, especially, she noted, after forming Cities in Dust. Being in a goth band, co-writing, making, and performing music in front of live audiences became an important emotional, physical, and psychological outlet for her.

> There's definitely a lot of emotion and sort of *introspection* [in goth]. For me it is like *mental* but also *physical* effects of those sorts of things. So, they can be what you think about and that can cover like your views of other people and views about yourself; there is probably a lot of reflection…I've definitely got a lot of songs about love—but it is not necessarily *all* soppy love songs, there is a lot of disappointment and sort of nightmarish things and anxiety and control and…power coming across…I think, in goth, you have got the opportunity to dramatize things. So, you can make things quite apocalyptic or bleak, which can suit the sound of the *actual* music.

Throughout this interview, Rosa repeatedly highlights the significance of what she calls the 'introspective' characteristics of goth. For her and many other research participants, this introspection—often expressed through individual identity and 'being yourself'—is a key aspect of goth. During interviews, Rosa identified herself as an introspective ('very self-centred', 'insular') person. She

[56] See Van Elferen (2012).

felt there was an important and 'organic' fit between her association with goth and her inner-self, which is independent from her identification as a goth. While she could not deny the fit between goth and her essential self, she could selectively claim identification with goth depending on context. As such, Rosa felt she could 'be herself'—an individual with multiple non-goth relationships, interests, responsibilities, and so on—whilst also being a goth, which she considered a better fit with her inner-self than other similar practices and styles that she had experimented with.

This sense of fit between an individual's identity and goth is what Venters (2009) refers to when writing about individuals who are 'comfortable being goth'. Venters also identifies a false 'purism' within many interpretations of goth and sees the ideals of the 'Real Goth' and the 'Secret Goth Cabal' as central to this purist attitude. Real Goths are idealised 'perfect' goths who 'tick all the boxes' on a list of 'things that are goth' and who limit their identity and practices to things that are on this list. The Secret Goth Cabal, sometimes called 'The Goth Police', is a fictional committee of 'elitist' goths—goth Übermenschen[57]—who monitor the lives and activities of people who claim association with goth, award and revoke fictional 'goth membership cards' and 'goth points', and are *the* authority on all things goth (see Venters, 2009: 12).

While many goths use these labels satirically, they are borne from the overly-judgemental and self-legitimating behaviour of some goths, who are seen to imagine themselves as not only all-knowing and all-powerful authorities on goth but as the paragon of 'Real Goth'. In the terms of this thesis, these labels are used to describe individuals and groups that perceive themselves as indisputably authentic and legitimate authorities on goth. Such individuals maintain that their understandings of goth are definitive and expect others to accept their judgements as law rather than acknowledging their subjective character. At the same time, such assertions about the authority of a single individual or group to 'determine' what 'is' and 'is not' goth chides with the dynamic character of goth

[57] Cybulska (2015: 1) suggests that Nietzsche 'evoked an ideal of the Übermensch ['ultimate man']…to ward off any future assaults on his fragile self'.

as a cultural practice that is practiced in diverse ways with reference to a consistently distinctive set of materials, meanings, and competencies.

Many goths view individuals who claim to embody these ideal characters as laughable. Kate, for example, chuckled as she recalled memories of a woman from Adelaide's 'old goth scene' who 'thought she was *the* most goth that ever walked the earth…who treated everyone as inferior and acted like she was, you know, goth royalty or something!'. While many of the participants in my research field asserted a similar authority about how goth should be defined and practiced, there is a crucial distinction to be drawn between the behaviour of 'Real Goths' and these participants. During conversations with key participants and on many of the social media posts that I read during my research, research participants sought to defuse accusations of such elitism by acknowledging the potential for variation of opinion and interpretation. In this way, they distinguished between their behaviour and the egotistical behaviour that they saw as ingenuine and used to deny the legitimacy of such individuals as representative of goth. To many goths, then, 'Real Goths' were viewed as overcompensating for a lack of 'fit' between their self or style and goth, suggesting desperation and immaturity, characteristics often associated with mallbats or goffs. In many ways, this kind of behaviour overlaps with an all-or-nothing view of goth, that ignores the dynamic and multifaceted nature of everyday life.

Venters (2009) also discusses this ignorant attitude and explains that, while many goths feel a 'fit' between their personal identities and goth, this does not mean they are (or must be) 'spooky creatures of darkness all the time,' that they 'don't do anything unless there is a gothy aspect to it,' or that they '*always* wear black and a face full of makeup' (2009: 21–2). She also describes something that many of my research participants felt was common-sense: goth may be a core part of who goths are,

> but it isn't the *only* thing they are. While their dark and spooky mindset and tastes probably add a shadowy tinge to just about everything they do, they don't only do things that are on some sort of pre-approved goth activity list.…[P]eople who tend to spout off the Real Goth nonsense, or who believe you must be spooktacular all the time, are generally…worried that someone, somewhere, is judging them, finding them lacking, and that it's

> only a matter of time before the Secret Goth Cabal swoops down and exposes them for the gothy fraud that they are.
>
> (Venters, 2009: 24)

Adam made similar comments. When talking about the difference between 'being yourself' and 'being goth', for example, he remarked that 'Anyone who believes they must conform 100% to anything might have identity issues', and added, 'You still have to be you' even when you are a goth. These comments reinforce the perception that individuals should not confine themselves to 'being goth' but should be 'more than goth'—much in the same way that goth is more than its popular stereotypes. It also highlights a caveat that participants attached to the ideal of 'being yourself': people also have to 'survive' in non-goth contexts such as work and school. Kahn-Harris recognises a similar sentiment within the extreme metal scene, observing that scene 'members still need to earn a living and maintain relationships with the world outside of the…scene' (2007: 58). He notes, however, that these scene participants frame the 'need to survive' as problematic by positioning 'the scene' and 'the world' beyond it in opposition to one another.

In contrast, many goths in my research field, particularly those who were more experienced (and often older),[58] viewed the goth and 'non-goth' aspects of their lives/identities as pieces of the same puzzle. This is notable in my discussions with Rosa about how goth fits into her everyday life. When I asked her if/how her goth identity and interests came through in her day-to-day life, she listed several areas where goth was a significant factor before stating that, like most people, she still had to 'function in society for day-to-day things' like work and school. By this, Rosa means that she may regularly feel drawn toward the more goth-centred aspects of her identity, but she is also a 'normal' person, bound to the rules and norms of society and therefore not completely free to 'just be herself' in all contexts. She also noted that, as she has matured, she has come

[58] Individuals whom I describe here as 'more experienced' are often, but not always (e.g. Rosa), older members, whose age has meant they have likely participated more in the practice and have had different opportunities to engage with goth (with or without the internet). This emphasis on *experience* rather than *age* acknowledges the differing levels of potential competence and experience of individuals who come to the practice at a later age, in particular, it accounts for those such as myself, whose concerted participation in goth began after their 'teenage years'.

to understand that this need to 'survive' does not threaten the more goth-centred aspects of her identity because, at the end of the day, she is still herself.

When discussing being goth and work during an interview with Evony and Kate, they made similar observations. Both women felt that it is usually younger goths who (mistakenly) assume that everything goths do and like must be goth and that they can only 'be themselves' when wearing 'goth clothes' and make-up, which are often frowned upon at school and in formal/professional settings. Evony and Kate explained this was partly due to the general sense of insecurity that teenagers and young adults feel as 'they try to figure out who they are'. They also noted that this may be the result of an enduring misconception that deviations from 'the goth list' risk being seen as 'inauthentic' or 'fake'. The significance of these concerns among younger goths is supported by the prevalence of discussions around these topics online. These kinds of posts were common on blogs and YouTube channels known for their role as 'advice' forums.

I touched on this content in Chapter 3, noting that many young goths vented their frustration and/or exasperation across a range of social media about 'adults' limiting or completely cutting-off their access to goth due to the popular image of goth as 'potentially harmful'. Teenagers also used social media to complain that such restrictions were 'suffocating', or that they could not 'be themselves' if they were not free to be goth all day, every day. When I discussed this content with Adam during an interview, he made the following comments:

> When on the clock at work you are theirs. In your time you are yours. Can you incorporate elements of you into a workplace/school? To some degree yes but it depends on what you do and where.…When I worked security I had to erase all irelevant elements in uniform. Yet working at Proscenium I had black shirt and tie with a spider brooch as a tie pin…
>
> In the end few can be themselves completely at work.…Survival comes first.…In life truly being yourself is a luxury and not all people can have it all the time. Kids don't get that. Society has rules even if you don't like them. If you want to survive you have to abide by most of them.…Plus it gets expensive. You need money to buy all that neat goth stuff [[commented with a hint of sarcasm]].

These comments about the necessity of survival and compromise appear to contradict the ideal of 'being yourself' within goth. In many ways, it calls to

mind Goffman's (1956) identity politics in which there are two 'stages', where an individual 'performs' a different identity. The 'frontstage' is a 'public face' that relies on an individual's understanding of social norms and expectations, which they use to act appropriately in social contexts. One's 'backstage', on the other hand, is a relatively private identity that individuals conceal in most public contexts. This more-or-less private identity is comprised of those traits that are often 'undesirable' and have the potential to contradict or ruin the 'frontstage' image that one presents to the world. It is only here, Goffman argues, that an individual may relax, 'drop his front [and] step out of character' (1956: 69–70). For Goffman, this backstage is home to an individual's most 'true', 'sincere' or 'authentic' identity; it is where individuals have the 'luxury', as Adam says, to 'truly' be themselves. This raises questions about how goths can sincerely be themselves when society demands that they 'conceal' aspects of their goth identity to 'survive' beyond the limited 'safe spaces' of goth (see Chapter 6) or 'in their bedrooms', where Evony suggested that 'real goth' was most often practiced in Adelaide.

The answers to such questions lay in two key dimensions discussed above. Firstly, the notion that goths are more than their goth tastes and practices suggests they can still 'be themselves' even when they do not 'look goth'. This is one of the main reasons that many goths stress the centrality of 'goth music' as the 'core' for both goth and goths' identities (see Chapter 4). In this regard, an individual's authenticity as a goth is not dependent upon whether they *wholly* conform to a set of standards, 'ticking boxes' off a list. Rather, goths often judge the authenticity of an individual's identity and association with goth based on how they negotiate this identity whilst also being 'normal'. Here, the term 'normal' is important; this kind of 'normal' is not someone that conforms to a 'normative' or 'dominant' set of tastes and practices. It is someone who accepts that life is about negotiating different social contexts and learns when to downplay non-normative characteristics of one's identity to 'survive' in society. For most goths who have moved beyond their 'babybat years', such negotiations do not taint their 'gothness' or sense of difference but help them 'survive' whilst also embracing their goth tastes and practices.

This ties into the second point: for participants, being goth is not about 'conform[ing] 100%' to goth, *only* doing things goths do and *only* liking things goths like; being goth involves negotiating different aspects of one's identity, tastes, and membership in multiple social groups in the flow of everyday life. This understanding of goth identities in practice follows a similar logic to Wenger (1998), who suggests that collective engagement in a practice ('community of practice') involves negotiating diverse practices and identities (see also Hui, 2017). Wenger writes that 'We define who we are by the ways we reconcile our various forms of membership into one identity [and] by negotiating local ways of belonging to broader [sociocultural] constellations and of manifesting broader styles and discourses' when engaging in a practice or community (Wenger, 1998: 149). Although Wenger's focus here is on the ways that individuals negotiate memberships in multiple social groups and practices, he clarifies that individuals do not simply turn practice-specific aspects of their identities on and off (1998: 159).

Instead, individuals downplay certain aspects of their identity and highlight others in certain contexts. This is not a mechanical occurrence but transpires in the 'ongoing flow of reflective moments' that comprise everyday life and which rely upon the individual's understanding of the tacit rules and norms in certain contexts (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 54; cf. Giddens, 1979). Such negotiations are an important factor influencing the goth style known as 'corporate goth' or 'corpgoth'. This style centres on the notion that goths who have jobs with more formal or 'business' dress-codes can subtly incorporate elements of 'goth style' into their work outfits without being unprofessional. A central tenet of corpgoth is to 'survive' in the world without erasing all traces of one's goth identity and sense of style. Kate, for example, noted that she had dyed her hair black since she was a teenager—something that she linked to her goth identity, personal tastes and style—but changing her natural hair colour was also acceptable in her professional life. This comes back to Reckwitz's (2002: 249–50) suggestion that practices are consist of certain elements that are not only interconnected with one another but brought together by participants in diverse ways as they negotiate the practice in their everyday lives.

For an individual to negotiate such boundaries, however, they require sufficient understanding of a practice's boundaries, of what remains beyond the bounds of acceptability in certain contexts, and of the degree of tolerable flexibility within certain contexts and environments (Wenger, 1998; Hui, 2017). Individuals with little experience within a given practice (e.g. goth) or type of context (e.g. work), who have a desire to resist or 'rebel' against the restrictions imposed by authority figures (such as in school) may find it difficult to effectively identify and negotiate these boundaries in their identity practices. Such experience is vital to an individual's negotiations of goth within their own lives, which requires competence that is built up over time and through repeated engagements with the practice and other participants. In part, this clarifies why 'longevity of participation' (Hodkinson, 2002) and 'sustained commitment' (Bennett, 2006) are central within participants' discourses about authentic participation and identities. At the same time, as Rosa suggests in the quotation at the beginning of the chapter, everyone has to begin somewhere. This underscores the significance of the online spaces and information discussed in Chapter 5. It also highlights the expectation that individuals 'do their research' to help them learn about goth to 'become just regular goths' (Rik).

'Do Your Own Research'

> Knowing the history helps to understand it better and connect with it more. Plus you find some great stuff along the way in looking into it. But I think pursuing music is all part of the participation. It doesn't feel like workk when you have a genuine interest.
>
> This is why I don't get why some people don't want to learn more about goth when they participate in [it]. Learning more and discovering great bands you didn't know before is part of the fun.
>
> (Adam)

When discussing YouTube in Chapter 5, I explained how (and why) Evony listed bands and music tracks for me to search for on the site, to get me started on the road to understanding what she meant by 'goth music'. It is important to observe that she did not provide me with hyperlinks to them—which would have been easy given the digital medium through which we were communicating—but inferred that I should search for them myself. This interview was one of many incidents where my interactions with participants drew attention to the importance of self-motivated 'research' within goth. After

spending time in my research field, I recognised that this sentiment was not tied to my position as 'a researcher of goth'—with participants expecting me to follow-up their leads—but something that was expected of all participants.

In the above quotation Adam observes that such research, despite it being an expectation among goths, did not feel like a chore to those who have a 'genuine interest' in goth. This connects to a point that I come back to throughout this chapter, that goths believe in a 'natural' fit between one's essential self and their association with goth. For 'real' goths, discovering things about goth and learning about its history as well as its more contemporary aspects, was not 'work' but pleasure.

When speaking with Adam about finding information about goth 'after the internet', he discussed how he often advised people to 'look at a wide range of sources', 'participate', and 'develop an understanding of goth through their own experiences' and insights. The following remarks from this conversation with Adam highlights why he gives such advice and why he sees it as important that individuals 'do their own research' into goth's music, origins, history, and how different people understand and define it.

> [T]here tends to be an us vs them thing between people who like goth as it was vs those who like to call all the new things goth. In reality a lot of the new things people call goth are recent additions (if they count at all) and have no relation to goth as it was in the 80s and 90s. Take…Cybergoth; [it] is a bit of a misnomer because its more a blending of industrial and rave elements. But of course because its dark and has a lot of black, people assume goth.
>
> Same goes for gothic lolita, burlesque, steampunk, black metal even pole dancing have all been tied to [goth] over the last 10 or so years whether [they] have any connection to goth subcultural history or not….its not all goth by default…goth is one part and it is definable. …
>
> Now all the information about…goth…is [online]. But there is also a lot of misinformation and mis-labelling out there too….When someone asks me about [goth] I recommend they look at the music and history, get as many points of view as they can and as many facts as they can. Then they can make their own mind up.

Here, Adam explains that many things that are 'dark', have 'a lot of black', and are (arguably) 'alternative', are frequently assumed to be goth, irrespective of their connections with goth or its history. As he sees it, these kinds of

misassociations and mislabelling have been furthered by both the popular imagination and the internet, which have made goth more accessible and visible to a greater range of people who have different opinions about goth(s). This is why it is so important to him that people seek out 'the facts' about goth and appreciate or at least acknowledge both where goth comes from and how it got to where it is today. Furthermore, he explains his belief that it is important for individuals to 'make up their own mind' about goth based on 'the facts' *and* one's experiences. Many goths shared this sentiment; it was often a key point made on social media, where content-creators frequently stated that 'different people have different experiences of and opinions about goth'.

Goths were often happy to help less experienced goths learn, answering questions and offering information and advice based on their own research and experiences. Like Adam and Evony, however, they also commonly felt that their knowledge and experiences should not be the only source of information individuals seek out when learning about goth. Part of this was about using a range of sources to 'fact-check' information to try, as Adam implies, to discern 'facts' from 'misinformation'. Another dimension of this process centred upon developing a personal opinion that was consistent with one's own experiences and conclusions as well as with others' understandings and 'the facts'. Doing one's own research is thus framed as an important means of developing a deeper understanding of goth that is congruent with one's 'true self', is 'relatively consistent' with others' understandings, and is recognisable (Hodkinson, 2007a). Crucially, this understanding is about more than having an encyclopaedic knowledge of goth 'facts'.

For an individual to form an authentic goth identity, these more explicit forms of knowledge must be brought into conversation with their personal experiences of goth. In earlier chapters, I discussed the significance that many goths attach to being part of one's local scene(s) and to engaging with what many participants called 'the goth community', the transnational networks of goths that have formed online. I also highlighted the value of these practical circumstances as sites of learning and relevant forms of competence necessary for the existence of goth-as-cultural-practice. These threads draw together here, coalescing into a form of practical, experiential knowledge that participants

utilise in their practices and identities. This practical or tacit knowledge is vital to individual understandings of goth.

To seek such practical experiences is to also develop a more personally-nuanced understanding of goth that extends beyond its surface. However, participants indicated that one does not become a goth by simply going to 'a goth night' or interacting with other goths online. As Kate and Evony suggest, many goths saw this kind of behaviour as laughable and 'cringeworthy':

> Evony: I am more interested in people who are just real people, not pretending they're something they're not….I don't care if you like (.) bleep-bleep music, I *really don't care*, but don't say you're something you're not.
> Kate: I always used to laugh because, at Proscenium, say, that night…or the previous night, they [TV or cinema] had shown a movie and it had been like *The Craft* or something --like that and--
> Evony: --Ackk, cringe!!--
> Kate: --all of a sudden you would get a *wash* of people arriving and they would all be like, 'Oh, I know this place, it's called Proscenium, let's go! We'll wear *all* our black and then we'll just go there, and we'll just hang out and (.)' And…these people would just turn up out of the blue. And you'd never see them again! They'd all come out for *one* night because they all thought, 'Oh yeah!!' [and were] inspired to do this for one night. [We'd] get a lot of fly-by-nights like that.

This is an important clarification as it underlines the need for repeated participation and 'commitment' to goth. Blum's (2001) notion of the idle onlooker is again relevant here: participants are frequently sceptical of the identity claims of people who, like mallbats, only mark-off certain criteria from a list to 'proclaim their gothness to the world' (Rik). In contrast, people who demonstrate greater degrees of commitment and dedication to being goth incite less scepticism from others and are often deemed authentic in their affiliation with goth. Many goths saw this latter form of association as 'natural' rather than 'forced', and consistent with the individual's 'inner-self' as opposed to the manicured 'perfection' of the 'Real Goth' that Venters describes (2009). An important part of this was developing what I call 'My Goth'; I discuss this in the next section.

Personalising Goth: Crafting 'My Goth' & Becoming Legitimate

Discussing individual authenticity, Ian Maxwell (2003) writes:

> Self-expression [in hip-hop] relies on *practice*; you must perform the correct genres, and affect the correct embodiments, but you must do so in a manner that expresses your *self* at the same time. You must develop your *style*—that which marks your difference as a rapper, a tagger, a breaker, a DJ—and your *skills*—your expertise in those practices.
>
> (Maxwell, 2003: 27)

Despite the often polar-opposition of hip-hop and goth[59] a similar sentiment is evident within goth and is embodied in 'My Goth'. My Goth is akin to an individualised version of goth that is unique to specific individuals—it is what participants describe in the quotations that opened this chapter. My Goth is comprised of an individual's distinct style, their relevant skills or expertise—including their knowledge in the form of 'understanding' and 'know-how' (Reckwitz, 2002: 249)—and their motivations. It is also tailored to their personal biography, including their tastes and interests from within and beyond goth. This form of goth is illustrated in the following vignette, wherein I describe some of the key parts of how I learned to be goth *in my own way* during my fieldwork.

Looking over photos and notes from my early fieldwork, I cringe at my earliest efforts to 'dress appropriately' and 'fit in with the goths'. This period is replete with 'rookie mistakes', 'pre-packaged' outfits, and music that I forced myself to listen to even though I winced or yawned out of disinterest as I listened to some of it. Despite my best intentions and belief that I was 'being myself', I recall how I repeatedly made such compromises to try to 'fit in' in Adelaide's Dark Alt scene and, later, the Postpunk scene. Even though I preferred the comfort of my jeans and band shirts, I bought overpriced dresses, skirts, and corsets that were categorised as 'goth' or 'gothic' by the manufacturer or by the person or store that sold them, despite many of them being unflattering on me and uncomfortable. I sought out clothing and accessories made by 'alternative' brand-names to wear to events, with a clear objective: fitting in. In photos from

[59] During an interview, for example, Mark expressed his delight that, as far as he was aware, 'nobody' has tried to blend the two because they are 'completely opposite things'.

Figure 12: Getting ready to go out at the end of my fieldwork, complete with DIYed stockings and refashioned Siouxsie and the Banshees top and comfortable boots (C. Groves, 2014).

events during this period, I looked much like everyone else, so assumed I was on the ‘right’ path, but later came to realise I was fitting myself to others’ standards and tastes.

As I participated and explored music that research participants classified as ‘goth music’ and pursued goth styles and aesthetics beyond their suggestions and beyond what was popular in local scenes, I began to get a feel for what aspects and styles I liked for myself. I started negotiating ‘goth things’ with my tastes and interests and experimented by combining what I knew and what I liked in different ways. I began designing and DIYing my outfits (or elements

Figure 13: Getting my hair out of my face, removing my corset and breathing a sigh of relief after approximately 7 hours of discomfort at a club night (C. Groves, 2014).

of them) in the styles that *I* liked, that suited *my* body, and that *I* felt comfortable in (see Figure 12)—though I doubt I'll ever be truly comfortable wearing a corset (see Figure 13). I used the styles, aesthetics, and sounds of goth as 'guidelines' for my practices and altered aspects of my style slightly to match different contexts: dressing up for Cities in Dust gigs or for Dark Alt club nights; going into my office or presenting my work at conferences.

I ventured beyond pre-compiled lists of bands and 'essential tracks', beyond DJs' setlists and explored goth music for myself. I went beyond music from events and what others said I 'MUST' listen to and compiled my own gothy

playlists. Rather than focusing too much on '*their* knowledge', '*their* style', '*their* goth', I prioritised '*my* knowledge', '*my* style', '*my* goth'. This only deepened over time, as I no longer wanted to *just* 'fit in' by marking off a list of things that would be written on a card for 'Goth Bingo'[60] but wanted to 'just be goth'. I subsequently felt more confident answering the question 'Are you a goth?' with a 'Yes!' because I believe I genuinely understand what it means to 'be goth' in a way that is consistent with who I am as an individual *and* with the general history, aesthetics, and practices of goth.

Alongside the photographs in Figures 12 and 13, this vignette highlights the learning process that Rik identified as part of becoming 'just a regular goth' (see Chapter 2). This act of 'becoming' is a key part of the 'transition' from being a genuinely interested babybat to being an authentic 'regular goth'. This is not an instantaneous process—one does not 'declare their gothness' and become a goth overnight; it requires time *and* commitment: individuals develop competence and confidence as practitioners as they participate in the practice and come to understand the difference between novices (babybats), 'relative old-timers' ('regular goths'), and 'old-timers' ('eldergoths')(Lave and Wenger, 1991). Those who craft an understanding of goth that is consistent with their identity, tastes and interests, and is relatively consistent with the broader practice and others' interpretations are more likely to be seen as genuine in their association with goth.

This is because of the levels of competence and commitment required to do so. While an individual's authenticity as a goth relies upon the development of competence, such as knowing how to assemble a goth outfit or understanding what 'goth music' is, it also relies upon commitment to participation. One does not become an eldergoth through only knowing '101 knowledge' (Reagle, 2016) or through occasionally 'wearing goth clothes'. Rosa and Adam explained, that authentic individuals also made significant 'investments' into being and practicing goth. Such investments are not necessarily financial—though many participants may invest large amounts of money into their goth practices.

[60] A game played by some goths play at events where one marks boxes that contain cultural clichés and phrases that one is almost certain to observe at these events as they encounter them.

Participants also invest 'energy' into goth. Kate and Evony put a lot of energy into Cascading Light and frequently went out of their way to support and promote Australian goth musicians; Adam devoted considerable energy to the Dark Alt scene, not only as a patron, but also as a DJ, promoter, event organiser and 'mentor' (see below); and Rosa invested a lot of energy into Cities in Dust and supporting the Postpunk scene. Integral to these investments of energy is time.

Many goths view time, in the form of commitment-over-time and time-spent-participating, as one of the largest investments that they make to being goth. Temporal investments have arguably become more significant in the twenty-first century, where time is a precious commodity that many people feel they lack (Shove, 2009; Shove et al., 2009). Investments of time have also become more noteworthy as greater numbers of goths continue to participate as they age (Hodkinson, 2012) and as goth in its various forms and interpretations—not all of which are 'real'—has become 'more accessible' via the internet and popular media. For individual goths, as Smith (2012: 161) writes, temporal investments result in experience and 'a honed performance,' that garners 'peer adulation' and status, especially when one continues to participate as they age (see also Bennett, 2006, 2018; Haenfler, 2012). Extending this understanding, I suggest that such investments may also be used to support one's claims to being a legitimate goth.

During my research, I observed that goths who had greater levels of status, locally or online, were those who demonstrated that they had made significant investments of time and energy. This was especially notable for goths who were older—primarily because it has often been longer since they discovered goth due to their age—and those who maintain 'visible' roles. In earlier chapters, I suggested that the visibility of these latter individuals put them in a position where they were representing the practice-as-entity and its participants to 'outsiders' and to newer participants, who learned much from more experienced individuals. Individuals who occupied these most visible positions were therefore expected to have made significant investments of time and energy to develop the competence to support their claims to be authentic and to have the right to represent goths through their practices.

This was demonstrated on one of Adam's blog posts, where he responded to an anonymous user who asked, 'who are u? What makes you think u ar good enough to give advice?'. In his response, Adam justified his claim to legitimacy within goth by outlining his goth 'credentials', beginning with his age and when he 'got into goth', before describing how this occurred, and listing some ways he had participated locally and online since then. It was not possible for me to gauge how others responded to this post directly. However, other research participants' references to Adam's blog during my fieldwork and the subsequent questions that he received through the blog may be seen as an indication that, to some, these credentials justified Adam's authority to maintain a goth advice blog, where he was not only representing goth as himself, but was positioned as a source of advice for those who were new to goth.

Individuals' claims to legitimacy are not always so 'public'. Kate's story about contacting Andrew, the then host of the Deathly Mystique radio show, and his response—asking her to meet him at Proscenium and, upon meeting her, asking her to join him on the radio show—is a less overt process of legitimisation (in Chapter 6). There are several key elements of Kate's narrative that suggest that Andrew sees Kate as not only authentic in her associations with goth but legitimate enough to join him on the radio show and as a DJ at the Proscenium nightclub. Kate contacted him because she was excited to hear he had played a track by Children On Stun, who are often left off many 'essentials' playlists of 'goth music'. This flagged her knowledge of goth music beyond what was easily accessible online or in popular media—'The Cure or The Smiths and you know, things that weren't really…what we call "goth music"'; this also implied Kate's 'subcultural capital' or authenticity by highlighting how she understood goth 'beyond its surface'.

There are many moments beyond this initial contact where Kate's knowledge of goth and her investments, including in her identity and style, support claims about her legitimacy as an authority on goth. This includes Andrew putting her name forward to discuss goth music on a popular Australian 'alternative' radio station, Triple-J, in the early-2000s, where she predicted the 'electro turn' in the 'local goth scene' (which led to the Dark Alt scene). This legitimacy and her

knowledge contributed to her status as a relatively authoritative individual among local goths, supported by and supporting her role as one of the goth DJs at 'the old Proscenium' and as host of Deathly Mystique/Cascading Light as it moved from local radio to its online format.

In these roles, Kate became a recognisable part of this local history, which supports her ongoing legitimacy; for example, almost two decades after Kate's initial involvement, Adam recognised Kate on my Facebook friends list, and commented the following during an interview, 'I see you know Kate—she knows her stuff. Does a great radio show too'. Rosa and Evony made similar affirmations of Kate's legitimacy and knowledge of goth, especially Australian goth music from the 1990s. This comes back to Smith's (2012) work that I cited above, where the author suggests that participants' status from their past engagements may be used to claim capital later in life. Despite Kate largely pulling back (but not ceasing!) the intensity of her involvement in local scenes, her investments of time in the past continue to support her legitimacy as a knowledgeable and experienced goth.

Referring to parallel examples in the British Northern Soul scene, Smith argues that older members often identify time and experience as more important values than, for example, having the stamina for dancing that they had in their youth (2012: 161–2). In her study, Smith also found that aging scene members who are parents often pass their knowledge, insights, connections, and subcultural capital to their children. Bennett (2006) identifies a similar trend in punk. He argues that, while 'ageing punk fans' expressed feelings of 'cultural authority and ownership' and positioned themselves as 'critical overseers of the punk scene', many also behaved in a manner that was 'distinctly parental [and] often protective' (2006: 128–34). Bennett writes:

> This discursive practice was designed both to celebrate the survival and development of the punk scene and to self-assert the older punks' collective authority, won through age and longevity of commitment to punk, to supply critical judgment of the scene and those involved in it….Relations between older and younger members of the punk scene also manifested themselves through "in-scene" exchanges of knowledge.
>
> (Bennett, 2006: 130, 131)

He adds that these 'elders' suggested that they 'had assumed the role of informal educators' on several occasions, offering anecdotal accounts from their own youth to help fill gaps in younger punks' knowledge about the early years of British punk (2006: 131). He observes a similar mentorship regarding practical skills, including knowledge of how to run successful events, and realistic understanding of the commitment, support and resources required to sustain a local scene. In this sense, an old-timer's legitimate position is not without its responsibilities to the practice and its perpetuation (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Their status is often tied to their role as a mentor, where they invest in the future of the practice by imparting anecdotal and practical knowledge to future generations, and their efforts to promote a positive image of the practice as something distinct yet acceptable to be and participate in.

Importantly this status was not purely self-assigned: younger goths in my research field often assigned this role to older participants such as Kate and Adam, who have demonstrated their authenticity and their commitment to goth. While their reasons for assigning this status to 'elders' are often different, younger participants may be seen to hold more experienced participants in high regard, frequently viewing them as role models due to their deep and 'personal investment in the preservation' of goth (Bennett, 2006: 131–2). Thus, while older goths regularly claim their own status vis-à-vis the cultural practice, their role as 'parental figures' often supports their claims to authority within goth and justifies the sense of ownership that they feel over it. I now turn to such claims and participants' associated defensive desires.

Claiming Goth & Wanting to 'Defend' it

People lay claim to goth in many ways; some are overt, but many are less recognisable as claims of ownership. As I noted at the end of the above vignette, one way of claiming goth is responding in the affirmative when questioned, as Evony did when I posed a similar question to her:

> Evony: Just my personal opinion—but I would say if a person listens predominantly to goth music, they could consider themselves goth—not that everyone likes titles. ;-)
> Briony: …Would you call yourself a goth then?

Evony: Ummm (.) I'm not really into labels as such (.) but yes, I guess I *am* a Goth, ha! Might not be able to get away with avoiding the label, since I live and breathe goth music, lol!![61]

Evony's suggestion that she may not be able to avoid the label, highlights her belief that there is a 'natural' fit between her self, her practices and the cultural practice of goth. While Evony backs this up by saying that this 'natural fit' is justified because she 'lives and breathes goth music' and demonstrates her gothness in other aspects of her practice, not all who claim goth can (or do) support their claims in such a manner. Some people, who I discuss below, also claim goth before being asked; many goths are hesitant to accept such unverifiable claims, and tended to associate them with 'mallbats' and outsiders who participants often saw as 'pretenders' (Fox, 1987).

Another means of vocalising one's perceived ownership over goth is through claiming the term or label as the 'property' of so-called 'insiders' such as oneself. Evony and Kate made such an assertion during our discussion of goth stereotypes:

Evony [[to Kate]]: Oh, how many blogs have I looked at where they say, [[imitation spoken in a highly sarcastic tone]] 'Oh, *I'm* a goth, I love Halloween, I love Tim Burton, but I really don't like the music'? And you go, 'Riiiiight. Welllll, that's not- then you are not a goth. Use another word!'

Kate [[to me]]: …It's not that we're saying you can't like those things; certainly, if you like them, like them, just don't equate--

Evony: --No. No-no. If you don't listen predominantly to goth music, then (.)

Kate & Evony in unison: (.)You don't equate it.

Evony (to Kate): Why can't they use some different terms? I think someone should make up some different terms that people go, 'Yeah!! Let's call ourselves that!'

Kate: Some new labels. [[both laugh]]

Evony: So they can leave us alone.

By suggesting people who have superficial understandings of goth find 'some different terms' and leave "goth" for goths, these women express feelings of ownership over the term, and, by extension, the whole practice. This latter part is important here: as noted in the earlier quote, Evony is apprehensive about being labelled (cf. Muggleton, 2000; Jasper, 2004), but, in this conversation with

[61] "Laugh out loud"

Kate, she claims the label because it means she is also claiming the practice and expressing their shared desire to protect goth from 'them'.

In these examples, individuals verbalised their feelings of ownership over goth as a label and a practice. Most claims were, however, embedded within other aspects of an individual's practice. For example, an individual's sense of style—expressed for instance through their outfits and tastes in interior decorations—their social relationships and activities such as regular participation in 'goth events', or their music collections and listening habits often represent symbolic claims to goth. In this sense, they are not only part of an individual's personal association with the practice, they also intersect the sense of affiliation that participants' feel with other goths. In this form, feelings of ownership are intertwined with feelings of identification with other goths, which frames goth as a distinctive and substantive cultural practice (Hodkinson, 2002, 2007a).

These non-verbal claims may be understood as 'expressive modalities' (Feld, 2012: 14) that have their foundations in the conventions of the practice of goth, which includes its expressive characteristics (see Evony and Rosa quotes earlier in chapter). This sentiment is what younger participants articulated when they vented on social media that parents, teachers or employers had 'taken goth away' from them by imposing strict dress codes or limiting their access to goth music, clothing, and other 'goth things' (see above and discussion in Chapter 4).

It is worth reiterating here that, as observed throughout this thesis, the authenticity of such explicit and implicit claims to goth is never automatic. Staking a claim to goth verbally, through one's practices, or via one's tastes or social relationships does not automatically equate to an authentic association. Nor does it mean that one automatically occupies a legitimate position vis-à-vis goth, though making such claims can influence others' judgements of an individual's legitimacy to represent or 'speak for' goth(s) in a general sense. I revisit these points below.

Another means of claiming ownership of goth occurs in the flow of practice, especially in debates about goth's definition, boundaries, or the relative 'gothness' of people, things, and activities. Goths frequently interpreted these

debates as caused by conflicting understandings of goth's boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, 'real' and 'fake', or viewed them as merely instances of 'petty bitchiness' or 'elitism'—descriptions that were commonly used in the many sites of my fieldwork. Although these interpretations are often fitting, what often goes unrecognised is the ways in which participants make different *personal* claims to goth in and through these discussions. The fact that, as Kate observed, these debates often became 'quite heated', especially online, highlights the personal and emotional stakes that underlie many of these discussions.

This 'heat' also points to the often-personal nature of individual investments in goth and the energy that they put into trying to maintain the integrity of goth's boundaries and, thus, into seeking to promote its legitimacy as a distinct cultural practice that has stood the test of time (Lindholm, 2008) as well as 'mainstream' appropriations, characterisations, and stigmatisation. When discussing the legitimisation of Nordic Walking[62] as exercise rather than the mundane practice of 'walking', Pantzar and Shove observe that enthusiastic participants tended to 'correct' the behaviour of individuals 'used their sticks in the "wrong" way' (Pantzar and Shove, 2010). These individuals, the authors note, did so despite the various ways that Nordic Walking is practiced and individual participants frequently developing their own style of practice based on the instructions of more experienced practitioners. Such actions can be interpreted, at least in part, as part of participants' efforts to manage the image of the practice. By seeking to demonstrate that it requires specific techniques and competencies to do and therefore requires ongoing participation and the development of certain skills (Shove and Pantzar, 2005: 58), their actions may be seen as tethered to a desire to legitimate Nordic Walking as a distinct and substantive practice.

As I have noted throughout this thesis, a comparable imperative is evident in goths' practices. What is significant here is how 'enthusiastic participants', who I suggest are often the most committed and passionate of participants, seek to 'correct' the way that others carry out the practice. For Rosa, debates about

[62] Nordic Walking is 'a form of speed walking with two sticks' that us undertaken with the deliberate intention of improving health and well-being (Shove and Pantzar, 2005; Pantzar and Shove, 2010)..

authenticity and the associated definitions of goth are tied to people's 'intellectualisation' of goth. She suggests that such policing and boundary-marking are tied to people's personal investments in goth:

> With a subculture developing to the state that goth has over the last forty years or so, it is because people hold the sentiment- or the notion of it so dearly that it has escalated to such a state. If you know what I mean? Like, people intellectualise it and invest a lot of time and money and labour and creativity into being a part of it…because it is so important to them.

Adam made similar comments to me when comparing 'identity experimentation' to ongoing commitments. He concluded by saying that he believed there was nothing wrong with experimenting with different identities, but 'claiming to be things you aren't will end up with you getting put in your place [because] people who have invested a lot of themselves into goth want to protect it.' In his opinion, people who were passionate about goth not only sought to 'correct' the behaviour of those who did not respect its substantiveness for personal reasons but wanted to 'protect it' from such trivialising. He discussed these concerns in more detail on his blog. In response to a Tumblr thread calling for a boycott of the American retail chain Hot Topic due to their 'appropriation' of kandi bracelets[63] from 'raver culture', Adam identified a similar link between these debates and people's emotional attachments to 'their culture' and its artefacts. He thus wrote:

> There's an emotional investment in any culture [that] people feel passionate about and participate in. It's something that is theirs and they do not take it lightly when someone takes from their culture or pretends to be a part of it. It's even worse when such impostors actively try to change that culture to suit themselves….People have a right to be upset when someone takes from something they care about and participate in it with no respect for its source…All people ask is respect for where these ideas came from and people refraining from misrepresenting the things they know nothing about.

Here, Adam notes a sense of connection that ravers and goths perceive between themselves and 'their culture'. Throughout this post, Adam defends what several other respondents in the thread saw as a 'stupid' or 'juvenile'

[63] Kandi bracelets are pieces of jewellery made of multicoloured plastic beads. These bracelets are commonly exchanged between ravers as a gesture of friendship and is a material representation of 'peace, love, unity, respect' (PLUR)(Moriyama, 2017).

overreaction to something that was the bread-and-butter of Hot Topic. For these individuals, it was not worth boycotting them because there was nothing to gain from it; Hot Topic would continue to do what they do because it is profitable. Seeking to justify the original poster's emotional responses against these claims of futility, Adam observes that people often feel a strong desire to defend 'their culture' from disrespectful appropriations because of their 'emotional investments'. For him, this warrants the impassioned response from 'real' participants.

Rather than focusing on commercial appropriations like others who empathised with the original poster, however, Adam focuses on *everyday* appropriations enacted by people 'who merely pay lip service to the look [of goth] and nothing else'—a sentiment I have discussed throughout the thesis. Like many other goths, Adam calls these people 'poseurs' and describes them as people who 'may look the part but…have little idea about [goth's] roots or even why such a manner of dress is worn'. This kind of individual has been present throughout this thesis as the inauthentic 'other' who claims a goth identity based on what 'real' participants see as a shallow or uncommitted view of goth. To goths, these claims to goth are false due to poseurs' lack of understanding, their tendency to sustain shallow or archetypal interpretations of goth, and the 'idleness' of their participation in relevant practices. They are also seen as false because, as I noted above, they are not 'being themselves' before attempting to 'be a goth'.

Throughout my research, participants described a specific type of poseur who was equally inauthentic in their claim to goth, but more inclined than the average poseur to 'actively try to change [a] culture to suit themselves'. This type of poseurs were often called 'hipsters'. Hipsters are characterised by their penchant for postmodern 'pastiche' (Haddow, 2008). Jameson (1983, 1998) describes this sense of pastiche as imitation for imitation's sake, a 'blank irony' that lacks meaning and motive (Jameson, 1983: 114).

Jameson understands pastiche as part of the loss of innovation and originality that he understands as characteristic of the postmodern era wherein consumer society is caught in a loop of imitation. This is at the heart of Polhemus' (1997) 'Supermarket of Style', where consumers 'revamp' what came before and

'playfully sample and mix from different looks [until] everything and nothing is The Genuine Article' (Polhemus, 1997: 149–50). Neither of these authors see the potential for authenticity in these contexts because there cannot be any 'original' or 'pure' moment of innovation that is not pastiche (Muggleton, 2000: 45). Accordingly, goths identify hipsters by noting their 'empty' imitations of various styles, including goth, and their (disrespectful and 'ironic') appropriations from other practices.

Importantly for goths, hipsters' appropriations characteristically respect neither the 'original sources' ('cultures') nor the subtleties of style and meaning that make them part of goth. Goths therefore regularly frame hipsters as sources of 'corruption' and 'trivialisation' for goth and maintain that hipsters damage the integrity of goth, not only as a distinct cultural practice, but as a distinct yet 'normal' identity. In so doing, hipsters' ingenuine appropriations are believed to denying the underlying sentiment (Feld, 2012) and significance of goth for its participants—past, present, and future—and ignore the nuances and subtleties that participants used to distinguish 'goth things' from 'non-goth things'.

Many goths saw hipsters' empty appropriations of goth as especially 'harmful' when they used 'the g-word' ironically. This ironic use of the label—for example calling unicorns and rainbows 'goth'—intentionally aligned things that are often placed in opposition to the macabre and 'dark' aesthetics of goth with the term. For many goths, this kind of intentional misuse undermined goth's boundaries—which were fundamental to its distinction as a cultural entity and an identity—but also goths' investments in their practices/identities, disregarding the emotional labour that they put into crafting 'My Goth'.

According to Haenfler (2006), conventional wisdom suggests that the more that an individual invests in a particular identity and practice, the more likely they are to seek to defend it from what they perceive as sources of potential corruption or trivialisation. This supports Wenger's assertion that committed participants are not only part of the practice, their continued engagements with and in the practice frequently leads to it becoming part of who they are (Wenger, 1998: 153). I have argued throughout this chapter, that committed goths

frequently make this link between their unique inner-self and goth, viewing the two as connected but not inseparable. In earlier chapters, I raised the point that many goths seek to foster a positive image of goth that frames it as a legitimate thing to do and a legitimate thing to *be*. This interpretation of goths' practice is valuable here. Participants argue that, people who rely on shallow or external understandings of goth cannot necessarily discern between the practices of poseurs and those of 'real' goths. They therefore seek to encourage an image of goth that is both distinguishable from the image presented by such inauthentic individuals and reflective of their own practices, which they maintain are authentic, giving them the right to make distinctions about who is and is not goth.

To understand this sentiment among goths, we can look to Becker's (1963) 'labelling theory', which I discussed in Chapter 3. In this work, Becker suggests that groups that are labelled social 'outsiders', are often generalised by those who label them as such. In this process of generalisation, the actions of one individual are seen as representative of the whole group, whether or not they are 'actual' members of the group. Following this logic, when someone who does not know the difference between a celebrity that is 'dressed goth' and what participants characterised as a 'real' goth, they are unlikely to see the 'subtle and unmistakable difference' between the individual who is wearing 'goth' and the one who *is* goth (Venters, 2009).

I suggest that this is one of the primary reasons that goths spend so much time and energy arguing about whether people, things, or practices can be seen as goth and engaging in evaluative processes such as testing mode. At the same time, as I noted in Chapter 5, the standards by which individuals judge others can seem at times to be arbitrary. This raises important questions about how individuals can 'be themselves' when they need to meet certain criteria in order to not be grouped in with 'hipsters' and 'mallbats'. While individuals in my research field frequently asked such questions, especially online, there was no evidence of a definitive answer. I suggest that the answer lies in the dynamic character of goth.

Variation & Dynamism

It is useful here to draw on Hui's (2017) discussion of funeral services and variations in practice. She observes that, participants can have diverse ideas and expectations about what elements a funeral should include. These ideas are based on their experiences with funerals or religious practices as well as their association to the deceased and other funeral-goers. Accordingly, she explains,

> even within the same country, city or building, funerals can involve widely differing sets of elements, with services an eclectic mix of activities of varied provenance and with diverse relationships to the family, attendees and deceased….The practitioners and institutions involved in any performance of a funeral negotiate and shape the set of elements that end up being incorporated, contributing to the combination of similarities and differences that distinguish it from other performances.
>
> (Hui, 2017: 57)

This highlights the discursive nature of practices, which are negotiated by participants as they come together and do it; this is what is meant by practices being produced in the flow of practice.

With this example in mind, I return to the seeming contradictory assertions that I raised in Chapter 5. On the one hand, as I have highlighted throughout this chapter, an individual who marks-off a list of 'things that are goth' is frequently considered inauthentic, their claims to genuine affiliation with goth are subsequently denied by many goths (yet may be accepted by others). On the other hand, as I have demonstrated throughout this thesis, especially in the present chapter, one must meet certain criteria for their claim to goth to be validated by other goths. Drawing on Hui's example of the potential for variation of practice and expectations, I suggest that individuals' evaluations of the (non-)gothness of others relies both upon their personal experiences, understandings, and expectations and their relationship to the individual or group being 'tested'. This also comes back to a point that I made in Chapter 4 about the popular imagination.

It is therefore possible to see how and why goths have differing understandings and expectations about the practice and how it should be done, without compromising the substantiveness of the practice. My discussion of individuals' identity practices in this chapter adds to this interpretation, suggesting that these

processes of distinction are important to individual goths for two reasons. Firstly, goths frequently invest a lot of time and energy into their engagements with goth from the time they 'come to it', as Rosa says, and throughout their identification. Therefore, the actions of people who they see as inauthentic in their association with goth and who they view as illegitimately representing goth, trivialises these investments. At the same time, the 'shallow' practices of these individuals impacts the image of goth as a legitimate and substantive cultural practice, as Adam notes in a quotation in Chapter 4, it 'cheapens' goth by association with these individuals and their practices.

Chapter 8 – Conclusion: 'The Fuck is Goth Anyway?'

As the titles of this chapter and the dissertation suggest, definition and boundaries remain important sites of contention among goths. I have demonstrated throughout this thesis that goth is the recursive and collaborative product of goths' practices, who reproduce it as they participate in it and engage in everyday activities such as listening to music or decorating their houses. I have drawn on material gathered during ethnographic fieldwork in Adelaide, a city that is often marginalised within goths' discourses, and studies of youth culture to illustrate that goths' evaluative judgments about authenticity and legitimacy are central to their negotiations of goth. I have used dynamic practice theory to analyse and interpret these classificatory practices and shown that goths are engaged in struggles for distinction and legitimacy. Of key importance to this framework is an interpretation that accounts for the dynamic and negotiated character of goth as produced by participants in the flow of their everyday lives and identity practices. This approach builds upon and contributes to ongoing debates within studies of youth culture about the active role of their participants in constructing the cultural phenomena through their engagements with one another and the world.

I have developed this understanding by considering: goth's complex relationship with the popular imagination and attendant distinctions between 'real' goth and popular representations (Chapter 4); how goths use the internet to negotiate and police goth's boundaries (Chapter 5); local experiences of goth, within the nexuses of Adelaide's Dark Alternative and Postpunk scenes (Chapter 6); and goths' identity practices and desire to defend goth from trivialisation (Chapter 7). Each of these chapters addresses a different part of goths' practice, moving from wider public discourses to local spaces and individuals. Although I have separated them for the sake of analysis, in practice, these different aspects are interwoven with one another, involve shifting levels of sociality, and rely upon often contextually applied distinctions between insider and outsider, authentic and inauthentic, and legitimate and illegitimate. These distinctions are made by goths as they find ways to co-ordinate and

negotiate their differences and similarities and establish meaningful boundaries around goth in the flow of their everyday lives.

This focus on the everyday lives and practices of goths is useful for understanding goth as part of the mundane lives of participants, which includes both 'ordinary' and 'spectacular' interests and practices rather than just the most 'spectacular'. Bennett (2015a) has recently suggested that there is a growing need for studies of 'youth culture' to account for the increasingly complex interplay of practices within the everyday lives of the 'young people' who participate in them. I have argued throughout this thesis that dynamic practice theory offers a useful framework for understanding these complexities and offers important insights for studies of so-called 'youth cultures'. Importantly, such a framework moves away from these cultural phenomena as the exclusive 'domain of the young' (Thornton, 1995).

Such an approach is increasingly significant as more individuals retain affiliation with and continue to invest in these cultural practices beyond their 'youth' or adolescence (Hodkinson, 2013). This was highlighted throughout my research field: most of my key informants are now in their 40s and, although they began participating in goth during the 1990s, they gave little indication that they will 'just get over it' as the popular interpretation of such cultures frequently assumes. There is a growing body of literature that focuses on the lives and identities of older members of youth cultures, including Hodkinson's work on ageing goths (2011, 2012, 2013). However, I suggest that further study is needed on intergenerational relations within these cultural practices. Namely, there is a need to explore how members of these groups enact judgements of authenticity and legitimacy across generations of these practices, which are often made based on generalisations about individuals in different age categories.

At several points throughout this thesis, I have suggested that there is an ongoing tension between different generations of goths. For example, I noted how older goths often speak and act as though their age and associated experiences with goth makes their understandings, practices and judgements more legitimate than individuals who are younger. I also noted how those born into the post-modern consumer environment of the twenty-first century are

often subject to greater levels of scrutiny and criticism than older generations of goths. Bennett (2012) has made some headway in exploring such relationships in relation to a range of popular music-related cultural groups. I have similarly begun exploring this topic in this thesis and elsewhere (Morrison 2016a, 2016b) in relation to the authenticity and legitimacy of goth and its participants. In this work, I have argued that generational divisions within youth cultures such as goth are, in practice, often linked to the period in which individuals began to participate in the practice. Accordingly, I suggest that it may therefore be more useful to focus on experience rather than biological age in analyses. This not only shifts away from existing age-centred approaches to these practices, but accounts for the differing levels of experience and competence of members of different generations and age groups.

These analyses have begun to explore the multigenerational characteristics of these cultural practices. However, a more focused investigation of how intergenerational dynamics impact how they are practiced and the associated gatekeeping processes that impact their substantiveness over time is needed. Such further investigation is especially valuable in light of the increasingly multi-generational character of so-called 'youth cultures' into the twenty-first century.

At the same time, I propose that further research is needed on the experiential and creative opportunities of newer generations within youth cultures, especially of those who were born decades after the emergence of the cultural practices in which they participate. This was a significant point of contention for the newer goths in my research field, who expressed frustration that they have had to work harder to prove their authenticity and to be perceived by older members as legitimate in their claims to represent goth. As I have argued throughout this dissertation, goths, especially older generations, often seek to put distance between their identities and actions and those of younger generations and babybats in order to emphasise the legitimacy of goth within society.[64]

[64] Paul Hodkinson (2012) has described how it is not only participants that have aged, so too have events and the associated 'subcultures'.

I demonstrated that goth continues to be characterised in the popular imagination as a 'phase' that teenagers go through, where they experiment with their identities before 'growing up' and maturing to become socially-responsible adults. I addressed this in detail in Chapters 3 and 4, where I suggested that goths engage in various practices to distinguish between these understandings, which they reject as 'misconceptions' or 'stereotypes', and their own practices. As such, they actively work to establish their actions and beliefs as not only legitimate and 'ordinary' but simultaneously distinct from 'mainstream' norms, tastes, and beliefs. This approach contrasts with existing understandings of goth as well as other youth cultures and popular music studies, which often reproduce long-standing binaries between these cultural practices and 'the mainstream'.

Although some scholars have questioned this binary (Thornton, 1995; Hodkinson, 2002), it continues to dominate many studies of youth culture and popular music. The approach that I have taken in this thesis offers new insights to these fields of study by seeking to understand the simultaneity of participants' desire to assert the legitimacy of their practices and its distinctiveness from other groups, especially 'the masses'. My contention that members of a cultural practice strive to legitimate their culture within the context of the dominant culture that surrounds them offers important new insights for understanding goth and other 'minority' groups within today's dynamic sociocultural environments as both part of this milieu and distinct within it.

For goths, this legitimacy is reliant upon the comparative authenticity of goth that is rooted in both the practices and tastes of legitimate members and its most enduring aspects such as 'the music' and its history. I have argued in this thesis that goths habitually reference these enduring features to construct meaningful boundaries around goth. Goths seek to distinguish these more substantive elements from 'shallow' characterisations and representations of certain individuals, groups and institutions, whom they see as lacking a legitimate right to speak for and represent goth. This is particularly expressed with reference to participants' demonstrations of commitment to the practice and the associated degrees of competence and understanding of the various aspects of goth, especially the narratives about its history and evolution. As I discussed in Chapter 5 with reference to goth's standard narratives, goths place

increasing significance upon the more enduring characteristics of goth such as these narratives and the stylistically varied history of goth in the digital age. Throughout this thesis, I have proposed that this increased significance is linked in many ways to the increased accessibility of information about goth's history and practice made possible by digital technologies such as the internet and associated media sharing platforms. Furthermore, I suggested that this rise in accessibility has not only supported greater scrutiny of participants' competence, it has also altered the traditional relationship between goth and its practice in local spaces and scenes.

As Williams (2006, 2007) observes with regard to straightedge, goths in my research field had diverse beliefs about the ongoing significance of local scenes and other face-to-face interactions among participants in an era when individuals can potentially limit their participation to digital spaces. Williams' intention was to understand the impact of these emergent technologies on the practices of straightedgers, including their evaluations of individual authenticity. I have endeavoured to understand the different contexts of research participants' practices of goth, which included their online activities and their engagements with local scenes. Thus, while Rosa suggested that the internet had made it easier for people to passively participate in goth—where one 'just looks' and 'just listens'—I have argued that this does not preclude active engagements with 'offline' spaces and activities such as events.

In Chapter 5, I also considered how using the increasingly mundane character of digital information and communication technologies has led to an increased significance of '101 knowledge' among goths (Reagle, 2016). Such knowledge and the ability to build upon it by drawing from personal experience and a wide net of resources is vital for individuals who seek to claim an association with goth that is understood as genuine (Chapter 7). This suggests a growing need for scholars to explore how 'new technological assemblages' such as computers, mobile devices, and Wi-Fi connections are used by participants to reconfigure the links between the elements of a given practice, which alter standards for meaningful and competent participation among participants (Shove et al., 2007). In so-doing, I have outlined an important gap within studies of youth and popular music, which often give the impression that all members of a particular

generation or age group possess the same knowledge and competence when they begin to participate. I have sought to highlight how these things are not only cumulative, but reliant upon the practical experiences and resources that individuals can and do access in the course of their engagements with the practice and other participants.

Participation in any practice presumes a degree of knowledge about the practice and its requisite elements. Individuals' understandings of their practices are based on 'tacit' (experience) and 'explicit' (information from other, more explicit, sources) forms of knowledge which they collate through different types of participation in the practice and negotiate in terms of their own tastes, interests, personality, and sense of style. Importantly, this is not to say that youth cultural participation is the product of postmodern hyper-individualism as suggested by postsubcultural researchers like Polhemus (1997) and Muggleton (1997, 2000). Rather, I have suggested that the broader practice of goth remains independent from the definitions and particularities of specific individuals' actions.

This is a central contention of dynamic practice theory, which proposes that analyses should focus upon practices rather than the individuals who carry and carry them out (Reckwitz, 2002). While I have utilised this practice-centric approach, I have also proposed that one cannot merely overlook the subjective foundations of individuals' practices and understandings. I have instead proposed that the nuanced biographies and identity practices of individuals are important in shaping practices because it frequently impacts how individuals carry them out in meaningful ways as well as how they negotiate and demarcate the limits of tolerable flexibility (Hui, 2017) within a practice. This, I have suggested is tethered to participants' subjective engagements with the practice in interaction with social, biographical, and environmental factors that impact who they are and how they 'do goth'. I developed this critique of dynamic practice theory in Chapter 7 with reference to literature on communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

Within this literature, individual participants are understood as subjective beings with their own biographies, motivations, and competences that extend beyond

the shared enterprise of the practice. I drew upon this understanding to consider how goths develop their own sense of the practice-as-entity that integrates their biographical and experiential interpretations (a process I call 'My Goth') and how this influences their practices of goth. While I focus on this argument in Chapter 7, I have developed this interpretation across the thesis, for example, in my considerations of how goths pass their understandings and know-how on to other participants, particularly babybats, in the flow of their practices and through their evaluative judgements. I have suggested throughout this thesis that these judgements and processes of learning how to be an authentic goth impact how goths define and practice goth, in particular through their policing of its boundaries.

By negotiating diverse forms of tacit and explicit knowledge in the flow of their practices, individual goths' negotiations of their goth identities and demonstrations of their competence tie into the larger picture of goth as a distinctive and substantive practice. Using this relationship as a case study, I have also pointed to an important limitation in dynamic practice theory: its side-lining of the dynamics of individual identity practices and biographies. I have suggested that this practice theoretical framework could benefit greatly from also seeking to understand the relationship between individuals and the practices that they carry and carry out in their day-to-day lives and negotiations of the practice in relation to their 'inner-self'.

In the vignettes in Chapters 1, 2, and 7, I used my own experiences, practices, and learning trajectory (Lave and Wenger, 1991) to outline this relationship. I considered the connections between my own experiences and how I not only understood goth but reproduced it through my engagements with the elements of the cultural practice. Through engaging in such processes of competence and knowledge development, I came to a personal understanding of why goths engage in the boundary-marking and policing practices that I have explored in this thesis. By gaining this intimate understanding of goth as a dynamic and evolving practice, I gained insight into the lives and understandings of research participants, without relying upon their words alone (Hine, 2015).

During my fieldwork, I underwent a process of becoming that is akin to what other goths go through, a process that continued after I completed my research. This involves transitioning from being a 'naïve babybat' to a competent 'regular goth', whose commitment to the practice and ongoing investments of time, energy, and money frequently contribute to a desire to 'protect' goth from the incursions of inauthentic individuals. However, I went through this transition and developed this close personal attachment to goth whilst remaining aware of the need to habitually 'step back' from goth and gain critical perspective about my research setting and participants (Hodkinson, 2005). This approach ties back to scholarly work on youth cultures and popular music that has been conducted by researchers who are also relative 'insiders' in their field of study.

Throughout this thesis, I have also contributed to this body of work by calling for greater attention on more marginalised sites of practice. In particular, I highlight the importance of understanding how goth is practiced in places that are peripheral to the 'centres' of goth which are located in the UK, Germany and the USA. Exploring goth and other similar cultural practices in marginal locations such as Adelaide offers opportunities to focus upon details that are likely to be overlooked in larger or more active 'centres'. For example, the ebbs and flows of the Dark Alt and Postpunk scenes during my fieldwork allowed me the time and space to reflect upon how research participants' locally situated practices intersect broader discourses about goth online and in the popular imagination. This context provided a suitable environment in which to understand the complexities and dynamics of goth as it is produced and reproduced by goths in Adelaide.

In this environment, I was able to explore some of the more nuanced aspects of goths' practice whilst also developing an answer an enduring question that continues to be asked by scholars and goths alike: 'the fuck is goth anyway?'. I have suggested here that it is a dynamic cultural practice that is carried out in a multitude of often unique ways by participants as they collectively define, redefine, and police its boundaries. For many of these individuals, goth is a meaningful part of their identity, despite their reluctance to claim identification with 'the g-word' in all circumstances because it is, as Evony commented, 'too easily misunderstood' by non-goths. With reference to research participants'

doings and sayings, I also outlined how they make claims about the legitimacy of goth as a distinct and substantive cultural practice that has stood the test of time despite its misrepresentation in the popular imagination. They justify these claims by linking their contemporary practices to goth's roots and emphasising the connections between their local practices of goth to transnational narratives and the online 'goth community'.

In my exploration of goth and my efforts to understand this cultural practice as a dynamic and complex phenomenon, I have also contributed to the broader fields of (post-)youth cultural practice and popular music studies. The theoretical framework that I have developed in this thesis is not only useful for understanding goth. It also has applications within these other fields of study, which continue to be dominated by a tension between traditional and post-traditional approaches to the study of 'subcultures' or 'youth cultures'. This has become increasingly important as researchers seek to understand these phenomena as everyday experiences for their participants rather than framing them as spectacular subcultures populated by 'card-carrying' young people who age out of them.

APPENDIX A

These screen captures are taken from the Cascading Light blog, where Evony uploaded some of the old Deathly Mystique playlists, a blog where she and Kate published their Cascading Light playlists.

1. 30 July 1997

This first image shows one of Andrew's playlists which is dominated by what participants classify as 'goth music', including 'foundational bands' like Bauhaus, Siouxsie and the Banshees, and Sex Gang Children; these three bands each have a central role in many of the 'origin stories' and 'standard narratives' of goth's history described in Chapter 5. Many of the other bands featured in this track list are consistent with what many participants called '90s goth rock' or darkwave music, genres that they considered to be 'goth music'.

2. 13 June 2001

This second image shows a playlist that Kate put together for Deathly Mystique. This playlist features a lot more '90s goth' than the playlist in the previous image, which featured on the show in 1997.

3. 9 July 2003

Playlist - 9 July, 2003

Guest DJ

- "Ancient Curse" Resurrection Eve (Ancient Curse)*
- "Equinoxe" House of Usher (Cosmogenesis)
- "Sideways Forest" Love Spirals Downwards (Sideways Forest)
- "Night Feast" Written in Ashes (Eternal)

Start guest dj set:

- "And Tomorrow Atlantis" Fortification 55 (Atlantis)
- "Skin" Neuroticfish (No Instruments)
- "Christfuck" Wumpscut (Wreath of Barbs)
- "Discotechque" Intra Venus (We Will Follow - A Tribute to U2)
- "Beautiful" XPQ-21 (Chi)
- "War of Emotions" Accessory (War of Emotions)

End guest dj set

- "Creeping Death" Calling Dead Red Roses (1985)
- "Isabella" Medieval Baebes (Undrentide)

* Artist of the Month

REACTIONS: LIKE! (0)

This third image features a playlist assembled by one of Necromancy's resident DJs; this show aired in the period of schism discussed in Chapter 6. The guest DJ's playlist begins after the first set of four tracks, which are consistent with the music in Kate's earlier playlist (featuring darkwave, goth rock, and dark ethereal tracks, which Kate referred to as 'goth music' during interviews). The guest DJ's set contrasts greatly with these tracks. This guest's set includes six tracks that would be played at Necromancy and other club nights, including a decade later during my fieldwork. These tracks have much harsher and faster electronic beats than the darkwave tracks, and many also have harsher and more aggressive vocal styles, and most research participants would have labelled them 'industrial music' rather than goth. The final two songs of the show are consistent with the first set of the show and fit with research participants' category of 'goth music'.

4. 25 June 2008

This final image shows a post on the Cascading Light blog from during my fieldwork, complete with hyperlinks to the bands (in purple) and an embedded media player. This was their last weekly show before changing to a monthly format. The music in the list come from a range of genres that Evony and Kate classified as 'goth music'. It is notable that most of these bands would not be played by any of the DJs in the Dark Alt scene, not even those who claimed association with goth.

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