Drug Use and Western Selfhood: An Ethnography of Urban Paths in Perth, Western Australia

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This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of The University of Western Australia, Department of Anthropology, 1995
Abstract

This thesis examines modalities for the construction and enactment of Western selfhood. It does so by examining, ethnographically and anthropologically, the everyday forms of drug use practised by the members of two socially and culturally diverse urban social scenes – the ‘Players’ and the ‘Bohemians’ – in Perth, Western Australia. Although anthropologists have become increasingly interested in the social and cultural construction of selfhood, their accounts rarely focus on selfhood in Western contexts. They either uncritically reproduce existing representations of the ‘Western’ self or fail to explore its construction and expression in specific ethnographic settings. Scholars from other disciplines – most notably, historians and sociologists – have documented two broad cultural traditions with regard to Western selfhood, those of ‘sincerity’ and ‘authenticity’. It is these traditions, and their relevance to an understanding of contemporary urban life, which are explored in the empirical context of urban drug use.

The interpretive, phenomenological and processual analysis relies for its framework on Rosaldo’s concept of ‘borderlands’ as sites of cultural contestation, on recent work in the sociology of culture (especially Hannerz’s discussion of ‘cultural complexity’) and, in particular, on Finnegan’s model of urban ‘pathways’. However, it extends Finnegan’s model to include aspects of personal transition and transformation. Each social scene is cast as an urban ‘path’, with the personalized routes along them conceptualized as ‘ways’. In this way, there is an analytical emphasis on both collective representation and personal creativity.

On the path constituted by Players, selfhood is transacted on the basis of the division between the ‘real’ self and the public self enacted in the pursuit of ‘the game’, an emic term for strategic interaction concerning the buying, selling and using of drugs. Players create and maintain presentations of multiple public selves as they engage in an activity defined by them to be stigmatizing. They enter into an ongoing dialogue with what they identify as mainstream morality, which results in the careful management of information regarding their ‘stigma’, the segregation of social networks and the
transformation of persons. In their presentations, they are 'insincere', subverting the presumed fit between private self and social role held to be characteristic of 'sincere' persons. The Player path is one of deceit, false presentation and motivational discourse, and is animated by the dialectic between secrecy and disclosure.

On the path constituted by Bohemians, selfhood is transacted on the basis of the belief that the self is alienated and repressed by 'Straight' society and culture. The Bohemian path describes a transitional process through which would-be Bohemians seek both to discover authentic selfhood relatively unconstrained by social roles, and to modify existing social roles to allow what is defined to be more authentic expression. To attempt to achieve these aims, Bohemians collectively construct an alternative moral community in which drug use is redefined as a positive and rewarding activity. They integrate their social networks, are relatively open about their drug use, and constantly seek new experiences and interaction with new sets of fellow Bohemians. The dialectic that perpetuates the Bohemian path is that between self-realization and the construction of Bohemian community.

Following the ethnographic description and analysis, the thesis summarizes, in a more abstract fashion, the structural and cultural features of the Player and Bohemian paths, the dialectics that underpin the two paths, the discourses on Being created and negotiated by their members, and the degree to which the two paths overlap. The thesis concludes by considering the theoretical ramifications of the presented ethnography for urban anthropology and for the addictions field.
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Acknowledgements

Writing a doctoral thesis incurs many debts. First, there are a number of organizations and people who have greatly facilitated its completion. Part of the reported research was supported by a 1990-91 research grant from the Research into Drug Abuse Advisory Committee (RIDAAC) of the National Campaign Against Drug Abuse (NCADA). At the time of this research, I was employed by the National Centre for Research into the Prevention of Drug Abuse (NCRPDA), Curtin University of Technology. While employed at the NCRPDA, my colleagues provided me with a stimulating and challenging environment in which to work (if not always to agree!). I would particularly like to thank the Director of the NCRPDA, Professor David Hawks, who was a Co-Investigator on the RIDAAC research grant.

Further research into drug use and the writing of the thesis were funded by a National Campaign Against Drug Abuse Research Scholarship and associated research monies. During the tenure of the scholarship, I was also fortunate enough to be offered a Visiting Research Fellowship in the Addiction Studies Unit, Curtin University of Technology, which provided invaluable logistic support and access to the necessities of academic life, and an Honorary Research Fellowship in the NCRPDA.

Before and during my tenure as Visiting Research Fellow in the Addiction Studies Unit, Associate Professor Bill Saunders (the Head of the Unit, a Co-Investigator on the RIDAAC research grant and a co-supervisor for the NCADA Research Scholarship) was an enthusiastic advocate for the ethnographic approach in the addictions field, was able to provide me with wise counsel regarding the realpolitiks of drug research, and was always prepared to do anything within his power to facilitate my research. My other colleagues in the Addiction Studies Unit also helped to create a pleasant environment in which to work, and Richelle Hall produced the final version of the manuscript. In the Department of Anthropology at the University of Western Australia, Jill Woodman ensured the smooth negotiation of administrative matters.
Academically, there are several people I would like to single out for special acknowledgement. Professor Basil Sansom, my principal supervisor, helped me to shape this thesis and his intellectual guidance has, as always, been illuminating and inspiring. Dr Charles Waddell, my co-supervisor, made many pertinent suggestions throughout the production of the thesis, his enthusiasm for the project never flagging. Dr Philip Moore read drafts of the thesis and was always willing to discuss ideas and to provide useful suggestions for reading. Professor Bob Tonkinson, despite the heavy workload of a head of department, happily agreed to be co-opted in the last few months of writing and his efficient editorial work helped me over the line. Richard Riordan, a fellow postgraduate student, was always ready to engage in some comparative discussion of our respective materials (usually in the 'quiet sections' of the library). Malissa Pearl Helms read and discussed Chapters 6 – 8 of the manuscript with me, and my father, George Moore, proof-read the final version. Although they are too numerous to name, I also thank the many people in the addictions field who have advised and encouraged me at different points along the way.

I would also like to thank the participants in the following seminars for their constructive criticism. Earlier versions of Chapter 8 were presented to the Urban Anthropology and Sociology Research Group in Perth in July, 1993, and to the Australian Anthropological Association National Conference in Melbourne in October, 1993. A preliminary version of Chapter 7 was presented to a Department of Anthropology Seminar, at the University of Western Australia, in October, 1994.

With any long-term project there are also those people who provide support of a more personal kind. Alison Marsh, Ernie Lang, Mariella Vallesi, Phil Rydon, Claudia Ovenden, Sharon Harford, Christopher Mills, Mary and George Moore, Chelsea Cruse, Darren Jackson, Valerie Frewarson-Lane and Val Pritchard have, in different ways and at different times, provided words of advice and encouragement during the writing process.

My penultimate acknowledgement is to the people with whom I moved during the research, who allowed me to share their lives for a short time. In particular, I thank the persons disguised as Jessie, Vinnie, Lisa, Laura, Michael, MC, Mark, Rick and Jane from the Player social scene; and Evatt, Suzanne, Mick, Georgia, Caitlin and Don from the Bohemian social scene. Tolerating my inappropriate questions and constant presence, and my requests for them to read drafts of thesis chapters (or earlier articles), they gave me (or, more accurately, made me work to understand) their social selves.
Finally, I lovingly thank my partner, Jode, for tolerating my absence on so many occasions and for sharing the anxieties and exhilarations (those 'eureka!' moments) of writing a doctoral thesis. In thanking her I can do no better than to paraphrase Ned Polsky (in Hustlers, Beats and Others) who, after perusing the acknowledgements of other books in order to find an appropriate one for his wife, wrote that, 'I found the choice to be hopeless, for every one of the many sweet things authors wrote about their [partners] is true of mine'.
From April, 1989, to February, 1992, I was employed as a Research Associate in the National Centre for Research into the Prevention of Drug Abuse (NCRPDA), at Curtin University of Technology in Perth, Western Australia. While employed there, I won a research grant to investigate, ethnographically, the use of a so-called ‘designer drug’, Ecstasy, amongst a social network of young people in Perth. On the basis of this research, which I conducted between 1990-92 (with the help of a PhD scholarship once I had resigned from NCRPDA), I published six articles written specifically for an addictions audience and published in addictions (or related) journals. These articles covered issues of ethnographic methodology (Moore 1992b, 1993a), styles of drug use (Moore 1993d), the sociology of a drug scene (Moore 1993c), anthropological reflections on a major concept in the addictions field – drug dependence (Moore 1992c), and the public health ramifications of the research (Moore 1993b).

In retrospect, with the benefit of time free from the pressure to publish afforded by the research scholarship, and the comparative material gathered in a second ethnographic research project into drug use amongst a different youth social scene in Perth, I realized that there was an underlying theoretical continuity to the six articles which none of them spelt out, as well as a missing empirical element that would provide additional coherence. In other words, there was some more writing to be done which would pull the diverse articles together; a set of underlying theoretical and empirical statements that would make coherent sense of the six articles and give them a unity that they lacked when read separately. Part 2 (Chapters 3 – 5) of the thesis attempts to formulate this theoretical and substantive core and, in particular, Chapters 3 and 4 contain revised material from the first five of the six articles cited above. Whereas these materials were once offered up in the context of applied research, they are now put to more theoretical ends in an academic thesis.
Part 1

Introduction
Chapter 1

Defining the problem

The city ... is an environment where there are many and varied ways of making oneself known to others ... The opportunities are there, in the social structure. What people do with them, and how consciously they seize upon them, can vary considerably (Hannerz 1980:232).

In this thesis, I work anthropologically to interpret the emic meanings of drug use for the members of two urban social scenes in Perth, the capital city of the state of Western Australia (population: approximately 1.2 million). I conceive of drug use as an activity constituting as well as expressing central social and cultural processes of everyday life in what I have termed the Player and Bohemian scenes. More broadly, then, my analysis concerns not only the anthropology of drug use but also the anthropology of urban life.

My mode of inquiry and the account I present have been further shaped by several considerations. Rather than portraying myself as an omnipresent observer – present in all places at the same time, all-seeing and all-knowing (cf. J. Marcus 1990) – my analysis is that of a 'positioned subject' (R. Rosaldo 1989). My age and life experience at the time of fieldwork, and my social relationships with those members of the social scenes with whom I moved, help to shape the intersubjective account I have constructed (cf. Rabinow 1977). In this view, anthropological texts should be firmly grounded in fieldwork and our analyses should proceed from an understanding of the words and deeds of those with whom we, as anthropologists, move. For this reason – to ground my analysis – I present descriptions of fieldwork in the two social scenes (in Chapters 3 and 6).

Secondly, Sansom (1980:267) remarks, in The Camp at Wallaby Cross, that 'contradiction in a system produces its dynamic and to define the nature of systemic contradiction is thus to account for the perpetuation of a social form'. In keeping with this dictum, I present an interpretive, processual account which focuses on the dialectics that animate and perpetuate two social and cultural forms.
Finally, the analysis presented derives from an ongoing dialogue between my developing understandings of each of the described social scenes, a strategy also noted by Kapferer (1988:xii) in his comparative study of nationalism in Sri Lanka and Australia:

the objective is ... to indicate how an understanding of one nationalism or cultural form is extended by placing it into a critical and dialectical relation to another ... My view is that vital dimensions of Australian life are thrown into general significance through the lens of Sri Lanka and vice versa. Much of the Australian description, in other words, depends on a reading of the Sri Lankan ethnography and the same applies the other way around.

The academic literature on drug use is both voluminous and varied. Two strands of this body of work have been guided by a number of theoretical and empirical concerns which make them less relevant for my purposes. Firstly, there is a substantial literature devoted to considering drug use in the context of government policy. The central concern for the authors of this literature is the relative efficacy of particular prevention and treatment measures (whether instituted by government or non-government agencies) designed to reduce the social and economic costs of drug use (e.g. Ali, Miller and Cormack 1992, Collins and Lapsley 1991, Goodstadt 1986, Wardlaw 1993). This literature may be informed by anthropological and sociological research findings but does not generally seek to address theoretical issues in these (and other) academic fields.

Secondly, there is a substantial body of research work with either a broadly behavioural science (e.g. Jessor and Jessor 1977, Kandel 1985, Loxley and Hawks 1994, Shedler and Block 1990) or an epidemiological orientation (e.g. Black and Casswell 1993, Department of Community Services and Health 1990, Hall and Hando 1993). Positivist in paradigm and methodologically reliant on large-scale surveys or longitudinal studies of age cohorts, such studies aim to describe and measure an 'objective' reality. Two common aims are to discover the 'underlying' or 'predisposing' factors in the initiation into drug use (in the behavioural science tradition) or to ascertain the number of 'individuals' using a particular drug, how often they use it, and in what quantities (in the epidemiological tradition). Even in psychological studies in which there is deemed to be a qualitative component - say, administered questionnaires or semi-structured interviews (e.g. Solowij, Hall and Lee 1992) – the deductive research process generally ensures that the kind of data sought is shaped by policy or theoretical considerations rather than from those arising out of the emic understandings of drug users themselves.
In 1990, while working as a Research Associate at the National Centre for Research into the Prevention of Drug Abuse in Perth, I published a review of Australian research of this etic type (Moore 1990). My review focused on the substantive area of youth drug use and argued the need for a more emic, anthropological/sociological perspective and methodology – ethnography. I reached four conclusions about trends in this research, aspects of which also featured in the drug research literature from the United States and the United Kingdom.

Firstly, Australian drug use research had ignored major theoretical developments in the field of the sociology of youth. The theoretical and methodological ramifications of important bodies of work, such as those associated with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham, were ignored. This trend had also been noted by other commentators. Dorn and South (1989) and Kandel (1980) documented it with respect to the British and North American literature on drug use, as did Blum (1984) for the sociology of alcohol problems in the United States.

Secondly, Australian research emphasized epidemiology, with its aggregate-level analysis of 'individuals', blurred boundaries between problematic use and any use of drugs, and ignorance of the social contexts in which drug use took place. Thirdly, the myriad ways in which sociological factors such as ethnicity, social class, gender and age serve to shape drug use were consistently ignored.

Finally, there was a disproportionate emphasis on pathology in explanations of youth drug use. In other words, drug use was perceived to be the result of a 'deficit' in either the personality and/or the environment. In this sense, studies of youth drug use reflected a broader emphasis on pathology in the addictions field, a characteristic labelled the 'pathology paradigm' by Mugford (1988a). While my review focused specifically on the Australian literature on youth drug use prior to 1990, broadening the focus to include international literature of this etic type brings much the same result – a disinterest in the emic view of drug use.

A third major stream in the literature on drug use addresses the social and cultural meanings of drug use, as these are created and understood by drug users. There is a rich tradition of anthropological and sociological studies based on participant observation and, to a lesser extent, other qualitative methods. Some of these studies deal with drug use in a range of cultures. Others focus on drug use in modern, industrialized urban centres and can loosely be divided into two overlapping categories. The divide between these two categories is not absolute but rather a
question of emphasis. Firstly, there are those studies that are written primarily for an addictions audience and published in specialist addictions journals or books. These studies share a common thread – an ethnographic focus on analytical problems raised by either the policy or the addictions agenda. Secondly, there are studies in which the authors attend to the anthropological or sociological meanings of their research material first and then, in some but not all cases, address theoretical issues in the addictions literature.

Where appropriate, insights from the emically oriented studies of drug use inform the analysis presented in this thesis. However, I employ neither the vast, disparate body of addictions literature (or any particular subfield within it) nor any other field of scholarly endeavour (e.g. the vast literature on youth) to shape my empirical and analytical problem, as one might in the conventional idea of a ‘literature review’. Reviewing a particular ‘field’ and identifying empirical ‘gaps’ to be ‘filled’ implies a positivist view of knowledge. It presumes that there is a finite, ‘objective’ body of knowledge that is discoverable, rather than seeing research as a series of interpretations conducted at specific historical times, in specific places, by specific investigators or teams of investigators. Such an approach runs the risk of constraining analysis by placing the empirical and conceptual findings of others ahead of those generated by one’s own research (cf. P. Moore 1992).

Nor do I specifically set out to produce a policy-oriented document that provides recommendations for practical measures to minimize drug-related harm. Rather, I heed the call of Dance and Mugford (1992:603) for ‘broadly based analyses’ of drug use (see also Mugford 1994), by working to produce an academic thesis aimed at the theoretical level. In the combative words of Hall et al (1978:x), this thesis represents an ‘intervention in the battleground of ideas’ in the addictions field. My aim is to work inductively to make anthropological sense of my ethnographic material on drug use in the two urban social scenes, employing whichever sources provide illumination, and then, in my conclusion, to address both anthropological theory and trends of analysis in the addictions field.

The problem

Remaining true to my emic, ethnographic focus, I begin with an account of a conversation I had with a male member of one of the two urban social scenes that I examine in the following pages. He had recently read some of Goffman’s work, particularly *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), and disagreed strongly with
several of Goffman’s fundamental premises. For him, the notion that social life could be seen through a dramaturgical lens – as a series of encounters in which one may present quite different selves depending on the audience – was anathema. Furthermore, that each of these encounters should involve a ‘frontstage’ (in which information relevant to the self being performed is readily available to the audience) and a ‘backstage’ (concealing information likely to undermine the performance of self) ran counter to his view of himself and his interactions as relatively open and honest. In his everyday social encounters, he felt he attempted to present the same self to various audiences without being overly concerned to conceal aspects of himself. When pressed, he conceded that there may be some contexts which lay beyond his control in which he might moderate slightly some aspects of himself, such as some work contexts. In general, however, he argued that the self he took into social interaction was his total self. He explicitly rejected Goffman’s idea of a ‘fragmented self’ performing for different audiences. For this particular man, the rejection of Goffman’s ideas is tied up with his sexuality. As a gay man long ‘out of the closet’ (i.e. publicly open about his sexuality) and committed to the gay and lesbian politics of equality, seeking to play down his sexuality constitutes for him an unacceptable compromise of the self.

Contained in our conversation are the seeds of my anthropological problem: How is selfhood (and, therefore, personhood) transacted in modern, urban contexts? In using the term ‘selfhood’, I am referring not to the ‘self’ of theological and philosophical writings but to the self transacted in social interaction, that is, the interpersonal self, the cultural self, the situational and biographical self. Substantively, I explore this question through a consideration of two urban social scenes, paying particular attention to the insights gained through a study of the forms of drug use around which they are organized. The study of drug use therefore becomes my point of departure, the extended case (Burawoy 1991) through which I illuminate the social and cultural practices employed in the respective transactions of selfhood and personhood in these scenes.

My conversational partner was enumerating the philosophy of an authentic self that he shares with other members of the social scene in which he moves. I have labelled the members of this scene the ‘Bohemians’ (Chapters 6 – 8). Put simply, in the terms set out above, Bohemians are anti-Goffman in the way they construct and transact selfhood. They reject what they deem to be mainstream society and its values as constraining self-expression. In their interaction and expressive activities, including drug use, they emphasize the search for an authentic self amidst a community of diverse yet like-minded persons.
By contrast, the diverse members of the second social scene in which I moved know one another through a series of instrumental relationships created and negotiated around drug use. The ‘Players’ (Chapters 3 – 5), as I have labelled them, could have stepped out of the pages of a Goffman text. In accepting what they take to be mainstream society’s prevailing definition of drug use, particularly injecting drug use, as a stigmatizing, deviant activity, they accept and elaborate the Goffmanian notion of fragmented selves in their concealment of an ‘immoral’ activity. They must reckon constantly with the possibility of ‘spoiled identity’. Thus, in their words and deeds, the members of the two social scenes transact selfhood and construct their social and cultural realities in very different ways.

The self

Culturally constructed selfhood

In the first half of the twentieth century, there emerged in anthropology the ‘culture-and-personality’ school. Anthropologists working within this theoretical framework (e.g. Benedict 1935, M. Mead 1935) uncritically borrowed existing (Western) psychoanalytic theories of personality and employed them in their analyses of diverse ethnographic contexts. Meanwhile, in 1938, Mauss had published his pioneering article, ‘A category of the human mind: the notion of person; the notion of self’. In it, he distinguished between the self (the moi), and the socially and culturally constituted person (the personne) and role (the personnage). For many years, apart from occasional attempts by anthropologists (and others) to deal with questions of self and person, the relationship between ‘individual and society’ was neglected. Since the late 1970s, however, there has been a burgeoning anthropological literature on the social and cultural construction of selfhood and personhood.

Notwithstanding discussions and critiques of anthropological research on selfhood (e.g. Cohen 1993, 1994), a central claim that emerges from anthropological studies in the constructivist tradition is that selfhood is culturally constructed. Many anthropologists have been inspired by the work of George Herbert Mead (1934) and Hallowell (1955), who argued that to be human was to possess self-awareness. Because, in these works, self-awareness was conceptualized as deriving from symbolic interaction with the ‘generalized other’, anthropologists argued that the myriad ways of being self-aware were constituted through the social and cultural practices found in specific contexts.
In contrast to the culture-and-personality studies, the authors of constructivist anthropological studies (e.g. Lutz 1988), despite differences in approach and emphasis, share a common aim: They seek to understand the 'ethnopsychologies' of those being studied, that is, the 'cultural formulations of persons, personal action and experience, and the interactive practices through which such formulations are conveyed in social life' (Kirkpatrick and White 1985:9, see also Heelas and Lock 1981).12 The anthropology of self (and feeling) is, in the words of Michelle Rosaldo (1984:139):

an attempt to understand how human beings understand themselves and to see their actions and behaviours as in some ways the creations of those understandings ... [w]e must appreciate the ways in which such understandings grow, not from an inner essence relatively independent of the social world, but from experience in a world of meanings, images, and social bonds, in which all persons are inevitably involved.

One important consequence of anthropological studies of selfhood and personhood as they are constructed in non-Western cultures is to call into question the universality of the idea prevalent in Western discourse – and therefore in psychology, psychoanalytic theory, psychiatry, social psychology and sociology – that persons have a coherent, bounded self which sustains them throughout their many social involvements. In the oft-quoted words of Geertz (1976:225):

The Western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgment, and action organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively both against other such wholes and against its social and natural background, is, however incorrigible it may seem to us, a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world's cultures.13

Two excellent ethnographies presenting accounts of culturally constructed, non-Western selfhood are those by Kondo (1990) and Michelle Rosaldo (1980). Both authors render problematic what they label the 'Western' notion of a coherent self, by explicitly contrasting it with selfhood as it is constructed in their respective research settings. For Kondo, the Japanese self is a contextually constructed, relationally defined self at odds with 'Western' (and, she argues, therefore academic) ideas about a fixed, coherent personal identity. For the Japanese, one is always a 'friend', 'daughter' or 'son', 'teacher', or 'sister' or 'brother', and is defined through social relationships to others. Such ideas, argued Kondo, are reflected in, and constitutive of, the Japanese language. Michelle Rosaldo argued convincingly that while Ilongot affectual terms may resemble feelings that appear familiar to the 'Western' reader, the meaning of
these terms must be understood with respect to their use. Therefore, affects must be understood as the constructions arising from a form of life, and selfhood as a mode of apprehension mediated by cultural forms and 'social logics'. In other words, the social lives of human actors are informed by their self-conceptions – the cultural accounts of how and why people act (in other works, these self-conceptions are termed 'personhood').

While anthropologists such as Geertz, Kondo and Michelle Rosaldo succeeded in drawing attention to the culturally constructed nature of selfhood and personhood, and in documenting these cultural constructions in non-Western cultures, they left ethnographically unexamined Western modalities for these transactions. They were strangely content merely to reproduce the unitary view of the Western self without defining or investigating it in concrete ethnographic or historical settings.14

There appear to be two obvious problems with the conventional view of the Western self, as it is set out in anthropological studies of non-Western cultures. As postmodernist scholars, or those influenced by postmodernism, have been quick to point out, the 'essentialist' view of the Western self appears simplistic and there exists more than one Western concept of self (e.g. Derrida 1976, 1978; Johnson 1985; Morton and Macintyre 1995; Murray 1993). Philosophers and historians of ideas have also traced Western conceptions of the self apparently at odds with that conception outlined by anthropologists.

Postmodernists, philosophers and historians seem to have a different analytical and empirical focus from that of anthropologists. Murray’s (1993) discussion of the Western concept of the self provides one way out of the apparent confusion. He (1993:10) states that he is 'not here advancing an alternate account of how Western selfhood may, in fact, have been experienced by natives'. Instead, he (1993:10-11) discerns three types of account in discussions of Western selfhood: 'ethnographic accounting of the way the Western self is either experienced or represented' ('S1'); 'accounts of how the tradition of what has been said about the Western self gets modeled' ('S2'); and 'remarks by such as myself ... directed to the claims made concerning S2' ('S3'). Murray’s principal concern is to show how the tradition explored in accounts of type S2 is 'more heterogeneous, contested, and dialectical' than has been claimed.
While Murray and other scholars of the self aim their analyses at the level of S2 or S3, my analysis is aimed at the level of S1. I employ representations and discussions from selected anthropological, historical, philosophical and sociological texts on the Western self to fashion the conceptual tools with which to explore the ethnographic problem I have set myself: How is selfhood (and personhood) transacted in two urban social scenes organized around forms of drug use? To do so means simultaneously mining this literature for theoretical insights while also treating it as an ethnographic source (a point also noted by Johnson [1985:92]).

The second obvious, but perhaps less vexing, problem with existing anthropological depictions of Western selfhood is that anthropologists do not always define what they mean when they use the term 'Western'. Do they mean North America (as do Lutz and Kondo)? Do they mean Europe and North America? Do they include countries such as Australia and New Zealand? In using 'Western', I include Western Europe, the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Although Johnson (1985:91-92) has argued that, 'generalizations stressing differences between east and west gloss over the diversity within both eastern and western traditions themselves – over different eras, among different cultures, and as these traditions are differentially experienced by individuals', the cultures, and in particular the notions of morality and selfhood, of these countries have been substantially shaped by both Catholic and Protestant religious ideas and values. Although the inclusion of Australia and New Zealand makes this definition slightly broader than that usually employed in studies of 'Western' cultural forms, it nevertheless remains consistent with them. Two instances of the many available works are Connell (1995), who, in his recent study of 'masculinity', focuses on Europe and the United States when writing of 'Western', and Said (1978) who, in his Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient, employs the same criteria (his Index entry [1978:368] for 'West' reads 'see Europe, United States').

Western constructions of selfhood as 'divided'

There is debate about the precise historical origins of the Western construction of self. Logan (1987) reviews some of the arguments, claiming that the confusion may centre on the different constructions of selfhood that emerged from about 1200 A.D. onwards. He argues that during the later Middle Ages there evolved a cultural view of the self as an autonomous subject in the world. Such a view is supported by studies of the role of confession. Prior to the thirteenth century, the practice of confession was confined to those in monastic or other forms of contemplative religious life (Foucault
1988). However, the meeting of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215-16) decreed that confession would henceforth be obligatory for laity (Jackson 1985, Meade 1988:24-30). At this time, confession (like penance) was tied to the idea that pastors/confessors were ‘physicians of the soul’ desiring to ‘minister to the mind diseased’ (McNeil and Gamer 1938 cited in Jackson 1985:49). The Lateran Council’s decision took the notion of a split between ‘inner states’ and ‘modes of behaviour’ out of religious settings and into everyday Western constructions of selfhood.

Campbell (1987:72-73) presents a slightly different view of the origins of the inner life in his discussion of emotions. In the Middle Ages, he argues, the main source of agency in the world was deemed to be located outside of humans. With the Reformation, there emerged the view that the environment was no longer ‘the primary source of feelings’ but a ‘“neutral sphere” governed by impersonal laws’. A ‘natural’ consequence of this important shift in world-view was that ‘emotions were relocated “within” persons, as states which emanated from some internal source’. Campbell sees this process of ‘disenchantment’ (following Weber) as beginning with ancient Judaism but accelerating in the Reformation and reaching its peak in the Enlightenment.

In making these observations, I do not mean to imply that selfhood (or any other cultural concept) is merely the product of discourse (as one might, employing a Foucauldian or a Durkheimian emphasis on ‘collective representations’). Rather, at a particular point in history (whether in the Middle Ages or later), it became something named. Prior to 1215-16 or, in Campbell’s formulation, the Reformation, laity may have engaged in certain types of behaviour or perhaps observed certain rites that expressed a view of selfhood based on a linguistically unarticulated idea of an inner life.

Logan continues by arguing that the Western construction of selfhood underwent further changes as modernity approached. During the Renaissance and Reformation, the self became represented as an assertive subject. By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment, respectively, the self was deemed a competent subject (Solomon 1988). The ‘modern’ era, including Romanticism, ushered in a construction of the self as an observed object. Finally, in the era of the ‘post-modern’, the self is held to be an existential and alienated object (in other historical works, modernity is also held to be associated with the rise of alienation).
Despite the protestations of postmodernists, with their emphasis on difference, one cultural feature has remained constant throughout the various representations of the Western self that Logan documents (whether in German, French, English, Italian or American discourses on the self): The Western self is represented as comprising two selves— an ‘inner’ or ‘core’ or ‘private’ self (George Herbert Mead’s ‘I’), and an ‘outer’ or ‘social’ or ‘public’ self manifested through the performance of social roles (Mead’s ‘me’). That is, the Western self is represented as a ‘divided self’.

Such a representation appears in various Western discourses—in Shakespeare’s famous line, ‘To thine own self be true’ (Crapanzano 1992), in the theories of Freud and Sartre (Denzin 1987c), in literature (Trilling 1972), and in sociology with Gidden’s (1991) ‘internally referential systems’ as the basis for the construction of the reflexive self of modernity. The notion of an inner and outer self also appears in popular proverbs and aphorisms—such as ‘Never judge a book by its cover’ and ‘Still [or smooth] waters run deep’—which relate to persons and to the relative fit between public performance and inner state.

Three specific examples show how thoroughly and unquestioningly representations of a divided self are integrated into twentieth-century Western intellectual discourse. In *The Well-Tempered Self*, Miller (1993) argues, following Foucault, that governments establish self-governance among their subjects through the ideology of citizenship. Such an ideology produces effective, functioning modern subjects. His is an argument that requires a conception of a divided self to be sustainable. For example (Miller 1993:xx-xxi):

> In recent formulations of this problem [circulating information for public decisions versus policing] it is often argued that government from on high is being displaced by government of the self. This does the work of fulfilling the desires of the state by manufacturing a public comprised of subjectivities that can work toward that goal. Foucault suggests that: “To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others”. This is done in order to make people more productive and have them do this under their own cognizance. Self-governance as a set of technologies comes to displace the management of population by material intervention. Just as the subject attains self-recognition via one set of discourses as a lone individual, even at this moment of loneliness, subjects are also expected to recognize themselves as part of a public. They know themselves as citizens.

The nub of Miller’s argument is that while government of the public self, through policing, is effective, more recent ‘technologies of the self’ focus on shaping a more compliant subjectivity or inner self (see also Rose 1990).
My second example of Western representations of the self as divided concerns psychiatry. Around the time that Goffman was writing and publishing *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (1959), Laing (1960) produced a complementary phenomenological-existential work on sanity and madness, *The Divided Self*. While we can put aside the more psychiatric aspects of Laing's work, his argument about the self is noteworthy. He contrasts schizophrenia with sanity, which he calls 'a schizoid existential position'. One type of schizoid position involves a split between an 'inner', 'real' self and a system of false selves (Laing 1960:76):

> What the individual variously terms his "own", "inner", "true", "real", self is experienced as divorced from all activity that is observable by another ... One may conveniently call this "personality" the individual's "false self" or a "false-self system". The reason I suggest that one speaks of a false-self system is that the "personality", false self, mask, "front" or persona that such individuals wear may consist in an amalgam of various part-selves, none of which is so fully developed as to have a comprehensive "personality" of its own.

According to Laing, the false-self system exists as a kind of protection for the 'inner self' which, preoccupied with establishing and maintaining identity, remains secret. Apart from safe situations and moments, 'the individual seeks to regard the whole of his objective existence as the expression of a false self' (Laing 1960:100).

Finally, Denzin (1987a, 1987b) has produced one of only four academic analyses (of which I am aware) that focus specifically on the self and drug use – licit or illicit. He argues that the 'alcoholic self' is a self divided against itself. He locates his analysis in the United States at a particular historical juncture at which, he claims, there is great ambivalence about alcohol. On the one hand, the use of alcohol is encouraged in the pursuit of a self which is valued in everyday discourse, while on the other alcohol use is condemned as hedonistic and harmful to self and society. Echoing Laing, Denzin argues that 'alcoholics' take to extremes the principles and assumptions that structure the lives of 'ordinary people'. They deceive themselves and others, and engage in distorted human relationships. 'Such persons also develop divided selves and live out imaginary self-ideals that have little to do with the worlds of the "real"' (Denzin 1987a:196). For some alcoholics, Alcoholics Anonymous provides a way of constructing a 'transcendental self' by providing a secular spirituality which helps to heal the 'alcoholically divided self of the past' (Denzin 1987a:199).
Following Logan's historical scheme, I will be most concerned with representations of the divided self in the context of the historical shift from pre-modern or 'traditional' times through modernity to the post-modernity of the late twentieth century. With respect to this period, the debate about the divided self has been conducted largely in terms of representations of 'sincerity' and 'authenticity'.

Hannerz (1980:221-231) provides a useful review of these terms in the context of his discussion of Goffman's contribution to urban anthropology. In particular, he traces the work of Peter Berger (Berger 1965, 1970, 1973; Berger, Berger and Kellner 1973), who argues that under more 'traditional' (i.e. pre-modern) social systems:

| the individual could identify himself primarily through the roles which placed him in the social order (Hannerz 1980:225). |

Accompanying this congruence between role and self were the concepts of 'honour', through which persons claimed esteem in terms of roles and role performance, and 'sincerity', which was characterized by identification with one's social roles.

With the development of industrial capitalism in the modern age came increased bureaucratization, urbanization and a rigidly demarcated division of labour, with consequences for the enactment of selfhood. As a result of these processes of modernization, there is a disjunction between self and role:

| Bureaucratic and industrial roles, however, are too often limited in their scope to contain the self, and consequently there is a disjunction between self and role ... there is a sense of a split between the public and private self, where the latter is the only "real" self (Hannerz 1980:225). |

When people found themselves engaged constantly in relationships and pursuits which did not lend succour to the self, feelings of deprivation set in. To construct and reinforce the 'real' self, people turned increasingly to activities in which self-definition was central. Hannerz (1980:225) suggests that a new industry has arisen to facilitate the 'search for identity' through 'recreational activities'.

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Accompanying such a change, a new ideology of selfhood has arisen. Honour has been replaced by the notion of human dignity, and there has been a decline in sincerity. In its place has emerged the celebration of 'authenticity', that is, a refusal to be constrained by one's social roles. 'The unfettered, full involvement of people with each other as whole personalities is idealized' (Hannerz 1980:225). Such a shift is far from complete: 'one may see honor and dignity, sincerity and authenticity as simultaneously present, sometimes in different arenas, occasionally in a conflict which is not necessarily sharply defined' (Hannerz 1980:226).

Campbell's (1987) study of the Romantic Ethic is also relevant to a consideration of the historical relationship between sincerity and authenticity. He states that his work is a complement to Weber's classic *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. According to Campbell, Weber focused mainly on the Calvinist (i.e. Puritan) strand in Protestant thought and ignored the 'second Protestant ethic', that of Pietism. As a consequence, Weber emphasized the Work Ethic, with its prescriptive stance towards indulgence, pleasure and luxury. The pre-modern notions of sincerity and honour, as outlined by Berger and Hannerz, continued to be integral to this modern ethic. In a far-ranging and detailed discussion of religious texts, figures and cultural elements, Campbell argues that, in focusing on Puritanism, Weber missed the association of virtue and pleasure found in Pietism and the consequent emphasis on hedonism in Romanticism, which, following Sentimentalism, developed from the Pietist strand of thought. According to Campbell (1987:269), it was with Romanticism that the idea of an authentic self first emerged:

Romanticism has much in common with that form of religious response which Weber dubbed, "inner-worldly asceticism". This is because the individual is under an obligation to his "god", to do his bidding; that is to "realize" his "true self", a process similar to the "perpetual externalization of the divine" which Weber associates with asceticism.

Hannerz notes that the idea of the authentic self stands in a 'somewhat uneasy relationship' to the Goffmanian perspective towards interaction ritual, which is based around the relative fit between private and public. Goffman's work seems to belong primarily within the parameters set by the self-role relationship and to the related question of whether persons are sincere or insincere in their presentations of self. His detractors argue that this focus on the self-role relationship means that Goffman's theories can just as easily be taken as a 'sociology of deception' as they can a 'sociology of sincerity' (Hannerz 1980:209-214).
A debate about the North American self

One area in which the debate over sincerity (and insincerity) and authenticity has been played out is in a particular strand of academic discourse regarding the nature of the American self. The protagonists in this debate do not always employ the terms 'sincerity' and 'authenticity', but the various arguments they present can be seen as informed by these terms. At a deeper level, the arguments make sense only within the conceptual parameters set by the Western cultural notion of divided selfhood.

Essentially, the debate examines 'American society' and changes in the self over the last century. Hewitt (1989:4-10) identifies and discusses the two sides of the debate as 'pessimistic' and 'optimistic' discourses and argues that differing views of modernity lie at the heart of both positions. The former portrays changes to the person in modern American society as negative (e.g. Bellah et al 1985, Bloom 1988, Lasch 1978, Magnet 1993, Riesman 1950, Rieff 1966). In times past, the pessimists argue, a stable social order produced persons whose lives were bounded by tradition, and whose perceptions of self were 'shaped by institutional involvements and commitments' (i.e. by social roles). The transformation from an agrarian society to a modern industrial one 'set in motion social changes that disrupted community, severed people from tradition, made identity problematic, and rendered institutions an uncertain resource for the self' (Hewitt 1989:5-6). As the authority of tradition waned, persons began to look for 'anchor points' within themselves rather than in social institutions:

- a concern for "sincerity" gave way to preoccupation with "authenticity",
- the era of "character" vanished and that of "personality" arrived,
- narcissism became a form of psychopathology writ large on American culture, and the "therapeutic culture" triumphed (Hewitt 1989:6)

Those writing on the 'optimistic' side of the debate celebrate such changes (e.g. Rogers 1980) or point to their potential value (e.g. Taylor 1991). Pessimist writers see the self as being undermined by modernity whereas optimists see modernity as:

- the liberation of the person from the past and its repressive mores, In this view, the modern transformation of the world has been beneficial to individuals, who have been gradually relieved of the oppressive weight of society, although there is yet a considerable distance to go before men and women are free to construct a good society in which good selves will be possible (Hewitt 1989:7).21
There are variations on this central theme in the debate over the effects of modernity on the American self. For example, Gergen (1991) traces the decline of the ‘Romantic self’ and the rise of the ‘Modernist self’. According to Gergen, the former emerged in the nineteenth century and was characterized by a view of persons as possessing the necessary attributes – passion, soul, creativity and moral fibre – for the formation of committed relations, close friendships and life purposes. The latter view emerged in the twentieth century and attributed to persons the qualities of predictability, honesty and sincerity. In relation to the work of Berger, Hannerz, Hewitt and Campbell, Gergen has emphasized a different historical order in which the authentic self of the Romantic period was replaced by the sincere self of modernism.

Whatever the details of historical emphasis (and there is ample evidence to support the Berger, Hannerz, et al view over that of Gergen), they are less important in Gergen’s argument than his view that both the Romantic and the Modernist self are being replaced by the idea of a ‘saturated’ or ‘post[-]modern self’. Because of ‘social saturation’ – the bombarding of the person with multiple messages, realities, languages and ideologies – it no longer makes sense, he argues, to speak of authenticity or sincerity. Instead, the concept of personal essence, which lies at the heart of both themes, is thrown into doubt. Selves as possessors of real and identifiable characteristics – such as rationality, emotion, inspiration and will – are dismantled. The self, in this view, becomes ultimately contextual; it is a ‘protean’ (Lifton 1993), ‘mutable’ (Zurcher, Jr. 1977) or ‘impulse-process’ self (Wood and Zurcher, Jr. 1988). Although this is an interesting argument, Gergen provides little ethnographic (or other systematic) evidence for his central claim – that the inner/outer dichotomy has been replaced by a contextual self.

_Homo rhetoricus, homo seriosus and homo authenticus_

Lanham (1975), in discussing ancient Greek philosophy and thought (with reference to literary and philosophical texts through the ages), represents the Western self as having been always composed of two elements: _homo seriosus_ and _homo rhetoricus_. By the former, he (1975: 1) means this:

Every man possesses a central self, an irreducible identity. These selves combine into a single, homogeneously real society which constitutes a referent reality for the men living in it. This referential society is in turn contained in a physical nature itself referential, standing “out there”, independent of man. Man has invented language to communicate with his fellow man. He communicates facts and concepts about both nature
and society. He can also communicate a third category of response, emotions. When he is communicating facts or concepts, the success with which they are communicated is measured by something we call *clarity*. When he is communicating feelings, success is measured by something we call *sincerity*, faithfulness to the self who is doing the feeling.

By contrast, in Lanham's (1975: 4-5) exposition of the *homo rhetoricus* view:

man is an actor; his reality public, dramatic. His sense of identity, his self, depends on the reassurance of daily histrionic reenactment ... The lowest common denominator of his life is a social situation. And his motivations must be characteristically ludic, agonistic. He thinks first of winning, of mastering the rules the current game enforces. He assumes a natural agility in changing orientations. He hits the street already street-wise. From birth, almost, he has dwelt not in a single value-structure but in several. He is thus committed to no single construction of the world; much rather, to prevailing in the game at hand. He makes an unlikely zealot. Nor is conceptual creativity, invention of a fresh paradigm, demanded of him. He accepts the present paradigm and explores its resources. Rhetorical man is trained not to discover reality but to manipulate it. Reality is what is accepted as reality, what is useful ... He is thus typically present-centered. Past and future remain as possibility only, a paradigm he may some day have to learn. Until then, he does not sentimentalize them. No golden-ager, he, and no Utopian either ... The rhetorical view of life ... conceives reality as fundamentally dramatic, man as fundamentally a role player. It synthesizes an essentially bifurcated, self-serving theory of motive. We play for advantage, but we play for pleasure, too.

For Lanham (1975:6), the history of the Western self has been marked by a:

shifting and perpetually uneasy combination of *homo rhetoricus* and *homo seriosus*, of a social self and a central self. It is their business to contend for supremacy. To *settle* the struggle would be to end the Greek experiment in a complex self.

Lanham's distinction between the sincerity of *homo seriosus* and the insincerity of *homo rhetoricus*, which belongs to the pre-modern historical period, lies squarely within the self-role territory mapped by Goffman (or rather by his supporters and critics). It does not incorporate the modern development of an authentic self noted by, amongst others, Berger, Campbell, Hannerz and Hewitt, and criticized by Lasch, Bellah et al, and others. He does not provide an alternative to the insincere response to the self-role relationship.
In my study of transacted selfhood, I want to use these terms in the following way. Under the pressure of the alienation and diverse social interactions held to be characteristic of modernity (and, even more so, of post-modernity), persons transacted selfhood in one of three ways. They left the relationship between self and role in place, and continued to strive for sincerity and honour. Secondly, they left the relationship between self and role in place but undermined it through deception (as is possible in the Goffmanian dramaturgical perspective). They were insincere in that the self expressed through social roles was not in keeping with the thoughts and sentiments of the ‘real’ self. Finally, they responded by seeking an authentic, ‘true’ self less constrained by social roles. The second and third developments are quite different. In the second, the existing relationship between self and role is unquestioned though subverted through insincerity; in the third, the central relationship is called into question, then cast aside in favour of an emphasis on the search for the authentic self.

Building on Lanham’s work, then, I propose a third term, homo authenticus, to describe the recent development in selfhood, one which rejects the self-role relationship and both the sincere and potentially insincere responses to it. In the following chapters, I examine the transaction of selfhood in the context of the Player and the Bohemian social scenes. I work to characterize the Players as instances of homo rhetoricus. They work within the bounds of the self-role relationship, subverting it through an emphasis on (insincere) dramatic performance and on representations of such performance in their accounts of social transactions. On the other hand, the Bohemians are instances of homo authenticus in the sense that they give emphasis to the presentation of an authentic self, held to be uncamouflaged behind social performance. They represent the self-role relationship, whether sincere or insincere, as alienating and therefore reject it. For Lanham, the competing forms of sincere and insincere self are present in each person whereas my interest is in social scenes, the members of which emphasize one way of constituting and transacting selfhood over others.

Selfhood and the folk-urban contrast

A final element of Hannerz’s (1980) discussion of selfhood and urban life is also relevant to my analysis – the folk-urban contrast. In urban-type situations, people move through a variety of situations involving different audiences. Some aspects of the self are revealed, others are not, being confined to the ‘backstage’ area. In other words, there may be many ways of revealing oneself to others and more scope for manipulating information kept in backstage. By contrast, in the extreme folk-type situation, the opposite is true: there may be but a single stage on which to perform and a total self is
brought into interaction before a variety of audiences. There is a fit between the inner and outer self. Turning to my research, Players move within instrumental networks, which they establish for the purposes of drug use. In this sense, they are rather like the urbanites of the Wirthian (1938) formulation. Their segmented relationships are characterized by anonymity and impersonality; the self they transact is fragmented. By contrast, Bohemians work to build a symbolic community (Cohen 1985) of like-minded persons in which an authentic self can be transacted during social interaction ('urban villages' [Gans 1962] minus geographic location).

Social diversity and cultural complexity in urban contexts

Apart from the anthropology of selfhood, there are a number of anthropological issues which may fruitfully be explored through a consideration of the two social scenes and which serve conceptually to link my treatment of the scenes. In this section, I spell out, in turn, a number of relevant areas of anthropological and sociological discussion – the theoretical movement from 'subculture' to 'borderland', the distribution of knowledge and the sociology of complex cultures, and the notion of urban pathways – working to situate the ethnographic problem I have set myself to answer. All three areas deal with a common theme: How to manage conceptually the social diversity and cultural complexity of urban life.

From subculture to borderland

Conceptualizing the Player and the Bohemian social scenes as 'subcultures' is unhelpful. 'Subculture', as defined in an interactionist sense by Fine and Kleinman (1979), refers to an interacting group which consists of a series of smaller groups interacting with one another through interlocking social connections. Cultural information and behavioural styles spread through the interlocking groups to construct a world of common discourse, and subcultural change comes about through the negotiation of cultural content between these groups. The term 'subculture' therefore refers both to the social – the network established through the interlocking groups – and the cultural – the knowledge and behaviours shared by the groups.

Within both the Player and Bohemian social scenes, however, there are persons drawn from a range of scenes. Amongst the Bohemians are members of the Gay and Lesbian 'community' (itself a series of scenes), the student scene and the grunge scene, united by a shared commitment to an overarching set of values. The Players, linked through
instrumental relations regarding drug use, are also drawn from a variety of social collectivities. Within each of these collectivities are specific bodies of knowledge and cultural practice. Describing the Player and Bohemian social scenes as ‘subcultures’ means denoting the diverse collectivities within each scene as ‘sub-subcultures’, a clumsy term. It also means, in turn, denoting the diverse groupings within these ‘subsubcultures’ as ‘sub-sub-subcultures’ or, in Hannerz’s (1992:69) terms, ‘microcultures’ (e.g. in the case of gay or lesbian members of the Player and Bohemian scenes, who are drawn from the diverse and complex Gay and Lesbian ‘community’).

Hannerz (1992), in his book *Cultural Complexity*, points out that previous studies of subculture have, for the most part, been ‘internalist’ in orientation – ‘they often give scant attention to what happens at the interfaces’. Even those he identifies as being explicitly externalist, such as the studies conducted by the so-called ‘Birmingham School’ at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) (e.g. Hall and Jefferson 1976), he sees as being guilty of the reification and homogenization of (sub)culture.23

Hannerz, building on his earlier urban anthropological writing (Hannerz 1980), positions his discussion of subcultures within a broader concern: the problem of cultural complexity. His project is macroanthropological (Hannerz 1992:22):

What would be a productive stance for cultural analysis toward what we think of as macro: social structures extended in space, involving large numbers of people, and exhibiting large inventories of meanings and meaningful overt forms, differentially distributed? Of course, in units such as cities, regions, states, or the world, one could not aim at doing the ethnography of everything. Nor is the macro-anthropology of culture probably so concerned with the quantitative aggregation of actions, or with the unintended consequences of such aggregation; favourite topics of types of macroanalysis which I would consider more socially than culturally inclined. [The proposals of other scholars] point in another direction, toward an overview of the cultural flow, and toward a focus on the points where its varied currents come together and mingle ... I will try here to pay less attention to the parts in themselves than to the interfaces, the affinities, the confrontations, the interpenetrations and the flow-through between clusters of meaning and ways of managing meaning. For these are the places and the events where, in some way and to some degree, diversity gets organized.

Thus, like me, Hannerz is more concerned with the spaces between subcultures, or between cultural streams, than he is with the subcultures themselves.
In similar vein, Renato Rosaldo (1989) advances the view that, for a number of diverse reasons which will not concern me here, anthropology must surrender its anachronistic commitment to cultural wholes, as supposedly coherent, self-contained units, and begin to examine sites at which a number of different subcultures meet. This is particularly so in urban settings where mainstream cultural understandings are cross-cut by ethnicity, race, sexuality, gender, generation and social class. Culture, particularly in such heterogeneous settings, is therefore contestable and contested – something which must be created out of the intersection between people occupying various social categories and bringing to these interactions different cultural meanings. The sites in which such intersections and interactions frequently occur are, in Rosaldo’s terminology, ‘borderlands’. In my discussion of the Player and Bohemian scenes, I employ Rosaldo’s term ‘borderland’, while also acknowledging Hannerz’s theoretical contribution to the study of interfaces.

A sociology of culture

A corollary of Rosaldo’s notion of borderlands as sites in which culture is contested, and his insistence that anthropologists surrender their commitment to ‘cultures’ as coherent wholes, is the issue of the distribution of knowledge. Some anthropologists working in oral cultures have written accounts of these cultures with emphasis on the sociology of knowledge, or of culture, rather than on ‘culture’ as a monolithic entity.

Keesing (1982), for example, writing of Kwaio religion, argues that there is considerable personal variation in the way Kwaio interpret the nature of their ancestors and the extent of their involvement in everyday life. Men and women, young and old, have different perspectives on social life. He further argues that the accumulation of sacred knowledge depends to a large extent on commitment, intelligence and other personal qualities. Barth (1975) notes that, amongst the Baktaman of New Guinea, the practice of secrecy structures knowledge into successive layers. The importance and validity of Baktaman rites are directly linked in the understanding of actors with the observation of secrecy. Thus, even within this small social group, numbering less than two hundred persons, there is an uneven distribution of knowledge. In a later work (Barth 1987), he returns to this theme, outlining a generative model to explain cultural variation both within and between Mountain Ok peoples in New Guinea. Bellman (1984) examines Poro ritual and argues that because most people know the content of secrets, his focus on the sociology of knowledge will deal not with the distribution of information but with the distribution of procedures for expressing secrecy. One of his important points is, following Goffman, to establish the principle that the practice of secrecy is more
important than its content. Through a Foucauldian analysis of discourse, Lindstrom (1990) concerns himself with the production, distribution and consumption of knowledge in Tanna, Vanuatu.

Collectively, the authors of these studies make the point that cultures always contain internal variation. Even in relatively small-scale societies, knowledge is differentially distributed. 'Culture' disintegrates into a more complex view of the ways and means in which particular bodies of knowledge are created, distributed and maintained throughout a set of socially related people. Although these studies do not deal with empirical issues relevant to this thesis, at the theoretical level they provide the space for my analysis of cultural and social diversity in each of the two social scenes with which I deal.

If the above studies raise the issue of internal cultural variation, three more recent works place the issue of collective representations versus personal creativity at the centre of their analytical focus. Keen (1994) gives an account of Yolngu religious beliefs and practices in the latter half of the 1970s and early 1980s. According to him, these beliefs and practices were not homogeneous, notwithstanding the trend in anthropological studies to treat them as such. Instead, the picture he sketches is of small groups, often kin-centred, each of which has its own body of religious practices to which it denies access to others. In addition, he also points to a sociology of religious knowledge. One’s perspective on religious meaning is also shaped by age and gender so that men deny women access to religious knowledge more often than women deny men, and older men and women deny young people access to knowledge. Thus, such knowledge remains esoteric. Consequently, a dynamic tension exists between the definition of sacred knowledge and objects (myths, songs) which connect and differentiate groups, and the religious secrecy that separates men and women, and young and old. He (Keen 1994:7, emphasis added) outlines his analytical problem as follows:

This relativity of perspectives, together with the evident heterogeneity in Yolngu practices, gives rise to a problem of how to conceptualize what it is that is shared for communication and cooperation in practices to be possible, without built-in assumptions of homogeneity.

In a wide-ranging, general discussion, Cohen (1994) argues that anthropology has over-emphasized collective representations to the neglect of personal creativity. He calls not for an anthropology of asocialized individuals (a contradiction in terms) but for an analytical balance between these two aspects of human life. Rapport (1993:164),
in his study of the English village of Wanet, distinguishes between the ‘shared knowledge of interactional systematics’, the social form, and the ‘unique visions, the limitless avenues of thought, the wild disorders of contradiction’, the meanings, that belong to each subject. Rapport emphasizes a shared grammar of interaction rather than shared meanings.

Keen, Cohen and Rapport focus explicitly on the issue of shared understandings versus personal variations in access to knowledge, but they emphasize different aspects in their analyses. I, too, will be concerned to elucidate what members of the Player and Bohemian social scenes share for communication to be possible, without assuming social and cultural homogeneity or denying personal creativity. Parkin puts this relationship felicitously when he writes that members of a culture ‘spin “endless perspectives” out of the cultural fleece’ (Parkin 1985 cited in Cohen 1993:214).

Turning to urban social forms, there is even more scope for a sociology of culture, for the examination of fractured meaning. Hannerz (1992:7) argues for a view of ‘contemporary complex cultures’ which includes the analysis of three dimensions: ideas and modes of thought; forms of externalization (i.e. the ways in which the ideas and modes of thought are made public); and social distribution. By ‘social distribution’, Hannerz means ‘the ways in which the collective cultural inventory of meanings and meaningful external forms ... is spread over a population and its social relationships’. While anthropologists have paid close attention to the first and, to a lesser degree, the second dimensions, Hannerz (1992:10) is most concerned with the third: ‘anthropologists have been inclined to neglect them [the problematics of the social distribution], at some cost. Whenever a culture is understood to be a collective phenomenon, it needs a sociology’. Thus, in my analytical treatment of the Player and Bohemian scenes, I will deal with the sociology of each scene and with its relation to the wider society.

**Urban paths and urban ways**

As I noted earlier, the Player and Bohemian scenes I deal with are characterized by their diversity, not only internally but with respect to the differences between them. I cast each scene as an urban pathway in the manner described by Finnegan (1989). In getting to grips with a diversity of personnel and style she uncovered in her study of music-making in an English town, she dispenses with established notions of community, class and social network. Instead, she proposes the idea that in urban settings people join specific groups for the purposes of specific social activity but that
these separate groups can be seen as fitting into a broader set of social practices and institutions which are linked by well-defined and well-travelled urban 'pathways'. These pathways bridge the usual sociological separators of gender, class, religion and race. For Finnegan, urban life is a series of intersecting, overlapping and evolving pathways, which already exist as social and cultural forms, though people can and do transform them by their actions. She (1989:306-7) provides a general definition:

These local musical pathways were established, already-trodden and, for the most part, abiding routes which many people had taken and were taking in the company of others. To be sure, none were permanent in the sense of being changeless, nor could they survive without people treading and constantly re-forming them; new paths were hewn out, some to become established, others to fade or be only faintly followed, others again to be extended and developed through new routings by the individuals and groups who patronised them. But for any given individuals the established pathways were in a sense already there, as a route at least to begin on: they were part of existing cultural forms rather than something that had to be calculated afresh each time.

She (1989:324) also notes variations in the nature of personal involvement with pathways:

For some people a particular pathway ... is a lifelong commitment – a pilgrimage from cradle to grave; while for others that, or another, pathway is something they follow less continuously, perhaps leaving at certain points in their lives to return again later, perhaps only coming in at one stage. Even for the intermittent participants, though, the pathway of shared expectations still in a sense remains irrespective of their own absences and presences, a structured and predictable channel for their participation.

In relation to the importance of pathways for successful involvement in urban living, Finnegan (1989:324) argues that ‘the overlap of many relatively distinct paths reflect[s] the many-sided, situated, often changing lives that people lead in towns today’. Pathways provide various ways of coping with the heterogeneity and multiple relationships held to be characteristic of urban environments in modern society, with a sense of familiarity and control over personal meaning – ‘travelling not in an alien environment but along familiar paths in time and space, in family continuity and habitual action’ (Finnegan 1989:324).
Further (Finnegan 1989:323):

Such pathways form one important – if often unstated – framework for people’s participation in urban life, something overlapping with, but more permanent and structured than, the personal networks in which individuals also participate. They form broad routes set out, as it were, across and through the city. They tend to be invisible to others, but for those who follow them they constitute a clearly laid thoroughfare both for their activities and relationships and for the meaningful structuring of their actions in space and time ... These many pathways, then, are culturally established ways through which people structure their activities on habitual patterns that – however unnoticed by outsiders – are known to and shared with others.

Finnegan’s notion of pathways addresses the perennial analytical question of what is collectively created and shared by the members of diverse social scenes, and what is not. She pays less attention, however, to how movement along pathways is personally experienced, that is, she does not investigate modalities for the enactment of selfhood and personhood associated with pathways. I want to use the notion of pathway in a slightly different way by splitting it into two parts. I refer to the broad social and cultural form within which members of the two scenes move as a ‘path’ and the enacted personal routes through this general form as ‘ways’. In particular, I pay specific attention to the transitions and transformations that persons undergo as they move along the respective paths.

It remains unclear, too, from Finnegan’s formulation whether or not she conceptualizes the ‘pathway’ as an emic as well as an etic framework. In one of the above quotations, she states that pathways are ‘culturally established ways’, which presumably means that the notion exists explicitly in the collective representations of the musicians she studied. Whatever her use of the term, I use ‘path’ as an emic as well as an anthropological/sociological concept.25

There are precedents for the distinction between general form and personal variation in the anthropological literature, as well as in the langue and parole of Saussure. Gilsenan (1973), writing of Sufism in Egypt, provides one example, although he uses ‘path’ and ‘way’ in the opposite manner to me. Muslims came together in Sufi Brotherhoods to pursue the ‘tariqa’ or ‘the way’ (pl. turuq). Subsumed under the term ‘tariqa’ are a number of religious groupings with a range of social meanings and functions and situated in diverse social, economic and political settings. Gilsenan cites a Muslim scholar’s metaphor of the circle as a way of understanding such diversity: the circle’s circumference is the Holy Law (Shari’ah) which encompasses the entire Muslim community; the radii from the circumference to the centre symbolize the
many and varied paths to God; and the centre is the Truth or Haqiqah. He (1973:5) continues: ‘This apt Sufi metaphor highlights the diversity and particularity of these “paths” to the centre (the truth).’

My task in the two case studies will be to set out the constituents of each path and the different ways in which persons move along these paths while, at the same time, showing the different modalities for selfhood and different ways of constructing personhood associated with these paths.

**Thesis outline**

The thesis is divided into four parts. In the remainder of Part One (i.e. Chapter 2), I sketch in some details of the illicit drug scene in Perth that are relevant to the later ethnographic discussion. Part Two consists of three chapters (3 – 5) which focus on the Players as instances of *homo rhetoricus*. In Chapter 3, I address the sociology of the Player scene and trace the Player path. In Chapter 4, I consider ‘playing the game [of drug use]’ as a key activity on the Player path, and examine the dynamic interplay between the instrumentality of the game and sociability. Playing the game involves learning how to present multiple selves. Chapter 5 deals with the contested claims made by Players as to the relative ‘depth’ of their ‘play’ in relation to drugs and the management of information. In Part Three (Chapters 6 – 8), I present the Bohemians as instances of *homo authenticus*. Chapter 6 introduces the Bohemians – their ethos and the sociology of their scene. Chapter 7 focuses on two types of symbolic encounter in which Bohemians work to discover and present their authentic selves while, at the same time, constructing an alternative moral community. In Chapter 8, I focus on a third type of symbolic encounter – ritual events – through a discussion of one such event, the rave. Part Four (Chapter 9) contains my conclusions. I summarize my argument and delineate what I see to be some of its ramifications for the anthropologies of selfhood and urban life, before addressing the dominant trends of analysis in the addictions field.

A final point: In my ethnographic portrayal of the two social scenes, I have remained faithful to emic representations of drug use. For the Players, drug use is the cement which holds relationships together. When Players interact, drug use occupies a central place in speech and action and so, inevitably, drug use is much to the fore in my discussion of them. Members of the Bohemian scene are not so reliant on drug use as the basis for their relationships with one another. Thus discussions of drug use appear alongside discussions of other aspects of the Bohemian scene which are equally crucial to its creation and continued existence.
Notes

1 While I recognize that legally available substances such as alcohol and tobacco qualify as 'drugs', I generally employ the term 'drug use' to refer to the use of drugs legally prohibited in Western Australia. This usage is consistent with emic modes of expression in that the members of both social scenes frequently refer to illicit drugs as 'drugs'. The only exceptions I make to this general rule are when the fact of illegality is analytically relevant to the discussion (in these cases, I specify 'licit' or 'illicit') or when I refer to the use of drugs that are legal (in these cases, I specify the drugs being used, e.g. alcohol or tobacco).

2 The academic literature on drug use includes works (categorized rather arbitrarily) from the perspectives of anthropology (see later discussion in text for examples), behavioural science (e.g. Newcomb and Bentler 1988), clinical studies (e.g. Stimson and Oppenheimer 1982), cultural studies (e.g. Stange 1994), epidemiology (e.g. Hughes 1977), history (e.g. Parsinen 1983), law (e.g. Manderson 1993), medicine (e.g. Wickes 1993), pharmacology (e.g. Chesher 1993), psychiatry (e.g. Royal College of Psychiatrists 1987), psychology (e.g. Davies 1992), social policy (e.g. Trebach 1982) and sociology (e.g. Glassner and Loughlin 1987).

3 There are also other streams in the academic literature on drug use – such as pharmacology and medicine – which I do not employ in constructing my analysis.


Within this 'policy/addictions' stream, there is also a growing anthropological and sociological literature on HIV/AIDS, drug use and social policy. See, for example, Broadhead and Fox (1990) and Kotarba (1990).

6 British examples of these studies include Dean (1990), Dorn, Murji and South (1992) and Young (1971); for the United States, see Adler (1985), Agar (1973), Becker (1953), Feldman (1968), Finestone (1957), Preble and Casey (1969), Sutter (1966) and Weppner (1973); for Australia, see Brady (1992) and, for alcohol use, Barbara, Usher and Barnes (1978) and Mewett (1988).
I have elsewhere reviewed the sociological literature on youth subcultures, particularly that produced by members of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (Moore 1994b:7-10, see also McGuigan 1992 and Willis et al 1990). The theoretical and methodological perspective underlying such studies has been continued in Australian cultural studies by, amongst others, Craven (1994) and Frow and Morris (1993).

For anthropological examples, see Bateson (1971), Fortes (1973), Geertz (1966), Hallowell (1955) and Read (1955); in sociology, see Goffman (1959) and Strauss (1959); in social psychology, see George Herbert Mead (1934).

While I recognize that the opposition ‘individual:society’ is itself a Western construct, it seems inevitable that such dichotomies should shape my thinking. See Michelle Rosaldo (1984) and Rosenberger (1992), among others, for discussions of this point.

Berger and Luckmann (1966), in their classic The Social Construction of Reality, also deal with the relationship between society and the ‘individual’. They divide their discussion into two parts: society as ‘objective reality’, and society as ‘subjective reality’. In the first part, they are dealing with society ‘in’ the self. Their focus is on the way ‘society’ is constructed and how this, in turn, shapes the cultural self. Such a view lies at the core of symbolic interactionism; in the words of Mead, ‘The self, as that which can be an object to itself, is essentially a social structure, and it arises in social experience’ (cited in Hannerz 1980:221-222). In the second part, their focus is reversed. Their concern becomes the self and how it may be transformed, in turn transforming the society within which it was originally constructed – the self ‘in’ society. With a few notable exceptions, those anthropologists and sociologists inspired by a constructionist paradigm have dealt primarily with the first of Berger and Luckmann’s concerns. They have written accounts of socially and culturally determined selves, that is, they have written of society in the self.


There is also a literature on ‘the self’ in relation to anthropological fieldwork, the so-called ‘reflexive’ turn. See, for example, the discussions in Cohen (1992), James (1993), Okely and Callaway (1992) and Rabinow (1977). This body of work overlaps with postmodernist anthropological concerns with ethnographic ‘texts’ or with discussions of these issues (e.g. Clifford and Marcus 1986, Fox 1991, Lutz 1993, J. Marcus 1990, Roth 1989, Wolf 1992).
Cohen (1994) argues that 'selfhood' is not an exclusively Western concept, something with which most anthropologists would presumably agree. However, he then seems to muddy the waters by conflating a laudable concern for greater attention to the distribution of knowledge in social collectives (and therefore more sophisticated ethnographies) with the argument that all cultures possess an 'I', that is, the idea of a personal self. He also argues, against the Whorfian (1956) view and the more general 'language-as-constitutive' perspective (in connection with the self, see Burke and Porter [1991] and Stromberg [1993]), that it is 'ludicrous' to claim that, because a language does not feature a word for 'self', there is no consciousness of self. Cohen suggests that anthropologists who are unwilling to concede the universality of the 'I' are guilty of ethnocentrism (see also Ewing [1990] and Kavapalu [1995] for similar 'universalist' arguments). However, the opposite could also be argued – that Cohen himself is guilty of imposing a Western concept onto other cultural forms.

I do not mean to imply that anthropologists have singlehandedly been responsible for the move to constructionism in regard to the self. Lutz (1988:6-7) and Michelle Rosaldo (1984:138-141), for instance, note recent developments in the study of emotion and selfhood as socially constructed in fields as diverse as philosophy, psychology and critical theory. For example, Smith and Bond (1993:93-117) investigate, from the perspective of social psychology, the self in various cultural and social contexts. While anthropologists would find their model overly simplistic (as indeed would postmodernists), they at least recognize the constructed nature of the self when they divide representations of the self into two categories: the self as an 'independent agent', usually found in 'western' cultures, and the self as an 'interdependent agent', usually found in 'eastern' cultures. Other works of social psychology in which the self is conceptualized as socially constructed include Baumeister (1986), Berg and Smith (1988), Gergen and Davis (1985), Tedeschi (1981), Wegner and Vallacher (1980) and Yardley and Honess (1987).

For a critique of Geertz's notion of the 'peculiarity' of the Western conception of self and person, see Spiro (1993).

In this sense, it could be argued that Geertz et al did for the 'West' what Said (1978) has argued Western conceptions have done for the 'Orient'.


Throughout this thesis, I use the term 'post-modern(ity)' to refer to the historical period rather than to the body of theory associated with 'postmodernism'.

The other studies are those of Bateson (1971), upon which Denzin draws in his analysis; Antze (1987), who, despite a concern with 'alcoholic personhood', deals more with the processes of conversion to the moral community of Alcoholics Anonymous; and Stange (1994), who deals with various American discourses about Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and their implications for the notion of selfhood amongst Native Americans.

I quote from Johnson’s ‘Foreword’ to Denzin (1987b:9):

At no institutional level [of American society] is there a formal ontology, theory, or perspective on the self and its rightful place in the social and spiritual order. This produces for many individuals a subject-object dualism, an experienced separation between the active knowing, sentient subject and his or her social experiences within this culture at this point in time.

For other accounts of the historical shift from sincerity to authenticity, see Elias (1978), Finkelstein (1991), Sennett (1977) and Trilling (1972).

Stange (1994:131, see Note 17) has identified a concern for the ‘identification and liberation of the true self’ in ‘self-help’ discourses about alcoholism.

Although I have chosen Lanham’s terms to describe notions of selfhood, I could also have used Huizinga’s (1949) *homo ludens* to describe the Players.

There is now a ‘post-Birmingham’ sociology of youth that presents a critique of CCCS writings. For example, Steve Redhead (1990:23) has taken issue with a notion central to the work of the CCCS: that British postwar youth subcultures between the 1950s and 1970s evolved in a linear fashion, each one neatly evolving out of the preceding subculture to be, in turn, transformed into the next one. However, in Redhead’s view, the work of the CCCS *created* authentic subcultures rather than the reverse. Subcultures, he argues, were always characterized by circularity rather than linear progression and the view of subcultures as closed, static entities was inaccurate.

For a related discussion of the importance of Finnegan’s work for urban anthropology, see Sanjek (1990). The term ‘pathways’ also appears in the sociological literature on drug use (e.g. Biernacki 1986), but its use tends to be metaphorical rather than analytical.

The emic notion of ‘path’ or ‘pathway’ appears to be part of a broader notion of the ‘individualized life course’ which emerged in the nineteenth century as ‘the basic code for constructing experience in Western societies’ (Becker 1994:386-387).
Chapter 2

Drug use in Perth: objective reality and situated meaning

The relationship between general form and specific variation discussed in Chapter 1 is replicated at another level, that between the 'objective reality' of drug use and the situated meanings of this use in specific social and cultural contexts. Knowledge that might be 'objective' for members of the Player and Bohemian social scenes, that is, which lies beyond their cultural constructions, may be situated meaning for other social scenes. For example, understandings of the pharmacological properties of drugs are situated within the socially constructed world of science (e.g. Knorr-Cetina 1981, Latour and Woolgar 1979). The availability of illicit drugs in Perth, and the forms in which they are available, are part of the meanings situated within drug-manufacturing and trafficking scenes. With the knowledge of such objective material, Players and Bohemians construct and negotiate cultural meanings situated in specific social scenes.

The distinction between 'objective reality' and 'situated meaning' is consistent with Berger and Luckmann's (1966) use of the distinction between 'society as objective reality' and society as 'subjective reality'. Marcus (1986:186) makes a similar point in his discussion of Paul Willis's (1977) Learning to Labour. The working-class 'lads' in this study are said to resist the 'capitalist system' through disruptive behaviour in school. For them, the capitalist system is an 'objective reality'; for others (the middle class, in Marcus's formulation), it is situated meaning. The distinction between objective knowledge and situated meaning is also employed in an important anthropological study of alcohol use – that by MacAndrew and Edgerton (1970) – and their use of the distinction is perhaps closest to mine. They compared alcohol use in a range of cultures (and historical periods) and found vastly different (even opposing) meanings constructed through this use. They concluded that there was no direct link between the objective, physiological effects of alcohol and the accompanying social behaviour and cultural constructions of drinking. In each of the reported cultures, consumption of the same pharmacological substance (with some differences in strength) was associated with different situated meanings.¹
There are some general features of the illicit drug market in Perth that are common to both the Player and Bohemian social scenes that I explore in this thesis. These objective features include the pharmacological properties of particular drugs, the forms in which they are available, their prices, the ways in which they can be used, the numbers of people who use them, and the potential legal ramifications of such use. I set out these aspects of the Perth illicit drug market in order to contextualize the ethnographic description of social scenes which follows. I also draw on the detailed and complementary discussion of this market provided by Ovenden, Loxley and McDonald (1995), which is based on interviews with thirty-five convicted drug dealers.

Members of both the Player and Bohemian scenes are able to obtain most illicit drugs relatively easily and they have experimented with a wide variety of such drugs. In the following pages, I pay attention only to those drugs used most often, that is, cannabis, amphetamine(s), Ecstasy and LSD.

**Drug pharmacology and prices**

The *cannabis sativa* plant is prepared for consumption in two forms: marijuana and hashish. The most commonly used form, called marijuana or ‘mull’, ‘green’, ‘ganga’, ‘dope’, ‘weed’ or ‘smoke’ (as well as a host of other nicknames), is widely available in Perth, although supply is subject to seasonal fluctuation. It consists of the dried leaves and flowers (the ‘head’) of the plant. Hashish, or ‘hash’, is the stronger form of prepared cannabis, being the dried and compressed resin of the plant.

Marijuana is most commonly sold in ‘foils’, so named because the marijuana is wrapped in aluminium foil for sale. A foil usually contains from one to two grams of marijuana, sells for $25, and is the smallest amount of marijuana one may buy. More regular marijuana smokers might buy larger amounts of the drug. They may buy a ‘$50 bag’ but this is relatively rare as few dealers seem to sell this size. More often, they will move to the next commonly available size and opt to share an ‘ounce’ with a friend or friends. Depending on their quality, ounces sell for between $210 and $400. The quality of marijuana is determined by the part of the plant from which it is derived. ‘Head’ is strongest and ‘tip’ and ‘leaf’ weakest. Different types and strains of marijuana become available from time to time, such as ‘sensimellia’ (enjoyed for the strength and quality of its intoxication) and ‘hydroponic’ (marijuana grown in a medium other than soil – usually inside cupboards, bedrooms, roof cavities or, sometimes, greenhouses). Hash is less commonly used. It is available in two forms – in small, solid blocks and as an oil extract.
The active ingredient in cannabis, delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), has both depressant and mild hallucinogenic effects on the central nervous system. Short-term physiological effects include increased pulse rate, reddening of the eyes and, sometimes, physical lethargy. Longer-term effects seem relatively mild at low doses. Cannabis is a low toxicity drug but contains significant amounts of tar which (in addition to the tobacco which is often smoked with cannabis) may increase the risk of respiratory illnesses such as lung cancer and bronchitis. Cannabis does not appear to produce any significant neuroadaptation and there is no significant withdrawal syndrome except at very high levels of use. Mild tolerance may develop after prolonged use.

Amphetamine, commonly known as ‘speed’ (but also as ‘go’ or ‘goey’, as in ‘go-fast’ or simply ‘fast’, ‘quick’, ‘zoom’ or ‘up’), is one of a number of stimulants that affect the central nervous system. Others in the same class of drugs include methamphetamine and dexamphetamine. These come in several forms — tablet, liquid and, most commonly, powder.

A gram of amphetamine, the most common street unit of sale, sells for anywhere between $50 and $100. The price depends on the quality and size of the gram (some dealers admit that their ‘grams’ are, in fact, less than a full gram, but argue that it has not been adulterated). When buying amphetamine, occasional and even regular drug users often pool funds to share a gram. In addition to offsetting the cost of buying a whole gram (which might be more than one really wants to consume), this practice serves the additional purpose of lessening the chance of discovery in the event of a police raid because all of the gram will most likely be consumed shortly after purchase by the partners. The drug is commonly sold in ‘gram bags’ — small, sealable plastic bags measuring about seven by four centimetres (rather like small sandwich bags) — and a gram of the white, yellow or brown powder takes up only the bottom few millimetres or so of the bag when held upright. Depending on its quality, a quarter-ounce of amphetamine usually sells for between $350 and $500, and an ounce for between $1,000 and $2,000.

Physiological effects from the use of amphetamines include increased heart and respiratory rate, heightened blood pressure, loss of appetite, increased alertness and energy, reduced fatigue, dilated pupils and sweating. Larger doses may be associated with insomnia and an irregular heart rate. Extreme, acute reactions include death from brain haemorrhage and heart failure.
The hallucinogens called ‘trips’ are a form of LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide) or Bromo-DMA (4-bromo-2,5-dimethoxyamphetamine). It is commonly sold in small tiles of blotting paper (which have absorbed the drug) at anywhere between $20 and $35 per dose. The tile form is marketed under a variety of colourful names, for example, ‘Red Dragons’, ‘Smiley Faces’ or ‘Penguins’, which reflect the differing, sometimes artistic markings on the blotting paper. Sometimes, each tile contains a single design; other forms of trip have a single design that covers perhaps ten or a hundred tiles, and so each tile contains only part of the larger picture. Other versions of the trip include the ‘microdot’, sold as a small tablet, and the gelatine-based ‘clear-light’.

Being hallucinogens, trips belong to the category of drugs that act on the central nervous system to produce changes in consciousness. The physiological effects of LSD are relatively mild, the initial effects being felt up to an hour following ingestion, and may last up to twenty-four hours (although eight to ten seems more common). They include dilated pupils, increased blood pressure and heart rate, muscular weakness, chills, flushing and nausea, as well as some loss of motor coordination. The effects of Bromo-DMA are similar to those produced by LSD (e.g. hallucinations) but the changes in auditory and visual perception produced by Bromo-DMA are less pronounced. They also last longer (from twelve to twenty-four hours).

Ecstasy (MDMA or methylenedioxymethamphetamine), or ‘E’ or ‘Eckie’, costs between $40 and $70 per dose and comes as a ‘tab’ (tablet) or a ‘cap’ (capsule), both available in several colours (blue, orange, grey, speckled). The physiological effects of Ecstasy include increased blood pressure and pulse rate, sweating, clenching of the jaw and grinding of the teeth, and nausea. Neurophysiologically, Ecstasy acts by stimulating the release of serotonin, a chemical messenger between brain cells, and preventing its re-absorption in the brain. Over-stimulation of serotonin production may lead to neurone damage (the nerve terminals which play a role in regulating mood, sleep, sexual functioning and sensitivity to stimuli) and a consequent decrease in serotonin levels, leading to depression and other mood disorders.

At higher doses Ecstasy may produce vomiting, blurred vision and convulsions, and overdoses have resulted in very high blood pressure and body temperature, and rapid heartbeat. Prolonged use may result in a lowered immunity to colds and influenza, headaches, and, at higher doses, numbness in the extremities, nystagmus (continual rolling of the eyeballs) and hallucinations. Over-dosing on Ecstasy may produce hypothermia, renal failure, palpitations and tachycardia (rapid heart-rate). Although
Rare, deaths related to the use of Ecstasy have been recorded in the United States and the United Kingdom, and there are reports of similar incidents in Australia. There is also speculation, although not yet proven, that Ecstasy may cause brain damage (Black, Farrell and McGuire et al 1992).

**Purchasing drugs**

The process of purchasing drugs is shaped by a number of factors. The cost, quality and availability of a drug depend on the buyer's relationship to the dealer, the amount purchased, the quality of previous purchases, the drug-related knowledge of the buyer and dealer, and their respective positions within particular social networks. More specific situational circumstances may also figure in the equation, such as a dealer's need to gain quick profits to cover any dealing debts or the availability of alternative, cheaper sources for a buyer. There does appear to be, however, a difference between the buying and selling transactions associated with cannabis and those involving the 'chemical drugs' (i.e. amphetamine, Ecstasy and LSD). In general, the former appear to be more scrupulous and open-handed than those associated with the chemical drugs. There are, of course, exceptions to such practice as both fair chemical dealers and unfair cannabis dealers exist and some dealers deal in both categories of drugs. In the sample of thirty-five convicted drug dealers interviewed by Ovenden, Loxley and McDonald 1995:21), eleven dealt in both cannabis and amphetamine. In general, however, the distinction holds. I deal with the chemical drugs first.

The situation regarding the chemical drugs is more complex than that associated with cannabis. Imagine a continuum: at one end is the novice drug user who has used drugs on a few occasions but not frequently enough to have established a business relationship with a dealer. He or she arranges purchases through an intermediary known to be more heavily involved in drug scenes. If the relationship between the buyer and the intermediary is a casual one, the intermediary may decide to 'tax' or 'stomp on' the drug; alternatively, if they are close friends, the intermediary may not. Taxing amphetamine involves removing a small amount for the intermediary's own use without replacement with a substitute, especially if the intermediary believes the buyer sufficiently inexperienced to be unable to tell how large the specified amount of amphetamine should appear in a gram bag. However, the more usual practice is for the intermediary to stomp on or 'cut' the amphetamine, by removing a quantity for his or her own use, and make up the shortfall with glucose, sugar or some other similar adulterant. In this way, the deception will pass unnoticed because there will appear to be a full gram of amphetamine powder in the bag.
When a gram of amphetamine leaves the seller (who has already taxed the drug), it might cost $80 and contain anywhere between five-tenths and eight-tenths of a gram of amphetamine (the amphetamine being perhaps 15% strength). It is then further reduced to perhaps four-tenths or five-tenths of a gram or less by the intermediary – either by taxing or cutting – before it arrives in the hands (or nose or arm) of the original, inexperienced buyer who believes he or she is purchasing a gram of amphetamine. The further removed the buyer is from the original source of purchase, the greater the likelihood of receiving and paying for a substandard product.

To counter such practices, experienced drug users, who are well aware that stomping and taxing are common practices, may endeavour to be present when drugs are purchased from a dealer rather than leaving the purchase to an intermediary. Those who inject their drugs are particularly concerned to be present when purchasing and preparing drugs to ensure that they receive their correct share. Being sold an inferior product partially defeats the point of injecting as the strength of the ‘rush’, one of the reasons for injecting, will be diluted.

Buying a trip is a hit-and-miss affair and consuming a trip is no guarantee of ‘getting out of it’ (becoming intoxicated). A trip may be rendered ineffective by excessive handling or lengthy storage in warm places, for the drug begins to lose its psychostimulant properties if not consumed within a few weeks or months of manufacture. Tiles cut from around the edges of sheets of blotting paper may contain less hallucinogenic material than those nearer the centre. A trip can also be taxed by cutting a thin strip from one or more sides (but cannot be ‘stomped on’ because there is no readily available way of substituting what has been removed). Likewise, Ecstasy may be taxed by scraping small amounts from the outside edges of tablets or by opening capsules and removing some of the powder inside. Theoretically, the capsules can also be ‘stomped on’ with adulterants added to the powder inside but, as buyers apparently seldom open them (unless they are injecting or snorting), there is little need to do this.

The further a drug user progresses towards the other end of the spectrum, towards the pole which represents greater drug experience, diverse drug contacts, and greater knowledge and prestige within drug networks, the less likely he or she will be ‘ripped off’ or ‘burned’. More experienced drug users deal directly with the dealer who is aware that any subterfuge will probably be detected. If experienced and knowledgeable buyers feel that recent purchases have been too expensive or of poor quality, they may either seek alternative sources or remind the dealer of the obligation to serve a regular customer well by providing a satisfactory product.
However, being experienced and having a direct link to a dealer is no iron-clad guarantee of avoiding being ‘ripped off’. Some street dealers have access only to poor-quality amphetamine, that is, it has already been heavily taxed on its way down the distribution line. Once the street dealer has taken his or her share and taxed the amphetamine for the last time, its strength is further reduced. Other dealers have a reputation for intentionally dealing in poor-quality amphetamine and are usually contacted only when all other avenues have been exhausted. Being ‘ripped off’ is thus endemic to the ‘chemical’ drug system and while the more experienced drug users may get ripped off less often than those with little experience (and usually know when they have been ripped off), they are by no means immune.

Drug users recognize the value of knowing several drug dealers. If one dealer is unavailable or has run out of the desired drug, further phone calls can be made to other dealers. However, contacts with a range of dealers may lapse if the drugs being obtained from one particular dealer are of reasonable quality and reliably available. Problems then arise if the usual dealer is unavailable and phone numbers of alternative drug contacts are out of date.

The cannabis market appears to be different from that for the chemical drugs for two main reasons. First of all, cannabis is a difficult drug to cut, with few adulterants that would pass for marijuana (although there are some, for instance, dried herbs) (cf. Ovenden, Loxley and McDonald 1995:30). Taxing is feasible but does not appear to be a widespread practice. This brings me to the second main reason: an ideology of cannabis smoking. Amongst those who regularly buy and sell cannabis there seems to be a consensus that ‘ripping people off’ belongs to the chemical drug scene, in particular, to ‘the speed scene’. Those involved in dealing in chemical drugs are thought to be primarily in it for profit whereas those dealing in cannabis often give away substantial amounts in the context of sociable consumption with friends (usually in the form of marijuana rather than the more expensive hashish).

A final aspect of the drug market is ‘credit’ (cf. the discussion in Ovenden, Loxley and McDonald 1995:28-30). In general, dealers will not part with drugs until they have the necessary cash. However, in special cases, the dealer may agree to give the user ‘credit’, allowing him or her to take the drugs and return with the money at some agreed future time. The extending of credit belongs to specific relationships between users and dealers and usually involves relatively small amounts of money and drugs. A dealer might extend credit to a regular, reliable customer with a high disposable income. Credit may be extended as a favour by a cannabis dealer to someone who has
access to chemical drugs, and vice-versa. Likewise, it is an unwise user who hands over money prior to gaining the drugs, but this may be waived in specific relationships where past events have led to the development of friendship and trust.

Using drugs

Drugs are used in many different ways depending on the social and cultural context of use. Here I restrict my description to some of the main methods for using drugs in Perth, which are relevant to the social action described in later chapters.

Cannabis (particularly the hashish form) may be used in the cooking of cakes and biscuits and the making of tea. Most commonly, it is smoked, often with tobacco. Marijuana is chopped up with tobacco, a process known as 'mulling up'. There are a number of reasons for mixing tobacco with cannabis: the cannabis lasts longer if mixed, some smokers enjoy the nicotine effect with their cannabis, and, as tobacco supposedly burns at a lower temperature than cannabis, the smoke is cooler and therefore less harsh on the mouth and throat. Cannabis is smoked via two main methods – those that employ water and those that do not. The latter includes 'joints' and various types of pipes. The marijuana form is the staple for smoking but sometimes small amounts of hash might be added to a joint or pipe bowl. In their operation, such methods are indistinguishable from those used to consume tobacco.

'Bong' is the generic term referring to the category of cannabis smoking implements that require water (modern versions of the 'hookah'). There are two types of bong. There are those bongs so designed that cannabis smoke is drawn from a metal cone through the water to cool before entering the smoker's mouth. A vast array of such bongs can be bought from several specialist retail outlets (it is not illegal to own implements for the consumption of cannabis so long as they have not been used) and, while they come in all shapes and sizes, the basic principle of water-cooling remains the same. Alternatively, many smokers buy the inexpensive metal cone and then manufacture their own bongs from empty soft-drink or fruit-juice containers.

In the second type of bong, the 'bucket bong', the water is used in a different way. The bottom is cut from an empty, plastic soft-drink bottle and the screw-top is pierced to accommodate a metal cone and receptor-seat. The metal cones are sometimes made of brass and are sometimes screwed into the seat rather than fitting snugly. An ordinary domestic bucket is then filled almost to the brim with water and the plastic bottle is pushed to the bottom of the bucket with the screw-top (and the cone-seat) sitting
above the water. A cone packed with marijuana (and sometimes with a few drops of hash oil or small pieces of hash resin) is placed (or screwed) into the cone-seat. An ignited cigarette lighter or a lit match is then held over the marijuana-filled cone as the bottle is slowly lifted almost but not out of the water. In this way, water pressure draws air through the cone as the water level inside the bottle falls. Once the marijuana in the cone is exhausted, the top is removed, the lips are placed on or just above the bottle’s neck and the bottle is slowly pressed into the water. The water pressure is now reversed and, as water rises inside the bottle, it forces the smoke out of the bottle through the neck and into the smoker’s mouth and lungs.

Although very effective in producing almost immediate intoxication, the bucket-bong method of smoking is particularly harsh on the throat and is generally practised only by experienced marijuana smokers. It is common in Perth and Brisbane but apparently not in other areas of Australia (Birmingham 1993). When smoked, regardless of style and implement, the effects of cannabis are usually felt within a few minutes and may last anywhere from two to five hours (depending on potency, the tolerance of the user, body weight). When eaten, the effects take longer to be felt (anything up to an hour), are less intense and last longer, up to seven hours.

Popularly associated with cocaine, the act of ‘snorting’ (intranasal ingestion) requires little preparation. The desired amount of amphetamine is poured from the gram bag onto a mirror or some other suitably flat surface (e.g. a compact disc cover or glass-topped table) against which the powder is clearly visible. The powder is then chopped with the edge of a credit card or driver’s licence until any crystals are crushed to produce a fine powder (if inhaled, uncrushed crystals can lead to bloody noses due to aggravation of the inner lining of the nostrils). The powder is then divided into ‘lines’ of varying thickness and length which are snorted through a straw or a rolled-up banknote. Snorting amphetamine is immediately followed by a bitter, foul taste at the back of the throat sometimes described as being ‘chemical’. After two to five minutes, the nose may also run, causing sniffing for some time afterwards, and the user might also feel moisture and a dripping or running sensation at the back of the throat and nose. The effects of snorted amphetamine take between ten and twenty minutes to be felt. Ecstasy may also be snorted if purchased in capsule form. The capsule is prised open and the process is then the same as for snorting amphetamine.

Swallowing amphetamine involves wrapping the desired amount in a tobacco-rolling paper (or tissue) and swallowing it, or mixing it with a strongly flavoured drink to disguise its bitter taste. Neither of these practices is as common as snorting or injecting
and they seem more common amongst women than men. This raises the question of why sniffing, with its unpleasant side-effects, should be preferred to the painless practice of swallowing amphetamine. One reason is that sniffing produces a faster and stronger effect. Another is that some drug users regard the unpleasant side-effects of sniffing as part of the ritual of amphetamine use.

Both Ecstasy and LSD are usually swallowed, although Ecstasy may also be inserted anally. Anal insertion requires little preparation other than lubrication prior to digital penetration. LSD may be swallowed immediately or the paper tile first chewed for up to fifteen minutes to release the hallucinogen into the mouth. Alternatively, it may be placed on the eyeball (particularly ‘clear-lights’, where the gelatine base dissolves and releases the hallucinogen). When swallowed, amphetamine ‘comes on’ gradually (usually within thirty minutes) whereas Ecstasy and LSD may take anywhere between thirty and sixty minutes depending on when the person last consumed food and on personal reactions to the drugs (LSD usually takes longer than Ecstasy to come on).

Amphetamine, LSD and Ecstasy may also be ‘blatted’ (injected). Other common phrases for injecting include ‘blasting’, ‘hitting’ and, in the case of amphetamine, ‘having a taste’. I provide details of injecting drugs not for reasons of prurience or instruction (the details I provide are based on user representations and are not ‘correct’ in the medical sense), but because they are relevant to the ethnographic action later described, particularly in Chapters 3 – 5 (for other descriptions of injecting, see Agar [1977], the Australian I.V. League [1990] and Sutter [1966]). For the description of injecting, I rely heavily on my research with the Players, with whom I witnessed many episodes of drug injection and collected many accounts of the process. At the time of my research with the Bohemians, I came across few current injectors. However, in talking at length to several Bohemians who had injected in the past or who were injecting during the period of my fieldwork (as well as discussions with research colleagues in the Perth addictions field), there were similarities in the way the mechanics of the injecting process were handled.

Injecting requires considerable knowledge and technique. When injecting amphetamine, the desired amount is poured into a spoon which has its neck bent so that the head lies flat on an even surface. Water is boiled and the amount needed to ‘bring the speed down’ (dissolve it in the water) is calculated. This part of the procedure is important because any surplus water added above the minimum amount needed to dissolve the amphetamine will dilute the ‘rush’ when injecting. The necessary amount of water is drawn into the syringe and squirted into the spoon.
Either end of the syringe plunger is used to mix the solution. Sometimes, heat, delivered in the form of a cigarette lighter held under the spoon, is required to aid the mixing process. One clue as to the possible quality of amphetamine is the ease with which it ‘comes down in the spoon’. If the amphetamine dissolves instantly, it is taken to be a good sign. The requirement of considerable mixing and heat is usually thought of as a negative indicator of quality.

Once the amphetamine has dissolved in the spoon, it is drawn back into the syringe (or a number of syringes if there are two or more persons having a ‘taste’) through a ‘filter’ (usually a tiny ball of cotton wool or piece of cigarette filter) to remove any impurities. The mixture is then examined for air bubbles. Some persons maximize the amount drawn from the spoon by placing the plastic cap (which protects the needle tip – the ‘pick’ – when not in use) onto the cotton ball and gently applying pressure. Any fluid left in the cotton is thus squeezed out and drawn into the syringe, although impurities trapped in the filter may also be drawn into the syringe in this way. The holding of the plastic cap is usually done by a second person but a skilful injector can perform both tasks at the same time.

A makeshift tourniquet (perhaps a leather belt or a length of rubber) is applied to the upper arm to bring veins to the skin surface and there is a careful search for a suitable injection point. The prominent surface veins of the inner elbow are a common place but repeated use may lead to scarring and subsequently painful future injection. Apart from avoiding pain and scarring, a major reason for rotating injection sites is to avoid discovery. Some drug users inject higher up the arm, above the elbow, where even a short-sleeved shirt covers any bruising that might appear. Other spots include the top or inner side of the forearm where body hair, particularly on a man, makes detection of the injection point more difficult.

Once a site is chosen, the tip of the needle is pushed through the skin into the vein and held motionless. Finding a vein may take some time, particularly if the veins ‘roll’ (the vein slips around the needle tip as it is inserted) or if their exact position (particularly their depth) is hard to locate. Slight backward pressure is exerted on the plunger until a red plume of blood squirts back into the syringe indicating a vein has been found. The contents of the syringe are then slowly emptied into the vein with occasional ‘checks’ (backward pressure until blood shoots back into the syringe). These are made to ensure the tip is still safely lodged in the vein to prevent ‘misses’ – when the needle slips from the vein and the drug mixture is injected into the surrounding flesh. A miss results in less intense effects (and sometimes, none at all) as well as bruising around
the injection site. In some cases, the syringe is emptied quickly to stimulate the biggest ‘rush’ possible. Once empty, the needle is withdrawn, leaving only a spot of blood on the skin and a small puncture hole.

Ecstasy and LSD can be injected in much the same way I have described for injecting amphetamine, although these drugs require more elaborate preparation. Injecting LSD is regarded by many as extremely foolhardy. The paper tile is placed in warm (but not hot) water, in a spoon, for about fifteen minutes to allow the LSD to leach into the water, rather like a minute psychedelic tea-bag. The LSD-infused mixture is then drawn into the syringe through a cotton filter and injected. Sometimes, the LSD tile itself may be used as a filter through which to draw a dissolved Ecstasy tablet or capsule. In this way, the user experiences the effects of both drugs after injecting.

Common to the consumption of amphetamine, LSD and Ecstasy is the ‘come-down’ (noun; adjectively ‘coming down’). This phrase refers to the period immediately following intoxication and is generally characterized by fatigue and irritability. Each drug seems to have its own particular attributes for coming down. For example, the amphetamine come-down is sometimes accompanied by paranoia while the come-down after a trip may be associated with nausea and stomach cramps.

**Statistics on drug use**

Accurate statistics on the incidence and prevalence of, and trends in, drug use are notoriously difficult to obtain and interpret (cf. Moore and Saunders 1991). There are a number of reasons for this – such as the illegal nature of the activity, the impossibility of estimating the total population of drug users in order to draw representative samples (resulting in sampling errors), the question of under-reporting and over-reporting of drug use in survey responses, the small numbers of drug users present in general population surveys and the focus on ‘captive’ survey populations such as schoolchildren. Consequently, there is much debate amongst researchers in the addictions field about the accuracy of such indicators of the prevalence (the present number of users) and incidence (the number of new users) of drug use.

Notwithstanding these reservations, National Household Surveys, commissioned by the National Campaign Against Drug Abuse (NCADA), have been run in 1985, 1988, 1991 and 1993 (Department of Human Services and Health 1994). They are general population surveys, that is, they do not specifically target drug users. There have been no relevant community surveys of drug use conducted in Perth and, although the
national surveys contain breakdowns by states, the sub-samples become too small to be of much significance. According to *Protecting the Community* (1995, Volume 2:17), the Report of the Task Force on Drug Abuse released by the Western Australian Government, analysis of what little Western Australian data are available suggests similar patterns of drug use to the rest of Australia.

I employ prevalence figures from the 1993 National Household Survey (n = 3,500, aged 14+ years) to contextualize my ethnographic account. Table 2:1 presents a summary of prevalence for the drug categories of marijuana, amphetamines, hallucinogens and Ecstasy/designer drugs, and the prevalence of injecting drugs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DRUG</th>
<th>MALES (YEARS)</th>
<th>FEMALES (YEARS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14-24</td>
<td>25-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marijuana</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amphetamines</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hallucinogens</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecstasy*</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>injected drugs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes other designer drugs

(Adapted from Department of Human Services and Health 1994:46).

One further statistic is relevant for my purposes, that concerning the proportion of the Australian population who have used drugs 'within the past twelve months'. In 1993, the figures were as follows: cannabis 13%, amphetamines 2%, hallucinogens 1% and Ecstasy/designer drugs 1%, and 1% had injected drugs.
Legal penalties

In Australia, the states determine both the legal status of drugs and the penalties for the use of drugs prohibited by law (except in cases relating to the importation of drugs into the country, which remain under Commonwealth jurisdiction). Under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1981 (and its later amendments), the possession, sale or supply (or intent to sell or supply), cultivation or manufacture of cannabis, amphetamine, Ecstasy and LSD is illegal in Western Australia.

The law makes a distinction between ‘simple offences’, that is, those relating to the possession of prohibited drugs, and ‘indictable offences’, that is, those relating to more serious drug-related offences such as sale or supply. Penalties for drug-related offences vary accordingly. I give the maximum penalties allowed under the Act. The actual sentences handed down in court cases relating to drugs may be lower. For example, the statutes contain a statement that, in respect of simple offences involving small quantities of prohibited drugs, a fine of between $100 and $150 is appropriate for a first offence.

At the lower end of the offence scale, the possession of small amounts of prohibited drugs – that is, less than 100 grams of cannabis, 2.0 grams of amphetamine, 0.002 grams of LSD or 2.0 grams of Ecstasy – carries a maximum penalty of a $2,000 fine and/or two years’ imprisonment. Possession of more than 100 grams (but less than 3.0 kilograms) of cannabis, 2.0 grams (but less than 28.0 grams) of amphetamine, 0.002 grams (but less than 0.01 grams) of LSD or 2.0 grams (but less than 28.0 grams) of Ecstasy is considered evidence of the ‘sale or supply’ of prohibited drugs, the ‘manufacturing or preparing’ of prohibited drugs (where appropriate) or the possession of prohibited drugs ‘with intent to sell or supply’. These charges are heard in summary courts and the maximum penalty is $5,000 and/or four years’ imprisonment.

Possession of more than 3.0 kilograms of cannabis is considered to be ‘trafficking’ and carries a maximum penalty of $20,000 and/or ten years’ imprisonment. With respect to trafficking in other drugs, possession of more than 28.0 grams of amphetamine, 0.01 grams of LSD or 28.0 grams of Ecstasy carries a maximum penalty of $100,000 and/or twenty-five years’ imprisonment.

With regard to the instruments sometimes necessary to facilitate the use of drugs, the possession of implements for smoking cannabis (i.e. bongs and pipes) is illegal if these implements contain residues of the illegal substance. The maximum penalty for
possession of smoking implements is $3,000 and/or three years' imprisonment. The possession of needles and syringes is not, in itself, illegal in Western Australia. However, the possession of used syringes, that is, those containing residues of illegal substances, places the user in breach of the simple offence of possession mentioned above.

In this chapter, I have spelt out some elements of the objective reality of the illicit drug market in Perth, as they are encountered by both Players and Bohemians alike, and provided a statistical profile of drug use in Australia. In the next chapter, I begin my ethnographic discussion of the situated meanings of drug use and selfhood with an account of the Player social scene.

Notes

1 See also the controversial study of alcohol use among the Camba of Bolivia by Heath (1958, 1991). He argued that the Camba, despite the heavy and frequent drinking of a particularly strong alcoholic beverage distilled from sugar cane, and contrary to the view generally held in the addictions field, exhibited no signs of alcohol-related problems or ‘addiction’ to alcohol.

2 Some of the processes, methods and mechanisms described may also be germane to other drug scenes both in Perth and other parts of Australia.

As a result of the presence of one of the two national research centres established under funding from the National Campaign Against Drug Abuse, there has been a substantial amount of research into illicit drug use in Perth (e.g. Blaze-Temple, Lo and Binns 1990), particularly in the area of HIV/AIDS and injecting drug use (Loxley et al 1992, Loxley and Hawks 1994, Marsh and Loxley 1991, Ovenden, Loxley and McDonald 1995). For the most part, this research has been guided by psychological, behavioural-scientific or epidemiological methodologies and theories, as well as being shaped by public policy considerations.

3 The drug prices quoted are given in Australian dollars and were current for Perth between 1991 and 1994.

4 In the time since my fieldwork, bags appear to have become more common than foils.

5 It would be interesting to know why, at the street level, drugs are commonly measured in grams but are measured in imperial units (ounces, pounds) at the next level up in the dealing chain.
Descriptions of the pharmacological and medical effects of cannabis and the other drugs described in this chapter are derived from a number of sources – the information pamphlets produced by the Centre for Education and Information on Drugs and Alcohol, the Western Australian Alcohol and Drug Authority, and other drug agencies in Australia and overseas, and the academic literature on drugs (e.g. Beck et al 1989, Black, Farrell and McGuire 1992).

This term refers to the adaptation of the cells of the nervous system to the presence of a drug. The absence of the drug then produces a physiological withdrawal as the body adjusts to this absence.

Tolerance means decreasing responsiveness to the effects of a drug. Larger doses of the drug are then needed to produce the same effects.

Ovenden, Loxley and McDonald note two related practices. Firstly (Ovenden, Loxley and McDonald 1995:25), there is a 'weed for speed' trade between Perth and the eastern states of Australia, which takes advantage of price differences between the states. Cannabis is grown in Western Australia and then sent to the eastern states where it is worth up to twice as much per pound (due to lower availability and high demand). The money is then re-invested in amphetamine which, in the eastern states, is almost half the price per ounce it is in Perth. The amphetamine is then brought back to Perth to be sold at Perth’s higher amphetamine prices. The second point they (Ovenden, Loxley and McDonald 1995:21) make is that about three-quarters of the dealers they interviewed claimed that, in the absence of non-injectable drugs such as cannabis, drug users sometimes bought injectable drugs such as amphetamine. The remaining dealers claimed that cannabis users would wait until more cannabis was available. One reason for the discrepancy between dealers may be that they were describing different areas of the overall drug market.

The term for this practice in some parts of the United States is ‘stepping on’ (Adler 1985, Sabbag 1976).

Although the terms taxing and cutting refer to different, if related, practices, they are sometimes used interchangeably.

I have not surveyed the ‘indirect’ data on the prevalence of drug use – such as treatment admissions, calls to drug information hotlines, and crime statistics.

The same legal situation obtains in other states of Australia with the exception of South Australia (SA) and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). SA has an expiation notice scheme for offences involving less than 100 grams of cannabis. There are a range of fines (from $50 – $150, depending on the amount of cannabis) and, if the fine is paid within sixty days of the issue of the notice, no conviction is recorded. The ACT also has an expiation system for offences involving less than 25 grams of cannabis. The offender is fined $100 and, if paid within sixty days, the offence is discharged and no conviction recorded (for more detail, see McDonald et al 1994). Researchers in the ACT have recently completed a feasibility study into the viability of providing heroin by prescription to those who have been registered as ‘dependent’ on the drug for a specified period (see Bammer 1995, Bammer et al 1995). They await political approval to embark on the trial.
Part 2

Homo rhetoricus
Chapter 3

The Players

In this and the next two chapters I set out to represent some of the cultural and social practices of those young drug users I have labelled the 'Players'. In terms of the theoretical parameters outlined in Chapter 1, the Players do not form a subculture. Rather, Players are members of a variety of social scenes, each with its own understandings and activities, and are drawn to the borderland space (Rosaldo 1989) of the Player scene for the instrumental purpose of obtaining drugs. Because of this instrumental focus, there is little attempt to forge a sense of community amongst Players. As there is no set of normative values and activities which have been consensually negotiated by Players at a collective level, my account focuses on the contested claims Players make when they interact. In this chapter, I concentrate on the sociological features of the Player scene, that is, who the Players are and how they come together to constitute the Player scene. I begin by detailing how I came to know them.

Finding the Player field

Gaining entry

In May 1990, I received a research grant from the Research into Drug Abuse Programme of the Australian National Campaign Against Drug Abuse. I was interested in the advent of a relatively new, so-called 'recreational drug', Ecstasy. In anticipation of winning the research grant, I had already been in regular contact with a young woman whom I will call Jessie, a friend of a university colleague. Jessie was at this stage a peripheral member of the Player scene and, through our mutual friend, had offered her assistance to me. I met her on a number of occasions, spelling out what the study would consist of, why I wanted to conduct it, and who was funding it. She, in turn, relayed this information to her set of friends and associates. She thus played the part of 'cultural broker' and vouched for my legitimacy, at this early stage a personal quality that I gained largely through my association with our common
friend, my university colleague. She considered herself marginal to the core of the particular drug-using set with which I came to move but volunteered to introduce me to them and then, after a settling-in period, leave me to my own devices. She did not particularly want to increase her involvement with this set and possibly increase her own drug use. She was happy to continue at the periphery, with easy access to drugs but with the option to limit her contact.

At our meetings, Jessie was able to enlighten me about many facets of the Player scene in which she moved, including drug use. This informal fieldwork highlighted those aspects of this scene that she considered important and provided me with considerable background on the personalities and events of preceding months. When I began fieldwork several months later, I was not plunged into situations and a set of relationships about which I knew nothing. Once the research grant had been formally approved, I began to run with the Players.

Most of the Players had prior knowledge of 'this guy who wants to watch us use [drugs]'. In hindsight, this prior knowledge may have been a hindrance. Players were free to create images of me and of the prospective research into which I had no input and which may have been inaccurate. While this approach was ethically watertight, it meant I had to overcome these created images. For example, Lisa, one of the Players I came to know well, told me several months after I had started fieldwork that she had thought prior to meeting me, and had told a number of her friends, that I would provide her with drugs and then monitor her reactions. I had also to overcome the perceived negative connotations implied by the name of my institutional employer at that time, the National Centre for Research into the Prevention of Drug Abuse. Many Players assumed me to be 'anti-drug' and, on several occasions, I had to explain my support for the harm minimization paradigm.

During the early part of fieldwork, I hung around with Jessie. I would phone or call by at her house to find out what was happening amongst the Players. As time passed, and I had an opportunity to assess the internal dynamics of the Players' scene, I consciously and slowly transferred my primary identification away from her to other Players. I did not want to be too closely associated with any single person. Interestingly, Jessie consequently increased her involvement in the Players' scene, contrary to her stated intention to remain peripheral in order to maintain her own low level of drug use.
Once I assumed a role within the Player scene, I came to be identified with particular people. I tried to minimize the impact of this identification. For example, one male with whom I was closely identified in the early stages of fieldwork held ambivalent views about gay men. His views were known to a number of bisexual and gay Players who regarded him as intolerant and 'homophobic'. Whenever the opportunity presented itself, I tried to be sociable with these men, attempting to discuss issues openly and communicating to them that I did not share his views. In this way, I was not stigmatized as 'anti-gay' and in the process of visiting scenes where he did not feel comfortable I was able to reinforce contacts with these and other gay or bisexual Players.

Naturally, I had to answer many queries about the research from Players (and not all concerning confidentiality issues). Most believed the research topic to be intrinsically interesting and thought me fortunate to hold such employment. However, the lack of a legal basis for guaranteeing confidentiality meant that, certainly in the initial stages of fieldwork, I was regarded as 'suspect' for discussion of certain issues, for example, the identity of the next person up the dealing pyramid. It was not that the Players did not trust me personally or that they doubted the sincerity of the research. Rather, it was an accurate and realistic appraisal that, without a legal basis to confidentiality, I could never absolutely guarantee their safety. Protestations on my behalf about a willingness to defy the law to protect anonymity did not gel with Player cultural notions about typical reactions to police interrogation. The widely-held view was that anybody arrested or even questioned by police would gladly report the illegal activities of even close friends. 'Dob in five mates' (i.e. report five friends to the police) was held to be the going rate for dismissal of charges. In their eyes, there were no grounds for believing me to be any more trustworthy than anyone else.

Two problems

The delicate rapport I had worked to establish with several key Players was strained by confusion over whether the study would be protected by the Epidemiological Studies (1981) Act. Coverage under this Act would have legally guaranteed immunity from subpoena for both my data and me. Initially, there was a misunderstanding between officers of the Research into Drug Abuse Programme and me. As a result of my conversations with them, I believed that legal coverage would be forthcoming, even if not for a considerable time. I duly reported this to some of the Players – that I would have a legal basis for protecting what they had told me, what I had witnessed and what I had recorded. Several months later, I was informed by the same officers
that a departmental decision had been made: my research, as well as a number of other research projects, would not be covered under the Act due to legal technicalities. As one might expect, several Players expressed considerable dissatisfaction when I relayed this news to them. Some Players had already become understandably suspicious because of the lengthy delays in reaching a decision regarding immunity.

A second problem, which remained throughout fieldwork with the Players and which became a central analytical issue, surfaced in an early incident. I had innocently commented to one Player, Vinnie, that I had noticed the car of another Player, MC, parked in a side street near the house shared by two other Players, Lisa and Mark. Mary, MC's girlfriend at the time, had warned MC not to visit this house because of the heavy drug use there, fearing MC's increasing involvement would lead to drug-related problems. I thought nothing more of my comment to Vinnie until a few Fridays later. The time was 5a.m. and MC and I were sitting talking in his car after visiting a nightclub. He said to me, 'I don't mind helping you with this study but you need to be careful who you tell about certain things'. I looked puzzled. He explained that I had told 'someone' a few weeks ago that I had seen his car parked outside Lisa's house. This information had found its way back to Mary and, consequently, caused him some personal problems. I apologized immediately, saying that I had had no idea that I had created a problem for him, thinking that the information was innocent enough. He said he was not overly concerned about this particular piece of information but that other items of information I might overhear or behaviour I might witness could prove more important. From this point on, I was more careful about revealing what people had said to me or what I had observed.

The emphasis on the management of information also meant that I was excluded from certain information and activity and often had to wait several weeks to learn what had transpired. In other cases, I never learned 'the truth'. The demand for discretion, and the fact that the Players moved with non-users who were often unaware of their drug use, meant that I also had to be careful about revealing my research role to those I met casually. Immediately revealing my research role to all and sundry would have meant the question being asked of my usual companions: 'Are they drug users?'

Fieldwork

Research with the Players was conducted over eighteen months during 1990–1992. The usual method of recording their words and deeds was through tape-recorded or typed fieldnotes, which were made as soon as possible after arriving home from a
period of fieldwork. Evening fieldwork was the most difficult because of the length of time involved, beginning sometime between 7.00 and 11.30p.m. and ending anytime between 4 and 9a.m the next day. The lengthy investment of time was required if I was to be present throughout a complete, bounded period of Player activity: planning the night, buying drugs, preparing and using drugs, visiting hotels and nightclubs, and returning home to discuss the night’s events. After marathon sessions, I would make a page or two of ‘condensed notes’ (Spradley 1980) – jotting down phrases or words which re-evoked segments of social action. The next day, or occasionally within a day or two depending on how hectic things were, I would write an expanded account of the event with the aid of the condensed notes.

Later in the field research, I tried tape-recording field notes. Instead of the ‘condensed notes’ and ‘expanded account’ stages, I simply dictated the full account, which was then transcribed. Although a costly exercise (because of transcription), this method led to better-quality notes; they were more detailed and more accurate. I could dictate them immediately on arriving home rather than waiting to type the account after sleeping. In addition, transcription allowed me valuable time to pursue other matters – either more fieldwork or some much needed reading (or sleeping). I also tape-recorded interviews with several Players to elicit biographical data or to explore further potentially interesting themes raised in group conversation. However, because of the emphasis on secrecy and the problems with coverage under the Epidemiological Studies (1981) Act, these interviews were rarely relaxed affairs. Later, I resorted to informal ‘chats’ within the context of normal socializing.

Constituting the Player field

The Players

During participant observation, I came into regular contact with approximately thirty drug-using people who were members of particular, overlapping social scenes. (I also heard accounts of the activities of a score or so more.) These people I refer to as Players. My greatest involvement was with a subset of perhaps twenty young men and women and, within this set, a core of six people. The identities of the six fluctuated as the research progressed, reflecting changes in personal relationships between Players and changes in their relationships with me. In turn, these drug users belonged to larger networks of other drug users as well as of non-users. As it would be impossible to estimate accurately the number of people comprising these larger networks (they must run into the hundreds), I cannot tell how representative of the
broader scene were the Players I came to know. However, I have focused on general Player social and cultural practices, rather than on the behaviours of specific people, and these would have extended into the broader scene.

Players come from divergent backgrounds – from various social classes (if we define these categories by parents' occupation) and residing and/or working in various suburbs (but with a concentration within a ten kilometre radius of the city centre). Almost all are of Australian birth to Anglo-Celtic parents. Their ages vary from late teens to early thirties but with a clustering in the eighteen to twenty-two years age range. Some had left secondary school prior to Years 10 and 11; others had completed secondary school and found work; others still are enrolled in post-secondary vocational or educational courses. A small number are enrolled in, or have completed, tertiary education.

Some Players are unemployed and live off a combination of unemployment benefits and the profits from intermittent drug dealing, although much of the profit is ploughed back into their own drug use. Employment ranges from positions in the trades and service industries (e.g. the hospitality or retail industry) to semi-professional and professional status. Most are mainly or exclusively heterosexual. A few are either exclusively homosexual or, despite identifying themselves as predominantly heterosexual, have experience of gay or lesbian encounters. The sorts of activities in which the Players engage, usually under the influence of drugs, include visiting hotels and, more often, nightclubs, watching videos, eating out and visiting friends. Less often, they go to parties.

Diversity

Players share few common understandings other than those pertaining to the particular focus of their activity, drug use, and, as I will show, there are variations in the understandings relating to this narrow focus. On subjects such as politics, the importance of money, the intrinsic value of material objects such as cars or designer clothing, sexuality, and a number of other social issues, there is little or no consensus amongst them. Some do not appear particularly impressed with material things, others are; some hold conservative political views, some vote Labor, and some regard politics as irrelevant; some enjoy 'playing the game' of drug use (see Chapter 4), others think it a senseless activity.
Player diversity reflects Player membership of a range of social scenes other than the one constituted by Players. Paradoxically, the non-users with whom Players interact often share many of the same diverse value positions as Players on the relative importance of money, the desire for material comfort, the place of women in society, and attitudes towards gay men and lesbians. In other words, aside from drug use, Players are virtually indistinguishable from the non-users with whom they frequently interact. Moreover, Players do not seem to regard themselves as particularly different from ‘Straights’ (i.e. non-users) other than on the grounds of their drug use.

Player drug use

I set out to research the use of Ecstasy (known as ‘Eckie’ or ‘E’ by Players). Once fieldwork began, however, it became clear to me that although Eckie was a popular drug for many Players, the drug they used most often was amphetamine (‘speed’). Most Players also commonly used a third chemical drug, ‘trips’, and some smoked marijuana (hereafter ‘dope’). Several had experimented with a range of other drugs – such as ‘magic mushrooms’, heroin (‘hammer’, ‘down’ or ‘smack’), cocaine (‘coke’) and d-methamphetamine hydrochloride (‘Ice’) – and some continued to use them occasionally to add variety to their drug use. A few employed tranquillizers such as Rohypnol (‘Rowies’) and Valium, as well as dope and non-prescription sedatives, to counterbalance the stimulant effects of speed and, to a lesser extent, Eckie and trips. Many Players, particularly the men, drank alcohol and smoked tobacco heavily.

Players use drugs in a variety of settings. Speed is widely used in almost any situation that does not involve eating (Players hold that speed suppresses the appetite) – going to a pub or nightclub, staying at home, going to work after a night or weekend of drug use, or going on several-day binges without sleep. Most Players also argue that speed is an ‘all-purpose’ drug. They feel that it makes them more confident, more energetic and more sociable, and is therefore well suited to a variety of interactional contexts. In addition, its effects on human perception are thought to be relatively mild when compared to Eckie and trips. Eckie and trips are considered only marginally less versatile (and similarly disassociated with food) and are used in similar contexts to speed (except for work). Hammer tends to be used in private homes, unless the Players concerned are particularly experienced with the drug and feel able to manage the behavioural and cognitive aspects of interaction in public settings under its influence.
Most Players, whether male or female, choose to inject speed. Newcomers to the Player scene are more likely to begin their drug experimentation by snorting speed and by dropping Eckie and trips. Once Players have injected speed (the drug usually injected first), however, it is rare for them to revert to snorting the drug. Players also inject Eckie and trips but occasionally they revert to other ways of using these drugs, such as dropping (in the case of Eckie and trips) or snorting (in the case of Eckie capsules, which contain powder suitable for snorting). When used, hammer is always injected, coke and Ice either snorted or injected, and tranquillizers dropped. Dope, sometimes mixed with tobacco, is smoked from bongs (sometimes of the bucket type) or in joints.

There is great variety in Player patterns of drug use, that is, in the frequency of drug use and the amount used on any single occasion. Newcomers to the Player scene use drugs in a spasmodic, opportunistic way – taking the chance to use drugs when offered but generally using them every other weekend or more seldom. Some Players restrict their drug use to weekends or at least until Thursday nights. Others who have less demands made on their leisure time (those who are unemployed or working part-time) might use drugs more frequently. ‘Speed binges’ are common. They last several days, usually over a weekend, and involve the use of large amounts of speed. During times of particularly heavy drug use (see Chapter 4), Players might use speed almost daily for several weeks. Eckie and trips are generally used much less frequently, perhaps fortnightly, monthly or less. Some Players smoke dope weekly or more often while others use it sparingly or not at all.

Experienced injectors of speed who have developed a tolerance to its effects might inject up to two grams in a night. More commonly, between a half and a whole gram of speed is consumed in the average weekend night. Because of the relatively infrequent use of Eckie and trips, tolerance to these drugs does not generally develop. Despite this, more experienced Players might use two, three or four doses of Eckie in a night (the record is reputedly seven) or more than one trip. Less experienced Players usually take a single dose of these drugs. Players tend not to mix their chemical drugs but usually drink large quantities of alcohol while ‘speeding’ (i.e. under the stimulant influence of speed).

Players are aware of public health campaigns that attempt to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS through the targeting of high-risk behaviours such as sharing needles and syringes, and practising unsafe sex. Players respond to these twin messages in different ways, in keeping with the non-normative nature of the Player scene and the
associated contested representations of risk (something I explore further in Chapter 5). However, there is a clear general distinction made between the former and the latter messages. Messages about needle hygiene have thoroughly penetrated the Player scene and, in general, are being heeded; in general, messages about safe sex, which have pierced the scenic consciousness in a fragmented way, are not.

With respect to injecting drugs, Players generally heed public health warnings. Some obtain clean needles and syringes (for themselves and, sometimes, for fellow injectors) from an inner-city gay sauna (others refuse to enter ‘gay’ premises), from suburban chemists and, occasionally, from a Government drug unit just outside the city centre. While moving with Players, I recorded only one confirmed instance of needle-sharing – between a de facto couple who reasoned that if they were having unprotected sex then they need not concern themselves with the potential risks of sharing injecting equipment. I also heard stories about the injecting practices at the home of one male Player where, apparently, a plastic bag was hung on a door handle for the disposal of used needles and syringes. The narrators of these stories claimed that sometimes this equipment was re-used when clean equipment was unavailable or when the ‘junkies’ who injected at the house could not wait to secure clean equipment before injecting drugs. (Of course, there may have been other instances of needle-sharing, both during and prior to the fieldwork period, which went unreported due to the ‘junkie’ stigma attached to this practice.)

In addition to taking precautions regarding injecting equipment, Players have also developed a diverse range of social sanctions and controls to reduce drug-related harm (Zinberg 1984). By ‘social sanctions’, Zinberg means the values and rules defining when, where, with whom and for what purposes drugs are used. Some general sanctions include the following: buy only from a known dealer (to facilitate secrecy, a degree of trust and agreeable terms of purchase), do not use drugs during the week, do not use drugs with strangers, seek advice from more experienced drug users when in doubt, do not carry drugs in public (this sanction is frequently waived by those dealing in drugs), and consume drugs in a safe, hygienic place.

In Zinberg’s model, ‘rituals’ refer to the stylized, prescribed patterns of behaviour surrounding drug use. Player rituals are most elaborated for injecting drugs and have developed to ensure maximum pleasure with minimum risk. For instance, Players hold that carefully calculating the amount of water needed to dissolve speed in water maximizes the ‘rush’ of injection, while boiling the water first sterilizes it. They also hold that Vitamin C should be available when taking trips as it can ‘bring someone down from a bad trip’ (i.e. return the tripper to relative sobriety).
The need for safe sex practices (to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS and venereal diseases) is represented by Players as of much less importance than the need for sterile injecting equipment. In relation to HIV/AIDS, one man reasoned that, because many of the male and female Players in the set with whom I moved could be linked to one another through past sexual relationships, 'if one of us has got it, then we all have'. Players, being young and single, explore a range of sexual experiences. In general, they place low emphasis on fidelity to a current partner (e.g. one male was conducting three affairs simultaneously) and have casual sex with multiple partners. Several Players also occasionally participate in sexual games of one sort or another, usually involving three or four people. The emphasis in such three-person or four-person scenarios is usually on simultaneous heterosexual and lesbian sexual acts (although not always penetrative acts), and only rarely on sexual acts between (usually) heterosexual men.

Player discussions of sexual activity suggest that the wearing of condoms is a low priority. Although there is some recognition of, and playful jesting with, the pro-condom slogan, 'If it's not on, it's not on' (i.e. 'If the condom is not on, sex is not on'), the need for safe sexual activity is not high on the list of topics for frequent group conversation. When compared with the knowledge of the need for clean injecting equipment and the high rate of practical application of this knowledge, safe sex does not occupy so central a place in the cultural scheme of things. There are a number of reasons that appear to be germane to the low use of condoms and low evaluation of the need for safe sex among Players: a perceived diminution of sexual pleasure with the use of condoms; an unwillingness to interrupt the sexual 'flow', particularly if sexual activity is opportunistic, that is, of a casual nature with a partner who is not especially well known; the lack of significance attached to the contraction of sexually transmitted diseases (other than HIV/AIDS); a low perceived risk of contracting the HIV virus (due to the perceived low incidence of HIV/AIDS in the heterosexual population); the widely-held Player perception (and therefore excuse) that alcohol and other drug intoxication, particularly that associated with Eckie, leads to sexual disinhibition; and the importance of sexual acts in the fashioning of personal reputation for both men and women. Two other speculative points may be made in relation to sexual behaviour among the Players: that sex is a commodity to be consumed like drugs, and that, although there are female as well as male Players, some women may have less say in the negotiation of sexual behaviour, including condom use (cf. Sharp et al 1991).
Several Players have been using drugs for over a decade and some for between two and five years. For others, the use of drugs is a relatively recent activity, having begun in the previous twelve months. Within the set of thirty people, two have received treatment or hospitalization for drug-related problems at some stage in their drug-using careers. In one case, a Player was treated at a drug centre for an ‘addiction to smack’; in the other, a brief period of hospitalization had followed the physical collapse produced by an eleven-day speed binge.

**Users and dealers**

One crucial social distinction made between persons in the Player scene is that between ‘user’ and ‘dealer’. Although the emic term for a person selling drugs is ‘dealer’, for Players the term means someone who deals and uses drugs. Being a dealer assumes importance in terms of prestige and the knowledge and power required to ‘play the game’ of drug use (see Chapter 4). Players who deal in drugs move in circles that conform to one of the seven types of dealing/trafficking identified by Dorn, Murji and South (1992:xiii): ‘mutual societies’, that is, ‘friendship networks of user-dealers who support each other and sell or exchange drugs amongst themselves in a reciprocal fashion’.

For Players, the move from user to dealer begins when the user starts out sharing the occasional gram of speed with a friend or friends or dropping the occasional trip or Eckie tablet. However, if one’s consumption increases, particularly if one begins to inject drugs (with the often associated heavier involvement in drug circles and increasing tolerance to drug effects), then the user must carry the burden of higher financial and, as I will show, sometimes personal costs. He or she may take one of two options: buy larger amounts of a drug, in the case of speed, to cheapen the relative cost of each gram consumed or buy a similarly large amount and begin dealing grams to friends. If a Player buys a quarter-ounce (seven grams) of speed for $450, each gram costs about $64. A quarter-ounce is a large amount for a single person, so this former option is more likely to involve two, three or four people pooling their resources. Taking the latter option, if he or she sells four-and-a-half grams to friends at $100 a gram, then two-and-a-half free grams are left for personal consumption. Those Players who use speed frequently move back and forth between these two less-expensive options whereas those newer to the scene continue to buy single grams.
Buying large amounts of speed more cheaply, however, requires careful management of one’s drug use. The financial cost of each gram of speed used is lessened by buying a quarter-ounce. However, the overall costs of one’s drug use are only lessened if the Player does not use speed more frequently than is normal for him or her. Having such a large amount of speed readily available for use sometimes proves too much for some Players. They embark on speed binges and use up the speed in a short time. By using at a frequency higher than usual, any per-gram financial advantage from buying the larger amount is negated by a rise in the level of use.

A few Players deal to wider networks of drug users than their usual drug-using associates. My data on this level of dealing involvement are patchy due to the careful control of information characteristic of this level and exercised in the presence of all those not directly involved in the deals (including the anthropologist). As far as I can tell, dealers at this level buy speed in ounces (for between $1,200 and 1,600) and sell either quarter-ounces or half-ounces to sets of two, three or four users who are pooling their finances. On occasions, they might sell single grams to friends. The former option means less profit but also less risk due to a faster (and therefore safer) turnover of drugs and a smaller customer base usually made up of friends. The latter option means greater profit but higher risk through exposure to a wider number of customers (who are less well known to the dealer) and a slower turnover of drugs (unless the dealer has a large and regular group of customers to whom he or she can sell fast).

A sociology of the Player scene

In order to explore some of the key sociological features of the Player scene, I shall outline the career of the young woman I have called Lisa as it unfolded over an eight-year period. Before doing so, I note an important transition. Lisa’s drug use preceded her participation in the Player scene. Initially, it belonged to social scenes in which drug use was but one constitutive feature of social relationships. In the early phases of her career, drug use accompanied already-established relationships. At the time of my fieldwork with the Players, drug use had become the primary basis for many of her enduring relationships. Sociologically, she had moved into a scene in which drug use was the network focus (Feld 1981).
Lisa's career

In 1984, at the age of sixteen, Lisa left secondary school and took a waitressing job in a city hotel. She lived at home with her family and socialized mainly with friends made through school, work or common neighbourhood ties. During this time, she began smoking dope occasionally in the company of these friends. In 1986, she travelled to Melbourne for an extended working holiday in the company of a school friend, spending eight months there. While hitch-hiking across the Nullarbor Plain she first experienced speed. The speed powder was offered by a man who gave her a lift.

While in Melbourne, Lisa moved house several times and met many different types of people drawn from various inner-city youth scenes and subcultures including punks, skinheads, mods and street youth, as well as youths who did not belong to any identifiable subculture. These people became part of Lisa's life in a number of ways. She met them through participating in sexual relationships, patronizing the same leisure venues, sharing residences, and being introduced to friends of friends. Money was scarce during this period and she and her newly-acquired friends made frequent use of available welfare agencies, such as the Red Cross, for food vouchers and other forms of charitable subsidy. She worked at a number of casual jobs (e.g. serving behind a shop counter, working in a fish market) as well as intermittently drawing unemployment benefits. She also spent a considerable amount of time learning the subtleties of dope and hash consumption in the company of others, as well as drinking regularly and heavily. Her souvenir photographs of the time depict young men and women enjoying themselves at parties, barbecues and private homes.

At the beginning of 1987, Lisa returned to Perth and moved into a shared house with some old school friends. She began socializing and smoking dope with her housemates and their friends, most of whom worked in the hospitality and service industries. After a few months, she moved back to her parents' house so she could afford to attend secretarial college. She remained there for about six months. During this time, she primarily associated with friends met through college, with drinking and smoking dope being important leisure pursuits. Lisa left college before completing the year-long course to take a sales job and subsequently rented a flat with a female friend. While in the flat, she struck up an acquaintanceship with several young men also living in the same block and began smoking dope with them. However, Lisa found managing her relationship with her female flatmate difficult, mainly due to different leisure patterns, and subsequently returned to the parental home.
Early in 1988, she resumed her association with the friends with whom she had previously shared a house. In the intervening period, they had begun using chemical drugs. She began snorting speed with this group and also experienced her first episode of injecting the drug – a practice she continued throughout her drug-using career. She spent a great deal of time with this set of people, ultimately moving into the house again. By mid-1988, Lisa was working in a nightclub alongside Glenn, one of her housemates, and socializing with the other bar staff. After work, several of them would often obtain speed, trips or Eckie and move on to other nightclubs to ‘party’. She also had brief affairs with two male nightclub co-workers.

After Lisa had worked in the nightclub for a few months, she left Glenn’s house to move into a house with MC (also on the nightclub staff), MC’s girlfriend, Mary, and Graham. One night, Graham brought home for a ‘one-night stand’ a young woman, Kathy, whom he had met in a nightclub. Lisa soon warmed to Kathy’s outrageous personality and they became firm friends. Through Kathy, Lisa met Mark and Brendan and, through them, Simone and William, all of whom frequented a gay and lesbian nightclub. She also met Melissa through her nightclub employment and, via her, Vinnie, Jessie and Michael. At this time, then, most of Lisa’s friends either worked in the hospitality industry or were regular patrons of various nightclub establishments. Drug use came to occupy a central place in most leisure activity as a consequence of the perceived benefits of drug use, a lifestyle oriented around the nocturnal hours, and easy access to drugs. It was at this point that Lisa began to move with those who could be described as Players.

Towards the end of 1988, Lisa moved in with Kathy, a move necessitated by the end of the lease with MC, Mary and Graham and the unavailability of the house. She continued to socialize with much the same group of people. In 1989, she moved into a flat with Mark who had begun dealing speed. She began a sexual relationship with Michael and continued to see, and use drugs with, Brendan, MC, Vinnie, Melissa, Jessie, William, Mary, Simone and Mark, as well as Michael.

Lisa’s next residential shift, in 1990, was into a house where she joined Laura, an old schoolfriend, and Vinnie, whom she had met through the nightclub work. Frequent visitors to this house included MC, Mark, Jessie, Michael, William, Jane (met through MC), and me, as well as friends of Vinnie’s (especially Rick) and patrons and other staff of the nightclub in which Lisa worked. Not all of these people used drugs and most of those who did not knew little or nothing of Lisa’s drug use or that of her drug-using friends.
Their stay in the house ended with the expiry of the six-month lease and because of growing friction among the three occupants over heavy drug use. (I cover this period in more detail in Chapter 4.) Finding herself without a place to live, Lisa took over the lease on Jenine’s flat (an ex-girlfriend of MC) even though it was beyond her financial means. For a number of reasons – disagreements over growing drug debts, new employment, and declining interest in partying and drug use – her circle of friends began to contract. Gradually, Lisa lost touch with those with whom she had used drugs in the past or purposefully avoided those to whom she owed money. These people included MC (who had left Perth), Mary, Jenine, Mark, William, Brendan, Jessie, Melissa, Kathy, Laura, Simone and Jane.

She remained in the sometimes stormy relationship with Michael, finally moving into a house with him in late 1991. Vinnie began visiting more frequently, to inject speed, often bringing Rick with him. Mark renewed contact. MC returned to Perth for a time. Other friends established during past socializing also visited. Some old school friends resumed contact and Laura reappeared occasionally. Jane called by a few times. However, this revival fizzled out within a few months. The circle again contracted dramatically until only Lisa, Michael and Vinnie (and occasionally Rick) were left. There were a number of reasons for this: Lisa no longer worked at the nightclub and therefore no longer had the opportunity to keep in frequent contact with a large range of people, she had grown tired of the nightclub scene, and some visitors had grown tired of Michael and Vinnie ‘playing the game’ of drug use by ‘ripping people off’ (see Chapter 4). Jane did not telephone again after Lisa told her that she and Michael were no longer using drugs.

By 1992, Lisa used speed at home (and, very occasionally, trips, Eckie and dope) but partying no longer held many attractions. After several months, her speed use declined until she used it only on special occasions (along with dope) – sometimes with Michael, Mark and Vinnie – and then not at all. After approximately five years of involvement, she had left the Player scene. To use her own words, she had ‘grown up’.

_Lability_

There are a number of sociological features of Lisa’s career which bear noting. The sets of people with whom Lisa associated over these years may be characterized as labile, that is, “continuity in the arrangement of persons in relation to one another” [a quotation from Radcliffe-Brown] is uncharacteristic and the search for this order of continuity is pointless and unreal’ (Sansom 1981:278). Lisa formed and re-formed her
relationships with different persons and different sets of people at many points over
the described period. While Lisa was busily moving from one set of persons to the
next (and sometimes back again), other people with whom she came into contact also
had similar histories of fluid and ever-changing association. In differing degrees, all
shared a common mode of relatively short-term associations which alter as one
changes leisure style (including drug use), employment, sexual partners and
residence.

The Player scene is amenable to processual analysis using Mayer's (1966) interrelated
concepts of 'action-set', 'quasi-group' and 'clique'. The action-set comprises those
Players recruited to a specific task or activity and usually numbers between two and
five people. In Lisa's case, an action-set might consist of three or four friends who
meet one night to inject amphetamine. Observing a number of successive action-sets
over time allows the discovery of the slightly larger set of people who are most often
recruited to these specific activities. This larger pool is the quasi-group, that is, the
total number of people who might be recruited for specific activities over a period of
time. In the Player scene, quasi-groups rarely number above five to eight people.
When the same people are regularly and frequently recruited to action-sets, it makes
sense to speak of the formation of a 'clique', an essential core within the more fluid
action-set and quasi-group. There is a tendency towards the formation of Player
cliques because of the illicit nature of action-set activity and the careful management
of information (see below).

Members of Player cliques are consociates, that is, persons sharing both time and
space (Geertz 1966). They may share some common bond in addition to drug use; for
instance, they may share a house or be old school friends or work together. These
relationships may be built on trust and a degree of intimacy, and therefore conform to
notions of sincerity (i.e. following Chapter 1, an honest adherence to social roles).
Alternatively, those in a clique may share a temporary relationship based on drug use,
though relationships of this sort are particularly prone to lapse. Sometimes, those
comprising a clique remain consociates for a substantial length of time. Sometimes, the
composition of cliques changes every few weeks or months. Persons who previously
comprised a clique become contemporaries, that is, those persons sharing time but not
space (Geertz 1966), but they may again become consociates at some future point.
These persons may be recruited to future action-sets but not with the same regularity
as was once the case.
The relationships between cliques can be conceptualized as 'weak ties' – those social links that join together various clusters of closer relationships (Granovetter 1983). Some cliques only participate in the Player scene in order to purchase and consume drugs and seldom interact for any other reason. They may prefer to spend their leisure time in other scenes which are more to their liking. Other Player cliques may form relationships with non-using action-sets based on patronage of the same nightclub or pub. Other cliques may share the bond of drug use and occasionally choose to spend leisure time together independent of drug use. Thus, in the Player scene, drug use is the basis for a substantial proportion of both the relationships within a clique and the links between cliques. These relationships are for the most part instrumental, in that they are shaped by the need to obtain and use drugs, and few of them develop beyond this superficial level.

If weak links connect cliques, 'bridging weak ties' may join two previously unrelated quasi-groups. The process of buying drugs often works on the bridging-tie principle. One person within a particular quasi-group might know of a dealer, from whom he or she purchases drugs on behalf of a drug-using friend or set of friends. The friends may never gain knowledge of the dealing source but, through the bridging weak tie, are able to secure the services of the dealer. For example, at one stage in her career, Lisa socialized with Michael, MC, Mark, Vinnie, and a number of others on a regular and frequent basis. One of these friends, Vinnie, also occasionally associated with another quasi-group of drug users, which consisted of a number of his workmates and their friends, chief amongst them being Rick. Through Rick's membership of another quasi-group of drug users, Vinnie was able to secure steady access to someone who dealt high-quality speed. Vinnie's relationship with Rick thus formed a bridging weak tie between two previously separate drug-using quasi-groups.

There is a dynamic element to weak ties in that people acquire new ones as they move through various cliques and quasi-groups. In addition, they may retain established ties or they may allow them to lapse. For example, on one occasion, Lisa's regular drug dealer was unable to supply speed and she rang a number of her old contacts. However, the telephone numbers she had were either out-of-date or the person no longer dealt in drugs, and she was forced to go to work that night without the aid of speed.
Within such labile settings, persons create ‘self-liquidating’ positions (Sansom 1981). A person, like Lisa, moves into the Player scene. She strikes up relationships with a number of people, some of which are based on access to, and the use of, drugs. She builds her contacts until she comes to know several dealers. She steadily acquires knowledge of drug use – the merits and drawbacks of different drugs, the best way of using different drugs, how to detect poor-quality drugs. If her drug use increases, she may decide to start dealing to her friends to help cover her own drug expenses. Later, she leaves the scene and the position she has created disappears with her. It is not a fixed status awaiting the arrival of the next incumbent; rather, it is highly person-specific and is not transferable to others. Even when she becomes an occasional small-scale dealer, the way she conducts her business transactions is highly personal.

**Segregating networks**

A structural feature of the Player scene, implicit in the description of Lisa’s career, is the segregation of networks. This segregation works in three ways. Lisa, and other Players, move within social scenes in which drug use is disapproved of. Thus, great care has to be taken in concealing evidence of drug use and of the drug-based nature of Player relationships. To maintain such secrecy involves creating and maintaining networks segregated into drug and non-drug relationships. Along with the segregation of networks goes the presentation of different selves, learning to perform a ‘public’, non-drug self during certain transactions and revealing the ‘true’, drug-using self during others.

A Player’s non-drug networks might include family members and friends, that is, relationships established prior to involvement in drug use and the Player scene. They will almost certainly include work colleagues. His or her Player network might include one’s past and current fellow injectors and also, with details of injecting noticeably absent from discussions of personal use, other non-injecting drug users. Sometimes, the two networks overlap in a single social situation, perhaps at a birthday party or in coincidental visits from both a non-using friend and a dealer. In these situations, Players transact a false self (hopefully in league with the drug-using friend) and hope that their performance is suitably convincing, for the consequences are potentially disastrous. Relationships with non-users are not redefined as unimportant for Players. On the contrary, a central element of the Player scene is being able to manage social situations in which several presented selves confront one another.
Secondly, drug-using networks are further segregated into consociates and contemporaries. Players generally segregate networks of past drug-using consociates who have become contemporaries from those consisting of their present drug-using consociates, who may have been contemporaries in the past and who may, in the future, become contemporaries once again. Although past consociates may be aware that a Player is still involved in drug use, specific details of current drug-using relationships may be kept secret. Players learn to transact several different selves depending on the situation at hand.

The third form of network segregation concerns dealing activity. In addition to segregating drug from non-drug relationships, those involved in more serious drug-dealing often keep their drug-dealing relationships segregated from all but a few of their drug-using relationships. In this way, dealers minimize the risks associated with their dealing activities.10

**Negotiated order**

Attempting to portray the social lives of Players like Lisa through the conventional conceptual tools of 'subculture', 'small world' or 'style' engenders a number of analytical challenges. Such concepts focus on shared understandings or styles of action, on bodies of common knowledge which are required for membership in a social collective. These collectivist terms imply the existence of a moral community. The scene constituted by the Players does not conform to such a view. Players do not move within a coherent subculture in which all its members share a consensual view of the world and, within it, of their drug use. Rather, the Players are a set of people drawn from diverse scenes whose social relationships are for the most part based around the instrumental purpose of buying and using drugs. Their disparate backgrounds, educational qualifications, employment histories, values and attitudes, and drug experiences mean that there is no common pool of knowledge to which all have access and which all acquire through participation in the Player scene.

In place of 'subculture' or similarly collectivist concepts I use 'negotiated order' (Strauss 1978). Strauss was concerned with the connection between social order or, in our case, social process, and what he calls the 'negotiation' of shared understandings. He argues that social orders (or, in our case, social scenes) are always 'negotiated orders', although there may be other types of interaction which exist side-by-side, such as coercion or manipulation. What Strauss (1978:ix) means by a negotiated order is this:
when individuals or groups or organizations of any size work together "to get things done" then agreement is required about such matters as what, how, when, where, and how much. Continued agreement itself may be something to be worked at. Even enemies may have to negotiate, to work together to arrive at their quite discrepant ends. Putting the matter thus suggests that negotiations pertain to the ordering and articulation of an enormous variety of activities.

What is clear from such a conceptualization is the idea that the collective enactment of any social activity, in this case drug use, emerges from an ongoing process of negotiation whereby each participant in the social scene contributes, albeit in differing ways and in differing degrees, to the overall outcome. 'Getting things done' refers to the procurement and consumption of drugs, the focal activity for members of the Player scene.

A similar conceptualization, but one which makes explicit the power relations implicit in the Straussian model, is provided by Rosen's (1978) 'bargaining for reality' (developed further in his later book of the same name, Rosen [1984]). In the earlier work, an article which focuses on the negotiation of reality in the context of male-female relations in Morocco, Rosen outlines the different understandings held by Moroccan men and women about the opposite gender, and characterizes them as separate if related discourses about the nature of the world. The crux of the article for my purposes is a conversation he records between a respected Haj and the mother of a soon-to-be-married bride, who is objecting to the choice of prospective groom for her daughter's arranged marriage. Such situations, he argues, can best be understood as instances of a more general process of 'bargaining for reality'. This is the process 'by which several actors, each of whom possesses a different view of what is really true about the situation in which all are involved, attempt to make his or her definition of the situation prevail' (Rosen 1978:574).

The negotiation of reality amongst Players proceeds in much the same way. Each piece of information about drugs, the actions and motivations of a person, and the relative risks associated with different acts, may be evaluated and understood in different ways depending on the Player audience. If a set of people learns that a particular drug dealer is dealing in poor-quality speed, after providing a reliable product for some time, there are a variety of possible responses, a variety of definitions of the situation. One member of the audience might add such news to that store of general knowledge relating to drug availability and quality, and seek other dealers of speed. Another audience member might seek out other dealers but also express anger or some other negative judgement of the dealer's actions. Still another
might evaluate the dealer as someone who could never be trusted, an essentially dishonest schemer. Or a Player might start to wonder why the speed quality is declining, and whether the dealer is deliberately attempting to demonstrate superior knowledge of drug use and the associated game of deceit and false presentation (see Chapter 4), and, therefore, attempting to undermine the buyer’s identity as a Player. Retaliation may be taken to reassert one’s identity, possibly by persuading other Players not to buy from the dealer in future (thus depriving the dealer of profits and prestige). Another retaliatory option would be to seek to reverse the position, by selling poor-quality speed to the dealer at some later stage if and when he or she runs out of speed and requires some for personal use. Regardless of the outcome, Players are aware of the bargaining process.

Furthermore, Rosen (1978:574) brings a sociology to his cultural negotiation:

Because these individuals are engaged in a common activity demanding both definition and resolution, their concepts of reality are subject to negotiation, which in turn is significantly affected by the relative power possessed by each of the participants in this particular situation.

Players with experience, knowledge and competence, in short, those who are successful Players, may be in the position to influence the views of others more successfully than any similar attempt by relative newcomers to the scene. Player identity buys a certain power to define how a situation should be interpreted by those present. This identity may be buttressed by other considerations – for instance, as someone who provides speed regularly to less experienced users or who regularly injects other users because they are unable to do so – but essentially one’s ability to define the situation is related to one’s ability to be a successful Player in the ‘game of drug use’.

**Alternation and moral transformation**

Players see themselves as belonging to the ‘mainstream’ in most ways other than those relating to their drug use (and, for some, their sexual proclivities). In using the term ‘mainstream’ I do not seek to resurrect 1950s American sociology. I use this etic term as a gloss for the emic view of Players themselves. Their label for the mainstream is ‘Straight’ or ‘the Straights’. By ‘Straight’, they mean the non-use of drugs rather than referring to conformity to other generalized social dictates.
In keeping with their mainstream orientation, members of the Player scene do not seek to create an alternative moral community. There is no common aim for Players other than securing access to drugs. Instead, they ‘play’ with the existing moral structure. They react to Straight society by alternately adhering to what they believe to be its precepts regarding drug use and denying their validity. In the eyes of Players, non-users are Straights who have yet to dabble with the deviance of drug use; yet they are also the sensible ones who have not succumbed to the seductive delights of drugs.

The concept of ‘alternation’ (Berger and Luckmann 1966, Travisano 1970) provides one way of understanding the movement of persons in the Player scene, and the relationship between the Player scene and Straight society. Unlike fully-fledged ‘conversion’, in which one’s moral world is redefined and the past reinterpreted through the new moral filter of a transcendent self (e.g. Lofland and Stark 1965, Snow and Machalek 1984, Stromberg 1993), ‘alternation’ refers to a lesser personal transformation which does not involve a total change of the primary universe of discourse. To put it another way, alternation does not involve a change in ‘the “informing aspect” of character’ (Burke 1954 cited in Travisano 1970:239). In the conversion process, there is a total break with the past, with alternation there is not. Alternations grow out of existing patterns of behaviour and can be accommodated within, or in spite of, an existing universe of discourse. So it is with Players. They interact frequently with non-users, thus necessitating the segregation of networks and the management of information regarding Player drug use. They do not seek to construct an alternative, legitimating moral community because they have not forsaken mainstream values. Instead, Players display ambivalence and equivocation over morality, sometimes accepting Straight values regarding drug use and other times rejecting them (see Chapters 4 and 5).

Working from the emic understandings of Players, and following Finnegan (1989), I conceptualize movement in the Player scene as an urban path, constituted by and expressed in numerous personal ways. This path is a temporary one, with most Players moving out of the Player scene after several years’ involvement (although they may take their Player skills to areas of life that do not involve drug use). The Player’s aim is, in the first instance, instrumental – to gain access to drugs and to the skills and knowledge associated with the strategic interaction (Goffman 1970) of the game. Through increasing involvement in the scene, one gradually acquires such abilities and undergoes the transition from novice to Player. Yet the novice Player must, at some stage, undergo a rite of passage (van Gennep 1908, Glaser and Strauss 1975) to claim Player identity. Personal transformation is signalled by the initiation into drug injection, the pivotal moment when the would-be Player moves from one socially recognized identity to another.
Of play, players and games

The Players with whom I moved conducted an ongoing dialogue with what they perceived to be Straight morality and steadfastly adhered to the work/leisure distinction characteristic of modern industrial capitalism (Gusfield 1987, Husch 1992, Parker 1983). Writing about drug use in one Australian context, Dance and Mugford (1992:602) have this distinction in mind when they argue that 'modern society can best be understood as having a contradictory mix of two themes, the well-documented Protestant Work Ethic ... and a more recently developed and less well-understood Hedonist Ethic'. Both Gusfield (1987) and Husch (1992), writing about the use of drugs in the United States, argue much the same point. For them, drugs are used to mark the separation of the spheres of work and leisure (and play), but also to mark transitions between two temporal spheres – from time shaped by the requirements of capitalist economic relations to time shaped by personal and social needs.

Firmly grounded in the work/leisure distinction is the work of Huizinga (1949; see also Young 1971) on 'play'. Huizinga (1949:13) defines play as:

a free activity standing quite consciously outside “ordinary” life as being “not serious”, but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means.

While play occurs within the leisure side of the work/leisure distinction, in which the work-related issues of career advancement, status and role-playing are set aside, play is not simply leisure. It is that part of leisure characterized by 'spontaneity, by unscheduled action, by a blurring of social boundaries and by activity which is chiefly unproductive from an economic viewpoint' (Gusfield 1987:84). Huizinga’s (and Gusfield’s derivative) play comes directly out of the temporal segregation of life into work and leisure. In other words, those who play are creatures of capitalism in that they observe such a conceptual distinction, and accept the associated cultural and social arrangements. At the same time, however, they work to make sense of their actions through an ongoing dialogue with what they consider to be the non-playing mainstream. In the remainder of this section, I consider several ethnographic studies in which this segregation of work and leisure and the related notions of 'play', 'players' and 'games' are canvassed.
Firstly, Finestone (1957) explicitly applies Huizinga's notion of play to his analysis of the social type of the 'cat'. Based on interviews with young African-American heroin users in Chicago, Finestone identifies two related but separate parts in the life of the cat: the 'hustle' and the 'kick'. The former refers to the way in which the cat supports himself—through petty theft, picking pockets, hustling at pool, pimping and con games. The latter is 'any act tabooed by "squares" that heightens and intensifies the present moment of experience'. Common kicks include 'dabbling in the various perversions and byways of sex', drinking and the use of marijuana or heroin, enacted against a backdrop of popular music (usually jazz) and tailored clothes.

For Finestone, the three central elements of Huizinga's play are present for the cat. First of all, the cat is 'free' in the sense that he is excluded from mainstream success and is therefore a 'pre-eminent candidate for new forms of social organization and novel social practices' to which he voluntarily agrees to participate. Secondly, play is not 'ordinary life' but rather a stepping-out into a separate sphere with a 'disposition all of its own'. Cats, denied legitimate opportunities for achieving status and material wealth, seek other forms through which to acquire these goals. They construct the cat as an heroic figure (Finestone 1957:434):

a person who is completely adequate to all situations, who controls his "kick" rather than letting it control him, who has a lucrative "hustle", who has no illusions as to what makes the world "tick", who is any man's equal, who basks in the admiration of his brother cats and associated "chicks", who hob-nobs with "celebs" of the musical world, and who in time himself may become a celebrity.

Thirdly, play is enacted within certain limits of time and space. This quality of play gives the heroin use of cats its esoteric, elitist image. The secrecy associated with drug 'connections', the lore of injecting and of appreciating the drug's effects, and the sense of being part of a conspiracy serve to place such drug use outside the mainstream.

A second ethnographic example is provided by Fine (1983) who discusses play in a very different context to Finestone. His book examines an 'urban leisure subculture', the members of which engage in fantasy 'role-playing' games such as *Dungeons and Dragons* and *Empire of the Petal Throne*. The players of these games are drawn from diverse backgrounds and often learn little about the private lives of fellow players. One of Fine's analytical concerns is the relationship between the 'real self' and the game being played. He divides fantasy-game participants into two categories (1983:223): those he calls 'gamers', who tend to express themselves through the game characters, and those he calls 'role-players', who become so engrossed in the game that they may 'shelve their natural identity and temporarily adopt the one of their character' in the game.
Thirdly, Manning (1973) considers play in the context of ‘black clubs’ in Bermuda. Men (and women) visit the clubs to ‘relax’ and ‘blow off steam’, defining clubs against their work obligations and duties (as well as those relating to family matters). Within the club setting, men participate in a broad sphere of play which includes sports and other forms of competitive activity as well as chance-taking in the presentation of selves. One instance of the transaction of selves is found in ‘rapping’, in which the speaker’s primary purpose is not to convey information but either to exhibit his personality and style or to persuade someone else to act in ways that will serve his interests. Manning calls this play sphere ‘the game’.

The cultural outlook associated with the game is one of strategic exploitation of opportunities (Manning 1973:108-109):

in the club world the game is an agonistic and dramatist mode of symbolic action; it is both competitive contest and public performance. As contestant, the clubman calculates a strategy that will gain him advantages over his competitors and enable him to strike for his goal at an opportune moment. As performer, he places his personality and style on public display and seeks to evoke appreciative responses from his audience.

The clubman is, therefore, a ‘player’ (Manning 1973:109).

Historically, these clubs were formed in response to the ethnic segregation of Bermudan society. They also developed from church-oriented ‘lodges’ which emphasized frugality and temperance. The lodges grew out of the Protestant tradition of personal salvation through hard work, although more recent fundamentalist Protestantism had advocated single conversion experiences as the road to salvation. Through the course of their lives, clubmen move back and forth between the lodges and the clubs, the latter being places for consumption and hedonism. There is also the idea that at some future point, when he has had his fill of sports, sex, and drinking, the clubman will be ‘saved’ and (re)join the church (Manning 1973:82):

more than nine-tenths of club members are not church members. The reasons are rooted in their perception of the opposition between the hedonistic play encouraged by the clubs and the ascetic piety prescribed by the churches. Yet despite this ethical opposition, the club is ultimately defined within the framework of the Christian cosmology. The club member accepts the Christian view of the club as “the world”, the sphere of secular activity that violates the normative precepts of fundamentalist Christianity. He also accepts the Christian view of himself as “unsaved”. If he formerly attained salvation, he acknowledges that he is a “backslider”; otherwise, he sees himself as a “sinner”.

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The clubman therefore cedes primacy to the Protestant cosmology over the club ethos and creates meaning in the context of the dialogue between the two.

There are other studies of competitive self-presentational forms in contexts of economic, social and moral segregation from mainstream society which reach similar conclusions. Cleckner (1977) provides an account of drug use and 'the game' as a cultural strategy articulated and employed by ghetto-dwelling, southern African-American men. Similar arguments about African-American men (sometimes framed within the debate over the 'culture-of-poverty' theory proposed by Lewis [1959]) are made by Hannerz (1969) about ghetto-dwellers; by Liebow (1967) about the men at Tally's Corner; by Horton (1973) writing of the 'hustler'; by Milner and Milner (1973) regarding 'players' of the 'pimp game'; and by Sutter , both for 'players' in the world of the 'righteous dope fiend' (Sutter 1966) and for players of 'the cold game' (Sutter 1972).

A more recent example is provided by Bourgois (1989), in his discussion of crack use and dealing in Spanish Harlem, New York. Although he takes pains to connect his cultural analysis to material conditions, his (1989:9) conclusion is similar to that found in the studies cited above:

the underground economy and the violence emerging out of it are not propelled by an irrational cultural logic distinct from that of mainstream USA. On the contrary, street participants are frantically pursuing the "American dream". The assertions of the culture of poverty theorists that the poor have been badly socialized and do not share mainstream values is wrong. On the contrary, ambitious, energetic, inner city youths are attracted into the underground economy in order to try frantically to get their piece of the pie as fast as possible. They often even follow the traditional US model for upward mobility to the letter by becoming aggressive private entrepreneurs. They are the ultimate rugged individualists braving an unpredictable frontier where fortune, fame and destruction are all just around the corner.

While, in his relatively short article, Bourgois does not specifically mention the multiple presentation of self or the notion of play, he does discuss the way in which crack dealers must project an image of ruthlessness to their employees, lest the employees attempt to rip them off. He cites a case where one crack dealer, working for another, was forced to flee after pocketing the receipts from a night's crack sales. Presumably there is an analysis of self waiting.16
Imbued with the spirit of Merton’s (1957) ‘relative deprivation’, the latter set of studies portrays drug users as granting validity to mainstream American ideas about status, conspicuous consumption and material gain, while responding to these ideas with specific cultural forms for attaining these goals or, in the more common case of failure, for denying their validity. In other words, members of both the ‘mainstream’ and the ‘deviant’ group are cut from the same cloth. They live in much the same world of symbols and meanings and share a similar set of interests in the universe around them (Erikson 1966:20).

Unlike the Players with whom I moved, the men (and sometimes women) in these studies (whether they be cats, fantasy-game players, clubmen, ghetto dwellers, pimps, righteous dope fiends or crack dealers) are segregated from the economic and social mainstream. However, there are also several crucial points of similarity between them. There is the segregation of work/leisure with play being confined to the leisure sphere. There is an ethos of strategic interaction and an associated emphasis on self-presentation in social transactions. And there is a dialogue between the mainstream moral system, which is granted primacy, and the shared understandings of members of ‘deviant’ groups (which may or may not constitute an alternative moral community, depending on the degree of cultural elaboration). Generically, ‘players’ in the ethnographic literature do not create their own moral community but work to make meaning within the confines of another.

Returning to the Players with whom I moved, a person’s participation in the Player scene can be conceptualized as the transitional path from novice to Player. The Players’ path lies in acquiring the necessary instrumental knowledge of strategies for the successful conduct of drug use and in accepting the initiation of injecting. It also means adopting an ontology of strategic interaction and developing the necessary skills to present the multiple selves appropriate to social transactions in segregated networks. In the next two chapters, I explore in more detail the Player path and the personalized ways in which Players travel along it.
Notes


2 The personal names used throughout this thesis are pseudonyms. I have also altered minor details in the description of events. In doing so, I have attempted to preserve the ethnographic integrity of the described action.

3 Put simply, the harm minimization paradigm (also known as the 'harm reduction' paradigm) recognizes the universality of drug use. Instead of seeking to eradicate it from society, a goal considered unrealistic, its proponents argue for measures designed to minimize drug-related harm rather than drug use per se. Debate continues about the relationship between the overall level of drug use and drug-related harm. Australia's National Campaign Against Drug Abuse has specifically adopted a harm minimization approach (Department of Community Services and Health 1989:25-26).

4 Cf. Berreman (1962), who gives an account of the ways in which his fieldwork was characterized by secrecy and concealment.

5 Tapes were transcribed by secretarial staff of the National Centre for Research into the Prevention of Drug Abuse and the Addiction Studies Unit, Curtin University of Technology.

6 In Western Australia, secondary school comprises five years of education: Years 8 to 12.

7 At the time of my research with Players, Hepatitis C had not been publicly identified as a health issue in relation to needle-sharing and unsafe sex and therefore did not feature in Player representations of risk.

8 For a more detailed account of some of the ways in which Players seek to reduce the risks associated with their drug use, see Moore (1993b). For other discussions of the social regulation of drug use, see Blackwell (1983), Maloff et al (1979) and Weil (1972).

9 Sometimes, a 'quarter-ounce' means eight grams because dealers occasionally throw in an extra gram free.

10 Sometimes, dealers let slip information relating to their dealing activities. I deal with this aspect of the control of information in my discussion of 'deep play' (Chapter 5).

11 Matza (1969) also discusses 'becoming deviant' in terms of 'conversion', but it is not clear from his discussion whether he, in fact, means 'conversion' or 'alternation'.
Harrison (1993) provides an interesting case of alternation amongst the Avatip of Melanesia. Through transformative ritual practice, Avatip men acquire the necessary attributes of self and person to enable them to kill. Once violent episodes are over, usually raids on other villages, men go through the ritual to place them back within the Avatip moral order. Whilst between the rituals the men step outside the moral order, or cease to use it as a communicative style, their violent actions do not render this order obsolete nor do they invalidate its status as the primary universe of discourse.

Caillois (1962), building on the work of Huizinga, discerns four themes in play, all of which are relevant to my discussion: competition (Fr. *agon*), chance (*alea*), simulation (*mimicry*) and vertigo (*ilinx*). For Caillois, however, play is not something which comes out of the segregation of work and leisure and he applies the concept to a range of non-industrial societies.

See also Manning’s discussion of play in Manning (1983a, 1983b).

Manning goes into greater detail about the relationship between Protestantism and the lodges, and between the clubmen and the lodges, but a review of these findings is not necessary for my more general purposes here.

A later work by Bourgois, entitled *In Search of Respect: Crack Dealing in the Barrio* (Cambridge University Press), had not been published at the time of writing. For additional works that deal with the relationship between North American mainstream values and drug use, see the second edition of Campbell’s (1991) *Girls in the Gang* and Williams (1989).

There are also studies of players and games in contexts not characterized by the segregation of work/leisure and where play, as defined by Huizinga, is most certainly absent. Bailey (1977) writes of players, motivational discourse and self-presentation in the formal bureaucracies of academia. The phrase ‘playing the [power] game’ also appears in the literature on business management (e.g. Griffin 1991, Mazzei 1984). Economists have also been interested in the study of games (e.g. Goetz and Tulloch 1974).
Late on Friday afternoons had become a regular time of the week for a number of Players to meet and inject speed. For some Players, these meetings heralded the start of the weekend, customarily a time of greater drug use than during the working week. For others, they were a way of coping with the physical and emotional experience of ‘coming down’ from drugs used the previous evening, a way of regaining energy for a Friday night to be spent in nightclubs.

On one such Friday afternoon, I drove to the house shared by Lisa and Michael. Lisa was waiting for Michael to arrive home with some speed. He duly arrived and informed her, to her annoyance, that the speed had been hidden in the house all the time. Lisa had her ‘taste’ (injection) as did Michael. Vinnie also arrived and had his taste. The three of them then decided they would recoup some of the costs on the quarter-ounce of speed they had purchased together. Lisa rang Jamie, a workmate, and he agreed to buy a gram. She and Michael then taxed the speed by removing a small amount, presuming that Jamie would be unable to spot the difference.

Some time later, Jamie arrived. He entered the house and exchanged pleasantries with us for a while before going into the kitchen to inject his speed. Lisa had already gone out into the back garden to sit in the late-afternoon sun. Michael then joined her, sitting on the back step smoking a cigarette. Vinnie had gone to the toilet, which left me alone in the lounge. After his injection, Jamie re-entered the lounge rubbing his inner elbow. He asked me: ‘Do you play with these [needles and syringes]?’ I replied that I did not. He smiled and the two of us joined Michael and Lisa in the back garden for what Vinnie later called ‘speed talk’ – a form of sociable conversation often engaged in after consuming speed. During the course of their conversation, they meandered from one topic to the next, covering their respective work situations, their plans for the evening, the relative quality of the speed they had just injected, their plans for the future and the current and recent relationships of friends. Later, Michael, Vinnie and Jamie discussed the possible purchase of a second quarter-ounce of speed some time in the next few days. Jamie, in agreeing to go in on the deal, said ‘I’ll play’.
In this chapter, I begin to examine the Player path as a path characterized by the insincere presentation of multiple selves. I begin my exploration by examining what it means when someone says, 'I'll play', and, in particular, I endeavour to make sense of a transition crucial to an understanding of the Player scene: that from novice drug user to competent Player. Following Finestone (1957), I portray the Player as a social type. I ground my treatment of the Player path in the presentation of two case studies. In the first, that concerning the young man I have called Vinnie, I show how persons may choose to increase their involvement in 'the game'. My concern is with the processes underlying the transition from novice to Player through the acquisition of knowledge and skills relating to the purchase, sale and use of drugs, the initiation into injecting drugs, and the link between acquiring such knowledge and skills and the making of claims to personal power and prestige. Paradoxically, the further one progresses in the game, the smaller the audience and the more closely guarded the information. Consequently, while one's prestige grows, the audience for whom this prestige has meaning shrinks.

Not all those who enter the Player scene make the transition from novice to Player, either out of choice or because they lack the necessary personal qualities to become a Player. They represent an alternative set of ways along the Player path. In the second case study, I show how Laura, despite moving in the same circles of the Player scene as Vinnie, chose not to play the game. While her interpretation of events focused on choice, other Players considered that she was not 'street-wise' enough to manage the game and, in their eyes, had therefore failed.

**Playing the game**

An ethos which permeates and characterizes almost every aspect of social relations amongst Players, and in particular those relating to the purchasing of drugs, is that of 'playing the game'. Playing the game has many of the qualities of Goffman's (1970:100-101) 'strategic interaction', the conditions for which are as follows:

Two or more parties must find themselves in a well-structured situation of mutual impingement where each party must make a move and where every possible move carries fateful implications for all the parties. In this situation, each player must influence his own decision by his knowing that the other players are likely to try to dope out his decision in advance, and may even appreciate that he knows this is likely. Courses of action or moves will then be made in the light of one's thoughts about the others' thoughts about oneself. An exchange of moves made on the basis of this kind of orientation to self and others can be called strategic interaction.
Most importantly, and a point I shall return to later, Goffman (1970:99) sees the assessment of persons as the ‘very nub of gaming’.

By virtue of their membership of the Player scene, all Players are exposed to the game, whether they are aware of it or not. Even newcomers who have yet to learn about the game are subject to its principles every time they seek to obtain drugs. Being a knowledgeable member of the Player scene means coming to understand the game, irrespective of one’s attitude towards it.

Playing the game refers to the competitive art of successfully conducting drug-related affairs with greater skill and a greater ability to manipulate outcomes than one’s drug-using consociates. At its broadest level, merely entering this particular drug scene as an active Player is to signal one’s intention to play the game. At a more specific level, playing the game finds expression in the practices of taxing and cutting drugs and in the careful control of information deemed to be important. Being a successful Player means having access to a reliable dealer, preferably one unknown to those persons with whom one customarily uses drugs, being skilled in drug-related negotiations, possessing considerable drug-related knowledge and skills (i.e. concerning intravenous injection), being able to ‘handle’ (cope with) the effects of drugs and, perhaps most importantly, being able to guard against the more blatant forms of being ‘ripped off’. It also means learning to segregate one’s drug-related relationships and networks from those involving non-users, learning to present different selves appropriate to the social transactions at hand and being prepared temporarily to step outside the boundaries of what is perceived to be the Straight moral community.

Securing the best drug deal is highly prized, particularly so if it means demonstrating greater knowledge and ability than one’s game-playing associates. It demonstrates that a Player is in control of the surrounding circumstances and thus reflects the cultural emphasis on personal autonomy and power amongst Players. Ripping people off is a way of ‘putting one over them’, of demonstrating that one is more knowledgeable and can play the game better than those taken in by subterfuge. Although it is practised often, outwitting newcomers to the Player scene proves a dubious challenge to those who take the game seriously. Pitching one’s wits against more experienced Players in the scene proves most tempting and, if successful, brings the most reward in terms of prestige. Amongst those who pursue the game enthusiastically, there is a competitive (and shifting) hierarchy based on one’s ability to play the game.
Playing the game also requires participating in the circulation of ‘recipes’ (Schutz and Luckmann 1974). This information constitutes a modus operandi of drug use – a charter for the basics of a lifestyle. It provides a cognitive map of an ever-changing and potentially hostile urban environment (cf. Hannerz 1967). Without such information, the novice drug user would remain just that – a neophyte. He or she would be without the basic orienting information which makes drug use possible. Because of its generalized nature, recipe information usually circulates freely amongst the Players – it is scene information – and may be exchanged on a daily basis in the form of everyday general conversations about drug-related activities. When it begins to focus more particularly on these matters in relation to specific persons and their drug-using regimes, however, it may also become part of the game.

Scene information generally relates to issues arising out of the nature of one’s drug use. One of the largest categories of such information is that relating to the police: news of recent ‘busts’, which nightclubs are likely to contain drug squad undercover personnel, what strategies one should adopt if arrested and charged, how to detect if one is being followed, the best places for concealing drugs and other matters relating to evasion of the law. A related category of knowledge concerns the dissemination of techniques for avoiding the discovery of one’s drug use by non-using friends and family. Other knowledge within this discourse relates to issues concerning the purchase of drugs: where to get the best quality drugs, the market price for particular drugs, how good is a particular batch of drugs, whether there is likely to be future shortages in the supply of particular drugs and other information relating to the availability of drugs and their purchase.

Other scene information exchanged amongst Players centres on the preparation of drugs, particularly (but not solely) in the case of injecting. To inject, a Player must know the basics: how much water is required to ‘bring down’ (dissolve) a particular drug prior to injection, what equipment one requires for injection, where to obtain needles and syringes and which pharmacies are to be avoided because of staff hostility to requests for injecting equipment. Information also circulates regarding tips on injection procedure (e.g. which vein to use), and measures designed to reduce injection-related problems specifically and drug-related problems generally.

Knowledge of how to cope with the drug experience often comes from trial-and-error and from observing more experienced drug users. But there is also information spread about these aspects, in the manner described by Becker (1953): how long the effects of a particular drug are likely to last, what the possible negative side-effects might be,
what sorts of sensory effects one might expect, how to conceal the more obvious effects if in a public place, how one drug differs from another and the relative merits of different types of the same drug. For example, some trips are considered to be very 'trippy' and 'visual', some are considered to be very 'speedy'; some Eckie is described as being 'very down' and is thought to be manufactured using either smack or a synthetic opiate, some is described as 'rushy'.

Blumstein (1991:306) has noted that a dramaturgical approach to social life, as is the case for Players, does not require that there be any private commitment on the part of the actor and the audience, that the self presented in social transactions is a valid reflection of the 'true self'. Thus, a central aspect of the game is the assessment of persons, and one way of arriving at such assessments is through discussions of persons and their acts. Garfinkel (1956) argues that statements about the acts performed by persons are statements about 'performative type', whereas statements about the persons engaged in the acts are statements about 'motivational type'. While both types of commentary exist amongst Players, the emphasis is on the latter. The statements are about people's essence, their being, their 'true' intentions and their 'real selves'. Motivational discourse is prevalent amongst Players because making judgements about people, and listening to the judgements of others, allows decisions to be made about their likely course of action in particular situations (cf. Mills 1940, Burke 1945).

Players frequently make comments concerning persons. For example, Vinnie once described a female friend as a 'party girl' who would always 'hang around till all the drugs are finished'. In his words, she was 'out for what she can get'. Michael once said that 'everybody wants something' in talking with me about social life in general. Lisa felt that a male friend she had not seen for some time only rang her when he was 'after drugs'. When he learned that she was using only occasionally and had limited access to drugs, he ceased calling.

Associated with the game, therefore, is an ontology of strategic interaction which focuses on maximizing self-interest, manipulating other people and asserting personal autonomy. Vinnie attempted to spell out what this ontology involves. He said, in discussing various friends and associates, that some of them are unable to 'step back and see things from the other side and work out what the other person's angle might be'. Thus, for Vinnie, possessing the ability to step into the shoes of others in order to understand 'where they were coming from' is vital in understanding how to 'play' people. Once this process is understood, and one has 'worked someone out',

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predictions can be made about his or her likely responses to specific situations and information. More importantly, one can seek to control them. Such an ontological position is consistent with a world-view shaped by personal action, in which all matters are seen to grow out of the motivations of particular persons.

While the game applies principally to drug use, there is another dimension to it – that applying to everyday interpersonal dealings. Those who particularly enjoy playing the game tend also to employ similar strategies in social interactions that are not related to drug use. Such interpersonal game-playing is essentially about seeking to control persons and events, particularly through the manipulation of emotions. It takes the following forms: making arrangements and then not turning up, creating friction between persons through the disclosure (or invention) of potentially embarrassing facts, seeking to control conversations by gaining support for particular interpretations of past events or analyses of persons, planting rumours about the private affairs of various persons in order to damage their reputation in some way, competing with others for the attention of a prospective sexual partner and employing deceit and subterfuge in order to win such attention (the male version of this game is called 'the snake game' by two of its keenest Players), and being generally obstructive or uninterested in activities proposed by other Players.

The two levels of the game are related and in many specific instances inform each other. However, most Players make a distinction between, on the one hand, playing the game with respect to purchasing drugs, which they accept as part and parcel of an illegal activity and something which cannot be avoided, and, on the other hand, playing the game with respect to interpersonal relations. These latter games are viewed with much less acceptance by some Players and may lead to disruptions in the relations between persons or cliques. When Players criticize a person for 'playing fucking games' or 'fucking around with people's lives', they are generally referring to game-playing of the interpersonal kind rather than that associated specifically with drug use.

Vinnie: from novice to Player

Vinnie is twenty-three years old, works in an office and has been in Perth for about six years. He has smoked marijuana on a handful of occasions and drinks alcohol and smokes tobacco heavily, particularly when socializing. He began his chemical drug use with Eckie, which he had heard about from acquaintances who frequented the same leisure venues as he did. Deciding to try Eckie for himself, he gained a single
tablet through a friend. He enjoyed the experience and, after occasionally swallowing Eckie for about a year (perhaps once every month or two), he decided to try speed. He began to snort speed and continued to do so for about six months. During this phase, he remained relatively open about his drug experimentation with close friends (but not with family or work colleagues). It was during this period that I met him.

Vinnie then moved into a house in an inner-city suburb with Lisa and Laura. For Vinnie, the move was only the most recent in a long line of residential shifts. The move reflected his growing association with Lisa, who had been using and injecting drugs for about two years, and several of her drug-using friends and associates, including MC, Mark, Michael, Jane and a number of others. His involvement in drug use and associated social scenes was on the increase.

He continued his practice of snorting speed for the first month or so of the new tenancy. He then decided to try 'blatting' (injecting) speed, having heard from Lisa and some of her friends (such as MC, Michael and Mark— all injectors of drugs) that the rush was far more intense using this method and that it lacked the perceived side-effects of snorting (the unpleasant taste, occasional bloody nose, and coughing and spluttering). In contrast to the perceived Straight normative view, this quasi-group of Players considered injecting to be the best way to consume drugs and held a low opinion of those who continued to snort or swallow speed. Vinnie expressed a desire to experience what the group of injectors had spoken of, to see what he was 'missing out on', and said that he felt 'left out'. Thus, Vinnie tried injecting for the first time. (Michael actually performed the injection.) He likened the effect to 'parachute silk slowly falling onto my head and then gradually closing over my body'. However, he claimed not to enjoy the experience (it seemed 'dark' and 'dangerous') and said he would not inject again. He reverted to snorting speed because he preferred the gradual onset of intoxication. A few weeks went by before he changed his mind and chose to be injected again. The second time was perceived to be more pleasant. (Lisa performed the injection on this occasion.) After the second injection, the frequency of his injecting climbed (others were still injecting him), somewhat unevenly, over the next two months. Interestingly, he also re-defined snorting as an extremely unpleasant activity.

With the initiation into injecting, he began to pay closer attention to the segregation of his networks. He became increasingly reluctant to tell non-using friends of his drug use and, in particular, drew a veil of silence over his injecting. He also became increasingly aware of the need to present different selves to different audiences consisting of drug users and non-users.
The next step for Vinnie was to inject himself. On first beginning to inject, he had said to me that being unable to inject himself was a good way of restricting the situations in which he could use drugs. However, other intravenous drug users had begun to suggest that he did not have the intestinal fortitude to self-inject. Because his veins were not readily visible, even after the application of a tourniquet, Vinnie was also recognized by other injectors as ‘hard to do’ (i.e. hard to inject) and he often bruised badly as a result of ‘misses’. On several occasions, people had also expressed reluctance to continue injecting him because of the risks inherent in such a practice. They felt that if there were any injecting mishaps, they would feel responsible and that, because of the potential danger of injecting, Vinnie ought to take responsibility for his own drug use and learn to self-inject. Consequently, Vinnie felt he would be regarded as an outsider so long as he was dependent on others to inject him. He decided that he would attempt self-injection and did so one night. He specifically claimed that one of the reasons for self-injecting was MC’s taunts that ‘if you need someone to do you, give me a call’. Once he had injected himself, he began to do so occasionally, but generally preferred to ask others to inject him. This practice was not unusual and many other injectors also alternated between self-injecting and having others inject them.

Several weeks after the episode of self-injection, Vinnie was scheduled to take two weeks’ holiday leave. His intravenous use of speed increased dramatically prior to this leave, culminating in a week of daily ‘blats’ in the seven days preceding the holiday period. At this point, he sometimes self-injected. More often, because of the bruising that he often experienced as a result of self-injecting, he asked others to inject him. During the holiday he used speed consecutively for a further fourteen days. During the twenty-one days, the daily drug use routine for Vinnie (and Lisa, who was also using more speed) was as follows (cf. Sterk-Elifson and Elifson’s [1993] description of the crack-cocaine cycle in a ‘base house’). He would rise late in the morning and, if he had some speed left from the night before, have his first taste of the day. He would then go shopping, do the laundry or other various household jobs, visit friends or watch videos. If there was no speed available he would organize to get some more. Often a visitor would call (e.g. MC, Mark, Jane, Stephen, Natasha or Michael) and another taste would be arranged. Later in the day, dinner might be organized if no speed had been obtained (if he managed to secure a taste, the resulting decreased appetite usually meant skipping dinner). Later in the evening, another taste would be organized and he would then go out until the early hours of the morning, drinking heavily. He would then come home, rest fitfully for a few hours (if at all) and then repeat the process.
At the beginning of the holiday leave, Vinnie bought eight grams of speed for $500 which was supposed to see him through this period. More was purchased as his and Lisa’s drug use increased and the original purchase was exhausted. Because Lisa often injected Vinnie (he christened her ‘Doc’), he would give her a taste in return for the injecting service. This usually translated into going ‘halves on a G’ (a gram) of speed, although the amounts they used increased as their physical tolerance to the drug grew (cf. Murphy and Waldorf’s [1991] discussion of ‘street docs’ in relation to Californian ‘shooting galleries’).

Vinnie’s increasing education in the game (under the tutelage of Lisa and others) found expression in his ripping-off of newcomers to the Player scene, just as he himself had been ripped off earlier in his drug-using career. Because he, or Lisa, had access to a dealer, novices who knew of his speed use (but not of his injecting) might ask him to get them some speed. Both Vinnie and Lisa knew that the novice was: (1) not particularly experienced in speed use, (2) usually a non-injector (it is easier to discern if speed has been cut when injecting) and (3) if female, most likely to swallow speed with some milk or orange juice to mask the bitter, chemical taste. Thus, taxing or cutting the speed (say, with crushed sugar) would not be noticed.

The novice might request a third of a gram. Vinnie or Lisa would obtain the gram and divide the speed before the novice arrived at the house. They would take more than a third each and then hand over the reduced amount, reasoning that the novice would either not know how much speed was in the bag or, if he or she did, would be in no position to protest. Alternatively, they would cut the speed so that the amount in the bag at least appeared correct. In this way, Vinnie and Lisa would receive more speed than the share for which they had paid.

During this period, Vinnie also managed to secure a second, high-quality quarter-ounce of speed, bought in partnership with Mary. He kept this second purchase secret in order to prevent demands on it from others – in his words, ‘it was too good to share’ – and because another drug user, Glenn, was performing the injecting service for him without expecting payment in speed. Thus, he no longer needed to rely on Lisa for injection.

Despite Glenn’s free performance of this service, Vinnie was happy to rip him off too. One Friday evening, Vinnie and Lisa obtained a gram of speed. Glenn, who was an experienced speed user and who had shared a house with Lisa in the past, phoned and said he was looking to obtain speed. Did Vinnie have any? Vinnie said he had just
obtained some and he and Lisa were in the process of ‘mixing up’ (preparing the speed for injection). Glenn asked for a ‘third’ (of a gram) and they agreed on a price. As Glenn had no ‘pick’ (needle and syringe), he asked Vinnie to mix his share of the speed and load it into a syringe ready for injection. They agreed to meet later that evening at a designated place in the city. After hanging up the phone, Vinnie and Lisa proceeded to redistribute the speed so that Glenn received slightly less than his agreed share.

In the last few days of his vacation, Vinnie decreased his speed use gradually in preparation for the imminent return to work. The incidence of speed use during the following few weeks was comparatively moderate, with only a few instances of consumption. Both Lisa and Vinnie complained of ‘coming down like bags of shit’ (very violently) during this period. Their withdrawal from the effects of speed included bouts of depression, extreme agitation, mood swings, lethargy, irritability and paranoia.

During the fifteen months following this episode, during which I continued to move with the Players, Vinnie continued to use speed, the frequency of his use being shaped by a number of factors: disposable funds, the availability of speed and the extent of his socializing. Occasionally, and sometimes frequently, he went through short binges (1-3 days, usually beginning on a Thursday evening and continuing through until Sunday morning) of heavier use which he described as ‘making a piggy of myself’ (i.e. using, in a day or two, speed which he had bought to last him for a week). Rather than buy grams of speed, as he had done before the holiday period, he usually purchased speed in quarter-ounces in partnership with friends. He also discovered another source of high-quality speed through a workmate, and so others who had access only to unreliable dealers or those who dealt only in poor-quality speed became more reliant on him. This placed him in a position where he was able to tax speed before passing it on to them and generally to be in a position of greater control.

Vinnie’s confidence also grew in regard to his self-injecting. Although he still asked others to inject him, he had managed to acquire a basic competence in self-injecting and for a period almost always injected himself, although usually with misses and the accompanying bruising. He was by no means as skilled as some fellow injectors. This was partially excused as he was generally regarded as difficult to inject by even the most skilled and experienced injectors, who had missed on numerous occasions when injecting him.
Vinnie’s discussions of the words and deeds of others also began to focus more often on their motivations. He had realized that the game required astute assessment of other persons in order to predict their likely responses to particular situations (cf. Damrell 1978:192). He participated keenly in discussions between Players concerning other persons with whom they frequently interacted, seeking information which might prove useful to him at some later stage. In conversations with him about recent events, he would explicitly set out what he saw to be the strategic ploys of other Players, why he thought they had embarked on particular courses of action and what he thought the outcomes might be. He also felt that some other Players had underestimated his ability to play the game, based on their own assessments of his motivations, and he enjoyed acquiring the skills with which to deceive them.

By now, Vinnie’s game-playing knowledge and skills had increased greatly. He began to extend these skills into the realm of interpersonal relations, seeking to gain and then control access to privileged information about non-drug related matters (such as sexual relationships). He began to renege on arrangements he had made with friends, and generally became more aloof from and arrogant towards them. His independence in matters relating to drug use were translated into the personal realm. When I commented to Lisa that Vinnie seemed to have learned to play the game well, she replied (half-jokingly), ‘No he hasn’t. He’s just become an arsehole’, and, more seriously, that he had become ‘just like MC [a noted Player at the interpersonal level] used to be’.

To summarize, then, Vinnie had moved into the Player scene as, inevitably, a novice. He had customarily bought drugs, usually speed, from Mark and MC or from those who bought from these two dealers. Usually, he arranged purchases through Lisa, sometimes sharing the cost of purchase with her and Laura. However, he became more selective and less trusting as his knowledge and experience of drug use grew, and he started injecting, thus providing a surer way of detecting the relative strengths of, and adulterants in, different batches of speed. He realized that he was being ripped off by Lisa, Mark and MC at various times. Even though he was able to acquire speed sporadically from other sources, he inevitably had to revert to the supply from MC, Mark or Lisa. Coincidentally, he discovered that a workmate also used speed and was able to gain an introduction to the workmate’s dealer, a sporting associate. This meant he was able to buy speed independently of the manipulation of his regular set of associates, from someone he felt he could trust and who appeared to be relatively honest in his dealing practices. It also meant Vinnie could act as mediator in any transactions between his drug-using consociates and this dealer.
In addition to learning the behavioural aspects of the game, Vinnie also learnt the culture of playing. He began to segregate his networks, first on the basis of drug and non-drug relationships and, later, when he began to deal in drugs occasionally, on the basis of those who knew of his dealing and those who did not. He began to discuss persons in terms of their motivations rather than being content to evaluate their actions. This latter development was a direct result of greater participation in the strategic interaction of the game and the need to assess persons in a way deemed to be more accurate.

As the quasi-group of Players with whom Vinnie customarily associated gradually dispersed, with interstate departures and other changes in the life circumstances of its members, Vinnie found himself in the reversed position in relation to Lisa, Michael and a number of other Players. Previously, he had been reliant on them for access to speed. But their dealers invariably produced poor-quality speed and were often unavailable and unreliable. Vinnie now had access to a steady supply of high-quality speed and others were more reliant on him for their supply. The wheel had spun full circle. Apart from his inability to commit himself fully to self-injecting on a regular basis, Vinnie had proven himself to be a successful Player of the game and he relished his new-found position of power.

Laura: rejecting the game

At the time I first met Laura – one Sunday afternoon in mid-1990 when she had an exceedingly painful hangover, courtesy of copious amounts of alcohol drunk the previous night – she had not used any chemical drugs. She had, however, smoked dope heavily when younger. Laura, twenty-one years old and employed in the retail trade, was a close schoolfriend of Lisa who had lived in Sydney for a couple of years. Their friendship was based on trust and it predated Lisa’s involvement with chemical drugs (they had smoked dope together in their late teens). After her return to Perth, on her first visit to the house Lisa shared with Mark and Brendan, Laura was shocked to witness Lisa injecting herself with speed four times in two hours. Laura thought the idea of injecting revolting and, at this point in time, expressed no desire to experiment with any drugs, despite the urgings of Lisa to try Eckie. Lisa thought Eckie would be ‘Laura’s kind of drug’.

Despite her initial misgivings about Lisa’s drug use, Laura renewed her previously close friendship with her and it seemed a logical extension to take a rental lease together. As Vinnie was also looking for a new place to live, he became the third
housemate. In the first few months of the tenancy, Laura chose not to experiment with chemical drugs despite having ample opportunity to witness the drug-related affairs of Lisa and Vinnie.

However, several months into the tenancy, Laura began to revise her previously negative opinion about speed for two reasons. Observing the use of speed by Lisa, Vinnie and other visitors to the house had made her curious about its effects. In addition, she had taken a second job in a nightclub to help save money for a planned holiday in another state and she reasoned that the stimulant would better enable her to meet the demands of two jobs. Vinnie and Lisa claimed there was a third reason to which Laura never alluded – the perceived ability to shed weight when using speed. Laura began to use speed sparingly, usually only on weekends. She would swallow it (usually a sixth or a quarter of a gram) wrapped in a piece of tissue or tobacco-rolling paper, washing it down with a glass of water. She disliked the idea of snorting even though she had never tried this method and refused, point-blank, to try injecting.

Despite her move to speed use, Laura did not become anywhere near as involved in drug-related affairs as Vinnie and Lisa, being content to purchase her quarter or perhaps half-gram of speed towards the end of each week to get her through the weekend. To differing degrees, Vinnie and Lisa had enjoyed negotiating drug deals, contributing to the flow of scene information by being able to converse knowledgeably about injecting and other aspects of drug use, providing advice to other, less knowledgeable drug users, and conversing about recent events as a result of their greater participation in drug use. By contrast, Laura remained mostly marginal to such discussions. This was partly due to her not being an injector, therefore possessing little knowledge about this method of drug use. It was also partly due to the fact that she deemed drug use to hold little intrinsic value. In addition, she often criticized Vinnie and Lisa, both for their heavy drug use and for their game-playing with those they claimed to be their friends.

The frequency and quantity of Laura’s speed use remained low prior to and during the first part of Vinnie’s holiday period. She then left the house to stay with a friend. The move was necessary because of her difficult interaction with Vinnie, as well as her desire to divorce herself from an increasingly heavy drug-using context. Initially, the move was intended to be temporary. She had grown intolerant of the coming down periods that Vinnie and Lisa often experienced as a result of heavy speed use. Her relationship with Lisa, previously one of trust, had foundered on the rock of Lisa’s spiralling drug use and associated game-playing. The resulting tension, emotional
outbursts and, at times, fierce arguments between visitors and residents alike, as well as the game-playing milieu which came to characterize the house, proved too much for her. She did not return.

Laura’s speed consumption declined after leaving the house, then ceased altogether as she lost her night job and could therefore see little point in continuing to use speed. Her speed use had been primarily instrumental in that she had used it to enable her to meet the demands of two jobs. On the few occasions she had used speed exclusively for leisure purposes, she complained of acute paranoia: ‘I feel like everyone’s watching me’.

Personal ways along the Player path

In the careers of Vinnie and Laura, we see two possible, and very different, personal ways along the Player path. One possible interpretation of Vinnie’s drug-using career, and his move to injecting and the heavier drug use of the holiday period, is to see it in terms of the ‘impaired control’ taken to be a hallmark of ‘drug dependence’ as defined by Edwards and Gross (1976). In this view, Vinnie’s game-playing might be seen as essential for him to ensure a steady supply of speed. But examining the development of his drug use, particularly the pivotal holiday period, in a more anthropological light reveals some interesting points about the nature of increased involvement in the game.

One important point in his transition from novice to Player was the initial increase in his speed use during the holiday period. Being on holiday meant that he was fully removed from one of his major non-drug responsibilities – work – and the behavioural constraints that this entailed. This was a ‘time-out’ period (MacAndrew and Edgerton 1970) from which Vinnie knew he would have to emerge after the three weeks and, in this sense, the three weeks were a rigidly demarcated time. Thus, to speak of ‘impaired control’ in this situation is misleading because he declared the entire period to be one of time-out from control. It makes more sense to cast his behaviour in terms of ‘controlled impairment’. He chose, through this first period of heavy speed use, to establish himself at the centre of drug-related activity in a social scene in which self-injecting and heavy drug use were valued activities. He was prepared to put his finances and his body on the line, to be temporarily out of control, in his quest to be a part of the Player scene.
Secondly, prior to the holiday period Vinnie had been a peripheral member of one quasi-group of Players. The dramatic escalation in his intravenous drug use represented two things. It was an attempt to gain membership of a quasi-group whose members were leading a lifestyle he considered attractive. This was confirmed by Michael who told me that Vinnie was using drugs heavily, and injecting, because he wanted to be 'part of the group', that is, he wanted to be a Player. He added that without intravenous drug use Vinnie would have little in common with the others.

Once his membership was granted, Vinnie attempted to increase the validity of his claims to be a Player of note within the hierarchy of the group. By establishing access to several dealers, and segregating these network links from those he had established with drug-using consociates, he gained more control over his own drug supply as well as achieving a degree of control over that of some of his drug-using consociates, particularly those new to the Player scene. His greater knowledge of drug-related affairs meant he was less easily ripped off (although this still occurred). It also signalled to some of his consociates that he was willing to compete with them in playing the game.

His desire to claim to be a Player is further evidenced in his overt attempts to reinforce his relationship with Michael, a central Player in the drug-using group of which Vinnie was a member. Vinnie often stated that he wanted to 'get to know Michael better' and displayed obvious pleasure when invited to use drugs with Michael or to socialize with him. He voiced jealousy at MC's close friendship with Michael and appeared to want to usurp this 'best-friend' position. He eventually succeeded when MC left Perth.

The central transformative point in Vinnie's career, however, is the initiation into injecting (cf. Feldman 1977). I use the term 'initiation' in the sense defined by Allen (1967:7):

By initiation ritual I refer to all those rites in which the initiants are incorporated into, and acquire the various statuses, rights and privileges vested in, a discrete group of individuals who co-operate in certain activities, share common property and are conscious of their existence as an organized body. Both the rites and the group itself are characterized by a degree of secrecy.

I add two further criteria to Allen's definition: (1) that there be work upon the body (in this case, injecting) and (2) that, in addition to secrecy surrounding the rites and the group, there be a degree of mystification regarding precisely what it is that initiants
are being initiated into. The act of injecting marks the transformative point at which Players signal their rejection of mainstream morality. They step into a play world which, ultimately, is framed by, and made meaningful in dialogue with, the mainstream moral community.

Vinnie's gradual acquisition of Player identity was signalled by his change in attitude to self-injecting. Initially, he felt neither confident nor skilful enough to inject himself regularly and voiced no wish to become more adept, seeing his inability to self-inject as a means of limiting the range of situations in which he could consume drugs. Instead, Lisa, or one of the other injectors with whom he associated, injected for him. As the dependent period approached, he revised his feelings about this inability to inject himself, viewing it as a drawback and a barrier to claiming the identity of 'TV user'; this inability set him apart from the others. At a more pragmatic level, he construed paying others to inject him as a drain on his resources. He tried to self-inject, succeeding (just) on two occasions, but could not manage fully to control the 'shakes' he experienced as the needle tip entered his arm. Despite his inability fully to master the task of self-injecting, indulging in a period of such heavy use went part of the way towards gaining the social identity of one who 'uses needles'. Later, he was more successful in his attempts to self-inject.

Vinnie's desire to prove himself competent in the game was also a response to the jibes of several of his drug-using consociates, particularly MC, who had cast doubts on his commitment to drug use and his maturity. For Vinnie, the holiday period and his subsequent game-playing, particularly his improved assessment of situations and people, proved that he could handle the heavy use of speed as well as his consociates, especially MC himself, that he could self-inject competently (if not expertly), and that he could conduct himself skilfully in the drug-buying transactions central to the game. Vinnie had initially bought most of his speed through MC, often complaining of being ripped off by him, and gained an inordinate amount of satisfaction from securing access to another dealer through a workmate (in his words, 'I'll show MC I don't need him'). This meant that he was able to supply Lisa and Michael with better-quality speed than MC could deliver.

Although Vinnie's gradual learning of the game took place over a year or more, his representations of the holiday period were crucial to his evolving claims to have mastered the game. In telling the stories of that time to those fellow Players also involved, many months on, he displays a certain ambivalence. On the one hand, he recognizes that this was a 'problem' period in regard to his drug use – one in which he
reached his lowest depths, his most degraded, his ‘vaguest’ (the loss of concentration resulting from heavy speed use), the point at which he was most likely to share a needle (although he claims that he did not). On the other hand, his stories depict what for him was also a golden era, the point where he had been most central to this particular drug scene, had really been part of the injecting set with whom he moved. He talks about it and his eyes glow and his voice rises excitedly and he shakes his head at the thought of it all. It was a time of him being a ‘junkie’, his description of himself during this period, or the nearest thing to this attractive yet feared label. This period became the benchmark by which he measured the rest of his drug use career; part of his memories which speak to the issue of who he is now through what he was then (cf. Moore 1994b:119-133, Sansom 1980:137-140). It is through these stories that Vinnie lays claim to being a Player.

In contrast to Vinnie’s wholesale embrace of the game, Laura’s response was to reject it even before she had grasped its intricacies. She had, however, seen enough through witnessing the game-playing activities of Vinnie, Lisa and a number of their playing consociates to know that it was not for her. She was never as fully a part of the drug-using scene as Vinnie or Lisa, and had resolutely maintained strong non-drug relationships (work, family, friends drawn from outside the Player scene) during the course of the tenancy. Unlike Vinnie she also (usually) took a genuine interest in the visitors to the house, aside from the area of drug use. She preferred to inquire after partners, recent events or work rather than ask about drug use. She evinced only occasional interest in such stock game questions as: What drugs are available? How much are they? When are they available?

In talking to Laura about her view of the style of the house during the heavy-using period, she felt that very few people visited the house purely because they were friends. Rather, they came to sell or buy drugs, to use drugs, to talk about drugs, to indulge in attempts to control one another’s actions (she went so far as to label one frequent visitor, ‘Mr Control’), in short, to play the game. She said that, with a few exceptions, everyone who visited ‘wanted something’. The visitors came to gain access to some item or activity and not to engage in the kind of social interaction she equated with sincere friendship.

Unlike Vinnie, who viewed drug use as his way to acceptance, power and prestige, for Laura drug use was only one aspect of her lifestyle and social identity, and a marginal one at that. In her self-presentation, Laura would not allow herself to be cowed by the usually derisive and antagonistic conversational style which often occurred in the
normal course of social interaction. She also refused to participate in the ongoing intrigues of information control relating to drug use and, as a result, would sometimes unwittingly disclose secrets (although she was happy to keep up with the latest information about, say, relationships between lovers). She also tended to take people at face value, not subscribing to the ontology of strategic interaction which informed both the game and the presentation of multiple selves.

Not surprisingly, both Vinnie and Lisa held an alternative view. They held that Laura was not ‘street-wise’ enough to live the lifestyle, redefining her refusal to play the game as a personal failure rather than as a rejection of the cultural and social scene of which they were a part. Finally, Laura chose, as a result of the increase in drug use and her dissatisfaction with her relationship with Vinnie, to leave this environment, only occasionally re-visiting with her disapproving boyfriend. To my knowledge, she has not used speed since.

For Vinnie, the holiday period in the house represented a movement from periphery to centre. For Laura it was, to use an appropriate term, a taste of something she wanted no part of. Others moving in the Player scene either followed one of these two ways along the Player path or fell somewhere in between. For example, one experienced Player, Rick, brought to his drug-related transactions an appreciation of the game in order that he might avoid being ripped off by others. In his interpersonal dealings, however, he evinced an easygoing, sincere, personable manner, seemingly happy to talk to anyone he came across. Others in the Player scene would, on occasions, play vigorously, especially if they were dealing with people they did not know very well or did not like. In their dealings with friends they might be more charitable.

The analytical point about the Player path is this: when moving in the Player scene, Players are constrained by a set of beliefs and practices – segregating different types of networks, presenting multiple selves and entering into an ongoing dialogue with mainstream morality. They must choose either to stay on the path, as Vinnie did, or, as in the case of Laura, to leave the Player scene. This fit between a person’s actions, once on the path, and the more general social and cultural practices of the Player scene conforms to Burke’s (1945:3) ‘scene-act ratio’:

Using “scene” in the sense of setting, or background, and “act” in the sense of action, one could say that “the scene contains the act.” And using “agents” in the sense of actors, or acters, one could say that “the scene contains the agents”.
The Player scene contains both Vinnie, the agent, and his actions (and makes them meaningful), once he elects to move along the Player path. So long as Vinnie chooses to remain on the Player path, and to move in the Player scene, he is constrained to play the game. Mills (1940) made much the same point when he argued that specific social contexts have their own appropriate ‘vocabularies of motive’ (i.e. the scene contains the act).

Becoming a Player

Vinnie and Laura were not alone in learning about the game through experience. At one time or another, MC, Mark, Lisa, Michael, Jane, Mary and a number of other Players, consociates of Vinnie and/or Laura, were the victims or perpetrators of hustles and rip-offs resulting from playing the game. In relation to learning through drug experience, Becker (1953) has written of the three stages involved in becoming a marijuana user: (1) learning the technique, (2) learning to perceive the effects and (3) learning to enjoy the effects. While Becker was most concerned with the experience of marijuana smoking and intoxication, his model of stages in the process of learning can be applied profitably to Vinnie’s career and to becoming a Player more generally.

There are four general stages through which Vinnie passed: (1) beginning to use drugs in a particular social scene which brought him into contact with Players, (2) learning that the game existed through participation in a casual or experimental phase of drug use but as yet unable to play, (3) learning the various strategies to play the game successfully with respect to drug use and (4) enjoying the game and applying its principles to interpersonal relations not necessarily involving drugs. To lay claim to be a Player, one must reach at least the third phase and begin successfully to employ game-like strategies in respect of drug use.

The would-be Player must also submit to the initiation of injecting which transforms persons. Injecting drugs signals one’s preparedness to play by rejecting Straight morality while simultaneously relying on this rejected morality to create and negotiate meaning. The initiated become privy, through allowing stigmatized work upon their bodies, to a clandestine world which exists side-by-side with, but is segregated from, the mainstream. Some Players, like Vinnie, not content with restricting their game to drug-related matters, move to the fourth phase and import these strategies into their interpersonal interactions.
Once a Player reaches the fourth stage, there seems to be a split between those who are content to use or deal in drugs at low to moderate levels (i.e. selling the odd gram or two to friends), and those who wish to increase their participation in the dealing side of the market. Although there are no specific emic labels for this distinction, it exists. Vinnie himself faced this decision. Briefly, he moved with a number of people he claimed were implicated more seriously in dealing, although he never learned the full extent of their criminal involvement. He quickly decided, however, that he wanted no part of this scene. In his words, they played 'big boys' games with big boys' rules'.

Despite the endemic nature of the game theme, the occasional arguments when rip-offs are discovered and the personal enmity generated by malicious or hurtful gossip, for the most part Players continue to socialize together, at least in the short term. Partly, continuing associations are instrumental – moving in the drug market as either a dealer or buyer requires contacts. Over time, Players leave the scene for a number of reasons – leaving Perth, meeting a new partner who is not a drug user and who disapproves of drug use, tiring of the constant games. From time to time, playing the game gets out of hand and truces must be declared between feuding Players. And some Players are openly critical of the game (or even deny its existence) but continue to play it themselves. If we think of the game as a cultural strategy rather than as an entity residing in particular persons, then this confusion recedes. Playing the game refers to a known style of interaction which is employed in particular situations, relating either to drugs or to interpersonal relations or to both. Some people play the game most of the time, others play it only in particular situations, some dislike it, some are happy to play the drug-related aspect of the game but feel less comfortable about the interpersonal version.

I now turn to the second element present in the excerpt with which I opened this chapter – the more sociable forms of interaction between Players. Playing the game and sociability seem odd partners. In this section I look at what happens when the practices and principles of the game are not the sole shapers of interaction.
Sociability and the game

Simmel (1950:45) defines the characteristics of sociability in the following way:

sociability has no objective purpose, no content, no extrinsic results, it entirely depends on the personalities among whom it occurs. Its aim is nothing but the success of the sociable moment and, at most, a memory of it. Hence the conditions and results of the process of sociability are exclusively the persons who find themselves at a social gathering. Its character is determined by such personal qualities as amiability, refinement, cordiality, and many other sources of attraction. But precisely because everything depends on their personalities, the participants are not permitted to stress them too conspicuously. Where specific interests (in cooperation or collision) determine the social form, it is these interests that prevent the individual from presenting his peculiarity and uniqueness in too unlimited and independent a manner. Where there are no such interests, their function must be taken over by other conditions. In sociability, these derive from the mere form of the gathering. Without the reduction of personal poignancy and autonomy brought about by this form, the gathering itself would not be possible. *Tact*, therefore, is here of such a peculiar significance: where no external or immediate egoistic interests direct the self-regulation of individuals in his personal relations with others, it is tact that fulfills this regulatory function. Perhaps its most essential task is to draw the limits, which result from the claims of others, of the individual's impulses, ego-stresses, and intellectual and material desires.

Simmel drew attention to sociability as interaction of and for itself, having no extraneous motivation and entirely dependent on the actions of those participating in it. It is interaction in which questions of prestige are absent and in which each participating person contributes to the outcome through a particular type of self-presentation.

On some occasions, the ethos of playing the game appears to be transcended for a few hours or a night as several Players organize themselves into an action-set to pursue interaction that possesses many of the characteristics of Simmel's sociability. Often, this type of interaction occurs after, and is facilitated by, the use of drugs. Questions of maximizing one's own interests, either as a drug dealer or buyer, are, at least for these moments, less relevant. Instead, the participating Players work to make these occasions enjoyable and relatively free of money, prestige or other outside considerations.
Taking drugs and attending nightclubs is a key sociable activity for Players. One Friday night, MC, Vinnie, Jane, Sue, Mark, Sharon, Jimmy (Sharon’s boyfriend) and I arranged to meet at a nightclub, the Rio. MC had bought several Eckie tablets from a friend and had sold them to the other Players for $45 each. Vinnie, Jimmy and Sharon took their tablets at Jimmy’s house before driving to the club about 11.30 p.m. Jane and Sue dropped their tablets in the car driving to the Rio. MC prepared himself for the night by blatting an Eckie tablet and then dropping a second one shortly before leaving his girlfriend’s house, about half-an-hour later. Another friend, Mark, having arrived home from a holiday only days before, arrived at Rio unaware that the others would be Ecking.

Sharon, Jimmy, Vinnie and I were inside the Rio by 11.45 p.m. We bought drinks and stood watching the dance floor. The club was doing a reasonable trade and was filling fast. We spied Jane and Sue and joined them. Shortly afterwards, MC arrived, greeting Jimmy by hugging him from behind. After releasing Jimmy he turned to Sharon, ‘So what do you think of clubbing?’ (it was her first visit to this particular club). She smiled back and mouthed ‘Good!’ He turned away dancing on the spot, smiling, watching the lights, perhaps also feeling a little proprietorial over this group for whom he had guaranteed an enjoyable evening. Jane and Sue decided to dance while the others ordered more drinks. The growing, sweating, enthusiastic, dancing crowd, the kaleidoscope of lights, the dance music and the euphoric effect of the Eckie combined to create (what was later described to me as) a soaring, ‘peaking’ sensation (the point at which the effect of the drug is strongest).

For perhaps half-an-hour, the group stood basking in the Eckie’s glow. Sharon had become very ‘touchy’ (seeking physical contact), giving Vinnie and MC hugs. She also kept close to Jimmy, fondling his arm. MC, Jane and Sue all peeled off into the crowd at different points and Mark appeared, then promptly disappeared. The others did not return. Jimmy saw Jane briefly later in the evening and gave her a hug. MC left to visit the nightclub where his girlfriend was working. I was left with Sharon, Jimmy and Vinnie. The Eckie was at its peak now. Jimmy was having difficulty concentrating on anything for very long, his focus constantly switching from one light or person to another. Vinnie was also struggling to cope with the sensory stimulus – he said that it was ‘becoming a bit too much’. Sharon’s peak had passed some time ago and she tried to talk to Jimmy. He answered but could not hold her gaze, preferring to keep his eyes roaming the club. Sharon said later she thought she might have felt a bit scared at Jimmy’s behaviour had she not been feeling so pleasant herself.
After another ten minutes or so, Vinnie said he could no longer bear the intensity of the experience. Jimmy told him to leave and not spoil it for him. Jimmy said he wanted ‘more of everything’ – the lights, music, the feeling. Vinnie left the Rio to ride out the remainder of the effect in a nightclub which was less ‘full-on’. He left us watching the dancing crowd.

Jimmy, Sharon and I joined Vinnie about 4a.m. in the nightclub to which he had escaped. All three claimed that the euphoric effect had worn off now, to be replaced by a general feeling of well-being. Jimmy and Sharon stood at the bar, ordered drinks and listened to the music. Lisa, who worked at this second club, smiled at them, knowing how they felt. Vinnie was also feeling extremely relaxed, chatting to some female friends he knew. Around 5a.m., Vinnie gave Jimmy and Sharon a lift home and then returned to the club, remaining until closing to give Lisa a lift home (to the house they shared with Laura at the time) and to take advantage of any free drinks which might be offered by the club manager at the end of the night. He then offered me a lift home, which I gratefully accepted. It was just after 6a.m.

On the Rio night, several Players came together to use Eckie and go clubbing. Observing them on the night, and speaking about it with them later, the Players present generally agreed that this particular night was ‘good’. For a few hours, several Players had concentrated on the matter at hand, creating an enjoyable group feeling and attempting to enjoy the sociable ambience of this particular nightclub. There had been physical contact in the form of hugging, a collective sense of ‘the group’ and a willingness to put aside any tensions which may have existed between specific persons over recent events.

To see social encounters involving Players, such as the night at the Rio, as being shaped by either the game or sociability is, however, simplistic. The relationship between sociability and the game is more complex than this interpretation would allow. Some Players make efforts to create spaces in which sociability may flourish. Yet they are often fragile and inherently unstable creations. In a social scene dominated by playing the game, rarely are game-like considerations rendered completely irrelevant to interactions involving Players, and sociable situations are often precariously maintained or are disrupted by changes in the interactional frame (Goffman 1974) from sociable to game-like. Situations of sociability may be either undermined by the pursuit of the game or incorporated into the strategic interaction that lies at its centre. More specifically, I want to argue that there is a dialogic relationship between the game and sociability.
Most, if not all, Players enjoy various forms of sociable interaction – taking drugs, patronizing nightclubs, attending parties, drinking heavily, experimenting sexually, in other words, partying – as well as more sedate forms such as watching videos together or just spending leisure time in one another’s company (perhaps even discussing personal feelings about relationships). Yet they differ in regard to the perspectives they bring to such sociability, depending on the degree to which they embrace the game.

Invoking the four phases of becoming a Player, those new to the Player scene who have yet to discover the existence of the game (phase one), and those who have just begun to realize that such a game exists but have yet to learn its rules (phase two), enter into sociability without much regard for game-like considerations. For them, an activity such as partying is an end in itself, yielding its own hedonistic rewards. Likewise, those who have learned the game but whose game-playing is restricted to negotiations and other matters regarding drug use (phase three), that is, those whose game-playing is not a feature of their non-drug-related interpersonal dealings, enter into the spirit of sociability in appropriate circumstances, such as visiting a nightclub or attending a party.

For those who bring the game to their interpersonal relationships, however, occasions of sociability mean something quite different. The words of one young woman, Tracey, are apposite here. Tracey was reflecting on the changes amongst the Players she knew best since the departure from the scene of one prominent Player, MC, several months before: ‘everything’s quietened down since he left’. She lamented the fact that in the last few months before dropping out of the scene, he had been spreading malicious rumours about friends and associates, and attempting to manipulate different people. In other words, he had been playing the game at both the interpersonal and drug levels. But at the same time, even though his actions had often impacted negatively on people, she felt that they also gave the several sets of Players of which he was a part a sense of cohesion. He had kept the sets together as a quasi-group through his close contact with a number of people, partly to ensure a steady supply of information so as to better manipulate people and partly because he was dealing drugs to quite a few of them. In all of this, Tracey said he had been ‘charming’ and ‘fun’, a charismatic figure, a sentiment echoed in the description of this man by other Players.
Tracey’s interpretation contains several important points relating to the interplay between the game and sociability, which I explore in no particular order. Firstly, she refers to the sociology of the Player scene. As I detailed in Chapter 3, this scene is characterized by small clusters of persons linked together by bridging weak ties. The composition of the clusters changes rapidly as friends fall out of favour and action-sets are comprised of others. People move into other clusters for a short time before perhaps moving back to the original one. Action-sets formed over, say, a six-month period may be composed of quite different personnel, not just in the sense of new personnel coming in from outside, but different re-combinations of those already in the quasi-group.

In addition, many of the relationships among members of the Player scene revolve around drug use. Hence, the frequency of contact between persons is related to the frequency of drug use. When drug use declines, the tempo of association falls. Conversely, when drug use increases, as it did during Vinnie’s heavy using period, the tempo of association increases. When people stop using drugs, or start to use drugs with other sets of people, their involvement in the particular scene with which I was familiar may cease altogether or at least fall off dramatically. To be sure, more intimate bonds develop between particular persons, either as lovers or as friends who hit it off due to factors other than drug use, say, compatible personal styles or because they work in related employment. Such close and sincere friendships develop over time, are characterized by differing degrees of trust, and may eventually lead to the disclosure of personal and intimate information. Yet in a scene characterized by superficiality, in which relationships are often based on drug use, there are few incentives to be open about one’s private thoughts and emotions. Consequently, there are few opportunities to create and sustain moments of true sociability.

Secondly, Tracey alludes to the instrumental aspects of having widespread contacts – to keep abreast of the latest developments in relationships between lovers and between friends, the drug-using regimens of friends and associates, and the state of relationships vis-a-vis other Players and what they might be saying about particular persons. Played this way, the game requires the Player to create situations of sociability in which other parties to the encounter may, because of the relaxed atmosphere, disclose intimate personal information either about themselves or about others in the quasi-group. If the other parties are novices, they may easily be led into divulging such information. On the other hand, if the interactants are also competent Players, then a round of verbal sparring may ensue in which all Players are aware of the unspoken strategic premises underlying the conversation.
As I outlined earlier, such information may become part of a Player's strategic interaction. It may be disclosed at some future point with the express purpose of embarrassing the subject and to let him or her know that the discloser has better access to information than the subject. Or the Player may, in seeking to gain some control over the subject, hint that he or she will divulge the information more publicly or pass it on to someone else who might be hurt or who, alternatively, might be in a position to make even better use of it. Because dealing and buying transactions in an illicit market are not formally regulated, keeping track of persons' activities and gaining access to their biographies is one way of keeping one's finger on the scenic pulse.

Thirdly, Tracey points to aspects of MC's self-presentation as a Player: his 'charm' and the sense of 'fun' he managed to create for those socializing with him. One way of understanding such self-presentation is provided by revisiting Finestone's (1957) discussion of the cat. According to Finestone, the cat keeps the hustle and the kick separate, although the hustle is required to fund the kick. Amongst Players, the hustle component refers not so much to various ways of generating income (although for those who engage periodically in drug dealing, there are small amounts of profit to be made or at least money to offset the cost of one's own drug use), as was the case for the cat, but to playing the game. The Players' kick is the actual experience of drug use (as well as sexual experimentation and drinking). The difference between some Players and the cat (apart from those attributable to ethnicity and historical time) is that for these Players, the hustle becomes the kick. Drug use, sex and drinking all become seconded to the game. But because overtly introducing the manipulation and deceit of the drug-related game into the interpersonal arena constantly undermines the establishment and maintenance of sociability, the skilled Player must disguise such strategies if sociability is to yield any ammunition for the game. To do this successfully, Players must be able to market their sociable selves to an unsuspecting audience.

The ability to be charming and fun becomes doubly important when one's biography becomes known. A Player can rip off novices for only so long before some of them begin to get wise to his or her strategies, as did Vinnie. The known Player can then seek new novices naive to the game and/or rely on personal charisma to placate those who have been taken in. Both strategies are central to the game. The former involves segregating networks to make it more difficult for newcomers to the Player scene to gain information about the Player's past practices. The latter involves working to improve one's skills in the presentation of multiple selves.
A fourth important point relates closely to (in fact, encapsulates) the second and third. As I noted earlier, Goffman saw the assessment of persons as the nub of gaming. If sociability is an instrumental tool for the purposes of the game, with its accompanying self-presentation and carefully orchestrated mood for the encouragement of unwitting disclosure, it is also a context in which consociates may be assessed for their trustworthiness, discretion, knowledge of drug use and self-presentation skills. What is more, in sociable encounters involving drug use, people can be assessed in states of intoxication which are perceived by Players to produce disinhibition. They are thought more likely to be their ‘real selves’ under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. People are thought to come ‘unstuck’ during intoxication, that is, their social masks slip. Of course, as one plays the game longer, Players also recognize that learning to handle the effects of drugs means that, even in these intoxicated states, one’s demeanour and conversation can be carefully monitored in the presentation of oneself.

Fifthly, being a Player means claiming this identity through the telling of stories, as Vinnie did regarding his holiday period of heavy drug use, and employing certain types of deceptive strategies with regard to information. Claiming Player identity and employing strategies of deception render it impossible to sustain one of Simmel’s central conditions for sociability – to agree collectively to withdraw discussion of prestige and any other extraneously motivated topics. While occasions in which several Players may sit around talking about the past can be thought of as sociable in relation to the game, they are riven with outside considerations.

My penultimate point about the relationship between the game and sociability is brought out by comparing the Players with the social scene portrayed in Polsky’s (1971) study of poolrooms and ‘hustlers’. He draws a distinction between the men who frequent such poolrooms for sociability (to play one of the various games, e.g. pool, billiards, to meet with other men, to ‘escape’ female interaction) and the ‘hustlers’ – those who view the poolroom as places in which to earn an income. Just as hustlers require a context of sociability in order to mask the plying of their dramatic trade, so too do Players. We can also take the comparison a little further. Hustlers need ‘sociable men’ who are naive in such matters if they are to be successful. If they become known as hustlers they must move to another poolroom or play only strangers who wander into the room. Similarly, although some Players might enjoy competing with other competent Players in the game, they also require naive novices around them in order to develop and hone their playing skills and to ensure an unsuspecting audience.
Finally, situations of sociability amongst Players (or those approximating Simmel’s definition) are constantly threatened by the intrusion of non-users. Such intrusions are less likely when Players use drugs in the context of private homes. They are also less likely to occur in those public places in which Players feel that they will not meet non-using friends or these places are made up of other drug-using patrons (and therefore Players will not particularly stand out). But experiencing the effects of drugs in public places deemed to be Straight means attention to the management of such effects, lest they give the game away to non-users. Having to monitor carefully one’s performance in social transactions with non-users is not conducive to establishing the conditions for sociability.

Conclusion

The description and analysis I have rendered so far leads to the conclusion that Players do not seek to create a sense of community that transcends persons and action-sets. They do not work to establish a sense of belonging (Cohen 1982). And herein lies the paradox I noted, but did not explore, earlier in this chapter. A Player chooses to become more deeply involved in the game. As a result, the risks associated with drug use magnify (particularly with the move to dealing, however low-level) and the material rewards seem slight considering the increased risk (and are likely to be ploughed back into further and heavier drug use). Furthermore, the audience that may bestow the social identity of Player becomes smaller. The paradox is: Why play at all when so few are in a position to appreciate one’s playing? In the next chapter I seek to explain this apparent anomaly.

Notes


2 Handelman (1990:70-71), writing more generally of ‘play’ and ‘games’, has argued that a ‘game’ is a ‘distinctly moral medium’. However, in the case of the Players, this does not translate into the construction of a moral community because the game is not the sole shaper of interaction. I address the contested nature of value in the Player scene later in this chapter and in Chapter 5.
I have dealt with some of this material and its implications for the concept of 'drug dependence' elsewhere (Moore 1992c).

I examine the ambivalence towards heavy drug use and the 'junkie' label in Chapter 5.

The movement into more serious criminality may be conceptualized as a fifth phase in playing the game but, as I have no data on this type of involvement, I have not dealt with it.
In Chapter 4, I began to outline the game and how, in the transition from novice drug user to Player, one learns to play it. In this chapter, I continue my treatment of the Player path by showing how becoming a Player means accepting what Players perceive to be the Straight normative view of drug use, particularly injecting drugs, as a ‘discrediting’ (Goffman 1963) and ‘high-risk’ activity. As a consequence, Players adopt a particular view of drug use and a style of information management, based on the tension between secrecy and disclosure, which I characterize as ‘deep play’ (Geertz 1972). On the basis of such deep play, Players claim social identity.

The risks of drug use

To be a Player is to take risks. Following Douglas (1986), I discuss ‘risk’ as an emic concept developed in the context of a specific social and cultural setting rather than as the abstract (and logical, rational) concept so beloved of economists, behavioural scientists and philosophers. For Players, risks can be categorized as legal, physiological, psychological, financial and moral. First of all, Players risk legal sanctions. The possession, sale, supply, manufacture or cultivation of drugs such as cannabis, amphetamine, Ecstasy and LSD is illegal in Western Australia. For Players, illegality is important because of their frequent interaction with non-users. Players move in social contexts in which drug use is frowned upon, whether because of the fact of illegality or because of stereotypical views about the dangers of drugs. Their decision to use drugs is fraught with danger. If the fact of their use were to become widely known, criminal sanctions could result. A criminal conviction may, in turn, result in the loss of employment and/or ostracism by non-using friends and/or family. For those periodically engaged in dealing in drugs, these risks are magnified. Dealing carries with it the possibility of increased police surveillance of Players and, if they are caught and convicted, more severe penalties.
Players also point to the risk of adverse psychological and physiological consequences as a result of their use of drugs. Such consequences differ from drug to drug and also depend on how, and with what frequency, a drug is used. There may be problems with the drug itself – drugs produced in illegal laboratories are always adulterated in some way and are further cut as they move down the distribution pyramid. There is the (albeit low) risk of idiosyncratic physical reactions to drugs. Some drugs apparently carry a higher potential for the development of psychiatric conditions. Constant heavy speed use, for example, has been linked to the onset of psychosis, a point recognized by Players.

Using needles and syringes is also seen as a potentially dangerous activity. Injecting drugs carries with it all of the above risks plus those associated with the intrusive procedure of injecting: such as 'dirty tastes' or infections from non-sterile equipment, the risk of HIV/AIDS transmission from the sharing of injecting equipment, and overdose. In addition to the health risks of injecting, Players see injecting drugs as indicative of greater commitment to a drug-using lifestyle. Those who inject often seem to increase their use of drugs, beginning to use larger amounts as their tolerance to drug effects builds and they redefine injecting drugs as a seductive activity. If their use increases dramatically, they are sometimes forced to begin dealing in drugs to offset the higher costs of increased use.

Players are also aware of the financial risks of drug use. In addition to legal sanctions, purchasing drugs in an illicit market (i.e. one without formal regulation) is fraught with danger. Drugs in general, and speed in particular, are sometimes of lesser standard than claimed by dealers. They may have been taxed (in the case of Eckie tablets or capsules, trip tiles or speed powder) or cut (in the case of speed powder or Eckie capsules). For dealers, selling drugs 'on credit' may lead to the accumulation of bad debts, the recovery of which is unlikely.

There are also moral risks. Players argue that, while the use of marijuana is unlikely to evoke much moral outrage on the part of Straights, the use of manufactured drugs such as hammer, speed and trips remains stigmatized by those with whom they customarily interact and, by extension, the Australian community at large. Moreover, if the mere use of drugs such as speed, trips and hammer is, in the eyes of Players, a stigmatized activity, they reason that the act of injecting drugs draws even more condemnation from, and instils even more fear in, Straights. So far as Players are concerned, the act of injecting a drug into one's vein remains inextricably linked in Straight perceptions to ideas about addiction personified by the 'junkie'. According to Players, public perceptions of 'junkies' associate them with loneliness, vagrancy, poverty, disease and crime fuelled by the desperate search for drugs.3
In Players’ eyes, then, choosing to use drugs, to inject drugs and to deal in drugs means risking a ‘spoiled identity’ (Goffman 1963). Goffman defines ‘spoiled identity’ or ‘stigma’ as a special form of discrepancy between one’s ‘virtual social identity’ – what others take the person to be – and one’s ‘actual social identity’ – what the person can be proved to be. Goffman distinguishes two types of stigmatized person: the ‘discredited’ and the ‘discreditable’. For the former, the stigma is evident; for the latter, it is not.

A second relevant point in Goffman’s treatment of stigma is that some groups of stigmatized persons may hold ambivalent views about their stigma. He argues that the stigmatized person has internalized the standards and norms of the mainstream society with regard to the stigma (in this case, drug use) but has ‘failed’ to live up to them. Thus, the ambivalence of stigmatized persons centres around simultaneously accepting and rejecting mainstream values regarding their stigma, rather than constructing an alternative moral community in which the power of the stigma to spoil identity is rendered impotent. I discuss two Player discourses that are based on such ambivalence: that between alternating views of drugs as ‘fun’ and drugs as ‘danger’, and that between alternating views of injecting drugs as the pinnacle of competence and injecting drugs as evidence of ‘junkie’ identity.

For Players, the view of drugs they perceive to be normative is sometimes subverted; drugs are deemed to be enjoyable substances taken in the pursuit of ‘fun’. Eckie is often represented as an enhancer of sexual pleasure, speed as a provider of more stamina for dancing at nightclubs and more confidence when interacting with friends, and trips as producers of certain types of humorous intoxicated action (e.g. powerful visual effects or looking ‘out-of-it’ [intoxicated] in a public place). These aspects of drug use are celebrated in stories of past ‘big nights’ – nights on which unusually large amounts of drugs (both licit and illicit) are consumed, particularly funny or intense drug-related events occur or unusual activities are pursued while ‘tripping’ at someone’s home. In these representations of drug use, drugs are represented as chemical passports to humorous and pleasurable experiences.

At times, the representations of Players also mirror those they attribute to Straights. Drugs are held to be inherently dangerous substances. Given the right circumstances, drugs are considered capable of causing certain types of behaviour: in the case of speed – violence, ‘addiction’ and ‘speed psychosis’; in the case of trips – the cognitive disruption which is ‘losing it’ or ‘freaking out’. The use of Eckie is thought to release sexual inhibitions. Male Players tell two types of stories which are offered as proof of
this 'fact'. The first involves descriptions of incidents in which a person has taken Eckie (or, less often, speed) and has become almost immediately sexually excited. Women are thought to be particularly susceptible to this aphrodisiac effect. The second type of male story features instances where (again usually) women are told that they are about to use drugs and that, as a result, they will become sexually excited. According to these stories, following ingestion of what is supposedly a mixture of perhaps Eckie, coke and speed (but what may actually have been speed mixed with sugar), these women do indeed become sexually excited. To become sexually aroused is therefore partly 'excused' by being 'on' Eckie, in much the same way as alcohol is used to excuse certain actions. As the stories I heard were nearly always told by men about women, there also appears to be a degree of sexual exploitation, both in the actions described in the stories and in the stories themselves. There may, of course, have been similar stories about men told by women to which I, as a man, was not privy.

The act of injecting drugs is also viewed ambivalently by Players. Players sometimes invert what they hold to be the Straight normative view of injecting drugs and represent the injecting drug experience as the pinnacle of one's drug-using competence. The intoxication resulting from injecting is represented by Players as a higher-quality, more intense assault on the senses than that derived from snorting or swallowing drugs. Such intense intoxication requires management if it is not to affect one's perceived ability to handle drugs. With regard to injecting Eckie, the resulting euphoric rush is described in glowing terms, even though this rush is also thought to wear off more quickly than the less-intense version produced by swallowing the drug. Injecting trips, despite being widely regarded as foolhardy and only for the experienced tripper, is said to put the user immediately into an enjoyable state of sensory disorientation. The tripping experience begins at once rather than gradually 'coming on' (i.e. beginning to take effect) over an hour or so (as is the case with swallowing), and is thought to be more intense. The stimulant effects of speed, when injected, are described as overpowering – the heart races, the breath heaves and the blood pressure rises.

Players also represent injecting as the purest expression of one's flagrant disregard for perceived Straight morals regarding drug use. There is a degree of admiration for those who participate successfully in what is seen as an attractive, subterranean lifestyle. To inject is to violate strong mainstream social taboos and claim membership of a world of esoteric knowledge and risk. This desire to be associated with such a risky lifestyle is borne out by the fact that some injecting Players, at various times and
in the apparent absence of problematic drug use, willingly describe themselves as ‘junkies’ and some feel that the mere act of blatting, regardless of frequency, is sufficient to qualify one as a ‘junkie’.

Player representations, however, also uphold the Straight normative view. Because the effects of injecting drugs are perceived to be so intensely pleasurable, injecting becomes an activity that one must also be wary of lest its attractions become too great. One can become a ‘junkie’ with attendant financial, physical, psychological and social problems. According to Players, once a person has tried injecting drugs, there is no reverting to other and milder modes of consumption. The injector has always to deal with the ever-present knowledge that a short, quick procedure, capable of being easily performed, can produce momentous effects. The seductive side of drugs requires constant vigilance. Players generally view becoming a junkie with some trepidation, equating this ambiguous identity with uncontrolled drug use. They endorse Straight normative ideas about ‘addicts’ as out-of-control, pitiful creatures. In the context of these representations, to label a fellow Player a ‘junkie’ is a term of abuse and a judgement of incompetence in managing one’s drug use. The junkie has laid claim to personal transformation through the act of injecting.

The source of ambivalence lies in the fact that Players do not belong to a coherent social scene whose members work to create a sense of moral community and a set of common values which legitimate the use of drugs. Players do not look to fellow Players for a ready-made set of assumptions regarding their moral worth. There is little in the way of a coherent Player critique of the Straight normative view and no attempt to establish and codify an alternative set of Player meanings. Instead, Players make differing claims about what drug use is ‘really like’. Yet Players, as novices, have to defy the perceived Straight view in order to engage in drug use in the first place. Thus, using drugs places Players into an ongoing moral dialogue with the mainstream from which they are drawn. Drug use is ‘deviant’ and something to be feared. This very ‘badness’ makes it attractive. As a consequence of moving in social scenes in which drug use is frowned upon, such use becomes activity segregated from one’s ‘normal’ life. Drug use is a risky game to be played on the side.

**Drug use as deep play**

Players are concerned to reduce the risks associated with their drug use and they often discuss strategies to minimize drug-related harm. Being admitted to a treatment facility for a drug-related problem, being arrested in connection with drug use,
contracting an infectious disease, losing one's job as a result of the use of drugs or being unmasked as a drug user by family and/or close friends may all lead to a spoiled identity. Players minimize (though certainly do not eliminate) the chances of labelling through acquiring the esoteric knowledge and skills necessary to play the game. They learn how to inject in a manner considered to be hygienic, they learn how to conceal the more obvious effects of drugs when in public places and they learn to obtain drugs in ways that minimize the chances of arrest and deception. They do all this in awareness of the psychological risks of using drugs at high levels. They are also careful to limit revelations about their drug use through the control of information, the segregation of networks and the presentation of non-using false selves.

Sometimes, however, Players talk down the efficacy of the skills and knowledge they have created and developed to minimize drug-related harm. They emphasize the riskiness of drug use. They represent injecting drugs as both a 'dangerous' and stigmatizing activity. In their words, 'It doesn't matter how good you are and how much you know, when you stick a needle in your arm you don't knows what's in it', and, 'Each time [of injecting] could be your last'. I provide three brief, typical representations concerning this view of using drugs.

MC once spoke of the thrill of walking past police officers with his pockets laden with drugs and greeting them in a friendly manner, whilst knowing that a search by them would bring certain arrest and imprisonment. Another Player, Jane, spoke in positive terms of the segregation of her networks, the presentation of multiple selves and the enjoyment of risking her un-spoiled identity. She talked of the 'thrill' of arriving at the parental home still 'speeding' or 'E'ing' and having to disguise the effects of the drugs from her Straight family and friends and, in particular, from her boyfriend who strongly disapproved of drug use.

A third Player, Wayne, described the thrill of deception and delivered an analysis too. He was describing the activities of a fellow Player. This Player had everything to lose - a great job with a high, steady income and good prospects, caring parents and a close relationship with his brother and sister. Through playing the game, this man had alienated his family and come close to losing his job on several occasions, either because of police interest in his drug-related activities or through discovery of his drug use by work colleagues (including his boss). Wayne confessed that he did not know the full extent of this man's dealing activities. (As I detailed in Chapter 3, those involved in dealing beyond merely lessening the costs of their own consumption sometimes keep their dealing circles segregated from those comprising most of their
fellow users.) Despite this ignorance, Wayne could not really see that the rewards could outweigh the potential losses. He put forward the explanation that it was precisely this gambling with such important personal stakes that made the game so attractive to the man in question. He enjoyed risking it all.

Some Players thus emphasize the high risks and high stakes associated with the use of drugs. Taking the above representations (and countless others) as evidence, I argue that becoming a Player in the game of drug use entails developing a conception of risk similar to Bentham’s notion of ‘deep play’, as described by Geertz (1972). Geertz argues that the illegal Balinese cockfights that he observed are only apparently contests between cocks; actually, they are contests between men (the gamblers, owners and trainers at cockfights are exclusively male). Men bet on the cockfight in two ways: the centre-bet and the side-bet. The centre-bet, typically a large collective one and always even money, is made between the owners and backers of a particular bird and those of its opponent. The side-bets, typically small and involving odds, are made by lone members of the audience. The larger the centre-bet (anything up to 500 ringgits when the average wage for a manual worker is 3 ringgits per day), the more side-betting gets skewed towards short-odds, that is, side-betting moves towards a position of even-betting. This is because the higher the centre-bet, the more evenly matched the cocks are considered to be and, consequently, the more unpredictable and interesting the match is likely to be. The Balinese attempt to create the most interesting matches by making the centre-bets as high as possible.

Geertz suggests that one way of examining the cockfight is to consider it as one instance of Bentham’s ‘deep play’, that is, play in which the stakes are so high that to engage in it at all seems irrational. The example he provides for the cockfight is as follows: if a man’s personal fortune is 1000 ringgits and he wagers 500 of it on a cockfight in which the two cocks are evenly matched, the marginal utility of the money he stands to win is less than the marginal disutility of that he stands to lose. Thus, the question Geertz sets himself to answer is: Why wager such high stakes in contests when the potential rewards are so low?

Geertz argues that the betting money, while not unimportant, is not the main thing at stake in cockfighting. Rather, gamblers wager their personal esteem, honour, dignity and respect on the outcome of fights. The betting is a device for creating interest in such ‘deep matches’ rather than its main stake. The more money one risks in betting, the more one places other things at risk also – one’s pride, poise and masculinity – and the ‘deeper’ the play as the bettors get in over their financial heads. Sociologically, the
Balinese make the cockfight an elaborate representation of tensions established in social life – between various castes, kin-groups and villages. For the Balinese, the higher the stakes, the deeper and therefore more meaningful the match becomes. After all, one’s personal prestige is at stake.

In the following pages, I argue that drug use for the Players can be conceptualized in terms of deep play. However, my use of the term differs from that of Geertz. His deep play is normative and homogeneous – the Balinese he describes all understand what is happening in the cockfight (or at least it appears that they do in his paper). The Player conception of deep play is not normative, a state of affairs that is consistent with the sociology of the Player scene, the tensions inherent in playing the game and the ambivalence regarding drug use as stigma. Rather, it is created and contested in specific social contexts through the claims different Players make about the relative risks of drug use and the size of the stakes being wagered. There are two contexts for these claims and their contestation: conversations between those who play the game at the interpersonal level and those who do not, and conversations amongst Players of the interpersonal game. What lies at the heart of such claims is social identity and prestige.

**Becoming a deep Player**

‘Moral career’ is the term Goffman suggests to conceptualize the learning experiences regarding one’s stigma and the associated changes in self-conception. Goffman outlines four phases: (1) learning and incorporating the standpoint of mainstream society (the ‘normals’ or, in Player parlance, the Straights) regarding specific stigmas, (2) learning that one possesses a stigma and that there are ensuing consequences, (3) learning to ‘pass’, that is, learning to manage potentially damaging information about one’s stigma, and (4) accepting one’s stigma and ‘coming out’ (to use a term specific to one kind of stigma acceptance, that of the gay man or lesbian).

The moral career of a Player passes through a similar series of stages (which correspond roughly with those of becoming a Player as outlined in Chapter 4). As a novice, he or she comes to drug use bearing the fundamental orientation of Straight normative values – drug use is morally dubious – but having escaped such a view sufficiently to want to experiment with drugs. At this stage, there is much ambivalence between the drugs as ‘fun’ and drugs as ‘danger’ themes: drugs are fun because one is being introduced to them by friends who speak of their enjoyable quality, yet drugs are also inherently dangerous and associated with ‘problems’.
In reality, being a novice is perhaps the least risky type of drug involvement. Novices use drugs only occasionally, use small amounts and are involved neither in dealing nor injecting. The risks of being apprehended by police or discovered by family are slight. They may find that the ‘high-risk’ talk of others only serves to render the lifestyle more attractive. Alternatively, novices may question such talk, voicing doubts about the relative risks and even pouring scorn on the dangermongers. They may claim that such an assessment of risk is exaggerated. Paradoxically, it is at this point of inexperience that the drug user is probably at highest risk in terms of being ripped off by dealers or experiencing the acute problems sometimes associated with drug use (such as unpleasant side-effects and not knowing how to cope with them).

Novices continue using drugs and begin to learn, first, that the game exists and, second, how to play it. Drug use escalates as they define it to be an activity worthy of the investment of time and money. At some point during this period, as for Vinnie in Chapter 4, a decision is made to inject, an act viewed as morally transforming both by the first-time injector and by other Players. The risks associated with being ripped off and ‘losing it’ on drugs have declined through the acquisition of game knowledge. If the Player’s drug use continues to increase, so, too, do the odds of discovery by family, friends and employers. What is more, the moral import of discovery has grown considerably with the move to injecting. The risk of spoiled identity is far greater. Similarly, if dealing has become part of one’s game, the risks of drawing police attention have increased along with the legal penalties and moral stigma of being, in the eyes of Straights, a ‘drug pusher’. However, countering these risks, Players have learned various techniques for passing. At this stage the ambivalence remains, although it is an ambivalence built on greater knowledge. Players know and appreciate the greater risks of their drug use but continue to define drug use as a worthwhile pastime.

At some point in a Player’s career, the precise location of which varies, the play begins to be represented as more serious. It may be as one begins to deal in larger amounts of drugs and to take a higher profile in Player circles. It may be at the point where the Player imports playing-the-game-type strategies into non-drug related affairs. It may come as a result of one’s increased drug use – possibly being exposed to others who are defined to be ‘junkies’, in the negative sense. Being both a junkie and a dealer combine the greatest elements of moral stigma and legal risk.
Once Players reach the point of seriousness in their moral career, their attitudes become less flexible. While there are still statements about drug use being ‘fun’, the game has become more an end in itself, no longer merely a means. Playing the game has become all-consuming and there are fewer occasions where sociability is a possibility. The representations associated with this phase are more likely to portray drug use of this heavier, more involved type as extremely risky. Police attention is thought to be higher, the difficulties of managing the physical and psychological consequences of heavy drug use have increased and the game has become more serious and demanding. The representations and actions of this fourth stage a Player reaches are not those of the ‘coming-out’ stage in Goffman’s model of moral careers (i.e. accepting one’s stigma and learning to live with it publicly). They are those of deep play. There are increased rewards to drug use but they are outweighed by the perceived risks to one’s safety and identity. Drug use comes to be defined as a high-stigma, high-risk and low-reward activity.

The following excerpt from an interview I conducted with a male Player illustrates the deep-play view of drug use. My italicized editorial comments either clarify particular points or note the specific risks. Three dots indicate conversational pauses in his monologue, three dots inside square brackets indicate the deletion of a section:

Saturday ... urn ... it was actually the Sunday morning ... it was after the Saturday night ... and I’d been caught with the shit speed, and I was trying to make my money back to cover my arse, so that my normal life would continue [financial risks of dealing].

I was held by someone who is extremely dear to me [his female partner], but whom I’m losing because of drugs ... but whom I’m losing because of the ... constant use of the drugs and so on [risks to relationships]. She held me in her arms and couldn’t say anything, and the thing that upset me so much was that everything I’d seen and everything I’d done was for $100 and for my drugs. That’s all it was for.

And the things I saw that night. I saw people drop to the floor in agony because the things they’d put in their body were hurting so much [physical risks of injecting, risk of dependence]. I saw someone snap a steel tip, a pick, in their arm, and the mad rushes from trying to get it out before it went into the bloodstream, into the heart [... he explains about the type of needle and syringe used which has a detachable needlepoint].

If you whip the needle out of someone’s arm – which is what you do usually ... after he’s trying to pull it out pretty direct and quickly – it can stay. Now, you then have a vein which is technically severed so with each heart beat, which causes compression on the blood, it squirts.
Now, we're talking just after I've grabbed tweezers and retrieved a steel barb out of someone's arm which could have killed them. I've had blood spraying across my cheek and around the room as this guy panicked and spun around until I grabbed him by the back of the elbow and just whipped it out [health risks of injecting].

[...]

Part of the problems I have with the present household, where I should be now professing my undying love, is that they get upset that I can have five times the quantity [of drugs] that they're having, but yet I still turn around and call them "junkies" and give them a hard time, and say, "You're using too much, you're using too much". And their response has been, "But it's not as much as you, it's not as much as you", and I keep saying [pausing for effect], "Yet!" [psychological risks - chiefly the perceived inevitability of escalating and problematic use].

To move in the Player scene thus requires the development of a view of drug use as an inordinately risky business in which the stake is one's identity. Those who do not proceed to this point may still occasionally represent drug use in such risky terms but not with the same frequency – it does not became the root metaphor (Ortner 1973) for their drug use. Despite developing techniques to reduce considerably at least some of the risks of using drugs, and dealing in them, Players represent their lifestyle as if riven with potential danger. In saying this, I do not mean to imply that their view of danger is fantasy. For those whose dealing activities bring them into contact with persons more seriously involved in the distribution side of the drug market, the risk of arrest and financial loss is very real indeed. Those whose drug use has reached high levels and who concede that they have a ‘problem’ find managing such use in the context of work and other Straight relationships difficult. Players represent such things as an integral part of the creation of their social identities.

Claiming deep play and social identity

Another section of the above interview deals not with the risks of drug use but with social identity and person. The Player begins by telling me of a bungled injection by a male injector he had recently witnessed:

It caused a massive mess in him, but otherwise he would have kept dancing around the room panicking. He’s one of those pathetic breed that want the rush and want the good times and want to be part of it [the drug scene], but haven’t got the balls or the skill to be able to be cold ... calmly hold themselves down and inject the drugs that they love into them.
So ... that was the hardest part of the night, when I went into the bathroom and I looked in the mirror I saw me with permanent dark stains around my eyes and a completely ... I couldn’t, no matter what I tried to do, I had a blank expression on my face. I had no expression. I remember standing there and thinking that there wasn’t any life left in my face, that I’d been nullified or drug-fucked so badly that my wit and my personality had just receded into a back part of my mind that used to come out when I was coming down, or when I was going up, and my acerbic wit comes to the fore ... ohhhh ...

And I lay in her arms and cried not for any of them but for me. And I kept saying to myself, “I fucking don’t belong here, I don’t belong here, this isn’t me, I don’t belong sitting in a house with prostitutes, male prostitutes, and people that are rocking in the corner tirelessly, rocking backwards and forwards waiting for the drugs to [inaudible] ... talking about the problems you have with security working in a brothel [inaudible]”.

And I just sat there and was calculating the money I’ve had to make and how much trouble I was in. And you’ve probably heard the expression, “It takes a certain kind of person”, and it really does. It’s very easy, I mean when you’re physically hurting, to inject yourself, because you see it as relieving the pain. It’s like removing a splinter from the middle of the cut. It hurts like hell but you’re relieving the pain. And it’s very easy to inject yourself, we’re not talking the skill part here, that’s still difficult. We’re talking the overcoming the mental barrier of being able to penetrate your body, watch your own blood filter in and keep your hands steady and slowly depress the plunger in and watch your blood seep back into the fluid, and then gently pull more blood out and push it back in so that all the amphetamine or whatever’s in the tip goes into your blood as well. It’s easy to do when you’re relieving pain. If I were a diabetic, I could do it ... It’s a lot harder when you’re in complete control of your senses and you’re looking at a war-torn body and you still can find the spot and just very calmly and very coldly ... and cold is the only way you can do it ... [whispering] bang it up [inject].

The Player quoted explicitly relates deep play to a conceptualization of person. He suggests that ‘it takes a certain kind of person’ not just to engage in the activity of drug use as a Player, but to manage successfully this hazardous lifestyle, with its legal, physical, psychological, social, financial and moral risks. Taken together, these risks add up to the risk to one’s identity. The risks of drug use, and more particularly injecting drug use, while something to be avoided through harm minimization strategies, are, at the same time, one of the central attractions for some Players. They enjoy the potential danger of flirting with discovery by non-users. The danger of discovery makes ‘the drug scene’ that much more attractive.
As I suggested earlier, however, the deep-play view is not normative but contested. Players 'bargain for reality' (Rosen 1978, 1984). Claims to the deep-play view of drug use and the accompanying social identity are contested by counter-claims, for two reasons. Firstly, those in the Player scene are positioned at different phases in the transition from novice to Player and may therefore hold different views regarding the risks of drug use. Secondly, once a Player, claiming higher risks and deep play means claiming not only social identity but additional personal prestige within the category described by that identity.

Claims and counter-claims occur in two main contexts and take the form of stories recounting past events (such as those told by Vinnie in Chapter 4) or statements about persons. Firstly, claims to relative risk occur directly in conversations between Players and novices, or, indirectly, amongst Players when talking about novices and their actions. When Laura, a novice, began using speed on most weekends to provide energy for a second job (Chapter 4), several Players who injected drugs voiced their concern that this might lead to problems for her. When Vinnie began injecting drugs, and pressing his claims to Player identity, I heard similar comments to the effect that this was the first step in his inevitable slide towards the experience of 'problems'. On another occasion, a female injector of drugs asked me if I injected speed. When I replied that I did not, she said, 'Wise man'. The first two Player comments emphasize superior knowledge about drug use – they know more about drug use than Laura, the novice, or Vinnie, the fledgling Player. The third comment, about me, can be read ironically. I may have been 'wise' for not engaging in such risky activity but was this really wisdom or lack of nerve? I had shown myself to be not the right 'kind of person'. In such statements, Players claim to know the 'true' risks of drug use; they claim greater knowledge of the game based on experience.

Novices, in turn, may counter-claim with risk evaluations far below those of Players. They may point to the apparent pointlessness of all the secrecy associated with playing the game, claiming that obsessive secrecy is unnecessary to avoid stigma and arrest. They may be relatively unconcerned with such matters, viewing them as unlikely events. They may claim that representations of drug use as excessively risky contribute to Players' self-presentation as 'big men' participating in a shady criminal underworld. (This claim was always applied to men.) Players are quick to ridicule or criticize such attempts to lower the stakes of drug use.
Outsiders as well as novices may become embroiled in the contestation process. Throughout fieldwork I talked with Players about harm minimization strategies and asked their opinions of new prevention measures being tried in Perth, other parts of Australia and overseas. While most Players recognize that public health initiatives are evolving in the direction of greater access to information for drug users, the responses I received can be grouped into two categories, depending on whether or not the speaker viewed drug use as deep play. For those not committed to a deep-play view, any information that would reduce the risks of drug use was held to be beneficial (although some felt that information relating to more controversial areas such as injecting might be restricted in various ways). Those holding the deep-play view generally felt that almost any public discussion of drug use was problematic but, in particular, held that information relating to injecting should not be made public. Such responses could be predicted by the speaker's current position in relation to the deep-play view of drug use (which might change as he or she moved in the Player scene).

The following exchange between two Players and me is explicable within this process of claim and counter-claim, a specific example of the clash between deep play and harm minimization principles. I wrote a brief article for a magazine produced by a local non-government drug agency (Moore 1991), which I then showed to Vinnie and Michael. The article covered a number of areas including a description and explanation of the adulteration of street drugs, a brief description of the ways in which Eckie, speed and trips could be consumed, including injecting, and some comments about ways of minimizing drug-related harm. Both Vinnie and Michael felt strongly that the article was potentially dangerous in that it might alert novice drug users to the fact that they could inject drugs like Eckie and trips whereas perhaps before reading the article they may have been unaware of this fact. The article also included descriptions (from the perspective of drug users) of the preparation of drugs for injection. They felt such descriptions to be inappropriate, despite my explanations of the principles behind the harm minimization paradigm and my description of the enthusiastic acceptance of the article by both the head of the drug agency and her principal academic adviser. In addition, Vinnie felt that in the section outlining the adulteration of drugs I had 'given away' information that had taken people like himself months to learn. His concern was that I was bringing the esoteric practices of drug use into the public domain. Michael likewise expressed the opinion that I had written a 'how-to' piece which showed potential users how to inject certain drugs, and how to adulterate speed and thus increase one's dealing profits. I argued with both of them that an alternative interpretation was possible: that given such information, drug users might be better equipped to deal with the uncertainties and exploitation of the drug market. They were not persuaded.
Aside from any genuinely altruistic aims that Vinnie and Michael may have had, there appear to be two contested issues in the exchange between them and me. By writing openly about drug use and providing information that I thought would help educate drug users, I was, in effect, lowering the risks of drug use (and in a very public manner). Yet for Vinnie and Michael, drug use was ‘dangerous’ and not something that should be discussed openly for fear of encouraging people to use drugs; after all, only particular types of people, like themselves, could be expected to handle the enormous risks.

Secondly, I was (unintentionally), by going public, demystifying what they considered to be a secret world accessible only through experience and initiation, and thus undermining its potential to signal deviance. If the Player social identity is built on one’s ability to cope with a lifestyle represented as inherently dangerous and risky, then the last thing Players want is for someone, particularly an outsider (even if a ‘wise’ one), to provide evidence that might undermine their claims or to seek to further reduce the risks.

Claims and counter-claims also occur in the second main context of contestation: either directly in conversations amongst Players or indirectly, that is, amongst Players talking about other Players. These claim contests are about one’s prestige relative to other Players. A Player might claim that he or she has learned to play the game as well as, or better than, a more senior Player: ‘I used to think X was the best but I reckon I’m as good as him now’. X’s counter-claim would, of course, be that, as a senior Player, he had more varied experience of the risks of drug use and still knew more than the more junior Player: ‘Y hasn’t seen the real side of drugs’. Players seek to overhaul known others because there are no generally arrived at criteria for being placed at the top of a hierarchy – these are self-liquidating positions so one competes against specific persons.

An example of Player claim-contests is provided by Vinnie’s recollections of heavy injecting drug use during his holiday period. Another Player, MC, sometimes claimed that Vinnie was exaggerating the risk. MC felt that he possessed greater knowledge, in itself a claim to greater prestige, which would reduce the risk from high to low (or, in rare cases, non-existent). On other occasions, MC would attempt to puncture Vinnie’s self-presentation by pointing to its identity component: Vinnie’s representations of risk buttressed his claims to be a deep Player. In both cases, the counter-claim implied that Vinnie was ‘not that good’, that is, ‘he doesn’t know as much as he thinks he does’ and ‘his skills are not as developed as he thinks they are’.

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The claims process has much in common with that described by Gilsenan (1976:200) for the male inhabitants of the Lebanese village in which he worked:

Once an act or series of events is defined as radically undermining the whole social ground of an individual or group, the responses become increasingly limited and prescribed on a kind of all-or-nothing basis ... Such definition takes place over intervals of varying spans; the situation becomes critical as certain options are closed off or fail, as their failure narrows the alternative viable and socially reasonable definitions. In other cases the precipitating circumstances may be defined by their very nature as critical, as in a public killing or direct challenge ... Either the test is met at some proper point, or the individual is socially compromised, devalued in some degree, or even, in extreme circumstances, destroyed as a moral and social being.

In the case of Players, the kind of verbal sparring that could constitute a challenge or test is a common feature of conversation. Taking such commentary to heart would render each interaction a potential test. Instead, counter-claims to one’s own claims are often ignored, particularly if they come from newcomers to the scene or from those whose opinion is considered irrelevant for other reasons, for example, if they are designated as ‘dickheads’ or ‘fuck-wits’ and, consequently, their power to define situations is reduced (cf. Rosen 1978). The opposite may also be true. Newcomers may be challenged by more senior Players and may not have the cultural resources to meet the test. Their power to respond is limited.

Other reasons for avoiding confrontation are shaped by the sociology of the Player scene. In a labile scene, persons come and go and so challenges that develop over time may be forgotten (or at least put on hold) if the perpetrator has disappeared. The protagonists may decide that to continue to challenge each other is to risk escalating the contest to the point where they may face spoiled identity; their responses to the other’s challenge may involve progressively more risky ventures or they may be personally damaging to relationships. Furthermore, to take offence at each and every instance of challenge would render it difficult to sustain the small cliques which comprise the Player scene. If one regularly uses drugs with two or three others, one does not wish to alienate them, at least not obviously.

Therefore, as Gilsenan notes, there are conciliatory options which are considered before a situation is defined to be critical. However, sometimes a challenge becomes defined as serious, particularly when the challenge has been issued by one deep Player to another. These challenges are, in Gilsenan’s terms, ‘situations of ultimate
reference’, those in which the claims being made concern more than mere prestige. They concern the self. One instance of a situation of ultimate reference is provided by the clash between Vinnie and MC I discussed in Chapter 4. Vinnie defined MC’s challenge as a challenge to his self; not to the selves of multiple presentation to segregated networks but to his ‘real’, inner self, the self that Players attempt to ‘work out’ through motivational discourse. It was an invitation to ‘put up or shut up’, that is, to have his actions match his rhetoric. In calling on Vinnie to self-inject, MC was calling on him to act in accordance with the Player identity he was increasingly beginning to project to fellow Players.

Deep Player identity thus involves learning, demonstrating and claiming: (1) the necessary skills and knowledge to play the game at a deep level, in particular, the transformative act of injecting without which any claim to deep Player identity is hollow; (2) the necessary personal qualities – such as nerve, wit and the ability to deceive – to cope with the exigencies and risks inherent in such deep play, and with challenges to one’s claims; (3) a willingness to place oneself into situations of potential discovery by non-users or, better still, the police and (4) a view of drug use as high-risk activity.

Paradoxically, the further a Player moves along the Player path, and the greater his or her claims to Player social identity, the smaller the audience. A possible answer to this apparently odd state of affairs lies in the sociology of the Player scene and in the esoteric nature of the game. Players do not seek to create community so one’s social identity is bestowed by members of small cliques. Their in-depth knowledge of the Player scene places them in a position to understand, if not always to appreciate, the nuances of fellow Players’ performances and abilities. While one’s audience may be small, it is comprised of those best placed to evaluate one’s skill as a Player.

Passing

So far, I have argued that Players conceptualize drug use in terms of deep play and contest this view through the claims process. I was dealing with the representations of drug use made by Players. In this section I deal with the behavioural aspects of deep play which involve the management of information concerning one’s potentially spoiled identity. This, according to Goffman, is the main issue for ‘discredible’ stigmatized persons – the management of information about their ‘failing’ which, if it became public, could place them into the ‘discredited’ category with all that this membership entails. Goffman terms the management of such information ‘passing’.
For Players, especially novices, passing means keeping one's drug use secret from friends, acquaintances, family and work colleagues who are thought to disapprove of drug use and, of course, from the police. Players employ numerous techniques for passing, such as segregating networks, which are made particularly necessary because they move in social scenes with large number of persons who do not use drugs and who are, in many cases, openly hostile towards those who do. Instances where non-using persons learned of the drug use of Players resulted in threats by the non-users to inform parents (and in one case, this was carried through), threats to inform the police if one did not desist from seeing drug-using friends, threats of sacking from one's job and threats of physical punishment if one continued using drugs. Thus, there is a generalized ethos of avoiding all disclosure unless there are good reasons to the contrary. The principle by which Players work is 'the less people know, the better'.

As a consequence, one does not discuss one's drug use openly except perhaps with trusted, close friends (as was the case in Chapter 4 when Lisa injected speed four times in full view of Laura on Laura's return from Sydney). Obviously, Players also discuss their drug use with fellow drug users (subject to strategies relating to the game as outlined in Chapter 4). Even discussions with members of both these categories are, however, rarely completely open. Details are left out and one's manner of administration is rarely mentioned. Arrangements to buy and use drugs are planned so as to prevent or minimize disclosure to others. Safe, secure places are chosen for the preparation of drugs for injection. Physical evidence is concealed – bruising on arms from injecting is concealed under long-sleeved shirts and appearing tired at work after a night on a speed binge might be explained away with reference to 'a heavy night on the piss [alcohol]'. Drug-related matters are not discussed in the company of non-users or over the telephone. Players do not make use of Perth's only mobile needle-exchange van (run by the Western Australian AIDS Council) because they argue that to use it means unambiguously that one is an injector of drugs. They prefer the relative anonymity of a gay sauna for the provision of needles and syringes or otherwise to take their chances when going into suburban chemists. Players report the occasional unpleasant experience in chemists where the sales staff are openly hostile to requests for injecting equipment.

Passing also means making concerted efforts to conceal the physiological, cognitive and emotional effects of drugs from disapproving friends, family and work associates. Sometimes, a Player might feel that the effects of a drug have worn off sufficiently to avoid detection. In other cases, the Player may feel he or she is sufficiently experienced and skilled enough to conceal the effects from all but the most
scrutinizing audience. The user may feel that the prospective audience possesses little knowledge of drug use on two counts: in relation to the Player’s leisure activities and in relation to the specific physiological (e.g. dilated pupils) or psychological signs (e.g. talking rapidly as a result of speed use) of drug use. Goffman argues that the ability of the audience to decipher such ‘stigma symbols’ partly determines the degree of ‘visibility’ of one’s stigma. Players also hold that the effects of some drugs are more easily concealed than others. For example, they hold that the auditory and visual hallucinations sometimes associated with tripping, and the consequent distortion of sensory input, are less easily concealed than the stimulant effects of speed.

Secrecy thus defines the Player’s relationship to the Straight world in much the same way as that outlined by Ponse (1976) and Read (1980) for lesbians and gay men, respectively. They note that lesbians and gay men who are still ‘in the closet’ refuse to reveal their sexual orientation in general social interaction with heterosexuals. Similarly, a Player’s identity as a ‘drug user’ is concealed from Straights, particularly if the Player feels that he or she is likely to be labelled a ‘junkie’ because of the fact of injecting.

In keeping with the non-normative nature of the Player scene, however, passing is not confined to secretive techniques for the management of information. In keeping with the requirements of deep play, passing also means risking spoiled identity through the partial disclosure of potentially discrediting information, just enough to allow non-users and novice users to glimpse the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Hannerz (1992:109, emphasis added) takes up this point when he says this of the relationship between secrecy and disclosure:

> secrecy can also entail a number of different distributions of knowledge, and of ignorance, and of knowledge of ignorance. Often control is most securely maintained if the secrecy is itself secret – people should not know that they do not know, because if they know that they do not know they may try to find out. Where knowledge becomes power mostly by way of prestige, however, the opposite may be true. The possession of secrets is flaunted. Others should be made to know that they do not know, and also made to know that to know is superior.

Corresponding with the process of claim and counter-claim regarding Player identity and representations of the relative risks of drug use, managing the tension between secrecy and disclosure takes various behavioural forms, as the following account demonstrates.
Natasha came to know Vinnie, Lisa, MC, Mark, Michael, Jenine and Mary through patronage of a nightclub, and occasionally visited their houses, particularly the house shared by Vinnie, Lisa and Laura. She became a more regular part of this social circle after she began a sexual relationship with a friend of Vinnie. Initially, Natasha did not use any drugs. Over a period of time, however, she began to suspect that Lisa, Vinnie, Laura and some of their friends used speed, Eckie and trips occasionally. (Natasha did not know the full extent of their drug use, which was heavier than she realized.) She remained unaware that they were injectors, however. After a few weeks in their company, she began to experiment with Eckie and speed. She usually purchased her drugs through Lisa and Vinnie, unaware that they would rip her off. Once Natasha began using drugs, Vinnie made little effort to conceal the fact that he did too (and in fact had told her of his Eckie use prior to her trying the drug). However, he did not inform her of his injecting. Lisa, on the other hand, never as concerned as Vinnie about secrecy, was, after some initial reluctance, quite open about her own injecting.

On several occasions, Vinnie’s desire to withhold from Natasha the fact that he injected led him into arguments with Lisa. Lisa would sometimes joke in front of Natasha about Vinnie’s injecting drug use, which he always strenuously denied. She would draw attention to his bruised arms or make coded references to the need for needles and syringes. On one occasion, after witnessing the coded talk concerning drug arrangements made in front of several Straight visitors, Natasha commented to Lisa and Vinnie, ‘You’re all so secretive’. After Natasha had left, Vinnie would abuse Lisa for joking in this way and say that Natasha had a ‘big mouth’. He feared that stories of his (and to a lesser extent Lisa’s) injecting drug use would reach beyond the inner circle of drug users who knew that he injected. He also felt that Natasha was the kind of person who ‘likes to be in’ (have access to inside information) and that she was a potential ‘security risk’. Later, he became even more concerned when he learned that Natasha had landed a new job in which she was to work with a friend of Vinnie who was completely unaware of Vinnie’s drug use. His fears that she would inform the friend only subsided when he learned that Natasha had herself injected speed for the first time. He said, ‘Now I’ve got something over her’.

A sense of personal autonomy informed Vinnie’s angry response. He felt it was not Lisa’s place to be so carefree with information regarding his drug practices, regardless of how she wanted to handle information concerning her own (so long as her own disclosures did not implicate him). This emphasis on autonomy might also explain an apparent paradox in Lisa’s behaviour. While she seemed unconcerned that Natasha knew she and Vinnie injected, she was not always so casual about such information. I
Once heard her scolding Vinnie for telling Glenn, an injecting drug user with whom she had once shared a house and drug injection, that she still injected. She said it was because her injecting was 'no-one else's business'.

Apart from expressing a sense of autonomy, Lisa's choice of different information-management strategies for different people was based on current realities and perhaps also on a more astute assessment of Natasha's impending recruitment to the Player scene than Vinnie's proved to be. Natasha was initiated into injecting several weeks later. Lisa had perhaps reasoned that Natasha would soon find out about her and Vinnie's injecting, through participating with them in buying and using drugs, and therefore slowly began to drop the non-injecting facade. Natasha was to become a frequent member of Lisa's action-sets, a consociate, whereas Glenn was not. He was, for the time being at least, a contemporary, even though he had been a consociate of Lisa in the past.

Information management during social encounters may be understood with reference to three criteria: whether a Player embraces the deep-play view of drug use, the content of the information being managed and the audience for passing.

Passing as deep play

The general Player rule regarding passing is secrecy. However, as Players learn to play the game with greater skill, and begin to adopt the deep-play view of drug use, they come to appreciate that passing may involve more than the relatively straightforward management of information through secrecy. There is a passage in Goffman (1963:87) which is germane to this point:

The phenomenon of passing has always raised issues regarding the psychic state of the passer. First, it is assumed that he must necessarily pay a great psychological price, a very high level of anxiety, in living a life than can be collapsed at any moment ... I think that a close study of passers would show that this anxiety is not always found and that here our folk conceptions of human nature can be seriously misleading.

At no stage does Goffman develop this cryptic, teasing comment but I suggest that, for Players, this is the point where deep play is vital to an understanding of passing.
Simmel (1950:333-334) has also identified a significant (somewhat psychological) tension between secrecy and disclosure which characterizes deep play with respect to passing:

The secret contains a tension that is dissolved in the moment of its revelation. This moment constitutes the acme in the development of the secret; all of its charms are once more gathered in it and brought to a climax ... The secret, too, is full of the consciousness that it can be betrayed; that one holds the power of surprises, turns of fate, joy, destruction ... For this reason, the secret is surrounded by the possibility and temptation of betrayal; and the external danger of being discovered is interwoven with the internal danger, which is like the fascination of an abyss, of giving oneself away ... The sociological significance of the secret, therefore, has its practical extent, its mode of realization, only in the individual's capacity or inclination to keep it to himself, in his resistance or weakness in the face of tempting betrayal.

Thus, the management of information by Players conforms to the notion of deep play: between disclosing just enough to make clear that there is so much more that is not being revealed, without actually giving too much away.

Some of the means by which Players increase the risk of discovery include the following acts. Drugs might be consumed in public places rather than the relative safety of a private home – for instance, in the workplace (if there is a suitable spot away from other workers), in parked cars, or in the toilets of nightclubs and pubs. Drugs may be carried on one's person when in public places, particularly if dealing. When discussing drug-related matters in the company of non-users or over the telephone, a coded language is used in which drugs are never referred to but where non-users may begin to suspect the true nature of the conversation. To preserve anonymity, I do not spell out in detail specific examples of this coded talk. It includes substituting codewords for the names of drugs (e.g. 'holidays' for 'trips') or drug-related activities (e.g. 'going on a holiday' for 'going tripping'), and discussing drug-related matters without specific reference to drugs (e.g. 'that business we discussed earlier'). Obtaining injecting equipment from suburban chemists means there is a risk, albeit slight, of running into an acquaintance.

Deep play with information also involves a Player enjoying being around Straights while under the influence of drugs, despite the risk of being caught. Sometimes, such interactions happen by accident but deep Players frequently and deliberately put themselves into such situations. Examples of such deep play include attending work while speeding and even E'ing (the effects of trips are generally thought to be too
strong for the work situation, as several Players had discovered through experience). Significantly, some of the nightclubs favoured by several deep Players are largely patronized by Straights or at least do not have reputations as clubs in which drug use is common (or openly acknowledged by other patrons). Attending these club means managing the (sometimes overwhelming) effects of drugs, particularly after injecting them. While the risks of apprehension by Straights is always a possibility, the knowledgeable and skilled Player is usually able to conceal the effects from all but the most scrutinizing audience. In a club full of Straights, the chances of the prospective audience possessing knowledge of drug use and its tell-tale signs (e.g. dilated pupils, increased talkativeness, euphoric mood) are slight. Goffman describes this issue as 'visibility', that is, the ability of the audience to decode 'stigma symbols'.

**Information content**

The management of information about one's drug use also depends on what the information consists of, that is, what are the likely ramifications of disclosure? There are four possible levels of Player involvement in the drug scene, each with its own relevant information (and each recognized by Players): being a drug user, being a dealer in small quantities of drugs, mainly to friends and to lessen the costs of one's own use, being an injecting drug user and being a dealer involved in higher levels of dealing. Information regarding one's drug use is least important (although certainly not unimportant) in that the potential ramifications are generally less serious than those associated with the disclosure of information regarding one's higher-level dealing.

Being an occasional drug user is the least stigmatizing type of involvement in the drug scene. Players do not usually volunteer the fact that they use drugs because the consequences may be serious – such as threats to inform parents or the jeopardizing of employment. In general, however, such information is protected by the strategies relating to secrecy outlined above. Discovery may necessitate some form of damage control. For example, a friend of Mark's discovered that Mark was a speed user (at this time, Mark had yet to inject). Mark responded by taking the man out for a drink. Prior to their meeting, he consumed some speed, reasoning, as Players do, that the speed would enable him to drink steadily all night while the friend became intoxicated. By doing so, Mark hoped to persuade the friend of two things. Firstly, that the sole reason he used speed was to enable him to drink more and stay awake for longer when nightclubbing, and, secondly, that using speed was not something to fear; that speed did not make Mark into some sort of drug-crazed stranger. The ploy apparently worked as the friend withdrew his threat to inform Mark's parents.
That a Player has begun dealing in small amounts of drugs, perhaps selling the occasional gram to a discreet friend or obtaining drugs for novices, is information more closely guarded than that concerning one’s drug use. Dealing means being exposed to more serious criminal charges should such information become widely known, and also to charges of being a ‘pusher’ which may be levelled by non-using acquaintances.

Using drugs intravenously – because sometimes injectors choose other methods of use such as swallowing – is information much more closely guarded. Players argue that using drugs intravenously is highly stigmatizing and take pains to conceal information relating to their chosen manner of consumption.

Finally, socializing with those involved in higher levels of drug-dealing, or becoming directly involved in such matters, is information so closely guarded that even other Players do not know the full details. As far as I can tell, very few Players are involved in such activities but determining the full extent of any involvement is impossible due to the tight control of information relating to such activities. In fact, some Players express a desire not to know the details of these activities. They uphold the segregation of networks and do not seek information relating to the dealing activities of other Players. However, other Players, particularly those embracing the deep-play view, sometimes seek this information as part of their game-playing strategies.

*Audience for passing*

The third factor shaping behavioural forms for the management of information is the audience for whom one performs. There are five types of audiences: (1) Straights who know nothing of one’s drug use, (2) Straights who know of, or who are suspicious of, one’s drug use but not its full extent (i.e. they do not know of one’s injecting), (3) Straights who know the full extent of one’s drug use, (4) other users of drugs who do not use intravenously (usually novices) and (5) other intravenous drug users with whom one customarily shares drugs. I have drawn the divisions sharply for reasons of exposition but in the ebb and flow of social life there is much overlap and movement between categories, a point to which I shall return.

The first category usually includes parents and other family members, anti-drug friends, and workmates and employers/employees. They are all categorized as Straight. This category consists of those people for whom discovery and disclosure can have potentially the most damaging consequences (apart from the police). In these
cases, passing techniques are limited to secrecy – not visiting the parental home while under the influence of drugs, divulging no information about drug use to close friends or siblings, segregating non-using and using networks, and confining one’s drug activities to the non-work sphere.

The second category comprises those Straights with whom one spends considerable leisure time – one’s customary leisure consociates. This feature of leisure consociation separates them from those in the first category, who often have little knowledge of drug use and have little reason to suspect anything. Consociates have the opportunity to witness a Player’s behaviour during leisure time, when most drug use takes place, and may begin to draw conclusions based on what they have seen. How is it that a particular person can drink so much alcohol but apparently remain sober? In the brightly-lit toilets, why are his or her pupils so large? Why is he or she standing close to the bar, jaw-clenching and avoiding the gaze of other patrons? They may also speak with other Straights about their suspicions, seeking confirmation or pooling their observations. Players are alert to such observers and often discuss amongst themselves someone who has been taking an inordinate interest in their behaviour.

Over time, it may become difficult to conceal completely one’s use of drugs from leisure consociates. Non-using and using networks may overlap and necessitate elaborate presentations of a false (i.e. a non-using) self. Straights may notice changes in one’s demeanour when socializing or surmise from one’s association with other suspected drug users. Players may feel they wish to share accounts of drug experiences with close and trusted friends (i.e. those with whom they preserve sincere relationships). Choosing this course of action depends on the degree to which the friends are considered ‘cool’ by the Player concerned, that is, the degree to which they are considered discreet and trustworthy. Those who are cool can be relied upon not to make foolish and potentially damaging disclosures. Alternatively, Players may be forced by circumstance to confess their drug use. In this case, they will admit to drug use – ‘I snort a couple of lines [of speed] occasionally when I’m feeling a bit tired’ or some similar statement – but conceal their injecting activity. Despite learning of the Player-friend’s drug use, cool people rarely learn any more about the Player scene, remaining firmly outside it.

The third category is a small one and corresponds with Goffman’s category of the ‘wise’, those whose special situation has made them intimately privy to the secret life of the stigmatized. (Goffman’s description could also be taken to include anthropologists.) People in this category are also cool but they differ from the ‘close
friends' mentioned earlier because they are also accorded a degree of courtesy membership in the drug-using scene, that is, they move inside the Player scene (close friends may, of course, move into this category over time). They are usually close consociates who either do not use drugs themselves or who occasionally sniff or swallow them. They are further differentiated from close friends by their awareness of the full extent of a Player's use of drugs, including injecting and, less often, dealing activity that may be supporting this use (they rarely learn of a Player's involvement in high-level dealing). People in this category may have close relationships with Players that predate drug involvement or they may be ex-users or ex-dealers. Cool people may develop close friendships with Players (e.g. sexual relationships). By virtue of their frequent presence, they may also be witness to occasional lapses in information management and self-presentation through which they learn of a Player's (or Players') drug use or dealing. They develop close relationships which establish them as trustworthy in the eyes of Players and therefore privileged in their access to potentially damaging information.

In the fourth category are those drug users who know nothing of the injecting activity of Players. They have either decided to confine themselves to snorting or swallowing drugs, or who have yet to be exposed to injecting. Players will frequently be quite open about their drug use with such people but will not reveal their injecting identity. In the case of Eckie or trips (which are often swallowed even by injectors), they may occasionally consume drugs with such people. Players also maintain such contacts so as to learn of new drug supplies.

The final category consists of fellow Players, that is, those people with whom one customarily buys and injects drugs. A Player might require their services to perform the actual injection or they might be trusted housemates who also inject. In this instance, the management of information has less to do with passing and the management of stigma and more to do with playing the game as outlined in Chapter 4—such as keeping secret one's drug source or how much of a particular drug one is using.

The police are a special case in terms of audience. They represent a generalized, ever-present threat and may belong to any of the first three audience categories depending on the situation. For example, uniformed police belong to the first category and passing takes the form of secrecy, but being interviewed by police regarding a dealing charge may mean disclosing some information (say, confessing to possession of drugs) but concealing other items (say, that one is dealing in drugs as well).
In keeping with a labile social scene, there is also movement between audience categories. Players who have been missing from recent socializing may find themselves very much on the outer when resuming interaction, at least until a certain period of reorientation has passed. Friends who learn of one’s drug use may come to be accepted as cool for certain information, although not usually the full extent of drug-related happenings, and thus pass from the first audience category to the second. Those who have demonstrated their discretion over time may be privy to more personal information and thus become members of the third category, the wise.

The form of information management

A final aspect to the management of information is its functional role in constituting both specific social relationships and a sense of shared knowledge. Burke’s (1961) *The Rhetoric of Religion* is relevant here. He discusses ‘adolescent perversity’ in the writings of St Augustine and the example he provides is that of adolescents stealing pears from a garden. He argues that the act of stealing the pears is not, in itself, particularly important. But he (1961:94) draws attention to the social context of the theft: ‘the stealing of the pears involves a delight in the fact that the act was sanctioned by a group of like-minded associates, a *consortium peccantium* (whereby it became in effect a conspiracy)’. Thus, Burke gives us a way of conceptualizing information management. Such management clearly serves a range of instrumental and expressive ends: concealing illegal activity from police, avoiding the possible ramifications of discovery such as job loss or ostracism by friends, contributing to one’s Player identity through flirtatious disclosure or acts, or preventing stigmatization as a ‘drug user’ or, worse, a ‘junkie’ or a ‘pusher’. There is, however, another dimension of great sociological significance. The management of information has much to do with constructing the basis for specific relationships. This is particularly so when the personnel from whom an in-group is constructed are varied in their values, attitudes and backgrounds. Managing information through secrecy and disclosure provides a common social space within which to move (cf. Simmel 1950).

Moral commentary and stigma

One component of becoming a Player is learning to discuss and assess people’s behaviour in motivational terms – attempting to assess other persons, to ‘work them out’. Such an ability becomes necessary once Players begin to engage in the strategic interaction which lies at the heart of playing the game, if they are not to be
disadvantaged. It is also necessary in assessing the relative risks in disclosing potentially damaging information to particular people, that is, what particular persons might do with the information. There is also a moral component to this commentary. As Players move more fully into the Player scene, they commit themselves to the deep-play view of drug use. It is a low-reward, high-risk activity with the potential for spoiled identity – as a criminal and a junkie. One of the questions that arises in such a situation is, given the inherent risks and the stigma, why would someone want to participate in such a lifestyle? Such considerations underlay Michael's claim that Vinnie had begun injecting drugs to be a 'part of the group' (Chapter 4), and Vinnie's assertion that Natasha was not to be trusted because she was the type of person who 'likes to be in'. Questions of moral worth also underlay Player accounts of MC, a Player who was variously described as a 'manipulator', a 'user' and someone who 'fucks around with people's lives'.

A substantial proportion of the Player discourse about persons centres on the crucial issue of motivation. In such discussions, possible motivations for engaging in drug use are canvassed, sometimes with the benefit of information gained by any of the parties present which may be thought to cast light on the issue at hand. There is, of course, an instrumental aspect to such discussions of persons as I have outlined (regarding the game), but the conversations are also pursued because Players wish to know 'what makes people tick'.

In keeping with the non-normative nature of the Player scene, conversations about motivations are not universal but tend to be negotiated more often (but not exclusively) amongst Players who engage in deep play and bring the game to their interpersonal relationships. Some in the Player scene, such as Laura, are simply not interested in 'working people out'. In addition, in a social scene constituted by persons possessing different value orientations, disagreements about the relevant criteria for moral judgement are bound to follow. For example, in order for someone to be accused of 'having a big mouth', and to have such a statement accepted, there has to be some general agreement that there is a store of knowledge which must be kept secret for the good of the group. To decry someone's increased involvement in drug use, and his or her increased association with particular people, there must be some implicit agreement about the undesirability of heavy drug use and about the motives and actions of the people in question.
Being a junkie

There is a final point I wish to make before concluding this chapter and my coverage of the Players. In his study of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Denzin (1987a, 1987b) argues that involvement with AA leads to a process of conversion from a fragmented self to a transcendent self, that is, from multiple selves to a single self. By contrast, I have argued that Players explicitly work to present multiple selves to different audiences as part of their definition of playing the game successfully.

There is, however, one instance in which this construction of multiple selves is threatened. When Players become heavily involved in injecting drugs, and their use begins to be defined by themselves and others as a 'problem', their careful management of segregated networks, of information about drug use (and perhaps dealing), and of multiple selves may start to slip. The all-consuming nature of their drug use threatens to overwhelm carefully constructed facades as it becomes increasingly difficult to manage successfully.

Through the heavy injecting of drugs, Players may begin to suffer physically, either losing weight rapidly (in the case of speed, the drug most often used heavily) or generally beginning to look tired. Psychologically, they may become paranoid, even about the innocent acts of close friends, and may suffer from auditory and visual hallucinations. Dealing in drugs is one way of financing increased drug use but dipping into savings or spending all of one's income may be required to sustain heavy use over time. And absences from work (or decreased work performance) or from pre-arranged social gatherings with family or other non-using contacts become more difficult to cover up or explain away.

One Player who was labelled a 'junkie' was recognized as a skilled and knowledgeable Player who subscribed to the deep-play view of drugs. However, at times his injecting drug use was described as being 'out of control'. Frequently, he would embark on speed binges lasting several days, to be followed by the use of Rowies or sometimes hammer to 'take the edge off the speed' (soften the come-down associated with heavy speed use). These cycles of 'going up' and 'going down' might last several weeks. During these times of excess, he was described as 'not giving a fuck' about whether his drug use might lead to problems.
As a result of the consequences of heavy drug use, Players are in danger of succumbing to the single self of the junkie. Players who start messing up their Player performances may become so labelled and the label is a social marker to the transition from a multiple to a single self, that of the junkie. Single-self junkies have ceased to control their game. Unlike the recovering alcoholics of Denzin’s study, Players define the movement from multiple selves to single self as failure.

Conclusion

My focus in this chapter has been on the way Players conceptualize drug use in terms of stigma and risk, and the consequences of this conceptualization for the management of information. By representing drug use as an inordinately risky activity (particularly injecting) which, against all odds, they have succeeded in managing, Players explicitly claim social identity as certain ‘kinds of persons’. Such persons are thought to possess the necessary traits to cope with the vicissitudes of an inherently dangerous and stigmatized lifestyle. Conceptualizing drug use as deep play tends to correspond with one’s progress along the Player path. It is contested through claims that Players make about their own drug use and that of others. These claims are made during everyday social encounters amongst Players, and between Players and novices.

Summary of Chapters 3 – 5

The Player scene is characterized by lability, diversity and instrumentality and has several distinctive features. It is instrumentally organized around an illicit activity, drug use, which is perceived by scene members to be heavily stigmatizing and potentially dangerous. It is also based on an illicit market which, because it’s illicit, is unregulated. Negotiating in such a scene therefore requires particular skills and knowledge in order to prevent being taken advantage of. These skills and knowledge, labelled by Players as ‘playing the game’, are acquired through experience. Because the scene is constituted by diverse personnel, there is a complex distribution of knowledge due to the careful management of information through the related processes of secrecy and disclosure. The management of information is made necessary (and possible) by the frequent interaction of Players and non-users. Finally, moving in the Player scene is a temporary adaptation to urban life, with most Players leaving it after several years.
Novices move along the Player path learning by watching and listening to more experienced Players and by putting some of the knowledge gained into practice. Once they elect to move along the path, Players are constrained to act in a way which is appropriate to the Player scene. Players need to maintain constant vigilance in order to pursue successfully the strategic interaction of 'playing the game'. Sometimes, the game becomes a cultural strategy that shapes not only Players' drug-related transactions but also their everyday social transactions. Players adopt, or have reinforced, an ontology which conceptualizes human interaction as inherently strategic and oriented towards maximizing one's self-interest.

Members of the Player scene do not seek to create community. On Hannerz’s (1980) urban-folk continuum, Player social relationships fall towards the Wirthian end; for the most part, they are segmented and superficial. Deprived of a coherent set of alternative meanings regarding drug use, Players are forced into an ongoing moral dialogue regarding an activity which they hold to be heavily stigmatized in public perceptions. I conceptualized this dialogue as 'alternation'. As Players acquire the knowledge and skills of the game, they also learn to adopt a view of drug use as an inherently risky lifestyle which, at any moment, can lead to a spoiled identity. As drug use comes to occupy a central role in the lives of Players, so, too, does a conception of themselves as certain kinds of persons successfully able to manage such deep play.

As evidence for these conclusions, I examined several constitutive elements of the Player path. These constituents can be seen as a series of contested claims which can be placed within a larger dynamic framework. One set of claims involves: representations of drugs as danger, the strategic interaction of playing the game, the management of information through secrecy, drug use as deep play and a strategic ontology. Pursuing secrecy in the management of information relating to one's drug-related affairs relates to a view of drug use, particularly injecting drug use, as dangerous and immoral. In this view, following Goffman (1963), the drug user is discreditable. Adopting secretive strategies and taking such a view of drug use complement playing the game, which involves maximizing one's interests, often at the expense of others.

Underpinning the game, which requires judgements about the character of other persons and their likely courses of action, is an ongoing moral commentary which has two central, and related, subjects. Through this commentary, Players seek to assess the actions of persons through an understanding of their essential character (which is thought to be 'hidden' in everyday social transactions); and, secondly, they seek also
to uncover the motivations for engaging in what they define to be a 'deviant' and stigmatizing activity, which has as its stake the risk of a spoiled identity. Taking these particular claims together, one assumes or develops an ontology of strategic action, a way of being that views the world from an instrumental perspective which has as its core the belief that 'everyone wants something'.

A second set of constitutive claims also runs through the chapters: being relatively open about one's drug use and disclosing this fact to others, viewing drugs as fun, helping to create sociability (or at least interaction approximating sociability), refusing to engage in moral commentary and subscribing to an ontology based at least partially on trust and relative openness to others (i.e. on relative sincerity). Being unconcerned with secrecy, or at least with elaborate strategies of secrecy for secrecy's sake, relates to a view of drugs as fun and as being associated with enjoyable, happy social interaction. In this view, drugs are 'no big deal' in a moral sense and may be the focal point for sociable interactions which are characterized by intimacy, disclosure and conviviality. In this set of related claims, moral commentary of the motivational and moral types are largely absent; discussions about other persons tend to focus on their actions rather than their inner states and therefore emphasize the performative. Participants in this commentary seek to answer the question: Has he or she succeeded in the performance of socially valued action? Taking this second set of claims together, they complement, and constitute, an ontology based on taking life as it comes, at face value.

I have rendered the two sets of claims in stark terms to highlight their differences. If we imagine a continuum, the two sets of claims can be placed at either pole, representing extreme statements of cultural themes. We might label the set of claims associated with secrecy, playing the game, deep play and motivational discourse, 'closed'; the opposite, that associated with openness, sociability and performative discourse, 'open'. Movement from the open pole to that represented by closed involves initiation into injecting drugs. At this point, Players voluntarily step outside the perceived Straight moral community and begin to take on the closed view of drugs and the accompanying behavioural styles. They are deemed by other Players to be transformed as persons.

The position of Players with respect to the two poles may change as their involvement in the Player scene increases and their competence and knowledge and, consequently, their personal power, develop. Yet Players move along the Player path in different ways. Some start at the pole marked by the open theme (openness, fun, sociability)
and leave the drug scene never having changed their views, or having wanted to. This was the case with Laura (Chapter 4). Some, like Vinnie (also Chapter 4), start at the pole marked by the open theme and, over time, move along the path towards the closed pole. And others still may be positioned nearer the closed end after several years of playing. They may withdraw from the Player scene, either because they no longer wish to be involved in such strategic interaction or because they have conceded that they do not possess the necessary qualifications to succeed (e.g. particular personal attributes, drug-using competence, knowledge). The picture becomes more complex when we recall that the Player scene is not normative and so Players may employ different strategies for different interactions, playing the game where they deem it to be appropriate (say, in regard only to drug-related matters involving acquaintances or friends of friends) but resorting to more sociable forms of interaction in other circumstances.

Because of the lack of regulation in the illicit drug market, the potential stigma of drug use and the rigours of the game, interaction in the Player scene proceeds on the basis of known persons. All that Players have to rely on in these interactions are their evaluations of other persons. Each interaction between two or more Players may proceed in accordance with the tenor of the occasion on which they last met. However, it may be different if participating Players bring to the current interaction new information about others or employ a different style from that of the others present. This may happen when, on an occasion of more sociable interaction, one (or more) of the participating Players begins to employ a game-style interactional strategy. Thus, the participants in Player transactions, while drawing on the range of cultural themes I have detailed, must fashion each one anew. Understandings or agreements reached in previous interactions may, or may not, bear directly on the present one. Therefore, to operate successfully, that is, to know ‘where the other person is coming from’, one needs knowledge of that person – his or her recent biography, current and past drug use, record of dealings with others, modes of presentation and likely style of interaction. Taken together, these aspects of person and self provide Players with the ability to assess accurately other Players, to assess their ‘true’ motivations and, ultimately, to understand the ‘real’ self behind the self-presentations made in the context of the game.

Using the various cultural materials at their disposal, Players create self-liquidating positions which are highly person-specific, not transferable to other persons and which disappear once their creator leaves the scene. Players do not interact with ‘statuses’, ‘roles’ or ‘social types’ (Cohen 1993). They interact strategically with the
selves presented by other Players in everyday social transactions, attempting always to assess whether these presented selves are real or just elaborate presentations for the purposes of the game.

In Chapters 3 – 5, I have dealt with the Players as instances of *homo rhetoricus*, ending, in this chapter, with a discussion of the management of stigma in relation to drug use. Goffman identifies another strategy for managing stigma which I have not dealt with here, for the Players do not make use of it. Voluntary disclosure of one’s stigma renders all other strategies irrelevant. Taking such a step means moving from the category of ‘discreditable’, as is the case for Players, to that of ‘discredited’. Players seek to prevent, and sometimes to flirt with, such a movement in a social scene in which members do not collectively seek to challenge perceived mainstream ideas about drug use. However, the movement from secrecy to disclosure regarding stigma need not necessarily lead to discrediting. The stigmatized person may move in a social scene in which members openly value drug experiences and, as part of a more general, coherent and powerful critique of the mainstream, reject anti-drug rhetoric. Members of such a scene may even embrace symbols of stigma in order to define themselves as fully outside the mainstream. In such a scene, passing, in the sense outlined by Goffman, is unnecessary because stigmatized persons accept and respect their selves. They may either feel no need to conceal their ‘failing’ or may redefine their ‘failing’ as a positive attribute which symbolizes their critique of the Straight world. In the next three chapters, I examine just such a social scene.

Notes

1 There is a considerable literature on the sociology of secrecy (e.g. Simmel 1950), secret societies (e.g. Lau Fong 1981), secrecy and the state (e.g. Shils 1956), secrecy and various types of espionage or counter-espionage agencies (e.g. several articles in Tefft 1980), secrecy in business practices (e.g. Andersen 1980), the identification of secrecy and deceit in corporate, political and marital life (e.g. Ekman 1985), moral philosophy and the ethics of concealment (e.g. Bok 1984) and secrecy in corporate organizations (e.g. several articles in Tefft 1980). Barnes (1994) provides a related discussion of lying. Such work has little relevance for my purposes for several reasons: (1) with some notable exceptions (e.g. Bok 1984, Warren 1974), the literature on secrecy deals with secrecy in the context of formal bureaucracies or hierarchical social groups, (2) some studies of secrecy are not based on ethnographic data and are therefore not concerned with the type of analytical issues that concern me and (3) my interest is not so much in secrecy per se, as it is in most of the cited studies, but with secrecy as just one possible strategy in the management of information.
Connors (1992) provides a similar argument in relation to drug use and risk, as does Gusfield (1981) in his study of the institutional procedures shaping theories of ‘risk’ in relation to drink-driving.

Assessing the accuracy of Players’ reading of public perceptions of drug use is very difficult. There is evidence that marijuana use is becoming increasingly accepted, if not necessarily condoned, in public discourses. There was a distinct lack of reaction to the (conservative) Liberal Federal Opposition leader’s 1994 admission that he had once smoked marijuana as a university student (perhaps because he claimed he did not enjoy the experience and perhaps because, parroting President Bill Clinton, he admitted to inhaling the drug). More recently, the Governor-General of Australia, Mr Bill Hayden, made a speech calling for a review of laws relating to cannabis (The Australian, 11/7/95, p.3). In Western Australia, there appears to be substantial community support for the decriminalization of marijuana (Lenton 1994).

With respect to drugs other than marijuana, a 1993 National Campaign Against Drug Abuse national community survey (of 3,500 people aged fourteen years and over) found that the use of various manufactured drugs (heroin, amphetamines, hallucinogens) rated very low as the ‘most serious drug problem for the general community’ – ranging from 1 to 10%, compared to 34% for ‘excessive alcohol drinking’ and 21% for ‘tobacco smoking’ (Department of Human Services and Health 1994:7). Other evidence from the same survey clouds the picture, however. McAllister (1993:3-5) reports that, when respondents were asked which drugs they considered to be part of the ‘drug problem’, about seven in ten named illicit drugs (especially heroin and marijuana, which were named by 60% of respondents).

In the case of injecting drugs, it seems safe to assume that this activity has, in public discourses, become firmly linked to the transmission of HIV/AIDS through public health campaigns about the dangers of sharing injecting equipment (see Lenton 1994). In the abovementioned survey, 19% identified ‘sharing needles’ as the most serious drug problem for the general community. In Western Australia, there is substantial community support for the provision of needles and syringes to injecting drug users, as one way of attempting to reduce the transmission of HIV/AIDS and the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) (Lenton 1994).

Deep play is a central cultural feature of the Player scene and shapes understandings and behaviour in a number of areas. While in this chapter, I concentrate on drug use as deep play, my analysis could easily be applied to sexual behaviour as well (see my various comments on sexual behaviour in Chapters 3 and 4).

For this and other criticisms or discussions of Geertz’s article, or the theoretical orientation it embodies, see Austin-Broos (1987), Crapanzano (1992), Roseberry (1982) and Shankman (1984).
There are other areas of activity which become the focus of Player claims and counter-claims regarding risk; for example, the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases and whether this risk justifies the use of condoms.

There are numerous accounts of information management in ethnographic contexts very different from that of the Players. Gregor (1977) gives an explicitly Goffmanian analysis of Mehinaku social life, Barth (1975) provides a discussion of the Baktaman of New Guinea and Brandt (1980) analyses secrecy amongst the Taos Pueblo. For more general discussions of information control, see McDermott and Roth (1978) and Wilsnack (1980).

I have elsewhere dealt with the some of the policy implications of the Players' refusal to use the WA AIDS Council outreach services (Moore 1993b).

For a study of passing by the patients of a mental-health institution, see Edgerton (1967).

In their discussion of 'the irony of secrecy in the drug world', Adler and Adler (1980) note the puzzling finding that the drug dealers of whom they write vacillate between extreme paranoia and concealment and relative degrees of candour with respect to information regarding their dealing activities. They argue, following Simmel, that the irony of secrecy is that 'its betrayal enables the individual to realize maximum enjoyment'. I would suggest that there is room in their analysis for the concept of 'deep play' as another mode of explanation.

In keeping with playing the game at the interpersonal level, information may also concern non-drug related matters such as sexual relationships. I do not deal with such matters because they do not relate to stigmatization.

There is potentially a fifth type of information: that concerning the kind of drug used. The degree of stigmatization and the reaction of Straight friends is likely to be milder in the case of the discovery of one's Eckie use than it would probably be for the discovery of hammer use. This is partly because the more common method (both in empirical fact and in public perceptions) of using hammer is injecting, whereas Eckie is more commonly used orally. I have not dealt with this type of information here because, despite the fact that some Players had used hammer in the past, few did so at the time of my research.
Part 3

_Homo authenticus_
Chapter 6
The Bohemians

In Chapters 6 – 8, I endeavour to represent some of the social and cultural practices associated with what I have chosen to term the Bohemian path, thus remaining faithful to Bohemian representations about personal transition. In this chapter I introduce the Bohemians and outline the sociology of the scene that they create and negotiate. But first, I detail how I came to know them.

Finding the Bohemian field

Gaining entry

I gained entry to the Bohemian scene through the friendship of two gay men. I was working as a researcher on a Government project investigating community relations in an ethnically diverse, inner-city area of Perth (McDonald, Hales and Associates 1989). I interviewed one of them as a resident of the study area. I kept in touch with them and, as I lived in the same inner-city area, would occasionally run into them. After completing the ethnographic study of Players, I began to think about conducting a second ethnography of drug use. I knew that the cultural scenes in which these two men moved would be more ‘alternative’ than that I have described for the Players. I also suspected that drug use in these scenes would be different from that of the Players and so it seemed a logical choice for comparison. I contacted the two men and they agreed that they and their friends (gay, lesbian and heterosexual) would provide good material for such a study.

I had felt jaded after fieldwork with the Players. I had planned to investigate drug use amongst the Bohemians through unstructured interviews, using participant observation as a complementary, supporting method. I wanted to gather as much material as possible, as quickly as possible. To this end, I conducted two preliminary interviews whilst finishing the research and writing-up of the Players’ material. Later, I began to interview people I had met through my two gay friends. However, in the
time spent hanging around houses before and after interviews, I began to realize (or perhaps admit to my anthropological ‘self’) that there was so much more to their lives than could be gathered in interviews. I became enthusiastic again for the idea of participant observation. I made the decision to continue with the interviews – to gather biographical information, drug-using histories and other relevant information – but to add participant observation as a primary method rather than a complementary one.

Two problems

While the decision to emphasize participant observation proved to be heuristic for coming to grips with the lifestyles of the Bohemians, it was not without problems of its own. The houses in which Bohemians lived were visited by a bewildering array of people drawn from diverse cultural scenes: gay men and lesbians, ‘ravers’, university students, unemployed people, ‘grungies’ and ‘bogans’, as well as those who did not fit into any discernible style but who were nevertheless thought to be ‘alternative’, that is, not ‘Straight’ – as in not drawn from the non-Bohemian ‘mainstream’. The term ‘straight’ has two distinct meanings which I distinguish typographically. Firstly, in Bohemian parlance, ‘Straight’ means belonging to the ‘mainstream’, aspects of which I will define later in the chapter. Secondly, ‘straight’ means heterosexual.

There were also those who could fit into several subcategories at the same time, for example, a person might be considered a member of the gay and lesbian, student and rave scenes. To do full justice to all of these diverse, intersecting social and cultural scenes would require fieldwork over several years, moving in turn in each of the scenes, or, otherwise, fieldwork in a team of anthropologists. Instead, I made a deliberate decision to focus on those borderland spaces in which there were interactions between the members of the different scenes. It was in these spaces that the Bohemian scene was constructed.

A second problem, which eventually righted itself as the research progressed, was that, initially, I felt very much an outsider. On reflection, this I think was partly due to the particular historical point at which my fieldwork commenced. I entered the Bohemian scene shortly after some of its members had engaged in a lengthy period of heavy drug use, as a result of which several close friends had fallen foul of one another. I entered an atmosphere poisoned by recriminations, division and anger as relationships damaged or strained by heavy drug use were renegotiated. In addition, I did not live in a Bohemian house, choosing to continue living with my long-term
partner. At the time, I interpreted my failure to 'get in' as due to my being too old (at twenty-nine years) to conduct participant observation with people in their late teens and early twenties. Depressed, I felt I had reached a 'use-by-date' for youth research, no longer able to pass as an insider as I had once done (e.g. Moore 1994b). However, I persisted and gradually became (a somewhat peripheral) part of this scene, although I suspect I was always perceived as 'older' and somewhat Straight.

Becoming part of the scene was further facilitated by the nature of the particular houses I was visiting. Other house visitors included not only those drawn from different scenes, but those of different ages, ranging from as young as fifteen years through to those in their mid-thirties and older. In the set of several houses I visited most, I was older than the average visitor but not so much as to appear out of the ordinary. While any sort of participant observation requires a period of rapport-building and the losing of the 'researcher' tag, I had felt that this period would be relatively short in social scenes which included many university students or graduates, some of whom had taken anthropology or sociology units in their degrees. It took longer than I had first thought.

Fieldwork

Following initial visits to the house in which my two friends lived, I conducted approximately fifteen months of participant observation through 1992-94 in and around several houses which served, in differing degrees, as meeting places for diverse sets of people. In addition, I maintained, albeit less frequent, contact throughout the writing of the thesis, particularly during the period in which I gave out drafts of chapters to be read by selected Bohemians. As well as extensive fieldnotes made following participant observation, I tape-recorded interviews with twenty people. Seven were women: four women were 'straight', one identified herself as 'bisexual', one as 'lesbian' and one as 'pretty straight but if I found the right woman I'd go for it'. Of the thirteen men, seven said they were 'straight', five 'gay' and one said he was 'mostly straight'.

The people interviewed moved in a variety of scenes: gay and lesbian, student, raver, grunge, bogan and the arts, to name a few. I selected people for interview on the basis of two criteria: that they were members of the sets of people I interacted with most or that they possessed knowledge relevant either to my theoretical concerns or to events that had occurred during or just before my field research. I have never counted how many people I met through fieldwork (perhaps eighty to one hundred people); my
focus was more on cultural construction than on demography. The set of houses I visited most had regular, often overlapping, visitor lists which numbered between twenty and fifty people. In addition, I met other people who visited these houses much less frequently, either to purchase drugs from residents or to maintain less intimate friendships with them.

Constituting the Bohemian field

Diversity

The Bohemians are characterized by their sociodemographic diversity. In the main, they are single and aged between sixteen and twenty-eight years. They are of varied ethnic background, although often Australian-born, and are drawn from various social classes. Few are in full-time employment. Of those who are, most pursue jobs allowing either a degree of autonomy, artistry and creativity or the chance to pursue altruistic ends broadly deemed to be related to social reform or in the public interest. The majority support themselves financially in a variety of ways: part-time employment in retail or service industries, unemployment benefits and/or tertiary study allowances. Some are, or have been, involved in low-level drug-dealing – usually in marijuana (hereafter ‘pot’), but also in amphetamines (‘speed’), ‘trips’ (or ‘acid’) and Ecstasy (‘E’) – mainly to subsidize the costs of their own drug consumption. Many Bohemians attend university or are university graduates, while others voice a desire to study at tertiary level at some point in the future.

More often than not, Bohemians reside in inner-city areas of Perth. These areas feature great heterogeneity in their populations – ‘yuppies’ intent on the gentrification of the inner city, those subscribing to ‘alternative’ or gay and lesbian lifestyles, and large concentrations of Greek, Italian and Vietnamese migrants. They also feature heterogeneity in land usage – low-cost, high-density rental properties, expensive family residences, light industry, retail outlets, cafes, brothels, tattoo parlours, churches of various denominations (Lutheran, Catholic, Buddhist, Anglican), and primary and secondary schools. Those Bohemians who do not live in the inner city tend to live close to Perth’s universities.

Bohemians are members of large social networks which articulate through a number of inner-city ‘shared houses’ (defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics [1982 cited in Helms 1986:17-18] as domestic residences inhabited by unrelated adults sharing a common kitchen facility). These networks are built on a range of associations:
attendance at the same secondary school, common leisure pursuits (e.g. patronage of
the same nightclub or membership of a voluntary association), attendance at the same
university or employment at the same place of work, membership of gay and lesbian
scenes or adherence to a particular lifestyle (e.g. grunge or raver). Others do not fit
comfortably into any explicitly identified subcategory. For such persons, the
designation 'alternative' is not usually sufficient. They may be described as
'alternative and grungy' or 'alternative and arty'. There is much care taken with such
labelling as if pinning someone down does damage to their complexity. What unites
these differently-labelled persons is their anti-Straight orientation. Other Bohemians
belong to several scenes at the same time (e.g. the gay and lesbian, student and rave
scenes). Although my empirical and analytical focus is on the borderland spaces
between the scenes from which Bohemians are drawn, it is worth elaborating on these
scenes, albeit briefly. They provide the starting points for the majority of would-be
Bohemians.

Constitutive scenes

The 'Gay and Lesbian Community', a convenient political fiction (cf. Read 1980:xvii-
xviii), refers to all those who identify themselves as primarily homosexual and, to a
lesser extent, to their friends, families and supporters. At a more specific level, the gay
and lesbian inner-city scenes in which some Bohemians periodically or permanently
move contain a number of gay and lesbian shared houses and Perth's two 'gay and
lesbian' nightclubs and hotels. One of the hotels counts gay men and lesbians amongst
its varied inner-city patrons rather than it being primarily a 'gay and lesbian' venue,
as is the case with the two nightclubs and the second hotel.4 The gay and lesbian
inner-city scene also contains the offices of several gay and lesbian-related businesses
or community support, advice and advocacy organizations, and several well-known
'beats' – public sites for anonymous gay-male sexual encounters (e.g. those in certain
inner-city parks). While there are identifiable substyles and categories within gay and
lesbian culture, which correspond to different parts of this scene – such as 'the young
queens' (young gay men), 'the nannas' (older gay men), 'lipstick lesbians' (who adopt
'feminine' dress styles), and 'diesel dykes' (who reject 'feminine' dress styles as part of
a critique of heterosexual femininity) – they will not concern me here.5

The term 'grungies' does not refer to the members of a coherent, identifiable youth
subculture as do terms such as 'skinheads' or 'mods'. Indeed, the term itself is not
commonly used by those who are labelled as such by outsiders. Rather, grungies (or
'grungeheads', 'swampies' or 'dreadies' – as in 'dreadlocks') are those who subscribe
to a diffuse lifestyle which may include some, all or none of the following characteristics: unemployed and poor; having a penchant for grunge, ‘thrash’ or ‘indie’ (independent) music – variations on a guitar-based sound usually produced by live bands or by those signed to independent record labels (bands such as Nirvana and Ministry); dressing in old, often torn, clothing; wearing their hair long; wearing nose, eyebrow and other facial rings or studs; consuming drugs (when they can afford them); possessing an eclectic mix of left-wing, ‘hippy’ and alternative beliefs (e.g. astrology); and living in large, inner-city shared houses with other grungies. Some grungies patronized one particular ‘alternative’ city nightclub until its closure in 1993 (although several new ones have taken its place). One grungy woman I interviewed explained grunge as a lifestyle that rejected the ‘Straight world’ and which was born of the necessity to live and dress inexpensively when poor.

Like grungies, ravers (or ‘techno-ravers’ or ‘stompies’) are similarly hard to define in that there is great variation on a number of central themes and the term ‘ravers’ subsumes or overlaps with several other less-identifiable styles which are not necessarily centred in the inner city. Generally, however, ravers attend raves and, sometimes, smoke pot and take E, trips and speed. They listen to ‘techno’ music, wear their hair shaved underneath and slicked back (for young men) or in ‘street’ fashion styles (for young women), wear baggy jeans and tops manufactured by such companies as Bloggs and Mossimo, and favour sporting shoes.

Student Bohemians attend one or more of Perth’s four tertiary institutions. They usually study the humanities and social sciences, and are perhaps the most politically aware of those who constitute the Bohemian scene. This political awareness often translates into a commitment to be involved in the various political processes of the universities they attend. Student Bohemians see tertiary education as a valuable experience – being exposed to new ideas and philosophies, meeting new and interesting people, and, most importantly, learning to be creative and critical in one’s thinking – rather than as a purely vocational exercise. Financial constraints mean that student Bohemians usually wear relatively inexpensive clothing (there is little in the way of a dress code) and seek budget accommodation. Student Bohemians drink alcohol (often heavily), smoke pot and take trips. They may also experiment with E and speed.

‘Bogan’ is a generic term covering a broad range of (usually ethnically Anglo-Celtic) working-class youth (although there are also southern Europeans and Australian Aborigines in the ranks of bogans). Bogans generally drive, or aspire to drive, large
cars with powerful engines, listen to heavy metal music or pub rock, wear their hair long, dress predominantly in black (and, sometimes, like grungies, in ‘flannies’ [flannelette shirts]) and decry anything smacking of sophistication or femininity (even female bogans, whom I have sometimes heard non-bogan Bohemians disparagingly refer to as ‘bogan chicks’ or ‘bog-chicks’).

Bogans appear to be, for the most part, resident in Perth’s suburbs. The bogan youth style seems to have originated in Australia, perhaps a more recent manifestation of the ‘bodgies’ (male) and ‘widgies’ (female) of the 1950s (e.g. Manning 1958, Stratton 1992). In turn, both bogans and bodgies and widgies may be seen as manifestations of a broader ‘larrakyn spirit’ (Gorman 1990: xiii) held to epitomize ‘authentically “Australian” characteristics of non-conformism, irreverence, impudence’ (Wilkes 1990: 201; see also Metcalfe 1988, Oxley 1978). Of the various scenes from which Bohemians are drawn, bogan is perhaps the most Straight. The ex-bogans who move in the Bohemian scene have left behind many of the trappings of the bogan style (e.g. its aggressive masculinity), and it is the larrakyn tradition that they endorse and uphold.

As I noted earlier, there are also those who do not fit any particular scene, those labelled ‘alternative and ...’. They, too, live in shared houses in and around the inner city, may be studying, unemployed or working in ‘artistic’ fields, and may borrow elements of grunge, bogan and even raver style in an eclectic mix. They can be found in some of the new alternative nightclubs mentioned earlier in relation to grungies – those that feature live bands playing thrash, grunge or indie music or disc jockeys (DJs) playing recorded versions of such music.

**Bohemian drug use**

With respect to drug use, almost all the Bohemians with whom I moved regularly smoked pot. Most use, or have experimented with, the so-called ‘chemical drugs’ – speed, E and trips. Some have also experimented with other drugs – heroin, cocaine, amyl nitrate, barbiturates and ‘magic mushrooms’ – and others express a desire to experiment with such drugs in the future. Some Bohemians also use alcohol and, on some occasions, use it heavily.

There is diversity in preferred contexts for drug consumption, reflecting Bohemian diversity in chosen lifestyle and associated leisure pursuits. Some Bohemians enjoy going ‘tripping’ in natural bushland settings, some (particularly those who enjoy dancing as a form of self-expression) seek out the sensory stimulation of nightclubs...
and raves, and others prefer to stay in the safe and familiar surrounds of home. The same Bohemian may, on different occasions and with different consociates, take drugs in all of these settings. Some Bohemians prefer the effects of E and regard the tripping experience as ill-suited to their own psychological make-up. Some Bohemians express wariness about taking speed or E (having had friends who had developed problems with the use of these drugs) but frequently take trips. Other Bohemians are equally comfortable taking any of the chemical drugs, either separately or together (two favoured polydrug combinations are the 'candy flip' – combining E and a trip – and the 'snowflake' – E and speed).

There is also variety in the ways Bohemians consume drugs. Although few of the Bohemians with whom I regularly interacted injected drugs, some of them had experimented with injecting in the recent past. By far the most popular method is 'dropping', in the case of E and trips, and 'snorting', in the case of speed. Occasionally, people break open E capsules and snort the powder inside (they do so in order to hasten the onset and increase the strength of the drug's effects), or swallow speed with drinks to disguise its unpleasant flavour. Some Bohemians (male and female, straight and gay/lesbian) occasionally take their E anally. Pot is smoked via joints, pipes or bongs.

There is also diversity in the patterns of drug use, that is, in the frequency of drug use and the quantity of drugs used. Some Bohemians smoke pot on a daily basis (heavy, daily users might smoke, and give away to friends, as much as a foil per day) and take chemical drugs weekly. Others smoke pot daily but use chemical drugs much less often, say, once a month or less. Some smoke pot occasionally (perhaps bi-weekly) and use chemical drugs about twice a month or more. Heavier users of drugs might consume more than one dose of a drug or drugs; say, taking two trips or two tablets or capsules of E at once, or taking speed, trips and E at the same time (or during the same evening). Other Bohemians take only half-doses of trips or E, or use what are regarded as small amounts of speed powder (say, a quarter or an eighth of a gram).

Bohemians are mindful of the potential health dangers of drug use and work to minimize the risks. All are aware of public health campaigns targeting HIV/AIDS risk behaviours such as needle-sharing and unsafe sexual practices (particularly gay and lesbian Bohemians). Gaining access to clean needles and syringes is made easy by the close proximity of both a needle exchange – an inner-city, gay sauna – and the Western Australian AIDS Council needle and syringe dispensing machine. Eleven of the twenty Bohemians with whom I tape-recorded interviews injected drugs or had
done so in the past (sometimes experimenting only once or twice). During visits to Bohemian shared houses, I also overheard several other people referring to their past or present injecting of drugs. Of the eleven Bohemians interviewed who had injected drugs, one said she had shared needles with a man with whom she was having a relationship that included unsafe sex. Because of the negative images associated with needle-sharing, there may have been other persons who had shared.

There are many examples of the social sanctions and controls created by Bohemians to minimize drug-related harm (Zinberg 1984). They include attempting to maintain a balance between involvement in drug use and involvement in activities not relating to drug use (e.g. university study), and reserving periods of heavier drug use for holidays or other periods when the demands of study or work are lower (e.g. university vacations). They also include going tripping with other, more experienced trippers and seeking information from experienced drug users regarding the likely effects of particular drugs and the most enjoyable ways of taking them. Bohemians, like Players, tend to avoid buying drugs from casual acquaintances or those more fully involved in heavy drug use. The latter are thought more likely, as a consequence of their heavy drug use, to 'rip off' the buyer. Finally, Bohemians attempt to create a cultural environment in which prioritizing drug use ahead of relationships with friends or making drug use an end in itself, as opposed to a means to an end, are frowned upon. In short, while drug use is a central and valued Bohemian activity, it is only one of many in the Bohemian behavioural repertoire.

**Users and dealers**

As with Players, Bohemians make a distinction between 'users' and 'dealers'. However, the categories mean different things for Bohemians, who do not generally use the former label. To be a member of the Bohemian scene usually (but not always) implies that one will, at least occasionally, use drugs, particularly pot. There is therefore little point in designating people as 'users' because most Bohemians fit this category. Bohemians do label certain people as 'dealers' because there are fewer people in this category and because (obviously) not everyone in the Bohemian scene is a dealer. Thus the label 'dealer' serves a purpose.

Because the Bohemians' primary drug is pot, a user (or, in Bohemian parlance, a 'smoker' or someone who 'smokes') is anyone who smokes pot on a regular basis. Smokers are recognized as 'heavy', 'regular' or 'occasional'. Many pot smokers are content to buy a foil every week or two. If their consumption increases and they begin
smoking every day or two, a foil does not last very long, particularly if shared with friends. They may decide to buy a '$50 bag'. Few dealers sell bags and, as there is no 'official' measure between the bag and the ounce, even fewer sell quarter, third, or half-ounces (this is usually an arrangement between the dealer and regular customers and friends).11

The more usual option for heavy smokers is to buy an ounce of pot with one or several partners. If the ounce costs $250 and four persons pool their money, each contributes $62.50 and gains about seven grams of pot, a saving of $25 on buying seven grams in foils (seven grams = approximately 3.5 foils [if the foils are two grams each] at $25 per foil = $87.50). Another reason for buying in partnership is that the smoker may find that a foil does not last very long but an ounce is too large. At this stage, the pot smoker remains a user, buying the larger amounts solely to save money. Users may buy as much as a whole ounce or even two ounces for their own consumption.

Some heavy pot smokers decide to reduce their consumption costs by selling foils to friends and acquaintances who smoke occasionally. The pot user/dealer might buy an ounce of pot for $250. He or she might roll and sell ten foils at $25 each, thus recouping the original outlay for the ounce and leaving (if each foil is two grams) roughly eight grams for his or her personal (and free) consumption. At this stage, the dealing usually remains at a level designed to lower personal consumption costs rather than as a money-making enterprise. There may also be an ideological component to such dealing, in that dealers believe they are supplying the means to a valuable experience. In the scheme provided by Dorn, Murji and South (1992:xiii), Bohemian dealers belong to 'trading charities – enterprises involved in the drug business because of ideological commitments to drugs (e.g. cannabis, Ecstasy), with profit a secondary motive'.12

Unlike Players, who see the dealer as a position of power, for Bohemians, being a dealer assumes little importance in terms of prestige. Those looking to make money from pot dealing generally operate at the next level up – the 'pound'. Dealers at this level will buy in pounds and break the pounds down into saleable ounces. A pound costs between $2,500 and $3,000.13

In these three categories – the smoker, the dealer in foils and the dealer in ounces – there is much variation. Those who smoke pot but who do not deal in it may buy anything between a foil and an ounce (or two) for their own consumption. There is then an overlap with the pot smoker who chooses to take the risks inherent in dealing and to
lower personal consumption costs through selling. Those who ‘sell foils’ might buy an ounce every few days if they smoke heavily themselves and have a large customer base, or one every few weeks if they are more careful and sell only to a smaller, more discreet clientele. Paradoxically, it is possible, although rare, that smokers who consume heavily but who choose to bear the costs themselves may actually smoke more than dealers in foils. Finally, dealers in ounces may buy pounds frequently or infrequently, again depending on the number of customers to whom they regularly sell.

Few Bohemians regularly deal in chemical drugs. When they do, it is usually to lessen the costs of their own consumption. Prior to a rave, a Bohemian with chemical drug contacts might agree to obtain E (or trips) for several friends attending the rave. The going rate for a single E might be $60. He or she gathers the money in advance from the friends and purchases perhaps ten E tablets. Because of the large number, and because of the possibility of future sales, the dealer may agree to sell the ten for $540, throwing in the tenth E free. The intermediary gains a free E for his or her efforts. This type of intermediary function differs from dealing in one important respect. A conventional dealer buys drugs using his or her own money and then sells on, recouping this money (occasionally, he or she might get credit and repay the money later, after selling on). The intermediary collects the money from friends first, and then takes it to the dealer. At no stage in the procurement process is he or she out of pocket.

Polythetic classification

In keeping with their membership of diverse scenes, Bohemians do not subscribe to a single body of identifiable cultural beliefs and values. Some Bohemians are much more concerned with ‘Green’ (i.e. environmental) issues than others; some are active in gay and lesbian circles while others are not; some are concerned with Left politics while others are more interested in self-exploration and artistic expression; most blend several such concerns together into a personal programme. The analytical problem is to find a way to categorize such diversity so as to make it anthropologically manageable.

Needham’s (1975) discussion of polythetic classification is germane to my sketch of the Bohemian scene. He argues that until the 1930s, the definition of a ‘class’ (as in ‘classificatory’ rather than ‘social class’) required that all its members possess a set of common attributes. In keeping with this definition, what was known of one member of a class was thought to hold true for other class members. Such classification is ‘monotypic’, that is, ‘defined by reference to a property which is necessary and sufficient for membership in its extension’ (Needham 1975:353).
Tracing a number of writings in psychology, philosophy and zoology, as well as his own on the anthropology of descent, Needham argues that there is another system of classification based on 'family resemblances' which is better suited to anthropological classification. Needham (1975:353) defines a 'polytypic' class in the following way:

A class is ordinarily defined by reference to a set of properties which are both necessary and sufficient (by stipulation) for membership in a class. It is possible, however, to define a group $K$ in terms of a set $G$ of properties $f_1, f_2, \ldots, f_n$ in a different manner. Suppose we have an aggregation of individuals (we shall not as yet call them a class) such that:

1) Each one possesses a large (but unspecified) number of the properties in $G$.
2) Each $f$ in $G$ is possessed by large numbers of these individuals and
3) No $f$ in $G$ is possessed by every individual in the aggregate.

Although this definition serves Needham's (and my) purposes well, he suggests the terms 'monothetic' and 'polythetic' (Gr. $\text{mono}$, one; $\text{poly}$, many; $\text{thetos}$, arrangements) as 'monotypic' and 'polytypic' have other meanings already well established in systematics. According to Needham, these new terms have been generally adopted in the taxonomies of various sciences.

In justifying the use of polythetic classes in anthropology, Needham (1975:358) argues that they are:

likely to accommodate better than monothetic the variegation of social phenomena: they have ... a high content of information, and they carry less risk of an arbitrary exclusion of significant features. In other words, it could be said, the polythetic principle is truer to the ethnographic materials.

Following Needham, the Bohemians can be conceptualized as a polythetic class. Members of the Bohemian scene ($K$ in the above definition) express a broad number of beliefs and values ($f$). Each Bohemian expresses a large number of the total beliefs and values ($G$) and each belief/value is held by large numbers of Bohemians. Yet no single belief/value is held by every Bohemian, and there is much discussion of and debate over these beliefs/values amongst Bohemians (see Chapter 7). My task, then, is to describe the full range of beliefs, that is, the Bohemian $G$. 
A Bohemian ethos

Politically, Bohemians can be placed somewhere on the left of the spectrum, both personally and in terms of organized political bodies. Some are members of, and almost all are supporters of, the ‘new social movements’ described by Burgmann (1993): the Aboriginal movement, the Women’s movement, the Lesbian and Gay movement, and the Peace and Green movements. Some are of pragmatic persuasion and vote Labor at both state and federal elections, despite acknowledging the gradual shift to the Right in Labor policies at the federal level. Others, disillusioned with Labor, prefer to vote for Green or Left Independent candidates while casting their preferences with Labor, recognizing that in a preferential political system strategic voting is in order. A vote for Labor is one less vote for the conservatives whom Bohemians uniformly despise.

The theoretical views that underpin Bohemian voting patterns derive from Marxism or post-Marxism (e.g. poststructuralism and political economy) and there is a general, powerfully felt and frequently expressed critique of capitalism. In terms of personal politics, Bohemians are opposed to racism, sexism, class-based elitism and homophobia in any form, whether expressed through public policies or in the context of interpersonal interactions. The Bohemians are also strong supporters of unionism as a vehicle for grass-roots democratic change, feminism and multiculturalism. Some are involved with student politics as well as with state or federal political parties.

The 1990s Bohemians, as young men and women raised in the post-Women’s Movement age, are explicitly concerned with issues concerning women and their empowerment (e.g. in the abortion debate, Bohemians are supporters of the pro-choice position). More generally, they are concerned with the social, cultural and political position of women in Straight society, both from the perspective of feminism and from the related perspective of the revision of traditional notions of masculinity and femininity. Gay men and lesbians in the Bohemian scene and, to a lesser extent, heterosexual men and women, bring an explicit challenge to Straight notions of what it is to be a ‘man’ or ‘woman’. Both work to construct new definitions and accompanying behavioural roles; in particular, overt heterosexist masculinity, theoretically construed as ‘the patriarchy’, is targeted for criticism. I should note that although Bohemians desire more equality between the genders, this desire does not translate into mixed-gender gatherings at all times. For example, gay men who move almost exclusively in gay circles may have few women friends (lesbian or straight); likewise for lesbians with respect to friendships with gay or straight men. Similarly, the concern for racial equality is not reflected in mixed-race gatherings, which are rare in the Bohemian scene.
Changes in attitude to the position of women, and challenges to mainstream notions of masculinity and femininity, are closely allied to a second change, that concerning sexuality. There are two aspects to this change. The first concerns the exploration of one's own sexuality. According to Bohemians, Straight society's homophobia, and structuring of sexuality into an either/or choice between homosexuality and heterosexuality, means that one's assumed heterosexuality should not be taken for granted. Sexual orientation is regarded as subject to change through one's lifetime rather than being fixed, and there is support for those who experiment with their sexual orientation.14

The second aspect of the change in views regarding sexuality relates to the negotiation of sexual behaviour. In keeping with their commitment to feminism, Bohemians deem their sexual negotiations to be more equitable than those negotiations between Straight men and women with which they are commonly contrasted. In addition, the advent of HIV/AIDS (and, more recently, Hepatitis C) has made sexual adventurism a somewhat more dangerous pastime than it was in the sexually liberating era of 'free love' which followed the invention of the Pill (Burgmann 1993:82). While 'safe sex' strategies, such as the use of condoms, dental dams and non-penetrative sex, reduce the risk of transmission of blood-borne diseases, they have also helped to shape a new attitude to sex for Bohemians – one based less on the Straight dichotomy of 'stud[male]/slut [female]' and more on the recognition of equality in sexual matters.

Bohemians are also fervently pro-environment. Some are volunteers in organizations that are dedicated to achieving Green political and social change (such as Greenpeace), and some have participated in environmental protests of one sort or another. This support for the environment extends beyond politics to personal attitudes. Bohemians understand the importance of recycling and, in some cases, follow Green recommendations on household waste, enjoy natural wilderness settings and admire Australian Aboriginal spiritual connections to the land. They abhor proposals to mine in national parks and in environmentally delicate areas, and to log old-growth forests.

Bohemians also shun full-time '9 – 5' work as boring and alienating. They would rather exist on the fringes of the regular economy with less money but with greater autonomy and freedom. Most of those in full-time employment, which is comparatively rare, usually take jobs that allow the expression of personal interests and creativity or which serve to facilitate the political ends outlined above.
Another aspect of the Bohemian ethos is pacifism. Bohemians hold that violence is an unacceptable mode of conduct in all but the most extreme circumstances. The domestic violence of Straight men towards women is particularly singled out as abhorrent and, for some Bohemians, is one of the few areas in which violence (of a defensive rather than offensive sort) can be justified (other situations in which defensive violence might be justified include being assaulted). At the level of national and international politics, the Vietnam conflict (although belonging to another era) is one regarded unequivocally by Bohemians as indefensible. Australia’s involvement in the Gulf War is held to be a foolish and lamentable act, all the more so because it came at a time when the Australian Labor Party was in power federally. For most Bohemians, Left politics and war do not go together.

The use of drugs other than alcohol is another important Bohemian pastime. To say this is not to imply that Bohemians do not drink. But many Bohemians explicitly argue that alcohol plays an important part in much violence and other social problems, and is generally associated with Straight society. By comparison, the use of pot is thought to enhance sociable interaction amongst people and to put the user into a relaxed frame of mind. Chemical drugs such as trips and E are thought to shape more intense and interesting sensual, emotional and intellectual experiences than those associated with alcohol. Their use is said to facilitate profound personal insights.

In using these drugs, Bohemians seek to counter ideas about their effects which they regard as common in Straight society. They explicitly reject, for instance, the Straight idea that drugs such as trips or E cannot be used in a controlled manner and that using any drug is inevitably dangerous. Few think that the use of drugs such as E ‘causes’ unsafe sexual behaviour. In general, Bohemians hold that those who are ideologically committed to and prepared for safe sex practices (e.g. with condoms and dental dams) will, under the influence of E (and other drugs), continue to employ these behavioural strategies. Alternatively, those who show scant regard for safe sex, might, under the influence of E, behave recklessly.

Bohemians hold diverse views regarding injecting drugs. Some of those Bohemians who tell me that they will not inject drugs, attribute this reluctance (and the negative attitudes it implies) to their (present) inability to withstand Straight portrayals of injecting drug use as inevitably dangerous. Others feel that injecting drugs is to become too drug-oriented and more likely to lead to problems. Some cite the cases of friends who have developed drug problems after regularly injecting drugs. However, amidst this diversity of positions, few Bohemians regard injecting drugs as
stigmatizing, at least within the Bohemian scene. They regard as Straight the view of injecting drugs as stigmatizing. Most of those who have injected drugs, or who want to try injecting them, evince little concern to hide these facts.

Two of the Bohemians I interviewed had experienced past ‘problems’ relating to their injecting use of drugs, and several others, reflecting on the heavy drug use that had occurred in the months immediately prior to my fieldwork, felt that their drug use had escalated to problematic levels. Rather than attributing to drugs particular addictive powers (something they identify with Straight understandings of drug use), they are more likely to explain periods of heavy drug use in the following terms: (1) as part of a personal journey – a particular phase that one might pass through in experimenting with different lifestyles, (2) as indicative of personal problems which manifest themselves through problematic drug use or (3) as behaviour appropriate to a particular scene (hence, developing problems with speed is thought to be characteristic of those moving frequently in the ‘speed scene’). Most Bohemians develop social sanctions and controls in an attempt to limit drug-related harm and there is much information regarding such matters flowing through Bohemian networks.

Bohemians desire new experiences – overseas travel, drug use, university study, varied and demanding leisure (and sometimes also work) lives, a diverse friendship network. Bohemians hold that, from such experiences, people reap many rewards – a fuller appreciation of one’s self and of the world, and a greater appreciation of cultural difference, of viewing the world in terms other than those to which one is accustomed. Such experiences lead one away from Straight views, which are held to be based on ignorance, fear or cynicism.

Many Bohemians also mock the ‘ideal’ heterosexual, nuclear-family image created and promoted by Straight society. Drawing on their own biographical experience or on that of friends, and on neo-Marxist, feminist and poststructuralist perspectives, some Bohemians (particularly gay men and lesbians) see the ‘family’ not necessarily as some supportive environment but one replete with unpleasant memories. The emphasis on the heterosexual nuclear family in Straight culture is also seen as excluding those who are not deemed to fit such a narrow definition – gay men and lesbians, single persons, straight couples who choose not to have children. In addition, the family is rejected on the grounds of what it is thought to be associated with: a mortgage on a house ‘in the suburbs’, a desire for economic comfort and the need for deferred gratification (e.g. planning one’s career, gaining promotions).
Another aspect of the Bohemian ethos targets the Straight emphasis on couples, particularly married ones. Bohemians reject what they hold to be the Straight pattern of meeting a prospective partner, developing a 'serious' relationship and committing to marriage. There are two reasons for this belief. Firstly, the critique of couples relates to the anti-family emphasis outlined above; heterosexual couples are the usual basis for families. Secondly, Bohemians regard being committed to another person on a long-term, monogamous basis as impinging on a central Bohemian belief – the freedom to pursue new experiences. While some of these new experiences involve sexual experimentation, it would be a mistake to see the emphasis on remaining single as a sole emphasis on sex. A third reason is the relative youth of most Bohemians, who are passing through a phase which even Straight society recognizes as being characterized by freedom and experimentation. The difference, according to Bohemians, is that Straights see this period as finite, one to be passed over at a later stage in favour of 'Mr or Miss Right'. For Bohemians, it is a long-term pattern. As a result, most Bohemians are single. Those Bohemians who are in relationships must construct them so as to balance carefully the tension between some minimal degree of commitment necessary for a relationship and the desire for personal freedom.

Another feature of the Bohemian lifestyle has been popularly labelled 'New Age', although most Bohemians would, I think, reject such a term. Alternative medicine (such as naturopathy, homoeopathy, iridology, therapeutic massage), astrological charts and tarot card readings are of interest to some Bohemians. Those Bohemians interested in spiritual matters generally reject organized Western forms of religion (e.g. Catholicism, Protestantism) in favour of elements drawn from some Eastern religions (e.g. Buddhism). Another central element of the New-Age movement, personal growth, is a central pursuit for Bohemians (although again, I suspect that most would reject the association with this movement, perhaps because of its largely apolitical stance). Bohemians search for ways in which to express themselves – artistic enterprise, physical movement (dance, skateboarding, other forms of exercise), drug use – and hope to gain new insights into themselves from participation in such activities.

There is also a cluster of values which accompanies these pursuits and beliefs. Bohemians value hedonism and spontaneity – following one's instincts and emotions – and see work and other routines as stifling. This spontaneous action is not the segregated, clandestine and restricted 'play' of the Players, for Bohemians attempt to make life into play rather than restricting play to particular times and places. They reject the pursuit of personal wealth for its own sake. Those who do earn substantial
incomes prefer to spend their money on drugs, music compact discs, saving for overseas travel or clothes, or to redistribute the money indirectly to friends via the provision of drugs or other aspects of leisure consumerism (such as paying for the entry of friends to nightclubs or raves). This last value is one manifestation of a more general communal orientation. Much leisure time and energy is invested in personal relationships, and there is an ethic of generalized reciprocity regarding the provision of resources, information and access to expertise regarding specific areas of knowledge (e.g. using chemical drugs or the workings of the social security system).

Listening to music and reading are two more pursuits in which Bohemians frequently engage. They provide an artistic framework which both constitute central Bohemian values as well as providing a source of such values. Many Bohemians have read at least some of the literature which emerged from the 1960s and 1970s social movements and, through alternative magazines, radio and other media, maintain a keen interest in alternative and progressive cultural trends. A number of musical forms are popular, depending on one’s leisure interests and style – for example, techno, ‘trance’, ‘heavy metal’, ‘world music’, ‘reggae’ and grunge. What is important is not so much the musical type but that none is especially ‘commercial’ and that all can be read as mounting critiques of the ‘mainstream’.16

Finally, Bohemians not only read, watch or listen to the artistic creations of other people, they also engage in artistic pursuits of their own. Some are students enrolled in post-secondary courses which have a creative, artistic component; some produce literary or artistic works – for example, poems or sculptures – for their own satisfaction or that of friends; some play musical instruments either for their own enjoyment or that of fellow musicians, or semi-professionally, while others are involved in musical or artistic production; some are designers of one sort or another; and several have been or are involved in the fields of the visual or performing arts. Whatever the field, there is much Bohemian support for and interest in the pursuit of such activities.

Reconstructing the self

Bohemians seek to create an alternative moral system, a symbolic community (Cohen 1985), the members of which reject the central features of what is seen to be the heterosexist, middle-class, patriarchal, materialist, white, capitalist mainstream – marriage, purchasing a home, owning a new car, raising a family and ‘living in suburbia’. As one gay man said to me, ‘We’re basically anti-family, anti-suburban,
pro-drug and anti-conservative'. His essentially reactive rather than proactive comment contains a significant point: running through the Bohemian value system is an ongoing and constant moral commentary on Straights. This commentary takes two forms.

Bohemians see Straights as the deluded bearers of a massive false consciousness concerning life, capitalism, morality, drug use and role behaviour. In this view, Straights fail to see through the hegemony of bourgeois, middle-class values and aspirations and, as a consequence, are constrained to live boring, staid and unfulfilling lives pursuing unimportant goals. This commentary appears to have its roots in neo-Marxist theories of alienation and capitalism (and, as I show later in the chapter, in earlier Romantic discourses on modern life). Secondly, Straights are thought to be well aware of the problems associated with their lifestyles but continue to live them, either because they are too scared to make the break and pursue what Bohemians consider to be a more personally rewarding lifestyle or, perhaps worse, they are willing to live a lie in order to reap the material rewards of such a lifestyle. They are 'prostitutes' selling their souls in the pursuit of wealth, security or the falsehood of the 'family'. One common aim for Bohemians, then, is the construction of a moral community which lies outside that created by Straights.

Allied to the critique of Straights is the Bohemian desire for self-realization – in 1960s terminology, 'finding yourself' or 'doing your own thing'. Straights are perceived by Bohemians as living either deluded or cynical lives which, through strict adherence to middle-class derived roles, constrain or alienate the self. By contrast, Bohemians see themselves as being engaged in a search for activities, persons and situations which facilitate personal exploration and growth. They value authentic, spontaneous living uncluttered by routine, boredom and the stifling mainstream. There is also a second, political, aspect to this search. In the course of meeting new people and being exposed to new experiences and understandings, Bohemians gradually become supporters of feminist, multiculturalist, environmental, gay and lesbian, and social justice issues. One central and heartfelt element of the critique of the mainstream is anti-police attitudes, particularly with respect to the enforcing of drug laws and the handling of race relations. The police, seen by Bohemians as the principal social control agents of the state, are held to be responsible for the imposition of Straight morality on those who lie outside it, such as drug users and Aborigines.
Not all those who move in the Bohemian scene, however, are equally well versed in debating politics or in throwing off the perceived shackles of their previously suburban existence, hence the need to construct a moral community which can provide and legitimate oppositional views (Berger and Luckmann 1966). While there are Bohemians who have lived and moved in alternative scenes for several years or more, others have only recently become aware of such lifestyles. They may have recently left the parental, often suburban, home to live with fellow students in the inner city. Or, if they are gay or lesbian, they may have ‘come out’ (i.e. publicly acknowledged their sexuality) in the past few months and are still exploring new social scenes.

Some Bohemians (or would-be Bohemians) come from homes in which parents themselves embraced the countercultural values of the 1960s and 1970s. They may already have been well aware of countercultural beliefs, both political and personal, from an early age. The transition to living and moving in Bohemian-inspired scenes may be easier for them than it is for those who have lived a suburban, Straight existence until their late teens. Following Finnegan (1989), I conceptualize this movement into and through the Bohemian scene as an urban path, constituted by and expressed in numerous personal ways. This path – a consciousness-raising process of progressive revelation, self-realization and education – has as its fundamental aim the reconstruction of self and, in the longer term, society (cf. Reich 1970). The would-be Bohemian embarks on a transitional journey in which he or she changes from Straight to ‘groovy’ or ‘cool’.17

I conceptualize the Bohemian path in two additional ways. I use the term ‘transitional’ rather than ‘transformative’ to refer to the temporal dimension of the path. Unlike the Player scene, in which the pivotal moment of transformation from one socially recognized identity to another is the act of injecting drugs, there is no similar rite of passage for Bohemians. While some events and periods are more important than others (see Chapters 7 and 8), journeying along the reconstructive path is held to be an ongoing, lifelong commitment to new ways of being and doing. My choice of ‘reconstructive’ to describe the Bohemian path is meant to suggest a gradual process.

Secondly, with reference to personal change and the role of moral communities, the Bohemian transitional process is a ‘conversion’ (e.g. Antze 1987, Berger and Luckmann 1966, Denzin 1987a, 1987b, Lofland and Stark 1965, Robbins 1988, Stromberg 1993, Travisano 1970). Travisano expresses perhaps the most important aspect of conversion when he notes that changing one’s moral community necessitates
a change in ‘informing character’ (recall my comments on ‘alternation’ in Chapter 3). The new identity one constructs becomes important for all social situations. In the same way, Bohemians seek a new sense of self through their conversion, and facilitate this process through joining, and contributing to, the Bohemian moral community.

The Players, who move in social scenes comprising many non-users and who are ambivalent about the morality of their drug-related actions, have always to manage their double lives. They do so through a dialectic that operates between themes of danger, stigma and secrecy and those of fun, openness and disclosure. For Bohemians, the fundamental dialectic they must manage in their movement in the Bohemian scene is that between seeking self-realization and participating in the construction of Bohemian community. Members of the Bohemian scene make self-realization a possibility by not placing too many burdens on fellow Bohemians in terms of their role duties. They are ‘free’ to pursue their whims. Yet being a member of a community requires some investment in the collective, if only to maintain the most basic and necessary relationships.

The historical context

The values and beliefs of the Bohemians with whom I moved can be seen as the most recent manifestation of cultural values that previously found expression in the countercultures of the 1960s and 1970s. However, these values have historical roots that can be traced back to the original Paris Bohemians and the Romantics of the early nineteenth century. The literature on these social movements is enormous. Without becoming mired in historical and sociological details and debates that are irrelevant to my broader purpose, I want to set the historical context for my discussion of 1990s Bohemians by tracing briefly the development of these values and some of the social movements that have previously expressed them.18

Miller (1977) argues that at the beginning of the nineteenth century bourgeois culture, in the quest for the creation of wealth, suppressed the spiritual, aesthetic dimension in culture and therefore created its antithesis – romantic resistance.19 In France during this period, the weakened grip of Christianity meant that many Restoration youth were faced with the task of creating new answers to old existential questions. Their response was to embrace romantic resistance to the mercenary aspects of bourgeois culture, eventually leading to the original Bohemians of the 1830s – a collection of painters, playwrights, poets and novelists led by Victor Hugo. Bohemia was the ‘social embodiment’ of Romanticism (Campbell 1987:195). Restoration youth labelled the
upholders of bourgeois culture as 'Philistines' (which Miller equates with later terms such as 'straight' [that is, Straight] or 'square'). In nineteenth-century England, the Romantics held similarly oppositional views to those of French youth and drew on Bohemian ideas (Musgrove 1974). They criticized technology, pollution, authority, the unauthentic, rationality and the family, were mostly university-educated and were drawn from wealthy families. They preached austerity and simplicity, sought altered states of consciousness through drug use and pursued the sensual in everyday life.

Miller traces further outbursts of such 'protocultural' values: in San Francisco in 1848, in France in the 1850s and 1860s, in the Paris Commune of 1871, in the Latin Quarter in Paris in the 1890s, and on the Left Bank prior to the First World War (e.g. Green 1986, Seigel 1986). Greenwich Village, rather than Paris, became the place for young American Bohemians to visit after 1914. The 1920s ushered in the age of the 'flapper' (Fass 1977) and Bohemians arrived on Australia's east coast (Kirkpatrick 1992).

Accompanying or being expressed by these twentieth-century social movements were art styles like Dada and Surrealism and the following ideas: sensuality through sex, a greater emphasis on relationships between races, the greater role of women in social and expressive movements (unlike the original Bohemians), the establishing of links between Socialists and Bohemians and between students and workers.


More recently, some of these values found expression in what Robbins (1988) has called the 'new religious movements' (e.g. Glock and Bellah 1976, Damrell 1978, Richardson 1978, Balch and Taylor 1978, Anthony et al 1978, Straus 1976, Ferguson 1980). These movements, which appeared to have grown out of cultural shifts dating from the 1960s and 1970s, were less explicitly political (Robbins 1988:3) and anti-middle class. Instead, their proponents argued that the key to social change lay in self-exploration. In this sense, they conformed to a general observation about the relationship between countercultural movements and music made by Nehring (1993:269):
the Romantic emphasis on the individual artistic consciousness converted the problems of the world into the problems of the individual. Liberation presumably lay in reminding the individual of his or her inner potential; creativity "meant removing the barriers which imprison man from within. (Hence) musicians' self-perception was dominated by the idea that music was the direct result of ... a creative baring of man's inner psychic forces".20

Finally, turning to the Australian context, I note two relevant studies. Helms (1986) gives an account of what she labels 'urban nomads' – highly mobile young men and women who lived in shared houses. She (Helms 1986:11) describes their 1980s ethos in the following way:

a synthesis of values from a variety of influences, primarily the social trends of the 1960's [sic] and the Australian "frontier" culture. These values were in part derived from those espoused by young people in the 1960's, values enunciated by the "hippies", "flower power" and alternative lifestyle movements, values of openness and experimentation, of change. The second major contribution to the ethos is from the frontier/rural values of Australia, particularly the attitude concerning the mutual dependence of those who inhabit the frontier and the emphasis on high spatial mobility.

Dance and Mugford (1992) give an account of St. Oswald's Day, a parodic religious day invented by a group of Canberra 'drug enthusiasts' who rejected 'straight society'. While the short article is written to address conceptual issues in the drug field, there is sufficient detail about the group to place them in the lineage of protocultural movements. These 'non-violent anarchists' pitted the carnival elements of the saint's day (e.g. excessive drug-taking, disorder) against the sobriety and propriety of 'conventional society':

The St. Oswald's Day celebration intentionally re-creates and cements a sense of community, deliberately and irreverently playing on (and hence distancing the group from) conventional norms and values. That sense of community includes an explicit rejection of aspects of normal, "straight" society and the legal codes erected around certain of the psychotropic drugs our respondents liked to consume. Rather than being a feature to apologise for, the very illegality of the drugs is part of a bond within this community which rejects conventionality in a deep and fundamental way (Dance and Mugford 1992: 601-2).

The 'drug enthusiasts' lacked attachment to the Protestant work ethic and employed a non-normative route, drug use, to achieve hedonistic ends.
There are clear differences amongst the disparate protocultural or Romantic movements of the last two hundred years. For example, Bennett Berger (1971), following Cowley (1934), has argued that equality for women was a fundamental Bohemian value by 1920. In a later publication (Berger 1981:151-2), he drew attention to a major criticism of the countercultures of the 1960s and 1970s: that while the members of such movements criticized many existing social and cultural arrangements, they did little to redress the subordinate position of women (see also Musgrove 1974:23, Willis 1978:128). Other authors, such as Cock (1979), claim that countercultural movements of the 1970s attempted to revise traditional models of masculinity and femininity, and Polsky (1971:162) noted that many of 1960s male beats he interviewed were bisexual.

Another point of difference has to do with the relative emphasis on the political and the expressive in protocultural movements. The members of the 1970s and 1980s new religious movements, and the urban nomads described by Helms, eschewed politics in favour of more personal programmes of liberation. The countercultures of the 1960s and 1970s appeared to emphasise the expressive and aesthetic over the political; their members ‘dropped out’. Willis (1978), for example, argued that the hippies ignored political analysis in favour of a flamboyant lifestyle; thus there was a cultural inability to develop the radical politics necessary to create the conditions for long-term survival. According to Willis, the emphasis on subjective experience (e.g. drug use) undercut theoretical knowledge of inequality and exploitation, and the desire to devise political strategies for reform. Kenniston (1971) specifically separated the drug-using college students from the student political radicals (although he conceded that there was overlap between the two groups) and Roszak (1973) noted a split between the Bohemians, with their concentration on reforming the personality structure (i.e. the self), and those comprising the New Left, who were more concerned with the social structure. According to Matza (1961), this dialectic was also apparent in earlier Bohemian movements.

Despite the differences amongst protocultural movements, however, there are also important similarities. Existing social and cultural structures, particularly those associated with the middle class, were deemed alienating to the self (recall my discussion of ‘authenticity’ and Romanticism in Chapter 1). As a consequence, the members of these movements emphasized the discovery of a spontaneous, original and authentic self. This self was to be found through some or all of the following pursuits: a voluntary detachment from excessive reliance on material goods, a yearning for new experiences, a desire for self-discovery, an interest in (and
sometimes production of) various esoteric literatures, arts and musical styles, an identification with the downtrodden and oppressed, a communal ethic and the use of mind-altering drugs to achieve expressive ends. More specifically, the members of most of these movements, like the 1990s Bohemians with whom I moved, had to manage the dialectic between self-realization and the construction of community.21

The 1990s Bohemians address themselves to the same difficult task of striking a balance between living for the here and now and sharing new experiences, and the practicalities of setting up cultural and social spaces in which these experiences and the accompanying lifestyles can flourish (see Chapter 7). This is a paradox noted by Peter Berger (Berger, Berger and Kellner 1973:211), among others. Tempering one’s search for the spontaneous with the need for structured study to pass university courses is one example of this new pragmatism. In addition, the 1990s Bohemians must also grapple with the opposition between those who emphasize the political and those who emphasize the expressive positions within their community, attempting to fuse political critique with prescriptions for cultural change (many Bohemians manage to take, and to act in accordance with, both positions). In this sense, they may represent the vanguard of a possibility noted by Peter Berger (1970:346-47), that those institutions and social roles deemed to be alienating will be reformed in the light of countercultural critiques. Although rather unwieldy, perhaps an appropriate label in the 1990s would be ‘pragmatic Bohemians’.

A sociology of the Bohemian scene

Lability

Like the social scene involving the Players, the Bohemian scene is characterized by lability; that is, social relationships may be of a relatively short-term duration and there is a high turnover of personnel. Yet the scene is not a totally fluid one. More accurately, most people belong to primary groups of consociates, that is, those sharing time and space, who may have been consociates for several years or longer. For example, one primary group is based on shared teenage years spent in a country town and another on membership of a gay scene. Others had been formed out of attendance at the same university or common leisure pursuits. Over time, some of these people might drift away into other social scenes and meet new consociates, or re-establish contact with past consociates. The original consociates then become contemporaries, people who share time but not space.
If we were to break down the Bohemian scene into its network or social organizational constituents at any given time, we would first find a series of tightly-knit groups, those consociates who are daily or weekly companions. They are the people with whom one shares a house, works, studies and frequently socializes. In addition, through bridging weak ties, the members of these groups are connected to, and interact with, the members of other, similarly tight-knit clusters which cohere around similar activities, although not necessarily in the same scene. For example, at a particular point in time, there was a link between one house, in which lived three bogs who had attended the same secondary school, and a house the members of which often moved in the gay and lesbian scene (at least as it was manifested in licensed premises). There are many such clusters and (sometimes unlikely) connections throughout the Bohemian scene. People move within a particular scene – gay and lesbian, student, raver – but look to extend links to those in other cultural streams. Similarly, the clusters within scenes are also joined by links, so the connecting bridging ties extend both within a scene and to those outside it.

While the picture yielded by a snapshot is static, the ongoing reality is one of flux. People may move between clusters within a cultural scene, forming new assemblies of persons, or change scenes and begin to move more in a connected, yet different scene. New people are recruited into clusters through common interest. In this sense, the social processes of the Bohemian scene are also rendered understandable by employing Mayer’s (1966) concepts of the action-set and quasi-group. People join or participate in action-sets which are established for the enactment of a specific activity on a specific occasion, perhaps attending a rave or a nightclub. Monitoring action-sets over a period of time allows discernment of those regularly recruited to the action-set. This larger pool is the quasi-group. While my analysis of the Player social scene also employed these concepts, there is a significant difference between Player and Bohemian social processes. The Player quasi-group is relatively small, comprising perhaps five to eight people. The quasi-group for Bohemians is virtually limitless. Bohemians work constantly to extend their quasi-groups and value a large and diverse pool of consociates and contemporaries upon which to call for leisure activity.

In his model, Mayer also distinguished a third level of activity: the ‘category’, that is, the total set of persons bounded by a common interest. He located the processes of the action-set and quasi-group within the category. There is no such category of the Bohemian scene unless we extend it to ludicrous, and unhelpful, proportions. The links between clusters extend out into all areas of urban life. The clusters in the Bohemian scene do not operate within a bounded entity but extend out and into the urban milieu – to family, to work associates and to friends in other cities, both within Australia and overseas.
Another important sociological feature of the Bohemian scene is the way various social networks are combined. Unlike Players, who rely on network segregation, role segregation and the presentation of multiple selves in pursuit of the game, Bohemians work to integrate their networks of fellow Bohemians. Particular persons and sets may be more closely identified with certain activities and scenes than others. There may be personality clashes between certain persons which mean that they avoid each other. A person living in a particular shared house may find the style of the house not to his or her liking and may elect to move to more agreeable surrounds. None of these features of Bohemian existence alters the fact that, in each of the social situations in which a Bohemian finds him or herself, the cultural emphasis is on presenting and transacting the same self. Obviously, this self changes as one moves along the Bohemian path, but the important point is that there is little network segregation and therefore little role segregation. Bohemians work at creating and maintaining a totalizing network which consists of all of their usual consociates. Rarely does bringing different sets of friends together result in disclosures that might embarrass the Bohemian or seriously undermine the self being presented.

Although Bohemians maintain (often difficult) relationships with Straight family and, to a lesser extent, with Straight friends, these persons are not included in the totalizing Bohemian social network for they lie outside the Bohemian moral community. Family and friends who are not Straight may be included in the network. However, this does not mean that meetings with Straights are seen as occasions for false presentation. Young newcomers to the Bohemian scene may have to return to Straight suburban homes, being unable to afford to move out. They may have been living in Bohemian shared houses for only a few months and still be grappling with exposure to new scenes and persons. They may not be comfortable talking about their newly-discovered experiences and understandings, which may be radically at odds with those of family and friends (particularly those relating to experimentation with drugs).

With increasing participation in the Bohemian scene, however, Bohemians may redefine Straight relationships as relatively unimportant and disregard unfavourable responses when they present their Bohemian self. They learn the skills and gain the confidence necessary to (often reluctantly) attend the occasional Straight gathering (e.g. family weddings, Christmas celebrations). However, such affairs frequently end in fierce arguments as Bohemians, secure and confident in their own moral community, bring their newly-acquired critical perspective to bear on family relationships or values. The end result of such clashes of moral perspective is often the replacement of the nuclear family with shared-house co-residents and close friends. In Bohemian parlance, these co-residents and friends become 'my family'.
Shared houses

Bohemian networks articulate through the shared houses in which most Bohemians live. This form of living appears to have grown out of the emphasis on shared living in countercultures but is a more manageable, smaller version of a commune. Some shared houses are ‘gay houses’, others are shared by bogans, straights, students or grungies. Some are shared by just two persons, others have up to five people officially living in them, plus the occasional interstate or overseas visitor or friend in need of a bed for a night or two (or longer). The set of houses with which I became most familiar was just one specific example of the articulation of several themes which are broadly shared across other houses.

Physically, the shared houses in which I spent most fieldwork time were generally large, older dwellings of a type once typical in Perth’s inner city. Usually, they have numerous bedrooms, a living area, a large kitchen, and a bathroom. In these houses, the living areas and kitchen tend to be the centres of public interaction. The bedrooms are usually places of private refuge away from the frenetic public activity of the public areas. They are places for peace and quiet, time with lovers, places to work out conflicts away from the public glare. The houses are generally within walking distance of the inner city, popular for its eclectic mix of nightclubs, pubs, restaurants and cafes.

To demonstrate the frequent changes in the residents of a shared house, I focus on one house over a period of twenty-one months. When first set up, this particular house comprised three gay men – Evatt, Ken and Frank – and one straight woman – Paula. Paula left to set up house with her male partner and another straight woman, Miranda, moved in. However, due to some personal and family problems, Miranda also moved out shortly afterwards. Simon, a gay man, moved in, moving to another shared house several months later – apparently to recover from the heavy drug use which had continued for several months prior to his departure – and Georgia, a lesbian, took his room. Frank then left to join a lover in a shared house in Sydney. This brought Phil, a gay man, to the house. He left after three months, following a build-up of tension between him and other house residents, and moved into a flat. Another gay man, John, moved in. There followed a period of relative stability and more restrained socializing and drug use for several months before Georgia departed to take up residence with her partner. Kath, a bisexual woman, was her replacement. Several months later, Kath moved out, as did John. This left Evatt and Ken. Ken went to stay with relatives, hoping to save enough money to travel overseas. Evatt surrendered the lease and moved house, setting up with a straight friend, Don, in a nearby street.
For most of its life during my fieldwork, the house contained four residents, although their identities changed several times. For the most part it was a gay house with only one straight person sharing at any one time. Through the twenty-one months of its existence, the ten occupants were gay or lesbian apart from Paula, Miranda and Kath (the young woman who identified herself as bisexual and who, at the time of her residence, was engaged in a relationship with a man). For part of this time, a young, straight man, Charlie, would often ‘stay over’ as he was a close friend of Evatt and their lifestyle included much drug use and nightclubbing. His parental home was far away in Perth’s sprawling suburbs and the sub-standard public transport system made it difficult to reach university (the house was closer to university and public transport).

The economic structure of Bohemian shared houses shows great variation. There is no definitive pattern regarding economic management, other than the basic sharing of essential costs – rent (and associated costs in setting up a house), and telephone and electricity bills. In some houses, residents buy their own food and cooking is done on an ad hoc basis. In others, there is a higher degree of organization and residents may contribute a set amount of money each week or fortnight for food and other consumables, as well as agreeing to a roster of household duties. Sometimes, this higher degree of organization is associated with older Bohemians who have extensive experience in shared-house living and who prefer some degree of comfort and a sense of ‘home’.

The various dispositions of residents may also shape economic arrangements. In some houses, the economic arrangement may be consistent with socialist principles. In one house, for example, the three residents agreed to pay unequal rent (according to their economic means) but then drew lots for the different-sized bedrooms (as it turned out, the man who had contributed most received the smallest bedroom). In others, the holder of the rental lease might get the largest bedroom and pay a higher proportion of the rent. Or the lessee may take more active control over the conditions under which new tenants move in; for instance, in one house, the senior resident charged a woman resident less for her bedroom because it was the noisiest in the house (it opened onto the lounge room). Therefore the economic structure of Bohemian shared houses reflects the dialectic between self and community, a dialectic managed differently in different houses.
Negotiating house style

Bohemian shared houses can be placed on a continuum, depending on the level of social activity which occurs within them. One pole represents 'open houses', the other 'quiet houses'. Open houses are characterized by a high degree of socializing (including visits by many who are 'friends of friends'), 'partying', drug-taking (and, less often, drug-dealing), and large numbers of visitors drawn from different scenes. In quiet houses, the residents are content to lead a relatively sedate lifestyle, being visited by a small number of friends and using drugs only occasionally. There is also movement between the two poles as Bohemians go through various phases on the reconstructive path and, as the described house shows, as house styles move through different phases. Living in open houses is generally (but not exclusively) associated with younger Bohemians whereas the residents of quiet houses may have put their days of excessive drug-taking and manic socializing behind them in favour of less rowdy, but no less Bohemian, pursuits.

In her thesis on shared houses in Perth, Helms (1986) persuasively argued, following Strauss (1978), that shared houses could be seen as 'negotiated orders'. The style of a shared house, that which I have summed up as an open or quiet house but which has many more dimensions to it (there are different types of open), is arrived at through constant negotiation between the co-residents and, to a lesser extent, between the co-residents and their visitors. Furthermore, in a labile social scene, shared-house style is not static. The negotiations do not result in a once-and-for-all decision being made; rather, the style of a house is a matter for ongoing debate. It may, for example, change radically with the departure of central personnel. Some members of their large friendship networks might continue to visit the house but others might not and, consequently, a house might 'quieten down'. The presence of several luminous personalities, heavy drug use and a vast number of visitors might contribute to a very open, 'chemical house' (one in which drugs other than pot are used frequently). Sometimes, negotiations fail and Bohemians leave a shared house to seek accommodation more suited to their personal and social style. This was the case when one Bohemian, Stu, said that he wanted to move from the house in which he resided. It had become 'too open' with heavy drug use and dealing, and a constant stream of visitors he barely knew. In another case, Don left the house in which he was living because he had begun studying again and found the house too noisy. In this negotiating, one must balance self-interest with commitment to the house and to its fellow occupants and their style.
There is also a private/public dichotomy to the negotiation of house style. Much of the negotiation following one heavy drug-using period in the shared house described above was carried out in private settings, either in bedrooms (which, in the case of the principal negotiators, were only selectively or never public spaces) or when visitors were not present. For several weeks, several of the people who had been involved in the heavy drug use played out, in private, recriminations and negotiations concerning personal relationships. These closed discussions and manoeuvres had repercussions for the public nature of the house. It ‘quietened down’.

Differences in the interactional styles of both the house occupants and their visitors (and the resulting ways in which house space is used) is another aspect to the negotiation of house style. For example, the two female occupants of the described house, Kath and Georgia (residing at different times but occupying the same bedroom), and two of the gay men, Ken and John, participated in the public spaces of the house much less so than did Frank, Evatt and Simon. Those who avoid public space may be less happy about a shared house becoming open and may either negotiate a style more suited to their needs or find more suitable accommodation.

There is a final aspect to the structure of shared houses which is particularly relevant to the chapters that follow – that concerning sexuality. Co-residents in a shared house do not, as a rule, conduct sexual relationships with one another. There is an outward vectoring of sexuality. The negotiation of shared-house style can be a tricky affair at the best of times and Bohemians do not want the added complications of sexually intimate relationships to entangle the negotiation process further. Furthermore, whether gay, lesbian or straight, most residents in Bohemian shared houses are single, or at least the relationships in which they engage are not those of the long-term, monogamous type. Being in a long-term, committed relationship may constrain the opportunities for self-development for which Bohemians search constantly.

My task in the following two chapters is to examine how Bohemians create a sense of moral community and purpose through common activity (such as drug use), experience and biography. In other words, how does the reconstruction of persons take place? In Chapter 7, I focus on a series of symbolic encounters, including those built around drug use, amongst diverse members of the Bohemian scene. These encounters constitute and express the personal ways along the Bohemian path to the reconstruction of self. Chapter 8 deals with another category of symbolic encounter, the ritual event, through a consideration of raves (all-night dance parties differentiated from other dance parties by the absence of a liquor licence). Ritual events are represented by Bohemians as significant moments in the journey along the reconstructive path.
Notes

1 In keeping with the typographic conventions of Chapters 3 – 5, I have adopted upper case for the term 'Bohemian'.

2 There are different ways of describing the homosexual community and its members. The community is often officially described as 'Gay and Lesbian', as in the internationally renowned Sydney 'Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival' or the 'Gay and Lesbian Choir'. Homosexual men are sometimes described as 'gay(s)' (particular in the United States) and sometimes as 'gay men' or 'gay males'. Homosexual women are usually referred to as 'lesbians' rather than the tautological 'lesbian women'. Homosexual Bohemians sometimes talk about the community as 'the Gay community' (meaning the 'Gay and Lesbian' community) and describe shared houses containing gay men and lesbians as 'gay houses'. This use of 'gay' to mean both male and female may date back to the period before lesbians had fought to become a political force. I use the term 'gay men' when discussing homosexual men in etic terms. When employing quotations from Bohemians, I remain faithful to whichever way they have described these categories. The articles in Aldrich and Witherspoon (1992) describe various aspects of Australian gay and lesbian cultures and social scenes, none of which is located in Perth.

3 For more sociodemographic detail on Perth's inner city, see McDonald, Hales and Associates (1989).

4 In the time since my field research, one of the nightclubs, while retaining gay and lesbian patrons, has become less oriented towards the gay and lesbian scene.

5 There seems to be ongoing debate about whether bisexuals and bisexuality have a political and conceptual place in the Gay and Lesbian community. While there is support for experimentation with any form of non-heterosexuality, some members of the Gay and Lesbian community equate bisexuality with 'fence-sitting' – the inability to choose. I discuss sexual orientation in the context of the Bohemian ethos (see later this chapter).


7 There has yet to emerge a significant academic literature on ravers. However, Kenny (1993), Masterson (1993), McRobbie (1993) and Redhead (1993) discuss various aspects of raves and the associated social scenes. I discuss raves in Chapter 8.

8 There is a distinct lack of academic literature on bogans. Elsewhere (Moore 1994b:14-15), I have documented that Perth skinheads explicitly contrasted themselves with young, Australian, working-class men whom they called 'bogs'. Bogs possessed some of the defining characteristics of bogans but seemed to belong, in skinhead labelling, to a more generalized category. The bogan style also seems to have much in common with that of the English 'rockers' of the 1960s (cf. Cohen 1980). I recall that during my secondary school years in Perth (1975-79), there existed a youth style very similar to that of bogans, the
members of which my schoolfriends and I called ‘rocks’ (sometimes spelt in graffiti as ‘rocs’, as in ‘rocs rule’). Christie and Rich (1989) provide a New Zealand example of drinking in what appears to be a similar scene.

9 Metcalfe (1988:73-88) provides a particularly interesting discussion of the ‘larrikin mode of class struggle’ in the context of the lives of coal miners in New South Wales. He sees it not so much as an Australian tradition but rather as a specific Australian expression of a more general tradition belonging to oppressed peoples living under the yoke of capitalist relations. One point he makes is particularly interesting, given my concern with selfhood. He argues that a central larrikin trait was the emphasis on the intrinsic nature of human worth which took the form of a discourse on Being – larrikins had ‘heart’, a quality Metcalfe likens to the ‘soul’ of African-Americans. Recall also my summary of Hannerz’s comments on authenticity and a new sense of human dignity in Chapter 1.

10 See Chapter 3 (Note 8) for other authors who have dealt with the issue of social controls on drug use.

11 As I noted in Chapter 2, bags are becoming more common and foils correspondingly less so.

12 See also Langer (1976, 1977), who presents analyses of the ‘rationalisation of the “hang-loose ethic”’, that is, the change from ideologically driven dealing in psychedelic drugs to that shaped primarily by the profit motive; and Damrell (1978:190-97), who discusses drug-dealing practices in countercultural social scenes.

13 There are, of course, more levels between the pound dealer and the grower but I never met anyone in these levels and did not ask any questions regarding these levels.

14 The issue of gay sexual orientation is a complex one. Arguing that gay sexuality is physiologically based has been an important political strategy for gay activists in combating arguments that gay men are ‘unnatural’. However, some gay men with whom I have spoken posit the existence of a continuum of sexual orientation and accept the argument that sexuality is subject to change over one’s lifetime (see also my comments in Note 5). Similar views were recently expressed by some of the gay men and lesbians interviewed for a feature article in the weekend edition of the national daily newspaper, The Australian (May 27-28, 1995, Review:1).

15 Although I did not collect specific material on family relationships, one thing that strikes me is the high incidence of divorce amongst the parents of Bohemians. Of the twenty interviewees, I am aware of at least eleven whose parents are divorced (and there may be one or two others in the other nine). In addition, several Bohemians I did not interview mentioned parental divorce in casual conversation. However, I make no causal claims regarding such material.

16 In the time between field research and writing, such music has become increasingly popular.
17 Bohemian use of 'cool' differs to that of Players. For Players, 'cool' is restricted to one's ability to keep secret potentially stigmatizing information about drug use. For Bohemians, it is a broader category including all those who are not Straight. Bohemians, and the scenes in which they move, may also be described as 'hard-core'. I deal with this issue in Chapter 8.

18 This discussion complements the one about historical changes in the relationship between self and role that I provided in Chapter 1.

19 As I noted in Chapter 1, Campbell (1987) also provides an explanation for the birth of Romanticism, which complements that of Miller (as well as differing on several points of emphasis). I follow Miller's exposition rather than Campbell's because he is more explicitly concerned with the links between Romanticism and those movements that followed it.

20 Rorty (1976:11) makes a similar point about the cultural importance of Romanticism and the development of a notion of the 'individual'.

21 The need to manage the dialectic between self and community is not, of course, restricted to Western protocultural movements of the last two centuries. For example, Myers (1986) provides an ethnographic account of the way in which this dialectic pervades the everyday lives of the Pintubi Aborigines of Central Australia.

22 Baum (1986) and Helms (1986) provide discussions of shared-house living which set forth, in more detail, several of the substantive themes I explore in this section.
In this chapter, I work ethnographically to show how symbolic encounters amongst Bohemians constitute and express the dialectic between self-realization and the creation of Bohemian community. Furthermore, I explore how this ever-present dialectic is expressed through two Bohemian discourses which arise in the context of these encounters. First of all, there is the ‘outer’ discourse. Its subject is the flawed political and moral convictions of Straight society and, sometimes, the Bohemian responses to this perceived bankruptcy. This discourse constitutes and expresses an anti-Straight commentary, as well as constructing alternative, non-Straight realities. It derives from the interaction between Straight and Bohemian modes of thought and action. A major component of this outer discourse is the parodic representation of Straights, which receives considerable coverage in this chapter. Being parodic, it requires an audience. Parodic representation simultaneously establishes distance from Straight society for Bohemians, as well as creates a sense of belonging (Cohen 1982) for the diverse people who constitute collectively the Bohemian scene.

The second discourse is ‘inner’ in that it deals with personal, inner experience of Bohemian activities, such as drug use or artistic production, and with perceived changes to one’s self as a result of such experiences. This discourse, like the outer one, is ‘social’ in the sense that its enactment belongs to symbolic encounters amongst Bohemians, and it may be implicitly anti-Straight. However, it differs from the outer because its primary focus is the self and its continuing realization. Participating in the Bohemian scene involves participating in both discourses – the political and intellectual (outer) and the expressive and aesthetic (inner).
The context for symbolic encounters

Bohemian symbolic encounters occur within the social and cultural context of the path to reconstruction. Persons are introduced to Bohemians in a number of ways: through attending university, living in the inner city or having friends in the alternative scenes from which the Bohemian scene draws its members. They move into and through the Bohemian scene, sometimes joining friends in similar inner-city, Bohemian scenes in other state capitals, especially Sydney and Melbourne. Over time, they are exposed to a wide range of ideas and activities which challenge Straight wisdom. Bohemians move house frequently so as to be exposed to new circles of Bohemians, each with their own contribution to make to the ideology of the reconstructive, transitional path.

One Bohemian, Don, summarized several aspects of the reconstructive path in a conversation we had while walking back to his house during a break from a rave. He said that one of the features of university life he most enjoyed was befriending people drawn from lifestyles and backgrounds different from his own. In this way, he explained, he could experience aspects of other lifestyles (such as the rave we had just attended, his first and only rave at the time of writing) without necessarily having to live that particular lifestyle full-time. Through such experiences, he felt he was able to gain some, albeit limited, insights into other non-Straight ways of being and doing. Other Bohemians followed similarly varied personalized ways. One, a male Bohemian previously a member of the bogan style not especially renowned for its progressive stance towards women, undertook a university course in Women’s Studies so as to better understand feminism and its critique of ‘traditional’ masculinity. Another Bohemian decided to pursue her lesbian sexuality after a series of relationships with men.

Persons choose their own way in which to participate in the Bohemian scene and to move along the reconstructive path, while all the time contributing to and sharing in the broader community aims of self-realization and political change. These personal ways are constituted by, and expressed in, symbolic encounters with other members of the scene. During symbolic encounters, fundamental Bohemian beliefs and values are created, expressed, negotiated and made available to newcomers to the scene.

Symbolic encounters, personal ways and the reconstructive path are all grounded sociologically in Bohemian shared houses. I represent shared houses as one particular instance of a borderland (Rosaldo 1989) in which intersections between diverse cultural streams frequently occur (Hannerz 1992). That the shared houses about which
I write can be conceptualized in this manner is evidenced in the comments of some of their occupants. One Bohemian said to me that one of the purposes of the shared houses in which he had lived was to provide places where people can 'mix and meet people they normally wouldn't meet'. Another said that shared houses such as the one in which he lived (which numbered homosexual and heterosexual men and women amongst its residents or regular visitors) were contributing to 'the breakdown of stereotypes of gay men'. Both comments contain a similar idea: that Bohemian shared houses provide spaces in which diverse people come together and exchange ideas in an effort to create greater understanding and tolerance, and, through such exchanges, to aid in the negation of the false consciousness or cynical attitudes thought to be generated by Straight society. They identify the explicitly political and moral content of such creative and transitional spaces.

Cultural intersections within shared houses take the form of symbolic encounters which occur amongst the residents and their visitors. Symbolic encounters can be divided into two categories. In the first belong those core symbolic encounters which lie at the heart of Bohemian community. The symbolic content of these encounters is highly charged; it concerns central Bohemian values such as the development of radical critiques of Straight morality. Without participation in at least some of these core symbolic encounters, the transitional process would be impossible. The newcomer to the Bohemian scene would be left without adequate social, moral and ideological support for the reconstruction of self. The second category of symbolic encounter consists of those instances in which Bohemians redefine and remake everyday, mundane activities (i.e. those in which Straights also engage) into Bohemian activities, which constitute and express the values created and negotiated in symbolic encounters belonging to the first category. Subtending both types of symbolic encounter is the dialectic between self-realization and Bohemian community.

Core symbolic encounters

I choose to explore the interplay between self and community, and between inner and outer discourses, through ethnographic description of the symbolic encounters that arise in the context of two core Bohemian activities: (1) smoking pot within shared houses and (2) discussing male behaviour and, more particularly, the (sometimes parodic) commentaries on the behaviour of Straight men.
'Basically, we’re just smoking drugs’

The words of my subheading are taken from an exchange which took place in a shared house one Saturday afternoon. Evatt, Tim, Mick and Ernie were sitting in the kitchen talking and taking turns at the bucket bong. I was in the lounge playing a Nintendo game with Georgia while Kelly looked on. Through the open front door walked a friend of Evatt, Millie, who asked casually, ‘So what’re you guys up to?’ Tim’s laconic reply was, ‘Basically, we’re just smoking drugs’. This brought laughter from Millie and from those of us playing Nintendo in the lounge who had overheard the kitchen conversation. In addition to its humorous content, however, Tim’s deceptively straightforward reply describes a philosophy of drug use and a known style of symbolic action.

One of the most frequent social activities undertaken by members of the Bohemian scene is smoking pot. As Becker (1953) has argued, the marijuana user must learn to discern the subtle effects of marijuana and to define the experience as pleasurable. Likewise, newcomers to the Bohemian scene who do not smoke pot or who smoke it infrequently may claim that the drug makes them ‘sleepy’ or ‘vague’. Through symbolic encounters involving pot, the Bohemian learns to define the experience as pleasant and sociable. However, he or she also learns a lot more.

Although Bohemians smoke pot when they are alone, I am more concerned here with its part in social interaction. Smoking pot is overwhelmingly thought to be a social activity by Bohemians. Bohemian cultural expectations that pot relaxes, relieves stress and decreases anxiety and social inhibition lead to statements like ‘marijuana is such a social drug’. This link between pot and sociability is frequently contrasted with the perceived association between alcohol and violence (or generalized aggression) deemed typical of drinking comportment amongst Straight males.

If several Bohemians sit down to smoke pot in a shared house, the person who provides the drug generally becomes the ‘packer’, that is, the person who ‘packs’ the pot into the metal cone integral to bong smoking. The packer is usually one or several of the house residents. However, as visitors to shared houses sometimes bring pot to share, they may also assume the role of packer. Once someone has assumed the packer role, he or she generally remains packer until relinquishing responsibility (e.g. if he or she has to leave the gathering or if his or her pot runs out). If the smoking tempo is deemed to be too slow by those present, the packer may be nudged along or a change of packer suggested. Generally, other smokers will not attempt to take over the role of packer by taking charge of the implements necessary for smoking.
To begin the smoking session, the packer asks everyone present, 'Would you like a cone?'. As each person assents, the packer will further ask, 'With or without?'. This question recognizes diversity in pot smoking styles; in other words, does the person being offered the cone smoke pot 'with or without' tobacco? The packer then 'mulls up', that is, prepares the pot for smoking by placing it inside a cereal bowl, tobacco tin or cup and cutting it finely with scissors. Some Bohemians use paper for the mulling process, holding it a slight angle as they break-up the pot 'buds' with their fingers, sorting out the seeds and stalks from the smokable portions. The seeds roll away from the pot, to be collected for growing or eating. If, amongst the Bohemians present, there have been requests for both 'with' and 'without', the packer prepares two bowls/cups of pot, one of which contains pot mixed with tobacco and one which does not. The packer then invites each person in turn to partake of the cone, which has been filled in accordance with the person's answer to the with/without question and either placed into the metal cone-seat of the bong or handed to the smoker. If there is only one container for preparation, the packer may offer the 'without' cones first, before adding tobacco. Should friends arrive during the session, as happened in my opening excerpt, they, too, are offered cones. At no time during the smoking session should smokers ask the packer for a cone or expect to receive a cone out of turn. Exceptions to this rule include having an intimate, close relationship with the packer/owner of the pot or if the packer/owner is deemed to owe the smoker a favour (and recognizes this fact). Another exception comes in the form of one man specifically named as a shameless demander of cones.

In the particular house in which the exchange between Tim and Millie took place, pot was generally smoked from bongs, hence the fine chopping with scissors. The preparation of joints, another pot-smoking form favoured by many Bohemians, entails a slightly different process. The joint roller is, like the packer, usually the provider of the pot. He or she will roll the pot in cigarette-rolling papers, light the completed joint, take a few puffs and pass it (to the left, according to some Bohemians) to the next person. The joint then circulates amongst all those who are smoking until it is exhausted. The pot for joints is almost always rolled with tobacco and, according to one Bohemian with substantial experience of different scenes, it is with joints that the practice of mixing pot and tobacco originated. According to him, the mixing of tobacco and pot for bong-cones is a relatively recent development in the scenes with which he is familiar, probably in the past five years or so.
The preparation of pot and the forms of smoking chosen express the dialectic between self and community. In the joint form, the pot is passed from person to person rather than being consumed in the one-person dose of the cone. For this reason, smoking pot in joints is sometimes seen as ‘more social’ than smoking it in cones. However, smoking pot from a bong, especially of the bucket variety, is deemed to be more economic and faster (though not necessarily more effective) than joints in producing an almost instantaneous and strong intoxication; the bucket bong is the smoking equivalent of injecting drugs. Each Bohemian gets ‘stoned’ more quickly – a personally experienced state. This route to intoxication may be faster because of the ingestion of nicotine (if the smoker chooses ‘with’) and, more importantly, because the bong smoker generally smokes an entire cone in one ‘hit’. As bucket bongs are also more difficult to hide in the unlikely event of a police raid or visit by a Straight family member or friend, and are harsher on the throat, their use indicates a commitment to maximizing the inner orientation on the part of the smoker. Bohemians who prefer to smoke ‘buckets’ generally smoke joints only if there is nothing but ‘leaf’ available. The occupants of different shared houses prefer different smoking methods. A Bohemian who smokes bucket-bongs at home might smoke joints, pipes or non-bucket bongs when visiting friends, and vice-versa. Generally, one accepts the pot in the form in which it is offered. In some houses, smokers can choose their smoking method as the residents possess bongs of both types, as well as papers, tobacco and other pot-smoking necessities.

The conversational and behavioural forms which accompany the smoking of pot express the dialectic between inner and outer discourses. The talk is the lateral, sometimes disconnected conversation of the stoned and moves constantly between inner and outer. The packer has sorted out who wants what and has passed around the first batch of cones or the lit joint. All those present may strike up a group conversation about a particular topic, for instance, recent political events, details of the next rave, the quality of the currently available pot, one’s often difficult relationships with Straight parents and friends, one’s own artistic pursuits – say, a recent musical ‘jam’ session – or those of friends, details of the recent activities of mutual friends in other Australian cities or the contents of one’s university course.

At varying points in the conversational flow, particularly if there are more than four or five people present, the assembled group may break into dyads or triads to talk separately. Some of them may have found the particular topic of conversation irrelevant, boring or not in keeping with their present stoned mood. They may turn to others and talk about some other topic; for instance, the effect of the pot they have
smoked. At other points, when the conversation has moved on from that topic which caused them initially to disengage, the carriers of these separate conversations may turn their attention back to the assembled set as a whole and continue discussion as a collective.

A second round of cones is offered as conversation continues. Sometimes, one, several or all of those present lapse into silence for several minutes, particularly if there is music playing and people 'vague out' listening to it, or if the effects of the pot are strong. Vaguing out severs the Bohemian from the surrounding conversational flow, momentarily releasing him or her to pursue personal thoughts and feelings shaped by the ambience of the occasion – the music, the assembled Bohemians, the general tenor of the session. Sometimes, someone's interest is captured by some object on the table, perhaps a newspaper or magazine, or a poster on the wall. Abruptly, someone might leave the conversation and, if the house residents possess the necessary equipment, go to play a Nintendo game (see below). Someone may suddenly begin talking about a new topic, his or her memory being sparked by feelings shaped by the music or by the inner cogitations of the stoned mind.

There are some circumstances in which the offer of a cone (or a puff on a joint) is not made. A small minority of Bohemians do not smoke pot and, therefore, are not asked (only rarely are they castigated – usually in a lighthearted manner – for their 'Straight' refusal). In very open houses, with their constant stream of visitors, some of these visitors may be deemed sufficiently socially distanced from the packer. The packer may have decided that he or she has already provided an ample amount to friends. To provide more cones would deplete the packer's remaining pot, and limit his or her ability to pack for other friends. There are also situational factors such as the available supply – should there be only a small amount of pot left, then the packer may save it for close friends or for him or herself. Significantly, if this latter situation does arise, and there are people present who would normally be offered a cone, the reason why the offer has not been made is explained. Few Bohemians have the financial resources to provide large amounts of pot, even to friends. Those who do are often working full-time or are dealers in pot and therefore usually have substantial amounts on hand.

Sometimes a refusal of the offer of a cone is wrongly interpreted by the packer (and perhaps by the other smokers present) to mean that the person is a 'non-smoker', whereas in reality the person, for whatever reason, has chosen not to smoke on the particular day the offer is made. Confusion may arise on future occasions when the same set of people (or at least the same packer and smoker) are once again present.
and, in keeping with the past occasion, no offer of a cone is made to the perceived 'non-smoker'. Because of the prohibition on requesting cones, it is usually up to a third party to intervene, explaining to the packer the nature of the misunderstanding.

How long the smoking session runs for, and how many cones are offered, depends on a number of factors, one of which is the projected activities for the rest of the day or night. Some of the session’s participants may have day-time appointments, say, with a university tutor. Whether they keep such appointments depends on their weighing up of the pros and cons of the session (i.e. whether they are particularly engaged in conversation or particularly stoned or particularly happy to remain where they are) against the pros and cons of the appointment (i.e. in the example given, how interesting the university tutorials have been and how many tutorials they have already missed). If the session occurs at night, some of those present may want to attend a party or a nightclub. Or they may simply have had enough of the conversation or the people present and want a change of social scenery.

The symbolic encounters that occur in the context of pot use (as well as the others I will examine in this chapter) involve much talking and therefore beg an analysis of Bohemian rules for speaking.1 These rules are both constitutive and regulative. Searle (1965:223-24) defines the difference between constitutive and regulative rules:

Some [rules] regulate antecedently existing forms of behaviour; for example, the rules of etiquette regulate interpersonal relationships, but these relationships exist independently of the rules of etiquette. Some rules on the other hand do not merely regulate but create or define new forms of behaviour ... I call the latter kind of rules constitutive rules and the former kind regulative rules. Regulative rules regulate a pre-existing activity, an activity whose existence is logically independent of the existence of the rules. Constitutive rules constitute (and also regulate) an activity the existence of which is logically dependent on the rules.

Bohemian constitutive rules for conversational encounters are minimal. They can be reduced to the following maxim: those persons constituting a Bohemian conversational encounter must work to create non-Straightness. However, this deceptively simple maxim gains in complexity once we admit three qualifications to it. Allowances are sometimes made for newcomers to the Bohemian scene who have yet to embark on the Bohemian path and who may still be feeling their way. Such newcomers may contribute little to conversation, preferring to remain silent and to listen to the various viewpoints being put by others. Sometimes, however, newcomers (and also those not so new to the scene) might make remarks which express a Straight
point of view. The response of others depends on the relative Straightness of the remarks. If they are relatively inoffensive, they may be ignored or gently rebuked. If their remark is particularly Straight and offensive (say, racist or sexist), they may be taken to task and their views fiercely attacked every time they are raised.

Secondly, Bohemians recognize that there are different ways of being non-Straight. Thus, talking with Bohemians drawn from social scenes other than one’s own is highly valued as an important means of coming to know some of these different ways. Elements of these understandings are then incorporated into one’s own personal programme of transition. Such interaction also means that there is considerable scope for conflict as well as consensus. Bohemians do not always agree over what will be deemed non-Straight and must work to define precisely what it is they mean (I discuss conflict later in the chapter). There is also a high degree of reflexivity over inevitable inconsistencies within and between thought and practice, both one’s own and those of others with whom one regularly interacts.

Finally, contributing to Bohemian conversational encounters is valued as a means of self-expression – to advance one’s personal opinions – and as a way of participating in the construction of anti-Straight community. Those who do not participate at least occasionally in conversational encounters with other Bohemians risk being described as having ‘lost it’.2 Their reluctance to engage in symbolic encounters means, in the eyes of Bohemians, that they have surrendered their commitment to group interaction. They are no longer party to the ongoing creation and re-creation of community, nor are they interested in, nor tolerant of, how others work to create non-Straightness. Instead, they have succumbed to an unhealthy obsession with self, an imbalance which Bohemians sometimes attribute to the heavy use of pot or other drugs.

Bohemians associate regulative rules with Straights. The example given by Searle, interpersonal etiquette, provides a good illustration of the Bohemian rejection of Straight forms. More obvious forms of interpersonal etiquette, such as waiting to eat one’s food until the food of others has arrived, feigning interest in a boring conversation or being overly concerned with the comfort of one’s guests, are considered by Bohemians to be Straight (and are sometimes described as ‘middle-class’). For Bohemians, such Straight regulative rules work against the free flow of words and acts deemed appropriate to interaction.
In being non-Straight, however, there are some regulative rules for Bohemian conversation and interaction. As with the constitutive rules for Bohemian conversational encounters, the rules regarding regulation can be reduced to a single thread: they relate to the management of the tension between self and group. For example, during conversation, various Bohemians may contribute more to the discussion than others. This may be because they have more knowledge of the particular topic being discussed than others and so their contributions are valued. It may be because they present themselves in an assertive way and so dominate both newcomers to the scene (who may still be finding their Bohemian feet after suburban socialization) and those who are less assertive in their social transactions. From the perspective of those who listen to such verbose Bohemians, some may, at times, describe them as ‘aggressive’ or ‘pushy’. In their eyes, the focal Bohemians have, by expressing themselves in conversation to the exclusion of other voices, denied the other persons present similar opportunities for self-expression. The focal Bohemians, usually those who have been in the scene longest, must balance two competing considerations. They should (and, indeed, will be expected to) voice their views on particular Bohemian topics, which are based on longer experience and often successful performance in the Bohemian scene. Less-experienced Bohemians want to hear what they have to say. At the same time, they must defer to the conversational group in constructing a friendly, pleasant environment in which all those present may benefit by contributing their views.

Arguments or disagreements occasionally arise over transgressions of Bohemian regulative rules for conversation. One party to the conversation may ask to be heard or may (sometimes jokingly) accuse another Bohemian of dominating the conversation (i.e. of not achieving the right balance between self and group). Such accusations may also be voiced in private. Alternatively, some Bohemians may choose not to engage in interactions involving such dominant personalities. However, transgressions of regulative rules are less important than transgressions of constitutive rules: failing to observe constitutive rules means that that which is constituted by these rules cannot exist. I witnessed several incidents that arose as a result of the introduction of views considered Straight into Bohemian conversation, that is, when one or more of the persons present broke the cardinal constitutive rule that Bohemian encounters must work to create non-Straightness. The following ‘social drama’ (Turner 1957) was typical of such altercations.
The occasion was a 'family' dinner, that is, a dinner for the residents of a shared house and their close friends or current lovers. Resident in the house were Evatt, Ken, Georgia and John. Evatt had prepared a meal for himself, Ken, Georgia and Kelly (John was out visiting friends). Evatt and Ken had been lovers in the past but were no longer so related. Georgia and Kelly were currently lovers in what was, after some (occasionally public) negotiation between them, an 'open' relationship, that is, one in which they were free to 'see' other women. I had called at the house by chance. Dinners in this particular house did not conform to Straight conventions. Inviting several people over to eat did not preclude playing host to several others who may have also dropped by the house. Sometimes, if there was enough food, these uninvited but no less welcome guests were offered sustenance but on other occasions they simply sat by while the food was consumed.

I went into the lounge to play a Nintendo game while the others ate. During dinner, there was an exchange between Evatt and Kelly which I only partially overheard. It began when Kelly began talking about the management of relationships. Evatt pointed out that there was a Straight belief implicit in Kelly’s view of intimate relationships – she held to Straight notions of 'true love' and, in this case, of finding 'Ms Right' and remaining with her for the rest of her life. He criticized this belief strongly, arguing that it grew out of misguided Straight notions of romantic and Christian love. In forceful terms, he put to Kelly that the idea that persons should spend their entire lives with the same partner was ridiculous. A short time later, the intemperate tone perhaps set by the initial exchange about relationships, Evatt quipped that Kelly probably ‘voted Liberal’ (i.e. conservative). About half-an-hour later, I overheard Kelly crying in Georgia’s bedroom while Georgia consoled her. I did not hear anybody chastise Evatt for his criticism of Kelly’s Straight ideas. He had clearly enunciated an argument that was in keeping with the majority Bohemian view about relationships. What little response there was went to the manner in which he had attacked her, which produced an embarrassed silence immediately following the altercation. Georgia thought the manner of Evatt’s attack somewhat harsh, and Ken said nothing, retiring to his bedroom soon afterwards. Kelly was particularly aggrieved.

Returning to the main focus of this section, the symbolic encounters involving the smoking of pot constitute and express the Bohemian dialectic between self and community, and between inner and outer discourses. To smoke pot heralds entry to a temporal space which lies outside Straight time. Accepting the pot-filled cone heralds
a willingness to enter a particular frame for experience (Goffman 1974); the stoned reality of those engaged in a smoking session. In this reality, people are encouraged to follow their spontaneous thoughts and feelings, to pursue their whims and fancies, to express themselves in diverse ways and to discuss the inner experience of being stoned. If the conversation is, in their eyes, uninteresting or not suited to their current mood, they are culturally permitted to engage in some other activity or conversation. They may play a Nintendo game, go to their bedroom (if they live in the house), tune in to the music (and therefore tune out of the conversation), suggest some alternative activity or simply leave.

Stoned time is, however, also ‘social time’. Emphasizing constantly one’s whims and desires to the detriment of one’s group involvement runs the risk of appearing to be anti-social and self-interested, as having ‘lost it’. Bohemians see sociability as essential to the realization of the self and the Bohemian community. Getting stoned with friends signals a willingness to enter into a larger category of people – ‘those who smoke’ – and therefore establishes a certain bond amongst diverse people. It signals a willingness to defy what is widely seen as the stupid, destructive, antisocial and Straight law which makes the consumption of pot a criminal offence, and a willingness to participate in conversation with others. Perhaps most importantly, participating in the smoking experience signals that one is not Straight. Smoking pot indicates acceptance and appreciation of its subtle effects and implicit recognition that Straight reality is neither necessary nor particularly desirable. The ‘bent’ quality of the pot experience (as in ‘I’m really bent’) becomes a metaphor for one’s rejection of Straight society. Accepting the value of a stoned reality is an important step on the Bohemian path.

‘Checking out the moisties’: constructing a new masculinity

The behaviour of men was one of the most common subjects for discussion in the Bohemian shared houses with which I became familiar. Bohemian women engage in such discussions (as well as those focusing on female behaviour) in a number of ways. During symbolic encounters, they may attempt to puncture the views that some Bohemian men have of themselves as liberated from perceived Straight male traits such as aggressiveness, competitiveness, arrogance or sexism. For instance, with respect to smoking pot, Bohemian women point out that some Bohemian men sometimes assume that women do not smoke, and therefore fail to offer them cones or joints. Bohemian women may also draw attention to the interpersonal competitiveness amongst Bohemian men sometimes associated with smoking large amounts of pot.
They may contribute female perspectives to discussions of relationships (e.g. relating their experiences with male friends or lovers) or they may parody Straight female behaviour in relation to Straight men.

I focus, however, on Bohemian male discourses about men for several reasons. Firstly, changing definitions of femininity amongst similar populations of female youth in the light of feminism have been recorded elsewhere (e.g. Henderson 1993, McRobbie 1993). Secondly, there appears to be a dearth of ethnographic material depicting redefinitions of ‘traditional’ masculinity in industrial societies. The third reason is methodological. Although the Bohemian scene comprises both men and women, my fieldnotes and choice of interviewees reflect the ethnographic reality of ‘gendered fields’ (Bell, Caplan and Karim 1993). The shared houses I visited and made notes about included women, if not always as residents, then as visitors. My interviewees included women as well as men. Yet, on balance, my data focus more on symbolic encounters involving men than those involving women. Although the gay and straight men I came to know best had female friends or lovers, they spent a good deal of their time in the company of other gay and straight men. Theoretically and personally I was especially interested in issues concerning men; for example, the way in which Bohemians sought to redefine Straight notions of masculinity. These interests are a logical theoretical and empirical progression from my previous research on Perth skinheads (Moore 1994b), who created a form of collective and aggressive masculinity which Bohemians would define as Straight. Finally, being a straight male hampered my ability to participate in some arenas in which interesting discussions of masculinity and femininity may have taken place. For example, I had limited access to discussions amongst those lesbians who spent much of their time in the company of other lesbians.

I do not think that my analysis of the Bohemian scene is undermined by these limitations. While my fieldnotes focus in more detail on Bohemian male words and deeds, they do not do so to the exclusion of those of Bohemian women. They indicate that Bohemian women hold similar conceptions about personal growth, drug use, the hypocrisy of Straight society, the discovery and exploration of the authentic self and the importance of the environment, as well as more general aspects of the Bohemian scene and the reconstructive path. While some of the specific areas of Bohemian life I examine and interpret concern male interaction (e.g. my discussion of masculinity), others explicitly include Bohemians of both genders (e.g. the raves discussed in Chapter 8).
I provide three examples of Bohemian male talk about male behaviour. Because sexuality is important to an understanding of the first example, I note the sexual orientation of each man as he is introduced into the account. I (the straight anthropologist) arrived at a shared house about 8.15p.m. one Friday night. I found Evatt (gay) and Ernie (straight) sitting at the kitchen table. Evatt was sitting in what he sometimes described as the ‘packer’s chair’ near the bucket bong; Ernie was to his immediate right. They were chatting about a hormone spray advertised in an Australian tabloid magazine. According to the wording of the advertisement, this spray was ‘guaranteed to attract women’. Evatt was gently ribbing Ernie. According to Evatt, Ernie did not need such sprays because women already found him extremely attractive. In fact, Evatt continued, because Ernie possessed such large quantities of the hormone spray’s base ingredient (unfortunately, I did not record the name of the ingredient in my fieldnotes), which women find irresistible, the manufacturers of the spray actually came to Ernie to replenish this essential ingredient. Ernie responded by laughing off Evatt’s inverted attack on his virility.

Evatt then reached into a cupboard, pulled out an eight-inch, latex dildo, complete with scrotum, and started waving it around, saying it belonged to a gay ex-resident of the house. Evatt placed it upright on the kitchen table (there was a smooth suction cup behind the scrotum) and, as it flopped to one side, said, ‘It’s on the flop’ (a slang expression for a flaccid penis). In keeping with his earlier comments about Ernie and his attractiveness to women, he remarked that this was ‘Ernie’s dick’. Evatt then waved the dildo around again, thrusting it towards Ernie, and he and Ernie began throwing things at each other – ammunition grabbed hastily from the items lying on the table-top and, in Evatt’s case, the dildo. The throwing was accompanied by a stern ‘Hey, heeeeyy’, intoned in a gruff ‘macho’ voice, and by a physical ‘squaring-up’, mimicking and parodying the perceived verbal build-up to a fight between Straight men. Not content with ‘assaulting’ Ernie, Evatt turned his attention to me and I suggested cricket. He began bowling the dildo ‘ball’ at me while I fended it away with a wooden spoon ‘bat’. Employing cricketing terms, I joked that I had ‘pulled it off a good length’, batting the dildo across the kitchen ‘mid-wicket’. Evatt stopped bowling after a couple of deliveries, fearing he would damage the dildo which was, after all, not his to damage. He placed it back in the centre of the table, leaving it to flop.

Later in the evening, there was the usual Friday night procession of visitors and ‘customers’ (one of the house residents sold foils of pot). Eddie (straight) arrived to have a few drinks and a smoke. Other friends arrived – three bogans, Mick, Paul and Chris (all straight and sharing a house together), and Tim (gay). We sat around the
kitchen table and spilt onto the old couch which also sat in the large kitchen. Evatt dispensed cones and some champagne; wine and beer were also drunk. Tim elected to partake of neither pot nor alcohol and was scolded by Evatt. The talk drifted along, ranging over a number of subjects – politics, music, university study and going to tutorials stoned. The dildo remained in the centre of the table, greeting each new arrival and drawing comments from them. It became the focus of attention occasionally with repeated jokes about it being on the flop. Evatt made a few half-hearted attempts to get those of the ‘straight boys’ who were seated at the table to touch the dildo but none did (I was sitting on the couch).

A little later, Don (straight) arrived, greeted everyone and joined me on the couch. After asking me how I was and how the research was going, he began to talk about his recent experience of dealing with the death of a close friend. He talked of how he had felt himself slipping into despair and bitterness before rallying to deal with such feelings. A few minutes later, he spoke of how he now felt ready to take a trip again. He had avoided the drug during the period immediately following the friend’s death, as he thought negative states of mind and hallucinogens were a potentially bad mix. Later, he moved to a chair left vacant at the table by the toilet visit of its previous occupant. He spied the dildo and picked it up from the table, asking, ‘What’s this?’.

He handled the dildo, waved it around, fondled it, before licking the suction cup and sticking it to his forehead. However, he failed to gain the necessary suction on his forehead and instead stuck the dildo to the fridge door. It loomed over us – an erect appendage. Later, in squeezing between the fridge and a chair, I accidentally brushed against the dildo, knocking it from the fridge door. This brought a joking accusation from Evatt that I had ‘tried to back onto it’.

The conversation continued, sometimes separately in pairs or threes, sometimes the assembled group together. Mick went into the lounge and played a Nintendo game for a while. At one point, looking around at the faces at the table, Evatt said, in a mock serious tone, that only he and Tim were gay and the rest of us were ‘filthy heteros’. His line was an abbreviated version of the phrase ‘filthy hetero pigs’ , which he borrowed from the film Female Trouble (1974), directed by John Waters. Later, one of the bogs, Chris, said that, at first, he had been quite uncomfortable visiting ‘a house full of poofers’ but he now felt ‘pretty relaxed’ because he knew everyone.

The evening continued in much the same vein until first Eddie and then Tim left. I headed for home about midnight, leaving Evatt, Mick, Paul and Don smoking, drinking and talking.
The dialectic between self-realization and the creation of Bohemian community is evident in this example, as is that between the inner and outer discourses. Evatt and Ernie, then Evatt and I, played out a parodic commentary on Straight masculinity – through Evatt teasing Ernie about his virility, through the parodying of the build-up to a ‘fight’ between Evatt and Ernie and through the mock cricket match. Because parody requires an audience, the parodic nature of much of the action and commentary goes to the community level – Bohemians working collectively to build both a critique of Straight men and, in doing so, an alternative, non-Straight reality.

Later, Don’s handling of a penis not his own and Chris’s statement about the positive development of his own attitudes towards gay men are two examples of the presentation of a non-Straight self. In his open handling of the dildo, Don demonstrates how far he has moved away from Straight male proscriptions regarding physical contact between men. He is not gay but, unlike the other straight Bohemians present, he is happy to hold another penis (even if it is not ‘alive’). Chris’s comment is a statement about self-development in the context of his increasing involvement with gay members of the Bohemian scene. Through symbolic encounters with a set of gay men, he has moved from the perceived homophobia of Straight ignorance to a degree of comfort in the company of ‘poofters’. His comments contain, I think, an implicit admission that he still has a way to go on this score, particularly in light of the importance attached to straight Bohemians attending gay and lesbian events (see Chapter 8). His comment about his feelings belongs to the inner discourse about self, as do Don’s reflections on his dealing with the experience of death and his comments about the incompatibility of trips and negative states of mind. One feature of the evening remains constant – the presence of a disembodied penis flopping on the kitchen table or stuck to the fridge door signals that one has entered a non-Straight environment.

My second example of Bohemian male discussions about men centres on a set of symbolic encounters involving a young man whom I have called Stu. Stu had been joined in his house by Rachel, the woman with whom he was having a relationship. This arrangement produced symbolic encounters in which the subject of conversation was Stu’s living arrangements. In his own descriptions of these arrangements, Stu parodied Straight methods of representing relationships. He sometimes said that he was living with ‘me moisty’ or would speak of ‘the little woman’ or, more generally, of ‘sheilas’ (Straight slang for ‘women’ in the same way as ‘birds’ is English vernacular for ‘women’). Other Bohemians echoed these descriptions of his partner and of women in general. On occasions, when Stu visited Bohemian shared houses for a visit and a smoke, his fellow smokers sometimes joked, after a few cones, that he had better ‘get home to the missus’ rather than continue to smoke with them.
There are several issues being played out in this set of symbolic encounters. Stu remains true to Bohemian form by parodying Straight relationships, in particular through employing stereotypically Straight terms of reference for female partners and for women in general. His Bohemian friends also employ such terms. However, there is also an implied criticism of Stu’s actions. His friends acknowledge that Stu’s relationship with Rachel will not be Straight, in the sense that it will be more equal than a Straight one (which, by Bohemian definition, will be sexist). However, they also draw attention to what they perceive to be another aspect of Stu’s existence which does come perilously close to being Straight. In committing himself to Rachel, they view Stu as being in danger of opting out of both the search for new experience, which fuels self-development, and commitment to the Bohemian community. Stu attempts to deflect criticism that he might be Straight, because of entering into a ‘serious’ relationship with Rachel, by parodying Straight male descriptive terms for partners.

Not all symbolic encounters involving discussions of male behaviour feature both the inner and outer discourses. The inner discourse belongs more often to gatherings of Bohemians who have known one another for a considerable time and where a degree of intimacy has been established. More frequently, symbolic encounters emphasize the community-oriented, parodic, outer discourse on ‘Aussie blokes’ (Straight males), which is played out between participants in the commentary. One night, Evatt and I were returning from a late-night stroll to a delicatessen. Our route had taken us some considerable distance, partly because we had extended it to take in some of the inner-city’s sights. Returning from the shop, we passed a striptease club that advertised ‘Girls! Girls! Girls!’ I joked with Evatt, in an exaggerated Australian accent, ‘Let’s go in here, mate!’ Taking my cue, he responded in kind, ‘Yeh, mate. Looks good. Let’s go and check out the moisties!’. With his intentions declared, he turned towards the club, grabbing at his crotch and thrusting his pelvis forward before moving towards the doorway. Reaching the doorway, which featured supposedly risqué photographs of some of the strippers employed inside, he called me to join him, ‘Come on, mate. Let’s go in. It’ll be hot. Oh yeh’. I was too busy laughing at the sight of a gay man ‘leering’ at pictures of women in states of undress to join him and he finally walked over to me. We wandered off across the street laughing, with him, still in parodic mode, abusing me for not wanting to go inside the club: ‘What are you, mate, a fucking shirt-lifter?’ (slang for a gay man).

On another occasion, Stu was playing a Nintendo game with Evatt. Jude, his female partner at the time, and I looked on. Stu was being soundly beaten by Evatt and, at several points, Jude quipped that, ‘It’s the sofa for you tonight. Sofa city’. Stu laughed
at her interjections and excused his poor performance by arguing that he was ‘pissed’ (i.e. intoxicated) from drinking two cans of beer earlier in the evening. Here Stu was playing on an earlier parodic exchange about drinking, and about whether or not to buy a ‘slab’ (a carton of beer containing twenty-four 375mls cans or ‘stubbies’ – small bottles). Bohemians equate heavy beer drinking and slab-buying with ‘blokes’. Jude was playing on the idea of withholding sexual favours because Stu had ‘failed’ in his contest with Evatt, and was therefore less of a ‘man’ for not being the winner. Both of them were parodying Straight male behaviour.

Having outlined some examples of the male Bohemian discussions about masculinity, what does it mean? What is its significance for the path of reconstruction? Bohemian commentary about men expresses the Bohemian discourse on self and inner experience. The words and acts of Don and Chris express this commentary through talking about how various experiences affect them personally, what they have learned from them, and how they have incorporated these lessons into their personal reconstructive programme.

At the community level, which is constituted and expressed by the outer discourse, the talk about men serves two ends. First of all, it helps to create, negotiate and police a set of attitudes about, and ways of behaving towards, women, which is consistent with a generalized version of feminism. Male newcomers to the Bohemian scene (and some females) quickly become aware (if they are not already) that Straight attitudes towards women are unacceptable and the merest mention of Straight views is likely to draw criticism. Such commentary can be traced directly to two related sources: the politics of the Bohemian scene – radical, Left, feminist-influenced; and to the gay and lesbian critique of heterosexuality and, in particular, heterosexual masculinity.

Secondly, the symbolic encounters I have described are specific instances of a generalized set of negotiations which explore and redefine what it is to be a ‘man’ (cf. Herek 1987). They are part of a process of creating a common masculinity which includes behaviours and attitudes which, to date, have been considered as belonging to either gay or heterosexual men. The Bohemians are defining themselves by what they are not; they are not part of Straight society in which gay and heterosexual are seen as separate entities and in which heterosexual men are deemed to be allocated a narrow range of appropriate values and behaviours. Bohemians create and negotiate an alternative set of values and guidelines for the enactment of masculinity. Through participation in symbolic encounters concerning discussions of masculinity, Bohemian men attempt to ‘liberate’ themselves from their past socialization into what are perceived to be sexist and oppressive mainstream roles.
An explicit statement of this redefinition of masculinity was contained in a poster I saw stuck to a wall in one Bohemian shared house. It advertised a ‘Family Day’ in a nearby park. Above the official lettering, one of the house’s occupants, Don, had written ‘Ready Your Rifles’. What Don was indicating was not that he was necessarily opposed to heterosexuality, for he was himself straight. He was criticizing the Straight emphasis on heterosexuality in relation to the nuclear family which, in its popular form, excludes gay men and lesbians. Registering his renunciation of the nuclear family, Don was playing his part in creating a sense of masculinity in which both gay and straight men could participate.

Remaking the everyday

‘Getting Nintense’

A common activity for both genders in the Bohemian shared houses I visited most often was playing Nintendo games. The term ‘Nintendo’ refers to the Nintendo Entertainment System hardware and software designed and produced in Japan. The system hardware sells for around $300 in Perth and is hooked up to a standard domestic television set. The hardware is then used to play a range of games sold in software form for approximately $100 each.

Super Mario World was the most popular Nintendo game throughout most of my fieldwork. It centres around an elaborate story about Mario and his brother Luigi and their quest to save a Princess from a series of evil characters. Super Mario World thus delivers stereotyped incidents in which male heroes of valour save feminine virtue, a point recognized by Bohemians. Progress is made through a series of ‘levels’ or courses (of which there are ninety-six) arranged into nine thematic ‘worlds’ of increasing difficulty. As Mario and Luigi move through each course, they are able to gain special powers – such as the ability to fly, to release fireballs, to be invincible for a short time – by performing specific tasks. They may also gain extra lives by collecting gold ‘coins’ along the way. When playing a full game, one starts at the first course in the first world and works through the various obstacles and creatures designed to ‘kill’ Mario and Luigi. Successfully negotiating a way through one course gains entry into the next one. At certain points along the way, players can save their progress so that the next time the game is played they can begin from the last point of saving, rather than having to return to the beginning.
Playing *Super Mario World* successfully requires good eye-hand coordination as well as detailed recall of previous attempts to play different levels in different worlds. As one progresses through to the more difficult worlds, there are secret exits or short-cuts which allow one to avoid particularly perilous parts of the specific level or to bypass very difficult levels altogether, and ways of gaining large numbers of extra lives, specific strategies which must be followed if Mario or Luigi is to succeed. As with all the Nintendo games favoured by Bohemians, players have the option to play alone or with another player. Unlike the other games, with the exception of *F-Zero* (see below), in *Super Mario World* competition between players is not direct. Only one player plays at a time even though both players may be attempting separately to negotiate their way through the same level.

Three other Nintendo games, all less complex than *Super Mario World*, were also popular during my fieldwork; in order of decreasing complexity – *Super Mario Kart*, *Streetfighter* and *F-Zero*. *Super Mario Kart* takes the characters from *Super Mario World*, both good and evil, and transports them to scenarios involving the driving of go-karts. There are two principal modes, each with its own variations. The first mode, ‘GP’ (as in ‘Grand Prix’), involves a racing track and the aim is the rather straightforward one of winning races. As the two players circle the progressively more difficult tracks, racing six other characters as well as each other, they pass over yellow squares and thus acquire special abilities (e.g. invincibility in the face of collisions with other cars) or weapons (e.g. two types of ‘shells’ to fire at other players). The second mode, ‘Battle Mode’, pits the two players alone against each other while roaring around and through a maze. Passing over the yellow squares conveys similar gifts for the contestants. There are a number of options from which players choose. They can dictate the power of the go-karts and the choice of character. Each has particular strengths – some corner faster but are slow on the straights, some have superior all-round handling ability but slower acceleration, and so on. There is also a choice between one or two-player mode (either in a bona fide race or in practice), and a choice of track (in GP mode) or maze (in Battle Mode).

*Streetfighter* is the most overtly violent Nintendo game. Two characters engage in brutal fighting scenarios. Players choose from a number of characters, each of whom possesses particular abilities and special powers which are brought into play through complex manipulation of the four-way hand controls. As backdrops to the fights, players choose different stereotyped ethnic scenarios. For example, choosing the ‘India’ option places the contesting characters in an Indian temple complete with elephants. The game is simple in that there is no second, more complex level to which
players proceed. However, to develop as a player, one must learn the more difficult 'special moves' of each character through reading the accompanying instruction manual or by having more experienced players explain the necessary manual control movements.

In *F-Zero*, the least complex of the Nintendo games favoured by the Bohemians I know, players drive alone. The player seeks to pilot what appears to be a jet-propelled hovercraft around a racing track, collects fuel on the way (to prevent the hovercraft from exploding) and races against several other similar craft. The tracks become progressively harder as one moves through the levels. Aside from learning various techniques for cornering and otherwise manoeuvring the craft (particularly to avoid collisions with other craft), there are few specific skills to be acquired. The only choice a player can make is which craft he or she wishes to navigate. The different craft possess different capabilities and characteristics.

Nintendo is enormously popular throughout the industrialized world. It is available from major consumer retail outlets and is a leisure activity pursued by Straight people of all ages. Nintendo 'texts' contain images suggestive of violence, sexism and 'individuality' (cf. Provenzo, Jr. 1991) – in Bohemian eyes, all hallmarks of Straight life. In their structure, Nintendo games appear to encourage the perceived Straight traits of competitiveness, personal achievement at the expense of others and, in the case of *Streetfighter*, overt aggression. However, what I intend to show is how Bohemians appropriate Nintendo, an item drawn from consumer capitalism, to subvert it in several ways, remaking the games to embody Bohemian ways of being and doing.

For Bohemians, 'getting Nintense' refers to the symbolic encounters in which people gather around a television set to play Nintendo games, often for several hours. The features of getting Nintense are similar to the conditions necessary for the development of 'focused gatherings', as outlined by Goffman (1961:18):

a single visual and cognitive focus of attention, a mutual and preferential openness to verbal communication; a heightened mutual relevance of acts; an eye-to-eye ecological huddle that maximizes each participant's opportunity to perceive the other participants' monitoring of him. Given these communication arrangements, their presence tends to be acknowledged or ratified through expressive signs, and a "we rationale" is likely to emerge, that is, a sense of the single thing that we are doing together at the time.
To play Nintendo is to engage in a collective activity with a single focus, with interconnected acts, flowing conversation (punctured by squeals, shouts of anger and claims of being victimized by the computer’s random ‘errors’) and a physical sense of ‘we-ness’ in sitting before the television set.

The first way in which Bohemians subvert Nintendo is through the use of drugs. Playing Nintendo while under the influence of drugs produces a discourse about the inner experience of playing; that is, what it ‘feels’ like to play. Some Bohemians joke that the inventors and designers of Nintendo games must have used drugs, or had drug users in mind, when they devised the games. Because Bohemians smoke pot so often, it is also the drug under the influence of which they usually play. Bohemians describe the way that the use of pot enhances the visual and auditory effects of the various games. Contrary to the widespread Straight view of marijuana intoxication as befuddling, Bohemians hold that getting stoned contributes to the high degree of concentration sometimes reached in the act of ‘getting Nintense’. In this sense, getting Nintense refers to the degree to which the player feels as if he or she is ‘in’ the game. The greater the skill level of the player, the greater the chance of getting Nintense. Stoned and skilful players who get Nintense give themselves fully to the activity at hand.

Drugs such as E and trips are deemed to have an even greater impact than pot on playing Nintendo and on the ability to achieve the experiential state described by ‘Nintense’. These chemical drugs, with their more pronounced pharmacological effects, are thought particularly effective in enhancing one’s sense of involvement in the game. For example, one young man explained to me how he took E and later, when the drug began to ‘come on’, decided to play a Nintendo ice-hockey game called Blades. On first sitting down to play, he found the images were moving too fast for him to comprehend them. However, after a short period of adjustment, he was not only able to make out the ice-hockey characters in the game, but he said that he felt he was ‘right in there with them’. Bohemians also felt that the hallucinogenic properties of trips were particularly well suited to playing Nintendo.

Bohemians also re-make Nintendo into a Bohemian activity through establishing two forms of play – one competitive and one more egalitarian. The first form is played between two experienced and skilled players, with or without an audience. It is announced as such to differentiate this combative form from the more egalitarian one in which several participants take turns to play (see below). The two players play for as long as is possible in the particular game chosen and look to gain the maximum
number of points or lives. Usually, this competitive form of Nintendo belongs to instances where there are only two, three or, at most, four players. Generally, if there are three or more players, a more egalitarian form is played.

In the more egalitarian version, two players begin the game but the loser is replaced by a new player after each round. In this way, all players wait, at most, only the number of rounds corresponding to the number of players minus one. For example, if four persons are present, two play first (round one) and then the winner remains to play the next player (round two). There is then a third round with the winner of round two playing the remaining (fourth) player. The original loser will thus be called to play again in round four. In this way, all those present participate equally (or as equally as possible given the ‘winner-stays-on’ organizing principle, which introduces some competitive incentive) and all players must play, taking the example given above, at least every fourth round. The frequency of playing is increased if a person wins the round and therefore stays to play the next person. If players prove particularly successful on a specific occasion, and defeat all opponents several times, they usually relinquish their right to continue.

Although the most important factor in shaping which form of Nintendo will be played is the number of people willing to participate, the particular game chosen also has some bearing on this choice. Both forms of playing may be applied to almost any of the commonly played Nintendo games, but the competitive form is most frequently played with *Super Mario World* and *Super Mario Kart* (in GP mode). The egalitarian form belongs most often to the playing of *Streetfighter*, the Battle Mode of *Super Mario Kart*, and *F-Zero*, the common feature of these games (or versions) being that players do not carry points accumulated in one round or level into the next.

The overt aggression and violence associated with some Nintendo games are sometimes subverted in a much more straightforward way. On several occasions, I witnessed first-time players of *Streetfighter* paralysed by fits of laughter at what they perceived to be the mindless violence of the game. On other occasions, players purposefully adopt ultra-aggressive moves or fighting strategies in a parodic manner. For example, one character possesses the ability to head-butt; another, the ability to ‘head-stomp’ with stiletto heels. Players selecting these characters and employing these moves frequently draw attention to their violent nature.
There is nothing inherently subversive or Bohemian about playing Nintendo games. Yet this is the very point I emphasize. Bohemians take what is an everyday Straight activity and remake it in the light of their Bohemian lifestyle. The inner discourse of getting Nintense most often belongs to the competitive form of playing Nintendo. In addition to the use of drugs, the degree to which a player can experience being ‘in the game’ depends both on the player’s skill and on the high level of concentration characteristic of the competitive form. Playing Nintendo also reflects the Bohemian orientation towards community. They compartmentalize the competitive form from the more egalitarian one and thus remake the games in the light of their communal orientation. And they scoff at the naked aggression required to succeed in some Nintendo games and sometimes parody this aggression in their style of play.

Bohemians take a Straight game and make it theirs.

‘Chucking the Sphincter’

The ‘Sphincter Ring’ is the name Bohemians have given to a Frisbee-like flying ring sold under the name ‘Aerobie’. According to Hickok (1992:168), the Frisbee originated in North America in the 1920s with a pie plate manufactured by the Frisbie Pie Company. Students from Yale University, which was located near the pie company, would play with the pie plates. During World War II, company truck drivers introduced plate-throwing to soldiers all over the United States. The original plate then underwent several modifications before the patent was bought by the Wham-O Manufacturing Company, which renamed the product the ‘Frisbee’ in 1959. Perhaps the most widely known Frisbee game was ‘Ultimate Frisbee’ and the first intercollegiate match was played between Rutgers and Princeton in 1972. Other games included Frisbee golf, discathon and goal-line Frisbee, as well as freestyle Frisbee, in which competitors were judged on the tricks and style they exhibited during throwing and catching. Like Nintendo, the Frisbee was a mass-produced, mass-marketed leisure item which, in Australia (if my memory serves me correctly), was most closely associated with beach sport and family picnics. Certainly, Frisbee-throwing was considered a wholesome recreational pastime.

Although it is thrown like a Frisbee, the Sphincter Ring differs in that it is literally a ring rather than a solid disc – measuring perhaps five centimetres across the breadth of the ring. It is so labelled because it was originally associated with a particular set of Bohemians who congregated at a site on one of Perth’s university campuses, which they had dubbed ‘The Sphincter’. The name stuck. ‘Sphincter’ was also considered an appropriate name by devotees as the Ring is ‘pink and it’s got a hole in it’.
‘Chucking the Sphincter’ involves rounding up a ‘posse’ of players for a ‘Sphincter session’. The term ‘posse’, an emic term for ‘action-set’ (Mayer 1966), is sometimes used to describe a set of people recruited for Bohemian activity that takes place in the public sphere. In other words, there is no such thing as a ‘Nintendo posse’ or a ‘pot posse’. The term originally derives from rave culture and was then borrowed by rave-going Bohemians to describe the set of people attending a specific rave – the ‘rave posse’. It is not generally employed by grunge or bogan Bohemians. Rave-going Bohemians then began to apply the term to other Bohemian ventures into the public domain. For this reason, and because the significant aspects of the Bohemian posse are highlighted more fully by the rave, I reserve my discussion of them until Chapter 8 where I consider raves in detail.

The posse consists of several players – ideally, at least four – who have been contacted specifically for the Sphincter session. Two persons can play but they may tire quickly chasing inaccurate throws. Alternatively, the decision to participate in a ‘Sphincter chuck’ may have been made by several Bohemians who have been passing an afternoon smoking pot, listening to music and talking. The Sphincter posse walks to a nearby park – naturally enough, re-named ‘Sphincter Park’. Once at the park, the assembled players are divided into two sets separated by about fifty metres. The gap may be bigger if all players are of above-average ability and can therefore throw accurately over greater distances. Ideally, because there is usually a range of throwing talents, there should be a splitting of good players so that both ends have at least one good player each. This ensures that at least when these players throw the Ring it gives the players at the other end a chance to attempt catches as the throws will be more accurate.

Another interesting feature of Sphincter chucking is that no matter who actually catches the Sphincter Ring, the assembled players take turns to chuck the Sphincter. While there may be some jostling for the best position to catch the Sphincter as it glides towards the players at one end, the act of catching brings no reward other than the pleasure of catching it. No matter how spectacular the catch, if it is not the catcher’s turn to throw, he or she surrenders the Sphincter to the player whose turn it is – a form of egalitarianism which overrides natural athletic ability and competition and which, according to one seasoned Sphincter chucker, also allows the participation of women, some of whom may be physically disadvantaged in, or dismissive of, the catching contests.
Sphincter-chucking requires little planning and coordination other than gathering up a number of friends. There is no point-scoring in a Sphincter session or any lasting ramifications for the participating Bohemians. It is activity which is of and for itself. The session is self-contained and does not spill over into other areas of life. There is no external reward or end other than the activity itself. Thus, Sphincter-chucking expresses a temporal orientation towards the here and now.

Chucking the Sphincter shares similarities with the brief outline of freestyle Frisbee-throwing provided by Hickok. With time and practice, and depending on physical coordination, Sphincter chuckers develop the ability to throw the Sphincter in different ways. Backhand throwing is most common but skilled players may also throw forehand or overarm (i.e. with a forehand motion but delivered from the back of the hand, rather like bowling a leg-break in cricket). Considerable skill is also required to throw accurately and consistently and to vary the flight of the Sphincter through the air. It can be thrown in a flat path three or four feet from the ground (or lower), travelling more or less directly to a player at the other end. It can be thrown in a high, looping arc off to one or the other side, so that it curves back in to the other end. Sometimes, a player at the receiving end will extend an arm, inviting the player about to throw to aim to land the Ring on the arm or as near as possible to it.

Being in the right position to catch the Sphincter also involves skill in judging where its flight will end. Actually catching it also requires skill in grasping an object spinning rapidly and in ensuring that it does not bounce off the palm of the hand. Skilled Sphincter chuckers attempt more spectacular catches, particularly when the Sphincter is thrown so that it hovers tantalizingly above their heads, inviting leaps from those circling below. In this respect, Sphincter-chucking resembles a number of games; in particular the ‘kick-to-kick’ games of Australian Rules Football that are common sights in Perth schoolyards. In these games, the football is kicked back and forth between two sets of players who attempt spectacular ‘marks’ (catches).

Chucking the Ring is usually a day-time activity. However, Bohemians occasionally chuck the Ring in the early hours of summer mornings. After taking drugs such as speed, E or trips and going dancing at nightclubs, they arrive home at perhaps 4 or 5a.m. Someone suggests a Sphincter session. A round of cones is smoked to ‘bring back on’ the effects of the chemical drugs taken earlier in the night. The players walk to the park and, in the dawn light, race around chucking the Ring. These physical exertions are also claimed to bring back on the effects of drugs. Finally, exhausted, the participants stagger back to the house to smoke a few more cones before ‘crashing’ into bed.
Chucking the Sphincter Ring is another example of the Bohemian subversion of the everyday. The Bohemians take a leisure activity enjoyed by Straights and rework it in accordance with Bohemian ways of doing. This reworking begins with the alteration of the name. 'Ring' is slang for anus. In a scene where symbolic encounters between young gay and straight men are common, Sphincter-chucking heralds more than just the physical activity of playing together. There is a symbolic and semantic dimension in that the 'straight boys' must pick up and throw what has, in its name, been likened to a part of the anus.

There are two other ways in which Sphincter-chucking is drawn into a non-Straight reality. Bohemians almost always play stoned or, less often, under the influence of other drugs. In addition to rendering the activity non-Straight, playing under the influence of drugs produces talk about Sphincter-chucking that belongs to the inner discourse. After a session, walking home and at the house, participants evaluate whether it was a 'good session', that is, whether there was a sense of flow about the throwing, and whether the throwing and catching were skilful and physically graceful. To be sure, this talk is not so detailed, intense or meaning-laden as the inner discourse sometimes associated with, for example, attending a rave (see Chapter 8), but, nevertheless, it focuses on how Bohemians feel while playing, how they feel in expressing themselves through their bodies.

A second aspect of Sphincter-chucking is the parodic commentary associated with spectacular catching. Leaping to catch the Ring, particularly if two or more players contest the catch, mimics the spectacular 'marks' of Australian Rules Football. Catching spectacularly is enjoyed as an expression of physical grace and prowess, and is commented on in this light. At the same time, however, there is laughter as players attempt catches which are beyond their physical capabilities or jostle one another for the best position as they await the arrival of the soaring Ring.

Like Nintendo, throwing Frisbees or Aerobies belongs to the category of mundane, Straight activity. Along with participation in more overtly non-Straight activities, such as environmental activism or drug use, Bohemians attempt to re-fashion even the most mundane aspects of their lives so as to render them non-Straight. Through participation in such everyday events as playing Nintendo and Sphincter-chucking, Bohemians learn about the values of the Bohemian scene and learn to express these values.
Through participation in symbolic encounters such as the ones I have described, Bohemians come to learn about the Bohemian path and the values, beliefs and behaviours which constitute and express it. Pursuing the path is not an activity that requires conformity. The members of the various scenes that comprise the Bohemian community have their own sets of critical understandings regarding Straight society and their own responses to the existential problems that such a critique poses. Bohemians create their own personalized ways through the scene, adhering to, and helping to create and negotiate, a set of community beliefs while simultaneously writing their own biographies of self.

Functional aspects of symbolic encounters

Having examined the symbolic content of these encounters, I want also to note briefly their functional aspect. Symbolic encounters bring diverse Bohemians together. For there to be interaction among the members of the diverse alternative scenes that comprise the Bohemian scene, there must be forums in which Bohemians can meet. That is, there must be ways in which Bohemians can manage their diversity. Participating in activities allows the creation of shared biographies – in the words of Sansom (1980), ‘consociate identities’ – aspects of which can be brought forward into the present and made to work as social currency.

For example, symbolic encounters involving pot smoking are perceived to play an important role in creating and managing interaction amongst diverse persons. Other drugs also play a role in the creation of commonality. The taking of chemical drugs may become the basis for symbolic encounters. However, these drugs belong more often, but not exclusively, to public settings such as nightclubs and raves (see Chapter 8) and are less frequently used than pot. By contrast, pot is an everyday version of commonality rather than one which belongs to more specialized ventures into public arenas. The following statement by Mick regarding pot is typical of those expressed to me:

drugs [in this interview context, Mick means pot] are sort of seen as something which unites all ... because you get people from all sort [sic] of different groups taking it. It's something that you can all relate to together without actually putting yourself into a group first.
Thus, for Mick, smoking pot is a common activity which allows the placement of diverse people into a single category — those who 'smoke' pot (and all that participating in such an act signals — rejecting Straight reality). Like others in the Bohemian scene, Mick desires to meet different types of people from whom he may learn new things as well as pass on his own views and perspectives. Sharing in the smoking of pot is one way of creating a forum in which to achieve this aim.

Playing Nintendo may also serve as a link between people who have little else in common (but who, of course, may develop common bonds in other ways or progress from their common Nintendo play). One such instance concerned Georgia, a one-time lesbian resident of the shared house detailed in Chapter 6, and me. She had a set of regular visitors, mostly other lesbians, who would frequently call to see her. Much of her socializing was done in her bedroom, away from the other occupants and their friends, although she would also take part in the discussions held in the more public kitchen or lounge areas. She had confided to me, following an interview I had done with her, that she found the procession of straight men coming into the house somewhat disconcerting as she had only ever lived with women before (at least since leaving home several years before). However, on one occasion she asked me, a straight man, if I wanted to play a game of Nintendo. I agreed, and so began several weeks where we would frequently play Nintendo. Over the course of playing, and talking and spending time together, we gradually found other things in common. For example, I had visited a naturopath for a meddlesome skin complaint and she was 'into' alternative medicine, and so we would talk about this subject. Our relationship did not develop into an especially close one and, subsequently, she moved out of the house to set up with her lesbian lover. But playing Nintendo games had provided us with a common space within which to interact.

Conversely, refusing an offer to play Nintendo is, in effect, placing one's self-interest ahead of one's personal investment in communal events. In one shared house, Ken refused to play Nintendo for several months. He gave as his reason several sociological studies he had either read about or had seen discussed on television. The authors of these studies had argued that Nintendo games fostered competitiveness and individuality, values to which he (as well as other Bohemians) did not subscribe. As a consequence of his refusal to play, he was excluded from the interaction and sociability which occurred around playing Nintendo games. However, several months on, he began to play another computer video game which did not involve competition against other players but against oneself. After playing this game for a week or two, Ken began to play Streetfighter, pitting his skills against those of other players (and in a
game centred principally around violent defeat of one's opponent, another belief to which he did not subscribe). Consequently, he became involved in the symbolic encounters based around Nintendo play that occurred amongst most house residents and their visitors. In this particular house, refusing to play Nintendo was refusing to be part of the social flow.

**Negotiating Bohemian borderlands**

Shared-house borderlands which have large numbers of visitors, drawn from diverse social scenes, are generally constructed around experienced Bohemians. People are drawn to particular persons, and to the houses they occupy, because they successfully create and manage social spaces in which people feel free to pursue their whims, to explore themselves and others through symbolic encounters, and to feel unconstrained by Straight conventions of sociable exchange. Bohemians develop their social skills over time, through participation in the numerous and diverse symbolic encounters which comprise the Bohemian path, and broaden their circle of friends and acquaintances. Senior Bohemians are generally experienced in the use of a wide range of drugs and have learned to speak knowledgeably and forcefully on a range of important political and moral issues, particularly those criticizing Straight ways of being and doing. In addition, they have established their Bohemian credentials through participation in past activities and times which, by consensus, are considered to be eras, that is, periods of time characterized by a particular mood or set of activities (cf. Moore 1994b:29-30). For example, Bohemians who favoured alternative dance nightclubs frequently spoke of the past era associated with a particular club in glowing terms – a fondly remembered period of drug use, dancing and the development of a sense of club community.

Borderlands may be daunting places. Bringing together Bohemians with radically differing viewpoints and practices may render problematic the presentation of an authentic self, particularly for newcomers to the Bohemian scene and its constituent scenes. One young man, Jeff, who had spent his teenage years in Perth's northern suburbs – a very Straight locale, according to Bohemians – began to visit a particular gay shared house which was the focal point for an eclectic circle of Bohemians. He continued to visit for several months. Abruptly, however, he ceased visiting the house, although he kept in touch with several Bohemians with whom he had relationships that predated his movement in the scene.
Jeff reappeared at the same house several months later, on a day when I also happened to be visiting. I asked him why he had been absent. The reason he gave was that he had experienced personal difficulties in making the transition from living in a relatively homogeneous northern suburb to visiting the shared house. He had fallen into the house pattern of frequent, often daily, pot use and more frequent use of chemical drugs than he had been accustomed to in the past. He also felt that his relative inexperience and suburban naivety had prevented him from both enjoying the numerous opportunities for personal development that the house could offer, and from presenting himself in a way with which he felt comfortable. In other words, he had found the transitional process, grounded in the symbolic encounters of a borderland space, too confronting and had encountered problems in transacting an authentic self in these encounters.

Jeff was not alone in grappling with such issues. At times, other visitors also found this particular shared house, or some of the personalities within the house, difficult to deal with. Some straight visitors told me that they occasionally felt the need to suppress open displays of their heterosexuality if they were accompanied by partners. Another man said, echoing Jeff’s comments, that he found the high turnover of diverse people disconcerting and repeated a cliché most often used in evaluating holiday destinations: ‘It’s a great place to visit but I wouldn’t want to live here’.

Bohemian shared houses therefore require ongoing and constant negotiation of the house style, and neither an open nor a quiet house is automatically a borderland space. An open house shared by three gay men, with friends who are mostly gay men, who consume vast amounts of drugs in licensed premises, and who socialize mainly in gay scenes, is unlikely to be a borderland. The potential for symbolic encounters between diverse persons is limited by the pursuit of a gay lifestyle. This is not to say that symbolic encounters do not occur. There are a range of styles within the gay and lesbian scene and people drawn from these styles may meet to exchange perspectives on being gay or lesbian in a largely S(s)traight world. But contact between, say, bogans or ravers and gay men is unlikely or rare (at least in leisure time). At least one important diacritic in Bohemian symbolic encounters – sexuality – is absent. Likewise, a quiet house shared by several lesbians may rarely be visited by men (either gay or straight) and the occupants may use drugs sparingly and be visited by only a small number of close friends. Their leisure contacts will overwhelmingly be with other lesbians.
Constructing a borderland space requires some work on the part of residents willing to allow their shared house to become so. They have to be tolerant of a high number of visitors, which is probably a common feature of many houses shared by young people. In the borderland space, however, there is an additional ingredient. One has also to be tolerant of diversity in the type of visitors – they are not drawn solely from one’s own scene – who bring with them different subjects for discussion and different non-Straight perspectives on social life. Georgia, the one-time lesbian resident of the shared house described in Chapter 6, expressed this conundrum when she drew attention to her discomfort at the number of straight men visiting the house. (One of these straight men, Mick, on reading this chapter, noted another possibility – that Georgia may have confused straight men with Straight men.)

Some of the friction that emerges from time to time amongst different members of the Bohemian scene can be traced to the nature of borderlands. Parodic commentaries can sometimes backfire in the presence of new (and even old) acquaintances. Don provided me with an example of such a situation. He had told Evatt, his gay housemate at the time and someone well aware of Don’s supportive stance towards homosexuality, what he considered to be a homophobic joke. It went as follows: Two gay men were sitting at the bar in a pub. They rose to leave and one said to the other, ‘Do you want me to push your stool in?’ A few days later, Don repeated the joke to Rod, a gay man who was a close friend of Evatt and who had also known Don for several years, although not so well. Rod’s initial response was one of offence and outrage. He correctly interpreted the joke to be homophobic but failed to see Don’s parodic intent, which Don had to explain at length. As Don pointed out, in a fluid scene with a high number of visitors, parodying Straight ways can sometimes be read wrongly as a sign of adherence to such views. As a result, Don said that when meeting gay men and lesbians for the first time, he is careful to avoid comments which could be misinterpreted, at least until he has established his tolerance of homosexuality for those present.

Bohemian shared houses may also gradually cease being borderlands, owing to changes in residents or changes in visitors. In these cases, the emphasis on tolerance of diversity – reflected in the playing of various kinds of music and the visitors being drawn from several different scenes – is replaced by a focus on a particular style. In one such instance, a shared house that previously drew an eclectic mix of visitors became dominated by those belonging to the techno/rave scene. Following several weeks of disagreement, one resident not of this scene moved out. The house became a meeting place for ‘bunnies’ – young techno-ravers who had little time for discussions of political issues or reggae or other types of music (and the ideas and values of the associated scenes). In these cases, the shared house is no longer part of the borderland of Bohemia.
The shared houses I have characterized in this chapter as borderlands have much in common with other shared houses. However, the degree of negotiation rises when one adds another ingredient to the shared-house brew. When a shared house becomes a borderland, not only does negotiation have to deal with the usual questions of style but there is also the potential of risking alienation from one’s primary scene. For example, Evatt would occasionally lament the fact that he was turning into a ‘straight hag’ because ‘most of my friends are straights’. (This phrase is a play on ‘fag hag’. Fag hags are women thought to associate primarily with gay men. A more common term for a gay man who spends most of his leisure time with ‘hets’ is ‘straight mate’.) He said he had received criticism from some gay friends for his propensity to spend time with straights. He had learned, as the prime architect of one particular borderland, that while there are many cultural and political benefits to such spaces, there are also pitfalls in the way one manages them. Indeed, once such spaces have been established, the architect must surrender control over them, and over judgements of them, for they become the ‘property’ of the collective. One’s power to determine what occurs in the borderland is usurped by, or rather surrendered to, the community.

Dialogue with Bohemians

Symbolic encounters, particularly of the core type, are frequently highly charged affairs. They involve Bohemians drawn from diverse scenes and lifestyles, who possess a range of experience and knowledge, and who bring differing personal styles to interaction. Of the half-dozen or so Bohemians who read earlier drafts of Chapters 6 – 8, one in particular, Brian, commented in a letter to me that despite commitment to the Bohemian path amongst his friends, there is, inevitably, conflict or disagreement over ideas and social practices, conflict that I may have glossed over in the account I had then rendered. While he felt that I had outlined the ‘basic tenets’ and ‘successes’ of the Bohemian scene, I had perhaps placed less emphasis on its ‘failures’. In this section, revised in the light of Brian’s comments (as well as the comments of other Bohemians), I attempt to rectify this omission. I provide additional comments, not to undermine those I have already given but to enhance the comprehensiveness of the description and analysis.

The process of self-reconstruction is, of necessity, a gradual one. Bohemians recognize the power of Straight socialization and the fact that people take time to move from Straight to cool. This does not mean that once Bohemians achieve a certain level of non-Straightness, they cease to question their own beliefs and behaviours, or that they reach some point where they no longer occasionally speak or behave in Straight ways.
Rather, there exists, particularly amongst experienced Bohemians, a desire to continue to probe or to reflect upon one another's ideologies and practices, looking for inconsistencies and hypocrisy, a lack of fit between idea and enactment. Sometimes, a Bohemian (or Bohemians) is found to be wanting in certain areas; say, in the case of male Bohemians, between public declarations of non-Straight masculinity and behaviour perceived by other (especially female) Bohemians to exhibit elements of Straight masculinity. One gay man who lived in a Bohemian shared house held what were widely considered to be racist views, despite being described by other Bohemians as a 'lovely guy'. Despite frequent criticism by other residents of the house, and by their visiting friends, he steadfastly refused to revise his views.

Another example is provided by Brian's reflexive letter. He pointed out inconsistencies in the matter of religious beliefs. Some Bohemians had provided him with detailed, well-argued criticisms of organized forms of Western religion. They had, as a result of their dissatisfactions, adopted selected features of Eastern religions. Yet, according to Brian these same Bohemians refused to apply their rigorous analyses to the practices of leaders of these religions, a kind of reverse ethnocentrism. He also had misgivings about the New-Age movement, despite his own pursuit of yoga and tarot card readings; namely, that the New-Age appropriation of spiritual practices without due consideration of the indigenous contexts in which they had been developed, and which continued to provide a practical context for the everyday enactment of such spirituality, amounted to a form of neo-colonialism.

Another long-running bone of contention (one not mentioned specifically by Brian) in the Bohemian scene is political tactics. All Bohemians are opposed to the policies of the conservative government currently in power in Western Australia. However, some support the pragmatic policies adopted by the Australian Labor Party in the belief that political parties must be in power to effect any change and that, realistically, this policy means jettisoning, albeit reluctantly, some radical Left policies. Others see such an attitude as bordering on Straight, and accepting of the power-plays and patriarchal structures of party politics. They prefer to support smaller parties which retain traditionally Left policies but which, as a result, are marginalized in a political system dominated by two main parties. Those who vote Labor argue that the smaller parties are just as prone to politicking as the larger ones. This debate between 'pragmatic' and 'idealistic' political stances is an ongoing one. Bohemians attempt to manage such conflict — so as not to create divisive ruptures between Bohemians and, more positively, to contribute to the educative transitional process — through (sometimes heated) discussion of different viewpoints.
The comments of Brian and other Bohemians point to the sometimes uneasy relationship between intellectualist and expressive discourses in the Bohemian scene. The former is a reflexive, devil’s advocate type of discourse in which Bohemians reflect on their actions and beliefs and those of their friends and fellow Bohemians. In this sense, it is a meta-commentary on the Bohemian commentary on Straights. One of the consequences of the intellectualist discourse is that what is considered to be non-Straight is a matter for negotiation. Few ‘politically correct’ elements of the Bohemian ethos are considered beyond discussion and debate. It is this discourse that is responsible for debates and arguments amongst Bohemians over what is non-Straight. In the social drama between Evatt and Kelly I discussed earlier, those present on this specific occasion (apart from Kelly) accepted Evatt’s statement of ‘the’ Bohemian view. Those pursuing the intellectualist discourse, such as Brian, seek to discuss why particular perspectives, such as the one put by Evatt, become accepted as non-Straight, and point to the need for tolerance of a range of positions in the Bohemian scene rather than the legislation of a single opinion.

The expressive discourse, by contrast, emphasizes exploration, openness to new ideas and the importance of stating one’s views, sometimes without critical self-reflection. In some ways, this discourse is antagonistic to the intellectualist one, rejecting its constant probing and dissection of the world. Whereas the expressive discourse is more likely to be shaped by an emphasis on reacting against the perceived Straight view, and to be characterized by moral absolutism, the intellectualist discourse appears to be more proactive, seeking to create its own agenda from a blend of ideas. The dialectic between the two discourses is one noted for past expressions of Bohemia (cf. Chapter 6), and it continues to be relevant in the 1990s.

Brian’s comments also set me thinking about another aspect of interpersonal negotiation in the Bohemian scene, which I may have under-emphasized in my account. Becoming a Bohemian involves gradually rediscovering the authentic self, which is held to be repressed or alienated by Straight roles. Because the process is gradual, however, there are instances where Bohemians bring different expectations to interaction, based on different degrees of rejection of roles. For example, I have heard some Bohemians complain about the behaviour of Bohemian ‘friends’ which, in the eyes of the complainants, is not in keeping with the social role indicated by the term ‘friend’. Another role, that of ‘lover’, can also be interpreted differently by those at different points on the Bohemian path. Two lesbian lovers, Georgia and Kelly, were discussing Georgia’s visit to another lesbian’s house several days before. Georgia summarized what they had done during the evening and finished by saying casually
that she had spent the night at the house, sleeping in the same bed as her friend. Kelly said that she hoped 'nothing sexual' had occurred between them. Georgia replied that Kelly did not 'own' her and should not interfere in her personal life. Kelly looked taken aback at this unexpected, more 'open' version of their relationship, but managed to say that she hoped Georgia would employ safer-sex techniques should she ever choose to have sex with another woman.

At the scenic level, as I have indicated, the emphasis is on authenticity and the rejection of social roles. At the specific level of various Bohemians and their relationships, there may be attempts to re-negotiate roles such as 'friend' and 'lover' so that they are, in the eyes of Bohemians, less constraining and more rewarding than was previously considered to be the case.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have considered the symbolic encounters that both constitute and express the Bohemian's personalized way down the Bohemian path to self-reconstruction. Putting things in ideal form, deluded or cynical Straights are exposed to friends from the Bohemian scene. If they are open to the kinds of ideas and experiences relayed to them by these friends, they may enter the Bohemian scene and begin to explore self and society. Through an ongoing series of symbolic encounters, would-be Bohemians begin to negotiate, sometimes through conflict over ideas and practices, new ways of conceptualizing critically the Straight world. Previous beliefs and role behaviours are redefined as repressive, boring and self-alienating. Instead, would-be Bohemians are encouraged both to find themselves, through activities such as drug use and artistic production, and to become involved in political and social change. The transition is subtended by the dialectic between self and community, and that between the inner and outer discourses. In this chapter, I have described the minimum necessary aspects of the Bohemian path. In the next, I consider the place of those more fully committed to the Bohemian path, and to the social product of this intense commitment, through an exploration of ritual events.
Rosaldo (1989) has provided an analysis of the spontaneous social interaction involved in ‘visiting’ amongst the Ilongot of the Philippines, which helped me clarify my own thoughts about Bohemian rules for speaking. He (1989:112, emphasis added) says:

In my view, optionality, variability, and unpredictability produce positive qualities of social being rather than negative zones of analytically empty randomness. Far from being devoid of positive content (presumably because of not being rule-governed), indeterminacy allows the emergence of a culturally valued quality of human relations where one can follow impulses, change directions, and coordinate with other people. In other words, social unpredictability has its distinctive tempo, and it permits people to develop timing, coordination, and a knack for responding to contingencies. These qualities constitute social grace, which in turn enables an attentive person to be effective in the interpersonal politics of everyday life.

Social grace ‘consists of one’s responsiveness to whims, desires, and contingencies, whether these emanate from one’s own heart or from those of one’s partners in action’ (Rosaldo 1989:114). In his analysis, Rosaldo argues that there is a high degree of behavioural slippage because of the absence of elaborate cultural rules. Thus, to move successfully in these ‘zones of indeterminacy’, Ilongots require the personal quality of social grace. However, he seems to be willing to attribute social behaviour to the possession of this personal trait rather than focusing on the constitutive rules for Ilongot visiting. Social grace seems to be more properly a property of ‘special’ persons, those who are ‘above’ the rules because of their extraordinary personal qualities or social prestige. My usage is also consistent with the etymological origins of ‘grace’ (see Pitt-Rivers 1992, Sansom in press).

Helms (1986) notes similar terminology for the urban nomads of her study. For urban nomads, ‘losing it’ was the opposite of ‘keeping it together’ – balancing the demands of social life with the search for self.

For anthropological studies of the construction of masculinity in various cultures, see, for example, Brandes (1980), Dunk (1991), Gilmore (1990), Herdt (1981, 1982, 1987), Herzfeld (1985), Levy (1973) and Moore (1994b). There is also the burgeoning field of ‘Men’s Studies’ (e.g. Brod 1987, Buchbinder 1994, Connell 1995, Hopkins 1992, Kimmel 1987, May and Strikwerda 1992, Morgan 1992, Seidler 1989). While the views expressed in many of these works resemble (and, through university study, inform) those articulated by Bohemians, their authors rarely focus on issues arising from specific ethnographies. They do not show how masculinity is created and negotiated in specific social contexts and are more concerned with theoretical, philosophical or political examinations of masculinity and with issues of sexuality arising from feminism, poststructuralism or postmodernism. It may be argued that they are more like position papers than empirical investigations of social trends.
Not all of those writing about the effects of video games on children agree with Provenzo, Jr.'s (1991) provocative analysis of Nintendo as representing gender stereotypes, violence and aggression. For example, Kinder (1991:104) argues that the more difficult Nintendo games encourage cooperation and the pooling of knowledge if players are to proceed to advanced levels or acquire the skills necessary to work the special moves of Nintendo-game characters. These differences in position may relate to differences in theoretical and methodological focus: Provenzo, Jr. seems to have concentrated on a textual analysis of Nintendo games whereas Kinder's research included attention to the actual playing of Nintendo games.

Some Bohemians played games on the Sega system, one of Nintendo's main rivals. My argument about subversion also applies to the Bohemian playing of these games.
Chapter 8

‘Going raving’: ritual events on the reconstructive path

In Chapter 7, I established a conceptual scheme for the Bohemian scene: symbolic encounter – personal way – reconstructive path. I distinguished two types of symbolic encounter – core and remaking everyday activities – and explored the fundamental Bohemian dialectic between self and community that underwrites these encounters. In this chapter, I explore this dialectic and, to a lesser extent, the one between inner and outer discourses, with reference to another category of symbolic encounter represented in Bohemian words and deeds, that of ritual events. These are events that are remarked upon for their special, out-of-the-ordinary nature. Bohemians employ a wide range of adjectives to describe ritual events – ‘mind-blowing’, ‘huge’, ‘wicked’, ‘full-on’, ‘cranking’ and ‘hard-core’, to name just a few. In keeping with Bohemian representations, I treat ritual events as transcendental, often revelatory moments in the transitional process. What differentiates these ritual events from symbolic encounters of the core and everyday variety is that they are represented by Bohemians as expressing, in a single event, the Bohemian community and everything for which it stands.

Because of the diversity within the Bohemian scene, there are different types of ritual event. For gay and lesbian Bohemians, and sometimes for their straight friends, flying to Sydney to participate in the annual Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade is one such event. Marching in Perth’s annual Lesbian and Gay Pride Parade and attending the dance party that follows is a local version of the Sydney event. Whether gay, lesbian or straight, all those who have attended these events speak of them in glowing terms as significant events in their lives as Bohemians. For gay men and lesbians, these events provide opportunities to come out, and to participate in a Gay and Lesbian ‘community event’ with ‘pride’. Those straight Bohemians who have participated in such events feel that they have provided them with deeper insights into life; for example, they feel as if they can identify better with their gay and lesbian friends, and have demonstrated in a personal way their political convictions. For Bohemians of both sexualities, participation in ritual events creates powerful expressive and political bonds with Bohemian consociates.
For grunge Bohemians, attending the Big Day Out (an annual all-day, open-air concert featuring grunge, indie and thrash bands) and other similar rock concerts appears to have similar ritual significance. One grungy I interviewed spoke excitedly of her Big Day Out experience as ‘memorable’. She described the lead-up to me:

And it was a huge, huge event. A huge event. All the grunge people came out for it. All the alternative people came out. And I didn’t think there was that many of those in Perth. And, ah, we just went wild that day. Totally sick, we set it all up. We had our little speed and everything in the morning. And we all had a blat, there was about five or six of us that had a blat in the morning. And that was fun. And we, then we filled up some picks ready to have some later on, and took them with us and everything. Caught the train. We were speeding away, just like really, really hyperactive and happy. And on the train, everybody on the train was going to Big Day Out, so the place was full of these alternative people and full of hippies. And it was just ... it was really good.

Another set of Bohemians has constructed an annual ritual event, which resembles, in at least its form, the St. Oswald’s Day described by Dance and Mugford (1992, cf. Chapter 6). On the morning of a particular day each year, these Bohemians gather at an appointed meeting place, smoke large amounts of pot, take trips and then spend the rest of the day roaming around Kings Park, 400 hectares of grass and bushland situated in the centre of Perth. The day is a chance to meet new friends and consolidate existing relationships, to create a non-Straight reality and to learn more about oneself.

In this chapter, I focus on a specific ritual event, the rave, by discussing three particular raves from the perspective of the Bohemians with whom I moved rather than attempting to discuss the rave as a total event. However, specific content aside, my analysis is meant to cover all forms of ritual event.

**A brief history of raves**

The acid-house movement or style, the forerunner of rave culture, emerged around 1985 (Kenny 1993, Redhead 1993). Firmly rooted in the music-oriented tradition of English youth subcultures such as the goths and the new romantics, acid-house music was apparently developed by a number of British tourists in Ibiza, amongst them holidaying nightclub DJs and members of popular music bands (McDermott 1993). It was then brought back to the United Kingdom but was originally played only in alternative nightclubs such as The Hacienda in Manchester. Acid house spawned a
number of musical developments – ‘acid jazz’, techno and trance or ‘ambient’ music – as well as a number of other musical styles. These styles share a reliance on a beat which rarely drops below 120 per minute.

In Perth, raves can be seen as the most recent in a long line of imported British youth traditions, following mods, skinheads and punks. These traditions are supported by the children of English migrants who form a high percentage of Perth’s overseas-born population (as well as by non-British youth). Many raves are organized and attended by English migrants and tourists. Raves have been running in Perth since the end of 1991, but originally catered to a small, largely underground, inner-city, alternative clientele. The first raves were attended by as few as five hundred people.

The popularity of raves was given a boost by events in the relatively small alternative nightclub scene in Perth. Most Perth nightclubs are oriented towards commercial music and the consumption of alcohol, and are therefore considered Straight by Bohemians. However, since the late 1970s, there have been a number of alternative nightclubs that have opened to cater for quite specific (often English-inspired) subcultural markets such as mods, punks and goths. These clubs open for a few years, become associated with particular scenes, and then close as musical and subcultural styles evolve, sometimes re-opening after being renovated in new styles more suited to subcultural developments.

The most recent, well-attended alternative dance nightclub closed in 1992. Popular opinion has it that because of the heavy drug use at this club and because those intoxicated by E, trips or speed did not want, or need, to drink alcohol, the club was not commercially viable. Other alternative nightclubs took some of the overspill but many young nightclub patrons were looking for venues that played techno music and in which drugs could be consumed in relative safety. They also wanted venues in which the use of alcohol, and the comportment associated with its use, would not detract greatly from illicit-drug experiences.

The changing view of nightclubs and their viability as leisure venues is worthy of elaboration. Among some sections of youth, including Bohemians, there appears to be a desire for truly alternative venues which goes beyond the style or theme of nightclubs. Criticisms of Straight nightclubs (as well as some alternative ones) are numerous and speak to their role as youth cultural spaces. They are perceived as small, generally catering to no more than five to six hundred people (although size, in itself, is not necessarily an important issue – some successful nightclubs have been
based in very small venues). There are limits to how one may behave inside them and they are policed by bouncers who are viewed as intimidating and aggressive. Their patrons are considered to be overly concerned with appearance and image, and less interested in dancing and generally ‘running amuck’ (i.e. following one’s emotions and feelings). There is also criticism of alcohol’s central place in most Straight nightclubs and the perceived associations between alcohol and violence, even in nightclubs which lie outside the commercial mainstream, play alternative music and are patronized by members of the alternative and subcultural fringe. Thus, Straight nightclubs (and, to a lesser extent, alternative clubs) are viewed as being constraining – behaviourally, emotionally and with respect to drug use.

These changes in taste and venue gave impetus to bigger, better-organized and better-advertised raves from 1992 onwards. Several rave production companies were formed and they gave their raves inviting names containing obvious drug references – ‘Trip to the Moon’, ‘Telepathy’, ‘Temple of Dreams’, ‘Kaos’, ‘Rush’ and ‘Escape’. Some of these raves were attended by up to 3,000 people and cost between $15 and $27 to enter. Raves featuring international dance acts cost as much as $35. They were held in disused quarries, warehouses and open fields and, initially, attracted considerable police and media attention (which occasionally resurfaces). One rave held in a quarry was closed down because of fires being lit in surrounding parkland, thus creating a safety hazard; another in a suburban warehouse was shut down about 4a.m., apparently because the music was disturbing residents up to four kilometres away. Substantial articles on raves have been run in the two local papers, The West Australian (e.g. 3/12/92 – a front page article with photograph) and The Sunday Times (e.g. 19/9/93), purporting to explain their significance and focusing on drug consumption.

In the early days of raves in Perth, E appears to have been a popular drug for many rave-goers (although there was always some diversity in preferred rave drugs) and it became identified with such events. It was consistently of good quality and was readily available, although proportionately more expensive than other drugs. Although discerning trends in drug use over short periods is difficult, it appears that, more recently, the variable quality and escalating cost of E have made trips and speed just as attractive as rave drugs.

E, trips and speed possess pharmacological qualities which are particularly well suited to the rave context. All have stimulant qualities that facilitate greater physical exertion, stamina and the ability to remain awake for long hours. E produces excessive amounts of serotonin, a mood-regulating chemical present in the brain, by preventing normal processes of absorption. Serotonin is thought to be responsible for the
reportedly euphoric qualities of E. Trips may produce auditory and visual hallucinations which amplify the sensory stimuli of raves – the music, lights, smoke and heat. Trips and E are also relatively long-lasting drugs with effects being reported anything up to twelve hours after ingestion. While no drug experience is shaped by pharmacology alone (Zinberg 1984), opiates or other drugs that physiologically depress body function would be less conducive to long hours of dancing.

There have been commercial spin-offs from raves. A new alternative nightclub opened, presumably to cash in on the popularity of raves but perhaps also to provide another venue that was not oriented around the use of alcohol. (It has since closed.) This club catered primarily for under-eighteens. Every second Saturday night, however, beginning at midnight, was an ‘all-ages’ night. Entry was $8 and the club was open until 8a.m. Those Bohemians who had attended this club described it as having a ‘ravey feel’, although physically the club was slightly smaller than some rave venues, and the lighting and other special effects were less elaborate. Several record shops specializing in dance music (and selling videos of raves and T-shirts bearing their names) have opened. Mainstream clothing shops now stock ‘rave’ clothing and accessories, and I saw a sign advertising ‘rave cuts’ outside one hairdresser shop. The more commercially accessible techno music now registers in the Top Forty music charts and two such tracks provide the backdrop to recent television advertisements for Coca-Cola. In the eyes of those Bohemians who attend raves, raves and techno music are beginning to be appropriated by the mainstream. In the words of one person: ‘Whatever happened to the underground?’.

The structure of raves

Advertisements for raves are placed in local magazines many months prior to the set date. Glossy, colourful promotional flyers are available in the dance-record shops in the few weeks prior to the rave and posters appear on billboards and inner-city walls. They inform the potential rave-goer of the type and size of the sound system, the variety and type of lighting that will be used, the DJs who will be playing (there may be up to eight) and whether they are local, interstate or international artists, who the MCs (‘mike controllers’) will be and, if relevant, where they are from, what sort of venue it will be – outdoor or indoor (although not usually disclosing the location) – and from which nightclub location maps will be distributed and at what time on the night of the rave. These flyers also carry various slogans which echo New-Age sentiments – such as ‘We are all one people’ and ‘Love and respect to all ravers’ – as well as oblique references to altered states – ‘We will telepathically transport you to a new dimension in aural, visual and sensual surrounds – welcome to the next level’.
On the night of the rave, a designated nightclub hosts a pre-rave party where maps
giving directions to the rave location are released at a specified time. Ravers attend the
release, obtain a map and then, as the venue is commonly a suburban one, drive to the
‘mystery location’. Sometimes there are buses provided to take people to the rave.
Once at the rave, one queues up outside alongside other ravers, grungies, university
students and bogans, as well as other young people with less obvious scenic
affiliations. There are also English youths dressed in soccer shirts or other clothing
items marking their ethnicity. According to rave-going Bohemians, these are the
‘soccer hooligans’ (or sometimes, for those Bohemians with English connections, the
‘football hooligans’) – those who in the 1970s and 1980s would perhaps have declared
their birthplace through membership of the skinhead or mod styles. Entry is via pre-
purchased ticket, although tickets are usually available at the door for a slightly higher
cost. The ticket buys access to an environment that is not licensed to sell alcohol.
Because of the unlicensed nature of raves, rave-goers may be as young as fourteen or
fifteen years. However, the majority of rave-goers are located in the age range
circumscribed by the mid-teens and mid-twenties, although there are those who are
older.

Raves are usually held on Saturday nights or, if Monday is an official public holiday,
on Sunday nights. In contrast to most nightclubs, raves are held in physically large
spaces – usually warehouses – which contributes to their overall impact. Inside the
rave, there are usually three main areas. Firstly, there is a large dance area which
occupies a major part of the available floor space. Secondly, there is an area containing
a bar, shop or stall which sells water, chewing gum and lollipops (and, at well-
organized raves, T-shirts bearing the name of the rave and images from the flyer). The
water is to counter the dehydration caused by drug use and heightened by long hours
of dancing in the high temperatures generated inside raves. The chewing-gum and
lollipops help to alleviate the jaw-grinding and clenching which sometimes
accompanies the use of E, trips and speed. Thirdly, there is an outside ‘chill-out’ area
which comprises portable toilets and an open-air space where people congregate to
cool down from dancing, to smoke cigarettes, to chat briefly to friends or to ride out
unpleasant phases in their drug experience. In addition to the main dance-floor area,
some venues contain other (usually smaller) rooms. In these cases, the chill-out area
may be located inside the rave, in one of the separate rooms, and may feature trance
or ambient music to help set a more relaxed mood.
There is usually private security at raves, advertised on the promotional flyers as 'rave-sensitive', 'rave-friendly' or 'firm but friendly'. At the head of the dance-floor area are raised platforms on which the DJs' equipment sits, flanked by towering banks of speakers. DJs are usually accompanied by MCs whose role is periodically to exhort the ravers to greater dance efforts with amplified calls such as 'put your hands in the air' or 'make some noise'. At the front of, and sometimes above, the dance floor are the lights – multicoloured 'lasers', 'roboscans' and 'strobes' – which deliver different visual effects. These lighting effects are complemented by machines that periodically pump smoke into the venue. Around the edge of the dance floor there are sometimes raised platforms on which people may dance if they wish. At some raves, these platforms are arranged so that those dancing on them can be seen by those on the dance floor, and so platform dancing becomes a form of exhibitionist self-expression, which also serves to spur those on the dance floor to more energetic efforts.

Raves usually start between 10p.m. and midnight and, police permitting, may run until 8, 9 or 10a.m. Sometimes, there are also official 'come-down parties' organized at city nightclubs which run for an hour from the conclusion of the rave. The DJs play trance or ambient music to 'come down to'. Because of the limited financial resources of those who attend raves (mostly teenagers) and the high cost of drugs, raves are generally run only once a month or less. This rationing of raves also contributes to their 'special' character.

Three case studies

I arrived at a shared house at about 10p.m. Seated around a kitchen table 'pulling cones' of pot on a bucket bong were Evatt, Mick, Paul, Bill and Tim. Evatt and Mick were becoming excited at the prospect of raving and using drugs. Both of them planned to take trips. Paul, Bill and Tim were not going to the rave for various reasons. Evatt said that he had 'PRT – pre-rave tension'. On the kitchen table he laid out a pair of scissors, the metal cone from the bucket bong, a glass of champagne, a trip wrapped in a small piece of foil (to minimize handling of the trip – which reputedly draws out the LSD – prior to consumption) and a packet of cigarettes. I asked what each item meant to him. He answered, 'in order of consumption', that he would use the scissors and cone to smoke pot. Then, he would drink the champagne as part of the pre-rave socializing. On the way to the rave, he would swallow his trip and, at the rave, he would smoke cigarettes while he was 'off my face'. Booming from the stereo loudspeakers was techno music, with its insistent 120 beats per minute, charging up the rave-goers, infusing them with energy and enthusiasm.
Another young man, John, arrived at the house having already consumed his trip. Cigarettes were smoked, cones were pulled on the bucket bong and a few games of Super Mario Kart were played as the hour at which the location maps would be released drew nearer. About 11 p.m., Evatt volunteered to walk 'around the corner' to obtain a map from a nearby nightclub. Paul walked with him and then went on to the railway station to catch a train home. Outside the club, a crowd was gathered in anticipation. Evatt secured a map, greeted some fellow ravers and headed back to the house where Mick, John and I waited (in the meantime, Bill and Tim had also left).

The drive to the rave location would take thirty minutes. Quick calculations were done to gauge the best time to drop the trips. The best time for drugs to come on was thought to be just after arriving at the rave. In this way, one enters the rave before the drug effects are too apparent but gains maximum intoxicated time while inside. Evatt pulled out a small amount of speed powder, chopped it into several lines with a credit card and offered it round. The last bucket bongs were smoked to top up the level of stonedness, and the four of us who comprised this night's rave posse hit the road in two cars. This particular rave posse of four souls was relatively small as such posses may number up to thirty people.

Following the drive, we arrived at the site of the rave, a go-kart track. Outside, hundreds of people congregated in a haphazard line. We walked nearer to the front of the queue and edged ourselves in. Once inside, our posse fragmented somewhat. Evatt went immediately to the front to the main dance floor. He wanted to be where the effect of the lights was best and brightest, where there was the most dance energy, where the music was loudest and the crowd thickest. The three of us hung back on the edges of the dance floor, surveying the scene before us, waiting to get into the mood before committing ourselves to dancing. Gradually, the hands of the other two posse members came out of their pockets and their bodies started to move to the music, as did mine. Stimulated by the lights and driving bass, we became infused with the energy of the crowd.

Before long, all of us were dancing, even Mick, the ex-bogan. He had agreed to attend the rave only because some of his friends are 'into' techno music and raves and have explained their meaning to him. He wanted to experience the rave for himself. He appeared unsure dancing to techno music, being more of a self-confessed 'headbanger' and fan of heavy metal bands like Metallica. Nevertheless, he was unable to contain himself and said as much to me. As the night wore on, and the effects of his trip intensified, he was moved to push through the crowd, declaring his intention to dance at the front with the most 'hard-core' ravers. He tried three times to
do so, returning each time saying he could not quite bring himself to dance. Finally, he broke whatever personal barriers were caging him, strode to the front of the dance floor, and, in his words, 'had a crank' amidst a sea of ravers.

We continued to dance, sometimes within eyesight of one another, sometimes surrounded by other ravers whom we did not know personally. I noticed that Evatt, during one of his breaks from dancing, was talking with two men. All three of them were gently moving their bodies to the music. Suddenly, one of the two men turned away from the conversation and began an extended, elaborate and vigorous dance sequence. After a few minutes, he turned back to Evatt and the other man and resumed talking.

Periodically, we met up again at a spot near one of the raised platforms to chat briefly, catch our breath, take in the rest of the rave, and share cigarettes, bottles of water or chewing gum. However, the conversation was superficial and to the point, confined to 'Are you having a crank, Mick?' or 'How's your trip?' and single-word answers.

Between 2 and 3a.m., the atmosphere took a downturn courtesy of a live act which played a style of music that owed more to funk than to techno. It was not suited to the rave. The energy level lifted again once they had finished and a new DJ began his bracket of techno tracks. By now, the rave crowd had increased and the warehouse seemed full without being overcrowded.

About 4a.m., I stopped dancing on a platform at the rear of the dance floor to marvel at the scene in front of me. Perhaps 1,500 people dancing feverishly, laser lights flashing, music pumping, sweat dripping, air thick with a sweaty humidity, most ravers standing in irregular lines with their friends to their right and left facing the front of the dance floor. For me, this moment was revelatory and has since prompted the kind of inner discourse I wrote of in Chapter 7. I had listened to several descriptions of raves before, but in this moment I felt as if I had passed from understanding the rave at an intellectual level to empathizing with it at an emotional level. I felt that I now knew what a rave felt like. Thinking about my response to this rave (the second I had attended) brings to mind a similar field experience described by Liebow (1967:254-55), on attending a dance with the African-American males with whom he moved:

One Saturday night, with my observer role clearly in mind, I went to a dance at the Capitol Arena where more than a thousand people were jammed together. I was the only white male, this was my first time at such an event, the music was so foreign to me that I picked out the wrong
beat, and I was unable to identify several of the band instruments. I was, willy-nilly, an observer. But here are a few lines excerpted from the field observation: “It was very hot, it was very noisy, it was very smelly, and it was all very exciting. It was impossible to remain simply an observer in a place like this, even for someone as phlegmatic as I. It was only a few minutes after Jackie Wilson started singing that I discovered that the noise wasn’t nearly loud enough, the heat wasn’t nearly hot enough, and the odor from more than a thousand closely packed people was not really strong enough. Like everyone else, I wanted more of everything.”

By 5.15a.m., after several solid hours of dancing, we had all had enough. Those who had been tripping were well past the major ‘peaks’ (points at which the effects of drugs are strongest) and were looking forward to ‘a couple of cones, some Nintendo and a chat’. In the car, Evatt and I began the post-mortem. Was the venue a good one? Were the DJs good? Why did they hire such an inappropriate live act? Back at the house, this analysis and evaluation began in earnest. The verdict on the venue was that it was a good one: not so big that the crowd was dwarfed, not too small to be too club-like. The music was not the best people had ever heard but was still judged to be ‘pretty good’. Stories of the rave were exchanged. I related one of mine: watching a bare-chested man dancing in an almost acrobatic way, whirling as if possessed by some mystical power. We agreed that he was probably ‘on’ (intoxicated by) E. Evatt related how, at the peak of his trip, when he was dancing on one of the raised platforms, he kept seeing figures dancing in front of him but when he reached out there was just air. Mick said he had had a great time and asked, ‘When’s the next one?’; this comment from the man who had originally said that he would never go to a rave because he hated techno music. Discussion of the experiential, inner aspects of the rave continued for another half-an-hour or so – particularly how the trips had enhanced the various lighting displays – interspersed with stories of the actions of other rave-goers.

More pot was smoked as people tried to soften the come-down from the trips and speed. About 6.15a.m., with the sun well up in the eastern sky, Evatt suggested a game of Nintendo and we filed into the lounge. John had never played Nintendo games, so Evatt and Mick instructed him. The telephone rang; it was someone who had just arrived home from the rave. Another person called by on the way home from the rave. It was now 6.30a.m. and another rave night was drawing to a close. The consensual verdict was that we had shared a very good rave. I left Mick, John and Evatt playing Nintendo and went home to bed.
On another rave night, I arrived at a shared house at about 10.45p.m. Present was a rave posse consisting of Evatt, Don, Stu, Suzanne, Jessica and two other women I had not met before, Sandie and Emily, although I remembered seeing Emily at a previous rave. They were waiting for a phone call which would tell them the location of that night’s rave. There was speculation as to where it might be. Don had never been to a rave before. He was looking forward to it and had borrowed one of Evatt’s ‘rave T-shirts’ for the occasion.

Don and Sandie were playing Nintendo. At the table sat Evatt, Stu, Jessica and Emily while Suzanne, anticipating the rave, was walking around, not really dancing but beginning to move her body to the techno music emanating from the stereo system. Evatt was doling out cones of pot. Suzanne, Don, Evatt and I took turns to drink several teaspoons of Guarana mixed with water. Guarana is, according to its packaging, a powdered form of the rubbed seeds of *Paullinia Cupana* which contains caffeine. In Perth, it is sold legally in health food shops and cafes (when served in the latter, it is mixed with orange juice or other drinks to disguise its bitter flavour).

When the phone call came at 11.45p.m., people were initially disappointed. The rave was to be held in an inner-city dance club that several members of the posse regularly frequented (the one that catered for under-eighteens as well as having ‘all-ages’ nights). Would the night still be ‘special’? Two of the women complained, saying that driving out to a mystery suburban location was part of the fun. Evatt said that the rave organizers would increase the size of the nightclub venue (apparently, when open as a nightclub, the owners used only half the available floor space) and there would be more lights, better-quality sound and more people. Other posse members also contributed to this turnaround in mood. Drugs were swallowed (trips and E), snorted (speed) or, in one case, inserted anally (E). More Guarana was drunk and a last round of cones was pulled on the bucket bong. We set off into the night in two groups – Stu and the four women ahead, while Evatt, Don and I were delayed by a quick visit to a nearby 24-hour automatic bank-teller machine.

On arrival, we walked to the front of the queue and pressed our way in. Both Evatt and Don felt their respective drugs beginning to come on and wanted to be inside, rather than in a long queue, when the full effects became apparent. Once inside, we walked straight to the dance floor and began dancing. Despite this being his first rave, Don showed little obvious reluctance to dance. After a few minutes we spotted Stu and the others standing about fifteen yards to our left and moved to join them.
The spot to which we had moved became our base for the night, our point of orientation, although people moved around the rave for different reasons – to buy water from the bar, to smoke cigarettes or cool off in less-crowded areas inside the rave or outside in the cool night air, or to dance amidst other groups of people. Suzanne, in particular, frequently danced off into the sweating crowd. We seemed to have found ourselves in an area in which there were a lot of people who had taken E. The smell of Vicks was strong. Vicks is a nasal decongestant, which contains menthol, and is said to heighten the ‘head rush’ of E; people at raves tend to use it via inhaler rather than the Vaporub form sold in jars. There was also a strong smell of Medic Vapour Spray (like Vaporub, a nasal decongestant), which was sprayed into industrial dust masks and then offered to nearby dancers – who may or may not be friends – to sniff. One woman was facing away from the DJ’s platform, unlike most other dancers, and was transfixed by a lit sparkler. She whizzed it through the air, watching as the sparks flew off. She was smiling like a child might at Christmas, as if she had seen something truly amazing for the very first time. Some of the Bohemians I was with smiled at her, guessing that she was ‘E’ing’.

To the right of where we were dancing, a raver had a small bottle of amyl nitrate which became communal property. Amyl nitrate is one drug in the ‘volatile substances’ category, those substances that change from a liquid to a gas when exposed to air. It is a volatile, flammable substance rapidly absorbed by inhalation and acts primarily as a smooth muscle relaxant. Recreationally, ‘amyl’ (the abbreviation by which it is commonly known) is used to enhance sexual activity (particularly by gay men) and to induce euphoria – the property most relevant to its use at raves. At regular intervals, the smoke machine, which was next to us, filled the area with so much smoke that it was impossible to see, and not so easy to breathe (combined with the odour of Vaporub and Medic Spray). The atmosphere was one of friendly, safe intimacy.

There was also a deal of physical contact in the area in which we danced. Amongst our posse, Suzanne hugged Evatt. Later, she hugged Stu. At one point, Stu sat on a raised platform while Evatt leant against his legs. Other members of our posse engaged in similar contacts throughout the evening. Amongst other rave posses near us there were similar displays of physical affection. Catching someone’s eye usually produced a smile. At one stage, as I squeezed between dancers on my way to buy water, a young woman reached out and touched my arm. I turned and smiled and she smiled back. As I jostled people, as inevitably I did with the dance area being so crowded, I apologized to be greeted with smiles. This was indeed a very happy
crowd, probably the happiest I had found myself in during attendance at seven raves. (In talking to Evatt later that week, he agreed that this had been a good rave and that the atmosphere had indeed been very friendly.)

About 4.45a.m., Suzanne said she was going outside for a breath of fresh air. Evatt suggested walking back to the house for a quick top-up cone and then walking back to the rave. Others agreed and we set off. Back at the house, there was little actual talk about the rave. The pot brought back some drug effects but apart from this there was also a reluctance to let the rave mood slip away. Stu sat down to play Nintendo but Suzanne said he should turn the game off before he got 'hooked' and did not want to return to the rave. About 5.15a.m., the decision was taken to return to the rave. I cried off, explaining that I required some sleep before attending a wedding at 11a.m. After various joking taunts of 'soft-core' and 'wimp', the others set off in the dawn light.

Not all raves are as successful or as enjoyable as these two. What follows is a description of a rave that was not so enjoyable. I met Evatt at his house around midnight. An hour later, we walked to the rave which was being held in an inner-city warehouse. Suzanne and Jessica turned up later. It was held in a smallish hall which Evatt said could be 'very intimate'. It started well. One of Evatt's favourite DJs came on about 2a.m. and delivered a blistering set of trance music which packed the dance floor and energized the crowd. The entire musical bracket was defined by the driving force upon which each track sat, a mere variation on the pure energy. A young man in front of me went into a series of convoluted, swirling rhythmical moves, his eyes closed in apparent ecstasy. The MC confined his comments to the occasional interjection for us to 'make some noise', telling us that he would take us 'higher'. The DJ's set was capped by a spectacular smoke and light show which created an audible human buzz around me. I looked through an enveloping, cloudy haze to see a purple wash bathe the entire warehouse.

Unfortunately, the next DJ played several minutes of music with a variable, fast rhythm, possibly as high as 200 beats per minute. It was very difficult to dance to. The crowd near me started to thin. Those who remained on the dance floor seemed less than enthusiastic and the general tempo of dancing fell. Evatt returned from his customary front dance-spot, saying that this music was 'absolute shit' and that he could not possibly dance to it. He smoked a cigarette and we surveyed the crowd which was trying its hardest to continue dancing. After perhaps twenty minutes or so, the music changed and this time it had a more infectious feel to it. The dance floor began to fill again and young bodies began to respond to the music once more.
Then, just as the energy levels began to rise, the electrical power failed. The music wound down and the lights went out. There were a few seconds of comparative silence before the MC resumed his calls. He praised this rave as ‘the rave for ravers by ravers’ (perhaps seeking to establish its authenticity as an underground rave rather than one organized by one of the larger rave companies), told us that we should ‘make some noise’ and asked us to ‘show some respect’ to the DJ for his efforts. His monologue continued, ‘We’re going to take you higher’. This statement was met by several calls from the group of twenty or so young English lads standing to my left: ‘Well play some fucking music then!’ Sections of the crowd began to grow restless and the MC, as if sensing and over-compensating, grew more insistent in his calls. They bordered on parody – how could one go higher when there was no music? Evatt, who had journeyed to the front only minutes before, at the sound of the more infectious music, reappeared at my side, cursing the MC as a ‘fuck-wit’. Fifteen minutes or so passed with no sound, only the deflating sight of men checking power leads and holding cigarette lighters for illumination, not a single torch amongst them. Finally, a large ghetto-blaster was propped up at the front but its thin sound hardly reached the back nor did it drown out the low hum of conversation and frustration. People drifted away from the dance floor. The mood of the rave was broken despite the MC’s continuing pleas for us to ‘make some noise’.

Finally, perhaps twenty-five minutes later, sound was restored but there were still no lights except for a single strobe which blinked insistently. The MC, encouraged by this promising development, thanked the ravers for staying and told them one more time that this rave was ‘for ravers by ravers’. However, he was too late, for us at least. Evatt suggested we go, and we left about 4.30 a.m., unsure of the whereabouts of Suzanne and Jessica. We discussed the night on the twenty-minute walk home – ‘a bit of a flop’ but Evatt wrote it off as just one of the hazards of raving. He agreed with me that the lighting and smoke combination was amongst the best he, as a veteran of over twenty raves, had ever experienced. We also agreed that the MC’s commentary left a lot to be desired. The highlight for him was the musical set by his favourite DJ, which he described simply and succinctly as ‘fucking brilliant’.

This third rave was not a success. The venue was suitable and the music and lighting were excellent initially. However, this positive evaluation was steadily eroded by the MC’s incessant and intrusive voice-overs, and the musical choice of the second DJ. Finally, the rave was delivered a killer blow by the power difficulties, and the air of desperation which crept into both the MC’s voice and the actions of the cigarette-lighter-wielding amateur electricians. Evatt has rarely mentioned it since.
Successful rave performance

We can now establish a set of constitutive rules for successful rave performance. I use the term ‘performance’ rather than ‘event’ to distinguish the actions of the Bohemian rave-goers, with whom I moved, from the larger frame which is the rave. In making this distinction, I mean to examine the conditions necessary for successful raving as defined by Bohemians rather than seeking to examine the rave as a total event. Clearly, rave organizers must provide the basic resources and materials which are a pre-condition for a successful rave – such as a venue, several DJs and MCs, lighting and other visual effects, a powerful sound system and security. Without these pre-conditions, the rave cannot happen. However, Bohemians have no control over such things and so, staying true to my ethnographic focus, the conditions I outline relate to those aspects over which they do have some control – those that constitute a successful rave performance.

Firstly, the pre-rave events. There should be considerable time spent at a single house with people arriving to talk, smoke pot, organize or procure chemical drugs and otherwise generally prepare for the coming event. A particularly important element of this preparation is placing oneself into an appropriate mood. Raving is a physically and mentally arduous undertaking and so one has to be ‘psyched up’. Inquiries into another person’s state of preparedness sometimes take the form: ‘Are you ready?’ (usually accompanied by a smile), meaning is one prepared for the long and emotion-charged night ahead. The group nature of the pre-rave meeting also serves to heighten excitement as the appointed hour to leave the house approaches. Ideally, there should be at least several people so that there can be more inputs to the discussion, more excitement as a result of more people and the sense of being about to participate collectively in a special event. In addition, there also needs to be at least some experienced ravers to pass on knowledge of the coming event for those less experienced, and to take the lead in building the excitement.

Once at the rave, the members of the posse must throw themselves into the rave. There can be no hanging back. And, as the essence of raving is dancing, this desire to participate means pushing into the dancing crowd to dance alongside co-ravers. Those who are particularly hard-core usually dance towards the front of the crowd, nearest the visual displays and loudspeakers and where the dancing is most energetic. One young woman described as ‘zoning’ the actions of those who stand back and view the dancing without indicating any willingness to abandon their inhibitions and become involved. While the non-participation of rave attendees does not necessarily dampen
the enthusiasm of others or detract greatly from the rave experience for these others, later, when the night is being evaluated, a comment or two might be passed about their non-participation (perhaps that they have been 'soft-core'). A truly successful performance, then, is one in which all who attend give themselves fully to the rave context.

Just as having a number of people present at the pre-rave meeting is important to foster a sense of collective endeavour and mounting excitement, it is also important when at the rave. One of the performance problems with the rave I attended with Evatt was that we were alone. Although Suzanne and Jessica turned up later, we did not speak with them. Nor had we spent the period immediately before the rave with them. There is a critical mass associated with raving. Although there is no magical number of ravers below which the rave performance declines, Bohemians appear to support the following axiom: the more people attending a rave, the better. The more people who attend, the more links one can establish with new friends or reinforce relationships with current friends.

Another aspect of successful rave performance is the part played by drugs. Although, as Zinberg (1984) has argued, the drug experience is not determined by pharmacology alone, the type and quality of the drugs consumed prior to a rave do bear on successful performance. A trip might be either 'speedy' or 'trippy'. E may be of the 'smacky' type, and produce a depressant effect in addition to euphoria, or of the reputedly cocaine-based type. Sometimes the effects of a trip are very weak or the speed has been heavily cut with adulterants, thus lessening its stimulant properties. However, the importance of drug use varies. At one extreme, Phil once said, walking home from a rave judged to be mediocre, that raves were 'no good' without drugs and that, as stamina was essential to dance for the whole night, and stimulant drugs provided stamina, then raving without drugs was a fruitless exercise. At the other extreme, Suzanne, generally recognized as a dedicated and hard-core raver, seldom took chemical drugs before attending raves (although she would invariably smoke pot). Even when she did so, she consumed relatively small amounts. She often said that 'I don't need the drugs. I get off on the music and movement'. Therefore, while drugs may contribute stamina and heighten visual and sensory stimulation, they are also viewed as a passport to a state of mind that may also be reached naturally, or at least via legal and less powerful stimulants (before attending a rave, Suzanne usually took Guarana). It is attaining this state of mind, rather than taking drugs per se, which really indicates successful rave performance.
Finally, returning to the house following the rave also benefits from having at least several people present. Sitting down to smoke pot and exchange stories is improved if there are more people to contribute their own unique perspective on, and experiences of, the rave. Should conversation flag, as tiredness begins to creep in, or the effects of one's drugs begin to return with the intoxication of pot, then someone else can continue the conversation. The less people there are, the harder each person has to work to create a sense of common experience.

The multiple meanings of raving

The central Bohemian dialectic between self and community is played out in a number of ways, and at a number of levels, in the context of preparing for, attending and following raves. The first issue to consider is the rave posse. Prior to the rave, the emphasis is on the posse as a collective - a set of friends psyching one another up, listening to techno music, talking excitedly about the night ahead – in order to create a sense of we-ness. This emphasis does not mean, however, that the focus on self is entirely absent from conversation or activity, just that it is de-emphasized. Prior to a rave, people do drift off to play Nintendo or sit quietly for a few moments, introspectively stoned, but the emphasis is on the collective. There is also a de-emphasizing of the outer discourse – the anti-Straight, sometimes parodic, talk which defines the Bohemian community in opposition to the perceived mainstream. Bohemians do talk about raves in the context of this discourse, but the construction of raves as anti-Straight, politically subversive events belongs to occasions other than rave nights. On the rave night, the discourse on inner experience is predominant, such as Evatt’s comment about PRT. People also talk of past raves, predominantly in terms of how they were experienced personally, seeking to re-live their experiential high points as part of the preparation for the rave at hand.

Once at the rave, the posse splits into its constituent parts (i.e. several Bohemians), sometimes spatially but, more importantly, communicatively. The members of the posse are freed from constant and ongoing interaction with one another and move to a broader level of collective association. The posse one arrives with disappears – either because persons move off into the crowd and dance elsewhere or because ongoing conversation is neither possible nor desirable. What replaces it is a focus on what one shares with all the rave-goers present at a particular rave – the willingness to participate in this special event. Bohemian ravers choose to alter the usual visual, spatial, emotional and intellectual contact with friends. Instead, they are, to use one colleague’s phrase, ‘alone together’. They begin with an emphasis on the posse prior to the rave. At the rave, the emphasis shifts to the self as a prelude to a sense of connectedness with a collective much broader than the posse – the entire rave.
The accounts of raves I have collected emphasize this feature. Bohemian ravers feel as if they are in touch with the complete strangers who are dancing in their immediate vicinity. After several of the raves I have attended, Bohemians have related stories of making this type of non-verbal contact with others. After one rave, Suzanne said she could feel the flow of the people around her, and throughout the evening she had moved around amongst different groups of people, feeding off their energy and delivering back some of her own. She, the single raver, felt powerfully connected to other ravers. Thus, for Bohemians the rave is experienced personally – through one’s own body – but in a uniquely and highly social, but non-verbal, environment, amongst other ravers, many of whom are strangers.

In the early days of raves in Perth, and elsewhere, this feeling of unity may have had much to do with the reported effects of E – the creation of empathy, the breaking down of barriers and the sense of emotional intimacy with others (e.g. Beck et al 1989). More recently, I suspect that this element of raves has become a more broadly based aspect of the setting and therefore may also influence the way in which other drugs are experienced.

An important feature of the rave, for those who elect to take drugs, is the freedom to be ‘drug-fucked’ in comparative safety. Bohemians perceive the rave context as one in which an altered state becomes not something to manage, as is the case in some nightclubs and other Straight public settings, but something to be pushed to its fullest limit. There is no atmosphere of aggression or violence which is another explicit reason for going raving, according to rave-going Bohemians. This friendly atmosphere is attributed partly to the absence of alcohol but also to the fact that many of the young men attending raves (even, to a certain degree, the ‘soccer hooligans’) are thought to reject behavioural patterns which are seen to be associated with Straight male social interaction – aggression, competitiveness, intolerance of homosexuality and the sexual harassment of women. In particular, the rave is marked by a distinct absence of the predatory sexuality thought by Bohemians to be characteristic of Straight nightclubs.

The setting up of a context for open self-expression is carefully managed. Rave organizers provide a physical space, DJs, lights, MCs and a particular type of music which is understood by Bohemians to affect the physiology of the brain. Ravers bring to these conditions their past experience of raves, the willingness to enter a special zone heralded by the acceptance of an altered state, and the company of like-minded friends. But such careful management of various elements can take the rave only so far. Its ultimate success depends on some other ingredient which lies beyond control.
and which is extremely hard to define. Bohemian rave-goers can easily say why a rave is not 'good', and even describe the features of a 'good rave', but if asked to define the additional ingredient which transforms a 'good rave' into a 'great one', they choose phrases such as 'Well, it just felt right' or 'It was really cranking' (an attempt to re-create the moment). They are reluctant to delineate exactly and explicitly what it is that makes for a truly special event.

In understanding this extra ingredient, the work of Helms (1986) on 'raging' amongst the residents of shared houses sheds some light. The 'rages' she writes of occur mostly at rock concerts and the term refers to the point during a social event at which a personal altered state ('out-of-it') becomes transformed into a collective experience. In particular, she writes of a specific rage – the night rock band INXS hit Perth (in the days before they were an internationally renowned act) – as one in which a sense of 'communitas' was experienced by her party of ragers. She (1986:99) quotes Turner (1979:45) on communitas: 'a direct, immediate and total confrontation of human identities ... It has something magical about it. Subjectively there is a feeling of endless power ... a moment when compatible people obtain a flash of lucid mutual understanding on the existential level'.

Helms also argues that the concept of 'flow' (as described by Csikszentmialyi and McAloon and cited by Turner [1979]), comes closest to the experiential state of raging. It is a state where there is a sense of 'unified flowing from one moment to the next' and which is felt to be governed by some 'internal logic' which requires no 'conscious intervention' by those experiencing it (Helms 1986:99). From the Bohemian point of view, seeking out and experiencing this state of being – whether we describe it as 'flow', 'communitas', the unity of selves or even the transcendence of one's self – is the essence of the rave. In the first of the presented case studies, Mick's attempts at dancing demonstrate the way he tried to throw off a cognitive frame of inhibition, finally achieving the flow state he described as 'cranking'.

Connecting with other, non-posse ravers is, however, difficult to sustain throughout the entire night. The fact that those raves that Bohemians memorialize are those at which there is a high degree of communitas is testimony to its elusive nature. More often, as the rave progresses, the raver alternates between connecting with the posse and connecting with the rave. The mood of the rave, as it is perceived by the members of the posse, changes over the course of the night. At the beginning it may be relatively subdued, although building steadily as more ravers arrive and the venue begins to fill. The effects of one's drugs will fluctuate, so that at various times verbal
communication with fellow posse members becomes especially undesirable or, in some cases, impossible. One’s energy for dancing waxes and wanes, and several posse members may move outside the rave to the chill-out area for a brief rest. Alternatively, they may leave the rave entirely and walk back to a car for a ‘car experience’—sharing talk about the rave so far and how they are feeling, resting and perhaps smoking a joint to help to ‘bring the drugs back on’.

Because Bohemians regard raves as relatively safe environments in which to be ‘drug-fucked’, they are free to focus fully on self-expression and the achievement of communitas. The members of a posse do not feel a particular responsibility to ensure the safety of fellow posse members, for they seek the personally experienced state of communitas. Dancing frenetically for much of the night, often in an altered state of consciousness, Bohemians cannot afford to be distracted from this primary ritual aim. The spatial movement during a rave also makes it difficult for posse members to monitor one another’s actions. The question of care for others is more likely to become an issue for those posse members who have not taken drugs or when Bohemians visit nightclubs in which alcohol (and therefore, in their eyes, potential problems) is a feature.

The emphasis on self at raves is further illustrated by modes of transport. When driving to suburban raves, Bohemians frequently take several cars rather than squeezing into the least number of cars for the size of the posse. Multiple transport allows Bohemians the opportunity to leave the rave if they wish. It also means that if a Bohemian catches a lift with another, he or she must wait until the car owner is ready to leave. Hence, although driving to raves is held to contribute to their special nature, walking to an inner-city rave has the advantage of allowing ease of arrival and exit.

The analysis of a third feature of the rave benefits from a consideration of Benedict’s (1935) work on Kwakiutl Indian religious rites, which she described as Dionysian.8 Through them, the Kwakiutl sought to escape from the boundaries imposed by the five senses and to break through into another order of experience. According to Benedict, the Kwakiutl played with the divide between sacred and secular realms in these ceremonies. People experienced altered states in a religious context and were then returned to a secular existence. Bohemian ravers are also playing with a dichotomy but not that between sacred and secular. Rather, they play with the divide between cognition and emotion. The rave centres on rejecting a cognitive frame of reference in order to experience a non-verbal commonality with other people. Jackson (1989:135), writing of bodily experience amongst the Kuranko of Sierra Leone, says that:
while words and concepts distinguish and divide, bodiliness unites and forms the grounds for an empathic, even a universal, understanding. That may be why the body so often takes the place of speech and eclipses thought in rituals, such as Kuranko initiation, whose point is the creation of community.

The desire to experience emotion becomes even more significant in the light of both the highly educated nature of the Bohemians and the political activism of some of them. Many Bohemians engage in, or have engaged in, activities where reason, logic and analysis are uppermost (such as studying for a university degree, being involved in political campaigns of one sort or another or, less often, being employed in jobs that require reason, logic and planning). Further, Bohemians hold that an excessive reliance on such aspects of existence is characteristic of Straights. For them, the rave is a context in which the various worlds of rationality may be rejected, at least for a short time, in favour of bodily and emotional experience.

In keeping with the dichotomy between emotion and cognition, the social creation of a rave happens only after the rave has finished, once the posse is wholly or partially re-connected. Reforming the posse towards the end of a rave can be difficult if several members wish to stay while others wish to leave, and if posse members cannot be found (if the rave is large and crowded). Some posse members may have already left. In the re-construction of events in the context of the drive or walk home and the discussions at the house, the rave is removed from the experiential level of the self and placed within a cognitive framework. There is movement from a world of sensual experience, emotion and the (loss of) self to one in which the cognitive and social are emphasized. This movement is signalled by a change in the major communicative avenue, from non-verbal at the rave, to verbal following the rave. People swap 'rave stories', descriptions of rave happenings either experienced personally (an example of the inner discourse) or observed during the night. The effects of the chemical drugs taken earlier in the evening are wearing off, cones of pot are smoked and there is a more relaxed, quiet atmosphere as people rest after their rave exertions. People are, in a physical sense, more able to talk. The rave itself is not conducive to talking, except at the most superficial level. Going to the rave is about experiencing the flow of self-experience rather than analysing it. The analysis and evaluation of the rave are constructed later.

In the movement between spheres, ravers move from what was primarily a personal bodily and emotional experience, that is, one relating to their selves, to a context in which the rave is celebrated at the shared, social level. In doing so, they re-constitute
the posse following its de-emphasis at the rave. The post-rave discussions also contribute to a sense of collective achievement, in itself a cognitively shaped construct. The ravers have gone through what is socially defined as a ‘special event’, a demarcated, time-out cultural space in which many of the routines for behaviour are suspended in favour of new ones. In this ritual space, both the personal and group boundaries become permeable and temporarily re-drawn. For Bohemians, it is this sense of sharing that overcomes the stylistic differences between the various categories of people attending raves – gay and lesbian, straight, bogan, grungy, soccer hooligan, student and raver. By contributing to the rave experience, all are equally caught up in the creation of a larger collective.

Finally, the rave is also relevant to the dialectic between inner and outer discourses. The rave night itself emphasizes the former. Much of the conversation prior to, during and following the rave focuses on inner experience. Evatt’s comment about PRT and his story about dancing on the platform at the first rave described is just one example of this discourse. However, Bohemians also talk about raves in the terms provided by the outer, anti-Straight discourse. In conversation about raves that occurs on occasions other than those nights set aside for raves, raves are constructed as political events and much enjoyment is derived from participating in such subversive, anti-Straight acts.

There is also another dynamic at work within this discourse. Bohemians recognize that the values they see as represented by raves – such as getting in touch with one’s emotions and one’s self, and breaking down barriers between different categories of youth – need to reach a wider audience if they are to have any impact on Straight society. At the same time, however, they lament the increasing commercialization of raves, a trend which is seen to weaken their political import.

**Being hard-core**

The *Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (1987:871) gives the adjectival meaning of ‘hard-core’ as ‘unswervingly committed; uncompromising; dedicated’. According to *The Macquarie Dictionary of New Words* (1990:184), the term ‘hard-core’ originated in the opposition between ‘hard-core’ and ‘soft-core’ pornography, and now refers more generally to any similar opposition between that which is defined as serious, committed and unequivocal, and that which is not. The term is used in discussions of various musical styles in the popular-culture press (e.g. *The Face* and *Revelation*) – for example, ‘hard-core techno’ or ‘hard-core grunge’. Amongst the
Bohemians, hard-core is thought to have originally referred to the type of techno music played first in alternative nightclubs and, later, at raves. One Bohemian suggested that the word may have derived from United States basketball jargon. As the dictionary definitions of the term suggest, hard-core techno is the most aggressive, driving, hard-edged version of this music. The only academic treatment of ‘hard-core’ I have come across is Willis (1993), who discusses ‘hardcore’ youth in a United States context. However, her account is less an ethnography and more a theoretical treatment of the relationship between youth culture and capitalism. There is little discussion of hard-core that is useful for my purposes. The hard-core scene to which she refers seems to be a meta-subculture for it includes such divergent styles as skinhead and punk and associated differences in political belief and musical taste.

In addition to references to music, the specific sets of Bohemians with whom I moved employed the term ‘hard-core’ in relation to discussions about persons and social scenes. This term has two meanings, both of which are germane to my discussion of raves and raving. While I ground my discussion with reference to the rave as a ritual event, I need also note that this discourse applies to the discussions of other Bohemian social scenes and the persons who comprise them.

Firstly, hard-core describes persons. In a negative sense, hard-core persons are those who have taken the material trappings and accessories of particular scenes and their associated activities as ends in themselves, rather than means to honest and authentic self-expression. Persons who boast of the vast amounts of money they have spent on music compact discs or records or clothes, or of the huge quantities of drugs they have taken, or of the money they have made through unscrupulous drug-dealing, may all be sarcastically referred to as ‘hard-core’. In this usage, the term marks a negative evaluation of performance. The young people of the Bohemian scene explicitly distance themselves from such hard-core persons who, in their eyes, either miss the point of raves – to experience the rave and to learn from it as part of the reconstructive process – or behave in accordance with other scenic agendas.

In its positive usage, hard-core persons are constantly on the search for hard-core scenes, always willing to invest their material, physical and emotional resources in the construction of special events or places. Being hard-core means going to raves and staying until dawn and beyond, throwing oneself energetically into dancing and being unafraid of experimentation with drugs. In short, being hard-core is about disregarding regulative Straight rules and pushing Bohemian activities to new heights. Being hard-core in this sense is a rejection of the cognitive; it is about doing
not saying. In this usage, hard-core refers not to the stylistic accoutrements of activities such as raving but to an attitude, a state of mind, which seeks to test set limits. It shifts hard-core away from a consumption pattern to a statement about the self. Hard-core persons have not necessarily achieved self-realization but they have moved some considerable distance along the Bohemian path to reconstruction.

The opposite of hard-core is, not surprisingly, 'soft-core'. Persons thus described exhibit hesitancy in seeking out new experiences and social scenes. Although, generally speaking, soft-core persons will consume pot and perhaps small amounts of other drugs, they may feel anxious at the thought of consuming large amounts of drugs or of mixing different types of drugs. If straight, they may be reluctant to move in gay and lesbian scenes for fear of confrontation or seduction. Unlike other Bohemians who work to minimize social contacts with Straights, they may maintain relations with Straight friends or family members. Soft-core persons may be construed as unwilling to put to the test the self they present in everyday life.

Secondly, hard-core describes specific scenes or events, like the rave. Positively speaking, a hard-core rave is one where the DJs play techno music with a high rate of beats per minute (though not too high – recall my third case study), where there is generated a powerful sense of communitas amongst the crowd, where the experiences shaped by the drugs one has taken are deemed to be strong and intense, where large numbers of co-ravers are thought to engage in self-expression through extravagant and energetic dancing and where the raver feels that she or he has participated in the flow of the rave. These aspects relate to the perceived quality of the rave experience when set against events of its type, that is, other raves. In a broader sense, hard-core also refers to the political and moral content of scenes which subvert Straight norms; hard-core scenes are those most differentiated from Straight scenes.

By contrast, a hard-core scene may also be one comprising hard-core persons of the negative type outlined above. In these scenes, the over-developed concern for material culture – clothing, records, compact discs and drugs – conceals a deeper problem. Rather than subverting the ways of the Straight world, these hard-core scenes mirror the values of Straight society through conspicuous consumption and display, dishonest relationships and an over-reliance on drugs as ends in themselves, rather than as avenues to new experience and the resultant personal growth.
The discourse about hard-core persons is one concerning performance and the transacted self. In evaluating a person as hard or soft-core, it is primarily the actions of the person that are judged. Because Bohemians play down the Straight distinction between role and self, and work to present an authentic self discovered through the transitional process, there is little motivational discourse. The self transacted in symbolic encounters and ritual events is not thought to be radically different from the private self. Thus Bohemians do not generally engage in discourses predicated on the assumption of a private self 'hidden' in social interaction which requires 'working out', as was the case with Players. One's actions are taken to be direct, relatively unmediated expressions of one's motivations.

The question of being hard-core is also relevant to a consideration of drug-related problems amongst Bohemians. In the several months between my preliminary contacts with Bohemians and beginning fieldwork in earnest, there was a period in which the drug use of several Bohemians escalated to levels defined to be a 'problem'. In the search for hard-coreness, they had mistakenly identified the heavy use of drugs as a way to self-realization. While these Bohemians had already used chemical drugs, their use had remained at what were considered to be relatively low levels (perhaps monthly). However, during this period, the drug use of several Bohemians increased dramatically, culminating in a period of injecting substantial amounts of drugs.

Other Bohemians who had kept their drug use at the previous low levels started to lessen their involvement with the heavy-using Bohemians. The mood of one shared house which became a centre for injecting drug use had changed from one of spontaneous social action, pot smoking and chatting with friends, to one where people were dropping by to 'score' (buy drugs), where people were 'hitting-up' (injecting drugs) in bedrooms, and where non-drug using periods were increasingly characterized by bad 'vibes', irritability and paranoia. For some Bohemians, this house was no longer a pleasant place to visit.

During this period, the behaviour of several Bohemians became increasingly desperate. They were described as 'being addicted' or as 'junkies'. Money was borrowed from fellow Bohemians under false pretences and not repaid, the failure to obtain drugs led to fierce arguments, drugs came to dominate most social interaction, relationships began to fracture in the intensified atmosphere of heavy drug use, and paranoia and manipulation became a feature of relationships between consociates. This heavy drug-using period continued for several months until one person was forced to seek professional help for his drug use. Although he was the only person who sought such counselling, others had similarly heavy drug-using regimens during this time.
This period is significant, both for my argument about selfhood and about being hard-core. In Chapter 5, I argued that Players define drug problems in terms of the single-self 'junkie'. Heavy injecting drug use leads to a decreased ability to present different selves, to control information, and to keep networks segregated, all of which are essential for successful game-playing. For Bohemians, the situation is reversed. Being defined as having a drug 'problem' means being defined as one whose authentic self has been fragmented through deceit and self-denial. During the heavy drug-using period, the participating Bohemians had begun to adopt game-like strategies in their interactions with fellow Bohemians, mirrored in the switch from performative to motivational discourse. Drug use had become an end in itself and had alienated these Bohemians from their authentic self-presentation. Instead, they had pursued the version of hard-coreness that mirrored Straight ways of being and doing. They had temporarily strayed from the Bohemian path.

Conclusion

Bohemians hold that ritual events are pivotal in every sense that counts in the Bohemian scene. They are political events in that they are viewed as anti-Straight. They are held to be moral events which constitute moral communities through their enactment. They are deemed to be vehicles for authentic self-expression outside the rationality and logic of Straight existence and beyond its alienation of the self. They are events that Bohemians associate with altered states of consciousness (often, but not always, associated with the use of drugs). And, in the eyes of Bohemians, they are arenas for the expression of new ways of being and doing; for example, straight men openly hugging each other or gay friends.

Ritual events such as raves are simultaneously social scenes in which personal hard-coreness may be expressed, and hard-core scenes which are constituted through the expression of personal hard-coreness. In other words, hard-core persons need hard-core scenes in which to be hard-core, and the creation of hard-core scenes requires the interaction of hard-core persons. Enthusiastically participating in the ritual events and symbolic encounters which comprise personalized ways, the hard-core person is prepared to put his or her socially transacted self at risk through exposure to new experiences, new practices and new persons. Scenes described as hard-core are those which express, in the most powerful way, opposition to Straight politics and morals and the social and cultural practices which express and constitute them.
I have conceptualized the Bohemian scene not as a normative subculture, but as a borderland space of intersection and negotiation between diverse scenes. Whereas Players concentrate on the contestation element of borderlands, Bohemians negotiate to produce and reproduce a moral community. This production and reproduction is reactive in the sense that it is contrasted constantly with the Straight moral community, the members of which are thought to be either cynical or the deluded bearers of false consciousness. Many of the constitutive values, ideas and behaviours of the Bohemian moral community criticize and subvert those created and pursued by Straights.

For some Bohemians, there is an activist component to the critique of Straights. Not content to assist with the construction of their own moral community, they see themselves as seeking to influence social change that would, in the long term, allow the gradual revision of Straight society in the light of Bohemian moral and political convictions. The attempt to construct long-term solutions to the existential questions posed by their rejection of the Straight world distinguishes Bohemians from other styles, such as skinhead or mod, or Player, which provide temporary, ‘time-out’ solutions before their members usually resume Straight roles and seek Straight rewards.

Structurally, Bohemian networks tend towards incorporation and integration. Players work to segregate their networks and to control their self-presentation through the management of information. This work is rendered necessary by their perception of drug use as a stigmatizing activity. By contrast, Bohemians work to bring the members of their networks together, relatively unconstrained by negative images of drug use. This integration provides new personnel for the production of diverse symbolic encounters. It also means that Bohemians must present the same self in different social interactions for if they do not, they will be found out. Presenting different selves to different audiences becomes potentially unmanageable in an integrative scene. In all likelihood, there will come a point when the audience for a future self-presentation is composed of the members of previously differentiated audiences.

Despite the social and cultural diversity of members of the Bohemian scene, I have argued that they are united by their commitment to a transitional path. Pursuing the path facilitates the change from Straight to non-Straight, that is, to groovy or cool, and this personal change is socially and culturally legitimated by the Bohemian moral
community. Along with this transition, there is a gradual reinvention of the self – from the perceived false self of Straight roles and obligations to the authentic self of spontaneous expression. This change in person and self is a conversion in the sense that one’s previous existence is reinterpreted in the light of a new set of morals, values and politics. One’s moral outlook has been altered and one’s new sense of identity and self informs all social transactions. Unlike many accounts of religious conversions, with their transformative, revelatory moments, the Bohemian conversion is a gradual process rather than one contained in a single episode.

If the concept of path belongs to the scenic level of analysis, at the level of persons and groups it is constituted by, and expressed in, numerous and diverse symbolic encounters, many of which include the use of drugs. Bohemians participate in a variety of such encounters in the formation of personalized ways along the more general path. Through this participation, would-be Bohemians embark on a process of re-socialization in which they gain new insights into themselves and the world in which they live. They experiment with situations and activities, seeking always to uncover what they claim to be the authentic self. For these reasons, I have dealt with the Bohemians as instances of *homo authenticus*.

Symbolic encounters take two forms. Firstly, the symbolic content of core encounters creates and expresses values and beliefs central to the Bohemian scene, sometimes through debate and conflict. Secondly, there are symbolic encounters that typify the way in which Bohemians appropriate and subvert everyday Straight ways of being and doing. Functionally, such encounters help to create shared biographies. Borderland spaces are generally orchestrated by, and constructed around, persons or sets of persons who create spaces in which exploration, experimentation and education can occur. Thus, borderlands are spaces where the self is put on the line, and giving honestly of one’s self and resources may pose problems for those yet to shed the inhibitions felt to characterize Straight ways of being and doing.

While the transitional process from Straight to non-Straight is gradual, there are some events culturally earmarked as ‘special’, such as the rave. What constitutes these ritual events may differ for different members of the Bohemian scene, but they are represented by Bohemians in much the same way: they are community events which crystallize many of the values and behaviours critical of Straight society. Through them, Bohemians seek communitas, the transcendental moment when the authentic, pure self is felt to be powerfully joined to those of one’s ritual co-participants.
Those who take the lead in the creation and negotiation of moral community, and in the symbolic encounters and ritual events which constitute and express it, may be described as hard-core. Hard-core persons constantly seek new experiences and new encounters (including experimentation with drugs) in flagrant disregard for Straight conventions. Scenes comprising such persons may themselves come to be described as hard-core. They express, in the actions of their members, a most direct and potent critique of Straight values.

Underpinning the transitional process is a performative discourse. While there are elements of motivational discourse in the way Bohemians speak about one another, the emphasis is on the evaluation of Bohemian performance. Because of the non-dramaturgical view of human action held by Bohemians, there is a presumed fit between one's performance and one's motivations. Thus, to discuss performance is to discuss motivation. This final element brings to a close my depiction of the Bohemian scene and the substantive chapters of the thesis. I now turn to my conclusions.

Notes

1 Some of the material on raves in this chapter will appear as Moore (in press b).

2 My ethnographic analysis of Bohemian perspectives on the rave differs from the sociological tradition laid down by the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in the 1970s. English studies of youth styles, including rave culture, seek 'essential' explanations: Are 1980s and 1990s youth styles, including raves, about resistance to state hegemony in the tradition of the skinhead and punk subcultures, or are they 'texts' that are better 'read' as evidence of defence, survival and/or avoidance strategies developed by youth in response to the harsh conditions created by Thatcherite social and economic policies? (e.g. McRobbie 1993, Redhead 1993). Griffin (1993) provides a related discussion of the discourses underlying representations of youth in British and American sociological and psychological research.

3 I provide a lengthier discussion of this aspect of Perth's social demography in my account of one such English-derived Perth youth subculture – skinheads (Moore 1994b:10-15).

4 See, for example, *The West Australian* of 5/9/94 and 8/9/94, and *X-Press* magazine of 7/10/93.
There is a growing literature on drug use in the context of raves in England. While providing empirical detail about the rave culture (e.g. McDermott 1993: 212-215, Newcombe 1992), the emphasis in these works tends to be on ascertaining the risks of drug use at raves and investigating potential public health strategies for minimizing drug-related harm, rather than on the rave as an issue for anthropological or sociological analysis. Other researchers working in this and related areas of the addictions field have focused on the production of harm minimization material written in culturally appropriate language (e.g. the publications of Lifeline, a Manchester drug agency).

McRobbie (1993) has identified the need to examine the social and cultural production of youth styles – that is, the manufacturing, buying and selling of these styles – through studies of clothing shops, record shops and market stalls.

Lyttle and Montagne (1992:1169-1171), writing from the perspective of social pharmacology, review various anthropological and sociological accounts of music’s role in ritual and suggest that there may be a link between music and physiology.

Padel (1981), writing about madness in fifth-century Athenian tragedy, provides an interesting discussion of ‘to rave’ and ‘raving’ in connection with altered states of consciousness. For the Greeks, ‘to rave’ could be a violent verb; for example, Homer used it in relation to battle-raging: ‘war gods and heroes “rave” on the [battle] field’ (Padel 1981:106). Homer also links ‘raving’ to Dionysus, the god of wine and theatre.
Part 4

Conclusion
Chapter 9

Summary, reconciliation and interpellation

This closing chapter is divided into three parts. I summarize my argument in a more abstract discussion of the relationship between selfhood and drug use – reconciling the structural, sociological and processual features of the two social scenes that constitute and express this relationship – and draw some more general conclusions about Western modalities for the enactment of selfhood. Secondly, I take my ethnography and my argument to the literature on urban anthropology and, finally, I close the thesis by addressing theory in the addictions field.

Western selfhood and drug use

This thesis has described two modalities for the enactment of selfhood in a modern, urban Western setting. Representations of the Western self emphasize its divided nature: between an inner, private self and an outer, public self performing social roles. Over the last two centuries, there has been a shift from discourses on sincere or insincere selfhood, based on the self-role relationship, to those rejecting this relationship. One cultural response to the self-role relationship was insincerity, to deny the need for a ‘sincere’ fit between self and role. The other was to redefine roles as constraining and to search for new ways of expressing what was considered to be a more authentic self. The study of the former response, homo rhetoricus, and the study of homo seriosus, are two sides of the same Goffmanian coin – simultaneously a sociology of insincerity or cynicism as well as a sociology of sincerity. The study of the latter response, homo authenticus, takes us outside the sociological sphere of Goffman, with his (and sociology’s) emphasis on role. Players and Bohemians construct modalities for selfhood out of such cultural representations of the divided self.
There are dialectics that animate and perpetuate each of the two presented social and cultural forms. Players move in scenes populated by non-users of drugs and must therefore manage constantly the contradiction between secrecy and disclosure. They lead double lives where drug use is a risky activity on the side. The Player game requires a Player to exploit available opportunities for personal advantage. Interacting with non-users means that information is carefully controlled to avoid spoiled identity. The self being transacted during social interaction in this setting is, of necessity, false and multiple. Players present themselves as non-users during interactions with Straights, that is, they live a lie. They may employ sociability in order to create the intimacy necessary for disclosures of potentially damaging personal information. In buying and selling transactions concerning drugs, Players adopt whatever strategies of presentation are necessary to ensure the most advantageous deal. And Players prevent other Players from glimpsing too much of what is defined to be the ‘real’ self lying beneath or behind dramaturgical performance; in other words, lying is integral to the Player path. The only instance in which Players may be forced to present a single self, or are defined as doing so by other Players, is during periods of uncontrolled drug use. The segregation of networks, playing of the game and successful presentation of multiple selves are all threatened by behaviour labelled as that of the single-self ‘junkie’.

For Bohemians, who move in scenes in which drug use is held to be a rewarding, non-Straight activity, the dialectic lies in the opposition between self-realization and commitment to the construction of an alternative moral community. Bohemians, by contrast with Players, attempt to discover and to present authentic selfhood, working to cast aside notions of ‘role’ as they do so. Discovering the authentic self is facilitated in symbolic encounters which act as ‘consciousness-raisers’ or ‘encounter-groups’. The Bohemian transitional path is educative, and is sometimes characterized by conflict. The perceived falsehoods of one’s (usually) Straight socialization are brought into stark relief as the would-be Bohemian mixes with a variety of persons who have worked to leave the mainstream behind. The authentic self, conceptualized as alienated and repressed by a Straight upbringing, is progressively revealed, a personal act construed as a political one. From the Bohemian perspective, there is little point in searching for one’s self if one is then going to conceal it in social transactions. One confirmation of this view of the Bohemian enterprise as a search for self lies in Bohemian representations of heavy drug use. When a Bohemian’s drug use is defined as a ‘problem’ by fellow Bohemians, they draw attention to the deception and exploitation of friends in the pursuit of drugs. The taking of drugs has ceased to be one way of learning about oneself and has become an activity that necessitates the false presentation of multiple selves.
The emphasis in the moral discourses associated with the two scenes also differs. I argued that Player discourses about persons emphasize motivational types. They do so in two ways. The strategic nature of game interaction means that the assessment of persons becomes a central pursuit. Because of the lack of fit posited between one's 'true' intentions and those presented in social transactions, Players converse constantly about 'what makes people tick'. Looking to one's performance is regarded as no guide to one's motivations. Because drug use, particularly injecting drug use, is regarded as stigmatizing, and to engage in it means risking spoiled identity, a second strand of motivational discourse focuses on the question: Why be a Player at all? Player discussions of this question are designed to discover what it is about persons that motivates them to deep play.

Bohemians emphasize performative discourse. In the absence of the strategic interaction of the game, and in a scene that emphasizes openness, spontaneity and the integration of personal networks, one's actions are conceptualized as accurately reflecting one's motivations. This is not to suggest that Bohemians believe motivation to be static; on the contrary, one's motivations may change with movement in the Bohemian scene. But whatever the motivations might be, they are held to be manifested in one's performance, for all to witness.

I write of an emphasis on (rather than a complete absence of) one or the other moral discourse because in borderlands there is no single discourse that holds sway. Indeed, in Chapter 8, I noted how some Bohemians, in the midst of heavy drug use, began to employ game-like strategies with a consequent de-emphasis on performative discourses and a resulting emphasis on motivational discourses. Similarly, at different stages of their drug-using careers, particularly at the novice stage, some Players are content to let people's actions speak for themselves without engaging in elaborate discussions of motivation. At the scenic level, however, the discourses of scene members reflect the either/or emphasis.

The Player and Bohemian social scenes share similarities and differences with respect to the sociology of culture. Both are characterized by social and cultural diversity, with their members being drawn from a range of backgrounds and scenes. I conceptualized both scenes as labile, that is, there is little structural continuity in the relationships between persons, with persons moving in and out of (and within) such scenes frequently. Employing Rosaldo's notion of 'borderlands', and Hannerz's writings on 'cultural complexity', I argued that such diverse cultural scenes are places of contestation and negotiation, rather than coherent subcultural wholes. A third
important theoretical device for conceptualizing this diversity was Finnegan's notion of 'pathways' as culturally recognized ways of moving through the scenes represented (i.e. present) in an urban region.

In addition to the similarities between the Player and Bohemian scenes, there are also sociological differences between them. The Player scene is characterized by small clusters of drug users linked to other clusters through weak ties. Relationships between the members of different clusters are marked by impersonality and superficiality, and are based around the instrumental purpose of securing drugs. Because Players move in social scenes in which there are many non-users, the true nature of these weak ties (as links established in the pursuit of drugs), and the basis for the relationships formed in clusters (to use drugs), are concealed. Therefore, a central structural feature of the Player scene is the segregation of networks and the accompanying management of knowledge. Networks established on the basis of drug use are segregated from those established on the basis of matters other than drug use (e.g. family or work). In addition, because of the strategic interaction of the game, Players sometimes keep different networks of drug users apart, or at least do little actively to encourage their integration, so as to control information better. This segregation within the Player scene is particularly likely in the case of those dealing in drugs, who are generally meticulous in their segregation of dealing networks from those based on using drugs.

By contrast, members of the Bohemian scene actively seek out the members of other alternative lifestyles. They work to strengthen the resulting weak ties between the clusters of which they are members and do not, as a rule, segregate their networks. In other words, they attempt to dissolve boundaries internal to their scene while resolutely maintaining the dichotomy between themselves and Straights. The result is that Bohemians who have moved in the Bohemian scene for several years have large networks which, although characterized by clusters of closer relationships, are marked by their openness and the interaction between diverse persons in the network. For Bohemians, the tendency is to develop a total network in which information may flow relatively freely through the network constituents. Put more sociometrically, clusters in the Bohemian scene are connected by multiplex ties which are increased and strengthened over time. In the Player scene, the clusters are connected by one or perhaps two weak ties, and only rarely are such ties developed beyond their instrumental function of securing access to drugs.
While the Player and Bohemian scenes share some sociological features, they differ radically in their orientation to the emically defined mainstream of ‘Straights’ (non-users) and ‘Straights’ (non-Bohemians). Players, rather than developing a coherent alternative value system regarding drug use (and other matters), are forced into an ongoing dialogue with perceived Straight morality, to which most eventually return once they leave the Player scene. I conceptualized this dialogue as an ‘alternation’. It results in a marked ambivalence about the moral worth of persons engaged in injecting drugs. They are either defined as ‘junkies’ who have succumbed to the powerful lure of drugs and have lost control of their game or as ‘junkies’ who have successfully learnt to play the game and who, as a result, are defined to be competent.

The movement of persons along the Bohemian path I conceptualized as a ‘conversion’. Despite their polythetic values, Bohemians are united in their coherent critique of Straight society as alienating and repressive. In conversion, one’s moral world is redefined so that the past is reinterpreted in light of the change in moral perspective. The dialogue between Bohemians and Straights is a reactive one on the part of Bohemians, who define themselves largely against the Straight mainstream. They have, through education and life experience, come to view the Straight world as worthy only of lifelong rejection and seek to construct a total, alternative moral community. Part of this redefinition of morality focuses on drug use, which is not seen as a stigmatizing activity but one that facilitates personal growth.

The difference between the members of the two scenes is similar to the distinction Dance and Mugford (1992) draw between ‘recreational drug users’ and ‘drug enthusiasts’ (recall my discussion of their work in Chapter 6). In their terms, recreational drug users conform to conventional values and behaviours but choose ‘deviant’ means to achieve socially accepted ends. Thus, entering a demarcated and contained world of hedonism and play is a socially sanctioned corollary of work in a capitalist system. The heavy use of alcohol on a Friday evening after work marks the beginning of the weekend, a time free of work commitments. In addition to alcohol, Players employ a range of illicit drugs to serve the same ends. They do not threaten the work/leisure (and play) distinction and their drug use is therefore, in sociological terms, ‘recreational’.2 Once Players cease using drugs, they return to conventionally accepted roles (although some may continue to subvert them through other means). Bohemians, like the drug enthusiasts of Dance and Mugford, not only use socially disapproved of drugs but also reject the work/leisure distinction, along with other aspects of Straight existence. They seek long-term alternative goals and employ alternative means to achieve them. In the particular case described by Dance and Mugford, the heavy use of illicit drugs becomes a central component in the construction of a non-Straight community.
Another major difference between the Player and Bohemian scenes is in the nature of the transitions undergone by persons as they move along the various paths. Both scenes are characterized by the gradual acquisition of knowledge. Through moving in the Player scene over a number of years, Players learn the game of drug use. They learn how to segregate their networks, how to inject drugs, how to pass and how to control information. Through symbolic encounters, Bohemians learn about the Bohemian critique of Straight society. They also seek self-realization through these encounters, aspiring to spontaneous and honest social interaction. If they become particularly adept in the pursuit of Bohemian social and cultural practices, they may be described by other Bohemians as 'hard-core'. An aggregation of hard-core persons sometimes leads to the formation of hard-core scenes.

The crucial difference between Players and Bohemians, however, lies in the transformative nature of injecting drugs for Players. No Player can claim to be a deep Player, a 'certain kind of person', without undergoing the moral change signified by injecting. The successful conduct of such an act situates the Player in direct contrast to mainstream morality and becomes one of the principal elements supporting Player claims to deep play and Player identity. Personal change for Bohemians is a more gradual process, despite the revelatory experience of ritual events such as the rave. Bohemians do not reach some special stage at which they may cease to strive for new experiences and relationships. The transition is thought to be a lifelong journey. Even though Bohemians define some types of symbolic encounter as more crucial than others in the transition from Straight to Bohemian, such as the rave, there is no specific act or acts of initiation through which all Bohemians must pass to win membership of the Bohemian community.

Members of the Player and Bohemian social scenes constitute and express contrasting ontologies. Players hold that 'everyone has an angle', which must be 'worked out' by those participating in social transactions. Their ontology is one of competitive, agonistic exploitation in which everyone must take whatever is on offer. Social life is a series of strategic interactions in which Players can rarely afford the luxury of sociability lest others take advantage of them. They accept that this is the way of the world and work to make their own way as best they can. For these reasons, I have worked to represent the Players as instances of homo rhetoricus. Such a representation accurately captures important elements of the Player scene as they are articulated and enacted by Players. In such a view, Players conceive of reality as essentially dramatic and view themselves, and others, as actors performing roles in various social situations. There is a sense of the ludic in these interactions but they are also competitive and serious. Players seem cynical in the sense that they accept the world as it is and explore its resources, seeking to manipulate them for their own ends.
Representing the Players as instances of *homo rhetoricus* has much in common with a Goffmanian analysis in that I am primarily concerned with the presentation of self in everyday life, and with the relationship between self and role. In their everyday social interactions with others, Players trade in the presentation of self. What is more, they explicitly conceive of such interactions in terms reminiscent of Goffman, placing great emphasis on the careful management of information relating to their self-presentations. Players accept the conceptual distinction between an inner and outer self which is central to the various cultural construction of Western selfhood I documented in Chapter 1. In this view, the inner self is the location of the 'real self' and the outer self expresses the various roles taken in social life. However, as instances of *homo rhetoricus*, Players subvert the self-role link through dramatic performance. In their words and deeds, they see little need for congruence between the 'real self' and the socially transacted self, and endeavour to prevent others from 'working them out' through presenting different kinds of public self. Because the scene in which they move is constituted through segmented and superficial relationships, there is considerable scope for this elaborate, though not always successful, construction of public selves. In keeping with such a view of self and interaction, there is an ontology underlying the Player path that conceives of the Player as a person negotiating interactions with other persons who are thought to be 'out for what they can get'.

The Bohemian ontology, in keeping with the Romantic tradition which it embodies, is more optimistic, despite the Bohemian critique of Straights. In the Bohemian version, the world is a place of endless variety and new experiences in which fellow-travellers of the Bohemian path are sources of inspiration, education and communal solidarity. Bohemians may hold that capitalism has brought the world to the brink of military, ecological and social disaster yet they continue to work for change. In the organized political sense, they belong to associations dedicated to progressive change in a manner mapped out by the political and social theories of the Left. Personally, they embark on cultural reform that will accompany the political changes they so desire. Refusing to surrender to cynicism, they fill their lives with hope and seek an authentic self that has, in the Bohemian view, been alienated by Straight society. Participation in the transitional process develops critical insights into Straight society and creates an alternative moral community to legitimize the conversion of person from Straight to Bohemian. Bohemians can be conceptualized as instances of *homo authenticus* in the sense that they seek what they consider to be an honest and authentic presentation of the self in everyday life.
Finally, stepping outside the Goffmanian territory of the sincere or insincere presentation of self (or selves) in everyday life, the Player ontology celebrates the Player as 'hero'. Player discourses on Being represent the person as hero-in-the-world (cf. Finestone 1957:434, Milner and Milner 1973:267). They emphasize successful management of a perilous lifestyle (cf. my discussion of 'certain kinds of persons' in Chapter 5). Bohemian ontological representations on Being also focus on a personal odyssey but they differ in emphasis from that of Players in one crucial way (cf. my discussion of hard-core scenes in Chapter 8). Persons move along the Bohemian path seeking to create their own way, but Bohemians also conceptualize the person’s way as contributing to a collective enterprise – the creation of hard-core social scenes. In the Player case, the emphasis is on the person set against a hostile world. In the Bohemian case, the person contributes to the creation of community.

The contrasting ontologies and the modalities for the enactment of selfhood in the two scenes are far from insulated from each other. There are several points of contact between them. A structural link exists in that some dealers in chemical drugs are known to some members of both Player and Bohemian social scenes. These dealers move in both scenes (though some of them may emphasize a Player style over a Bohemian one), looking to sell drugs to members of both. Secondly, apart from dealing in drugs, several bridging weak ties linked members of the two scenes. For instance, a male member of the Player scene knew several Bohemians who comprised a cluster in the Bohemian scene. A woman from the Bohemian scene had a female friend who associated with one particular cluster of Players. Through her, the Bohemian woman met these Players (and, on one occasion when speaking with me, ridiculed their self-presentation in the pursuit of the game). Thirdly, some members of the Player scene patronized those leisure venues in which Bohemians could also be found; in particular, a gay and lesbian nightclub and an alternative dance club.

Finally, listening to Player descriptions of past periods of drug use, it became clear that at least some Players had, in earlier periods of their lives, moved in social scenes reminiscent of the Bohemian one described here. They had lived in shared houses, had used drugs as the means to explore themselves and had subscribed to various alternative systems of meaning (such as the occult or other forms of New-Age spirituality). In conversations with me, some Players yearned to return to such Bohemian-like scenes where they felt they would be relieved of the pressure associated with playing the game constantly. One Player seemed to be serious enough about this to attend a 'personal growth' course at a local college. He was ridiculed by other Players.
Some members of the Bohemian scene temporarily adopted social and cultural practices more closely associated with the Player path during a particular period of heavy drug use (cf. Chapter 8). Others spoke of friends who 'played the game'. One young woman told me during an interview that she had ceased to visit one set of friends because their game-playing with regard to dealing in drugs had become too much for her to bear. One lesbian spoke of her previous 'drug problem' in terms reminiscent of the Player scene. The Bohemians who spoke of game-like practices amongst other sets of drug users most often associated them either with the 'speed scene' (speed being the drug used most often by Players) or with the heavy use of chemical drugs in general.

In moving from the Bohemian path to that of the Player, two changes of emphasis are central. Drug use becomes the defining aspect of one's relationships and interactions. Secondly, the authentic self of Bohemian social transactions is replaced by dramatic and insincere performance of the social roles necessary to the Player game, roles that are recognized as incommensurate with the 'real' self.

Western modalities for selfhood

Lanham (1975) located in each person the two themes he identified in the Greek experiment with the self, homo rhetoricus and homo seriosus (in my terms, insincere and sincere performance of social roles, respectively). By contrast, I have focused on social scenes rather than on persons. Members of the Player and Bohemian scenes give emphasis to one modality over the other. Speculating further on this point, what is the relationship between the sincere or insincere adherence to the self-role relationship, and the rejection of such adherence?

In pre-modern times, prior to the rise of Romanticism, a dialectic existed between sincerity and insincerity, honour and dishonour – between, in Lanham's terms, homo seriosus and homo rhetoricus, respectively. However, with the rise of Romanticism, a new dialectic was introduced – that between self and role (whether performed sincerely or insincerely, honourably or dishonourably) and the rejection of such a relationship (authenticity and human dignity). Campbell (1987:217-227) identifies and discusses this modernist dialectic but, though he refers to notions of character, he does not examine modalities for selfhood. He argues that the Puritan (sincere [and potentially insincere] character) and the Romantic (authentic character) are not in conflict with each other, but rather that they are in dialectic symbiosis, the one requiring the other for its existence. He (1987:227) concludes:
Just as “puritan” and “romantic” stand for contrasting character ideals which can, none the less, be successfully incorporated into one personality system, so too do they stand for apparently opposed cultural traditions which comprise the single cultural system of modernity; a system of which their symbiotic relationship is the central feature ... As a result, these twin cultures ensure the continued performance of those contrasted but interdependent forms of behaviour essential to the perpetuation of industrial societies, matching consumption with production, play with work ... more crucial than either is the tension generated between them, for it is upon this that the dynamism of the West ultimately depends. The main source of its restless energy does not derive from science and technology alone, nor yet from fashion, the avant-garde and Bohemia, but from the strain between dream and reality, pleasure and utility. This is the source of the tune to which these twin cultural traditions dance their cultural tango in time, as it is of the conflicting tensions which many individuals experience in their daily lives.

There are arguments for the modern dialectic between self-role and authentic self in other studies. For example, Milner and Milner (1973: 269), writing about black ‘players’ in the pimp ‘game’, say this:

The player versus the [Black] Panther is another aspect of the cat versus the bad nigger, the trickster versus the leader of the slave rebellion, and the two strategies are as old as these two types of personalities; both are facets of all humanity’s drama.

The player, the cat and the trickster are all insincere responses to the mainstream emphasis on self and role. The Black Panther, the ‘bad nigger’ and the leader of the slave rebellion are variations on the authentic response to both White-imposed social roles and the insincere response of players, cats and tricksters, which subverts the self-role relationship. The dialectic between self-role and authentic self also animates the debate over changes to the American self, which I discussed in Chapter 1.

While we might be wary of the Milners’ sweeping generalizations regarding ‘humanity’s drama’, both they and Campbell point to the dialectic between self-role and the authentic self. Within the cultural parameters set by the self-role relationship, persons have two options: *homo seriosus* – the sincere response – or *homo rhetoricus* – strategic interaction, agonistic exploitation and the insincere presentation of multiple selves. With the rise of Romanticism, there emerged a new set of cultural parameters, which produced a different response to the traditional emphasis on role: *homo authenticus* – the construction of an alternative moral community, the presentation of
an authentic self in the absence of social roles and a desire for the social and political change deemed necessary to introduce these aspects to a broader audience. As I detailed in Chapter 6, this response has informed the various protocultural movements of the last two centuries.

In this thesis, limited by the scope of my ethnography, I have dealt only with *homo rhetoricus* and *homo authenticus*. Yet it is probable that, for some people, *homo seriousness* continues to represent a viable modality for the enactment of Western selfhood in the late twentieth century. In the so-called post-modern age, contrary to postmodernist claims of an emphasis on ‘surfaces’, persons may continue to emphasize the expression of their selves through their social roles and derive satisfaction from the honourable discharge of such duties; that is, they continue to strive for, if not always to achieve, sincere selfhood. Examples that come readily to mind include those persons serving in such institutions as the military forces or the priesthood. Players and Bohemians identify such persons as Straight (although, as I have shown, the emic meaning of this term differs in the two scenes – Bohemians would categorize Players as Straight, too, because of their, albeit insincere, adherence to the self-role relationship). Speculating on the use of licit or illicit drugs, *homo seriousness* is most likely the person who drinks a few glasses of wine with a meal or has a few beers with colleagues or workmates at the close of business, and who, occasionally, overindulges on weekends. In short, *homo seriousness* uses licit drugs in a manner consistent with the sincere performance of social roles.

I have described two social scenes whose members emphasize one modality for the enactment of selfhood over another. They are, following Weber, ‘ideal’ modalities. In other social settings in the post-modern world, the picture may be more complex, and authenticity and sincerity may exist side-by-side in the same settings (cf. Hannerz 1980:226). In my ethnographic analysis of Perth skinheads (Moore 1994b), I employed the terms in the following way. At the subcultural level, skinheads sought authenticity – their skinhead identity (with its stark uniform, haircuts and tattoos) was carried into all of their social transactions. The skinhead identity (the term Peter Berger [1970:343] uses when discussing the self) was relevant in all situations. At the level of friendship, however, they valued sincerity – that ‘mates’ would conform to the social role described by that term. During instances of violent conflict between skinheads and other members of the ‘English youth scene’ (mods, teds, punks) in which skinheads moved, skinheads sometimes found themselves in positions of value-conflict. A ‘mate’ from another subculture may be in conflict with a fellow ‘skinhead’, and so being ‘authentic’ would compete with being ‘sincere’.
My ethnography has been limited to two social scenes in Perth, Western Australia. What can be said about the relevance of these data for other drug scenes? The drug-using population is not homogeneous with respect to wealth, social class, religion, occupation or political affiliation. In other Western urban locations there are numerous other forms of drug-using scenes, which have arisen in response to local drug markets, drug-using practices and law-enforcement policies. However, my argument is that, so long as drug use is defined to be inconsistent with the sincere performance of social roles (and there are signs of change as the possession of marijuana is decriminalized in parts of the United States and Australia), those who choose to take drugs must draw on the two remaining Western cultural traditions available to them for the enactment of selfhood. Therefore, the enactment of selfhood in these scenes will, in some way, feature elements of either *homo rhetoricus* or *homo authenticus*, or the interplay of both.

Turning to the emically oriented literature on drug use, Rosenbaum, Morgan and Beck (1989) provide one example of the possible co-existence of authentic and sincere selfhood. They write of drug-using Californian ‘professionals’ who use Ecstasy during vacation periods, principally for a purpose broadly within the Romantic tradition – ‘to evolve’ (i.e. personal growth or self-realization). Yet the same professionals presumably adhere to notions of sincerity in the performance of career roles (‘academic’, ‘doctor’, ‘lawyer’) that Bohemians (as bearers of Romanticism) would argue are alienating or repressive. Perhaps the answer to this apparent contradiction lies in the gradual redefinition of social roles in light of the authentic ideal, while stopping short of denying the validity of social roles.

**The self and the city**

Heeding Cohen’s (1993:201) call, I have attempted to put the self back into the anthropology of the city. There has been an ongoing debate about the nature of social relationships and selfhood in the city. One side of this debate is represented by the Wirthian formulation: that social relationships in the city are anonymous, superficial and segmented, and that the self is therefore absent from many social transactions. The other side of the debate sees social relationships in the city as tending towards the creation of ‘urban villages’ (Gans 1962), towards the ideal folk type of multifaceted, geographically based, intimate relationships in which the self is given full expression. I have shown that both styles are present in the city. The Players create a social scene which lies somewhere at the Wirthian end of the spectrum (if not actually at the Wirthian pole). Bohemians do not create geographically based urban villages.
(although many do live in the inner city), but they do seek to create a community of like-minded persons, a symbolic community of consciousness in which relationships are conducted in a manner more in keeping with those at the folk pole of the continuum.

I also employed and extended Finnegan’s analysis of urban pathways by distinguishing between scenic paths and personal ways. While her contribution to urban anthropology should be recognized, her analysis ignored what happens to persons and sets as they moved along the musical pathways she described. In distinguishing between Player and Bohemian paths and the personal ways along these paths, I have addressed a major anthropological issue, that of the relationship between ‘individual and society’. I conceptualized the Player-path transition from novice to Player as both a gradual process and a transformation marked by the initiation into injecting. Players stand morally transformed in both their own eyes and in the eyes of their usual consociates once they have performed the ritual work of drug injection upon their bodies. The Bohemian path involves a process of more gradual change, one defined to be lifelong, but one similarly characterized by personal ways. There is little in the way of specific initiatory rites marking the moral transformation from Straight to Bohemian.

In addition, I attended to the ways in which the Player and Bohemian paths are constructed and the relationship between different social and cultural features of each path. Sociologically, both scenes are labile and characterized by social and cultural diversity. Yet they differ in the way members manage their social relationships and networks, whether they construct moral communities or remain in a dialogue with the morality perceived to characterize the mainstream, the sorts of moral commentary in which they engage, the everyday self that they transact and the ontology that they construct as a frame (Goffman 1974) for their activities.

I also contributed to anthropological theorizing about the city through my use of Rosaldo’s (1989) concept of cultural borderlands. Although cities are not the sole sites of social and cultural diversity, they are the location in which such diversity is taken to its fullest extent. Rosaldo’s view of culture, as well as that of Hannerz (1992), as contested and negotiated, even within supposed cultural ‘wholes’, is particularly apposite. This process of contestation and negotiation perhaps reaches its zenith in urban formations where those of different social classes, ethnicities and genders combine to produce what anthropologists term ‘culture’.
The social construction of drug use

In mid-1993, I was approached by the Deputy Editor of *Addiction* (formerly the *British Journal of Addiction*, arguably the most widely read and influential journal in the addictions field) to contribute to the journal's format for publishing editorials along with invited commentaries on the editorials. The editorial, written by Griffith Edwards (1994), called for a more multidisciplinary approach to research, policy and practice in the addictions field. Theoretical synthesis was considered particularly necessary because of the far-reaching policy implications of addictions research. I contributed a piece that took issue with his call (Moore 1994a), arguing not that a multidisciplinary approach was undesirable or impossible but that he ignored the immense difficulties of such an undertaking. In my view, Edwards, in calling for debate about issues already established by what he termed 'science' – a positivist view that ignored the constructivist critique of 'science' (Foucault 1973, Geison 1995, Gusfield 1981, Knorr-Cetina and Mulkay 1983, Tesh 1990) – was prematurely closing off genuine debate in the addictions field. His call was political, polemical and hegemonic. I presented several bedrock assumptions of anthropological theory and research, which challenged the existing positivist addictions paradigm, and asked why it was that scholars from disciplines other than medicine, psychiatry and psychology should have to suspend their disciplinary assumptions (and therefore their critiques of existing paradigms) in order for the proposed synthesis to take place. In his published response to the commentaries, Edwards answered none of my concerns. The general position I advocated in the article informs the comments I make in this section, but here I am more concerned with the specific ramifications for the addictions field that flow from the ethnographic analysis presented in this thesis.

As the regular reviews of the literature by Heath (1975, 1976, 1987) show, the anthropology of alcohol use has developed exponentially over the past two to three decades. At present, however, there is little in the way of a coherent body of academic literature that could accurately be described as 'the anthropology of drug use'. Part of the explanation for this lamentable state of affairs lies in the divided focus of anthropological studies of drug use. In the opening pages of Chapter 1, I noted that the authors of most anthropological and sociological studies of drug use either investigated theoretical or empirical issues generated by the addictions field (with its accompanying etic bias), or attended to the analytical issues produced by interpretations of their ethnographic material first and then, in some cases, to the etic concerns generated by the addictions field.
There is scope for a third alternative, which I hope to have begun mapping out in this thesis. Anthropological studies of drug use can also cast light on theoretical issues of central concern to anthropology – the nature of social relationships in urban, labile social scenes, the move from attention to social structure to a concern for social process, and the analysis of the relationship between personal creativity and collective representations. Anthropological interpretations of drug use can, in turn, be shaped by an understanding of these broader theoretical issues and their relevance to specific empirical studies. In addition to the important insights anthropologists may contribute to policy debates in the addictions field, I am also calling for anthropologists to set a separate agenda of their own for studies of drug use.

Developing some bedrock anthropological statements about drug use may provide impetus to it being taken seriously by those in the addictions field. This process, as I noted above, is well under way for the anthropology of alcohol use. Following Douglas (1987), an anthropological perspective on alcohol use would presumably argue the following points: (1) that the biological inheritance of different populations (Douglas employs the contentious term ‘races’) is not a determinant of lowered ability to withstand the ill-effects of alcohol use, (2) that there is no clear relationship between alcohol use and criminal or aggressive behaviour, (3) that alcohol-related behaviour is culturally shaped in much the same way as any other human behaviour and does not represent some desocialized aberration and (4) that alcohol use is, in cross-cultural perspective, more often associated with celebration than with complication. In the remainder of this section, I set out some of the anthropological equivalents for the study of the social construction of drug use that can be derived directly from my ethnography.

Drug-using individuals versus cultural selves

Zinberg (1984), building on a tradition of cross-cultural research into the use of drugs (e.g. Weil 1972), developed a model which has been widely accepted in the addictions field. He argued that the drug experience was shaped by the interaction of three aspects – ‘drug, set, and setting’. By ‘drug’, he meant the pharmacological properties of drugs (e.g. chemical structure, purity, dosage, method and rate of administration and type); by ‘set’, he meant the psychological profile and biography of the drug user (e.g. age, sex, weight, general health, drug tolerance, previous experience and expectations); and by ‘setting’, he was referring to the social and cultural context in which drug use took place.
A major trend in etic analyses of drug use has been to focus on the first two components – the drug and/or the psychological set of the user – while also acknowledging the influence of the social context, an influence theoretically located in the third component, the setting. Pharmacological and medical research spells out the effects of drugs on the individual, organic human body.6 Positivist behavioural-science approaches to drug use, whether primarily psychiatric or psychological, focus overwhelmingly on the individual – they record and measure his or her attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. However, the individual in these approaches is one divorced from the social context. The individual is theoretically construed as the prime unit of analysis, the locus of control, affect and cognition.7 One linguistic expression of this asocial conceptualization is found in the titles of some addiction journal articles; for instance, ‘Self-attributions for alcohol use in older teenagers’ (Foxcroft and Lowe 1993) or ‘Structure and measurement of dimensions of risk for HIV transmission in injecting drug users’ (Ross et al 1992). The ‘factors’ sought by the researchers are conceptualized (and expressed linguistically) as lying within individuals. While there have been developments in general psychological and psychiatric models that seek to incorporate the ‘social’, the conceptualization of person featured in the addictions literature remains largely monadic.8 While such an individual object is, in this ‘value-free’, ‘scientific’ literature, seen to be partly influenced by the ‘social context’ (e.g. in the form of ‘peer pressure’), the relationship between individual and society is a mechanistic one.

The addictions view of the individual ‘set’ is influenced by psychological theories such as social learning (Bandura 1977), and is located within a broader academic discourse on the ‘individual’. I have argued, however, that this individualistic view (and the Cartesian duality it represents) is itself a cultural construction deriving from the historical development of Western morality, philosophy, psychology and other related discourses. Furthermore, I have shown how the members of two social scenes variously construct and negotiate selfhood and personhood. Therefore, I have argued that the set is also culturally constructed and negotiated in specific contexts. The set is as bound up in culture as the setting. The organic ‘individual’ becomes a ‘self’ through culture and he or she becomes an enculturated ‘person’. The anthropological challenge, therefore, is this: Selfhood is the product of subjectivity, which is, in turn, governed by social relations and cultural models. The study of organic ‘individuals’ – as in the individualistic models of mainstream medicine, psychiatry and psychology – gives way to the reflexive, interpretive study of selfhood.
There are studies in the addictions field whose authors attempt to explore the ‘setting’ through incorporating a qualitative, as well as a quantitative, component into their investigation of drug use. However, these authors rarely take into account the cultural dimension. The specific questions asked of ‘sample respondents’ or the interview guides employed for less-structured interviews are frequently drawn from reviews of the similarly behavioural-scientific and etic sections of the literature on drug use. There is the national and even international exchange of questionnaires. The type of data sought is, therefore, shaped by etic considerations. More recently, there have been attempts to employ computer programmes to analyse qualitative data in terms of categories derived from the data. However, the data are already etic in nature. No amount of internal categorization changes this basic fact.

Furthermore, as I have shown, the specific meanings of cultural categories (such as the notion of the ‘divided self’) are negotiated in situated social interaction. Qualitative investigations at a particular point in time collect personalized expressions of shared cultural understandings; in Saussure’s terms, they are parole (they have also been called ‘idioverses’ and ‘mazeways’). No attempt is made to understand the langue, that is, the overall set of collective representations from which parole emanates and which, in turn, is constituted by parole. In other words, there can be no way of theorizing the relationship between what Parkin (cf. Chapter 1) called the ‘cultural fleece’ (langue) and the ‘endless [and personal] perspectives’ that are ‘spun’ from it (parole).

**Drug use as situated meaning**

Although there have been significant changes in research-funding policy in recent years, still we see ‘drug studies’, that is, studies of drug use rather than studies of the social scenes in which drugs are used. Non-biomedical studies of drug use should focus on the social scenes in which drugs are used rather than on specific drugs such as the amphetamines or cannabis (all the more so in cases where those identified as using the targeted drug are also regular users of other drugs), or on specific ‘modes of drug administration’, namely, intravenous injection.

The material I have presented in this thesis demonstrates that a focus on particular drugs, or modes of administration, would most likely have missed the extraordinary differences in the situated meanings of drug use constructed by Players and Bohemians. While the emphasis on the use of particular drugs and the frequency of injecting differs in the two scenes, the general range of drugs used is similar. If, for instance, the screening criteria used to determine the eligibility of potential
respondents for a questionnaire-based study of amphetamine use in Perth required that respondents had used amphetamines, or that they had injected them within the last three months, the researchers conducting such a study could find themselves administering questionnaires to members of both Player and Bohemian social scenes (as well as a host of other social scenes). Generalizations about the 'social context' of drug use in such studies would become almost meaningless, limited to such analytical banalities as 'drug use occurs most often with peers'. In the terms laid out above, the researchers would be left with a number of personalized expressions of drug use drawn from the members of particular social scenes. There would be no way of gaining access to the broader shared understandings characteristic of each scene, which are expressed in, and constituted by, personalized expressions.

Similarly, if one accepts the above points, then another implication is that the statistics on drug use, while useful in providing a general picture of incidence and prevalence (however imprecise), are meaningless if no attempt is made to situate drug use in social scenes – in the beliefs and practices of members of these scenes (cf. Davies 1989:958, Moore and Saunders 1991:30-31).

Having discussed such issues with colleagues in the Perth, Australian and international addictions field over the last six years, one response (thankfully not the only one!) has been that the empirical detail and analysis provided by ethnography are interesting but unnecessary when the principal aim is to identify problematic drug use and formulate appropriate policy responses. However, taking this position ignores the fact that whether drug use is identified as a problem is bound up in cultural constructions, both those of addictions researchers and drug users. Indeed, the very way in which problems are conceptualized by the members of social scenes may be at odds with those of addictions researchers.

I have shown that for the Players, being identified as a drug user with 'problems' involves movement from the successful presentation of multiple selves to that of a single self – the 'junkie'. For the Bohemians, the movement from controlled to uncontrolled drug use runs in the opposite direction – from the presentation of a single, authentic self to the presentation of multiple, false selves made necessary by problematic drug use.

Taking the point one step further, Player and Bohemian responses to various public health strategies would have to be taken into account in the formulation of policy. Notwithstanding intra-scene differences in expressed Player attitudes to harm
reduction material (Chapter 5), at the scenic level Players are less welcoming of radical policy initiatives such as needle and syringe exchanges or information regarding safer injection techniques (e.g. Australian I.V. League 1990) than are members of the Bohemian scene. The former's response is grounded in the way in which Players represent injecting drugs as inherently risky and therefore indicative of a 'certain kind of person' (one willing to take on, and manage, enormous risks). Attempts to reduce such risks are resisted by some Players. By contrast, Bohemians welcome the new directions in public health initiatives (outreach services, up-to-date medical information about drug use and wider provision of needles and syringes) and some, in particular, express their frustration at not being able to gain access to information (they resort largely to articles in the popular-culture press or to information passed through word-of-mouth\textsuperscript{10}). Because Bohemians do not view drug use as stigmatizing, or indicative of moral flaws, they see little reason to restrict relevant information.

Further, the Bohemian emphasis on drug use as a means to several ends (e.g. personal growth) rather than as a valid activity in its own right, means that drug-related problems (or at least behaviour designated as 'high-risk' by public health researchers) may be less likely. Amongst Players, flirting with the high incidence of drug injecting is the central way of establishing social identity and prestige. Because these emic perspectives on drug use are created and negotiated in social action, they are missed by epidemiological, behavioural-scientific and psychological methodologies, which concentrate on snapshots of drug use at a particular point in time – the conducting of an interview or the administering of a questionnaire. The conservative policy implication of this is that different public health approaches are required for different social scenes. The more radical policy implication might be that some social scenes do not require intervention.

The emic view of drug use

My previous comments on trends of analysis in the addictions field share a common underlying point. Above all, I am calling for greater attention to the emic view of those who use drugs.\textsuperscript{11} Perhaps it is time for those in the addictions field to engage with the growing body of scholarly ethnographic work in which anthropologists, sociologists and cross-cultural psychiatrists are rewriting culture-bound theories in areas traditionally the domain of the psychological sciences – such as the study of emotions and depressive illnesses (e.g. Kleinman and Good 1985, Lutz and White 1986, Lynch 1990; for counter-critiques, see Lyon 1995 and Morton 1995).
None of the comments I have made should be construed as arguing that medicine, psychiatry and psychology have nothing whatsoever to offer theorizing about drug use, or to offer the prevention and treatment of drug-related problems; clearly, at least in Western contexts, they do. Rather, the call for multidisciplinarity in the addictions field is a hollow one if it discounts, out of hand, the theoretical and empirical findings of anthropology (and other disciplines such as history and sociology), which, in some cases (e.g. for alcohol use, MacAndrew and Edgerton 1970), pose a direct challenge to existing orthodoxies.

Instead, there needs to be a series of dialogues; attempts to fulfil what Schwartz (1992) has called the ‘unrequited relationship between anthropology and psychology’. There is a rich tradition of cross-disciplinary research, both past and present. The theories of symbolic interactionists (e.g. George Herbert Mead, Erving Goffman, Anselm Strauss, Howard Becker), ethnomethodologists and phenomenologists (e.g. Howard Garfinkel, Alfred Schutz), and cross-cultural psychiatrists (e.g. Arthur Kleinman, Robert Levy) have all been employed in the past by those working in diverse research fields. Geertz (1976) has made anthropological use of Kohut’s psychoanalytic ‘experience-near’ and ‘experience-distant’ concepts (see also Schwartz 1992:333). Broad debates are occurring amongst psychologists, psychoanalysts, cognitive scientists and anthropologists (e.g. Schwartz 1992, White 1992, White and Lutz 1992). These are just some of the starting points for those in the addictions field who would desire a genuinely multidisciplinary arena in which the emic view is granted a legitimate place.

Despite a call for more ethnographic studies in the *National Priorities for Drug and Alcohol Research* (Department of Health, Housing and Community Services 1992:5), there remain few such studies in Australia. This state of affairs is both regrettable and worrying for two reasons. There is the risk that researchers trained in academic disciplines with ‘individualistic’ and/or etic models and methods will attempt to rectify the dearth of ethnographically based knowledge. The result has been and will be poor analyses, which add little to our understanding of drug use from the emic perspective. Secondly, as numerous commentators have remarked (e.g. Mugford 1991a), studies that heed the views of drug users themselves provide essential correctives to existing conceptualizations of drug use as inherently dangerous and problematical, and as always the result of personal or social pathology. In the words of Sansom (1988:159), ‘Without cultural analysis, all policy science is vain’. The use of drugs is one of the myriad ways in which humans constitute and express their social and cultural realities, and so future research must seek to comprehend these realities.
1 The mutable, saturated, decentred self of postmodernist writings can be located within, but is not the same as, *homo authenticus*. There is a similar exposure to new ideas and experiences but this does not mean that the self disappears. The new experiences are assimilated to the self, which changes as a result of them, but always (at least in Western modalities) there is the ‘T’.

2 In using the term ‘recreational’ I do not mean to imply that drug use of this sort is ‘safe’ but to register its sociological significance. For further discussions of this issue, see Moore (in press a) and Mugford (1988b, 1991b).

3 For a more recent *Addiction* debate that covers similar territory, see McKeeganey (1995) and the commentaries on his editorial.

4 Strathern (1987) has argued precisely the same point with respect to the feminist challenge to anthropological theory, and the consequent response of anthropological colleagues – that feminist anthropology could become a valid and valuable sub-field of the discipline but that it would not challenge its bedrock assumptions.

5 See Douglas (1987) for a more detailed discussion. I have summarized several of her main points for my purposes and do not do full justice to her thoughtful treatment of the topic.

6 For exceptions in pharmacology, see Fitzgerald (1993) and Lyttle and Montagne (1992).

7 There have been attempts by psychologists to introduce ‘social context’ as another ‘factor’ in understanding the actions of ‘individuals’ with regard to their drug use (e.g. Saunders 1990), but much of the literature brings to mind the words of Schwartz (1992:341):

> For most in the mainstream [of psychology] the concept of culture is there but it is the business of anthropologists. It is seen as vague, intractable, not subject to convenient observation or experimental manipulation. Certainly it is not for the fastidious or the scientifically rigorous. Or else it is seen as located elsewhere, not accessible to the experimenter or clinician unless there are “ethnic” subjects.

8 There are, of course, exceptions to monadic conceptualizations in the addictions field, and no doubt new theoretical models are emerging. However, I discuss trends of analysis rather than specific cases. This method is consistent with that employed by Mugford (1988b) and Said (1978). Mugford (1988b:303) makes the following case in his discussion of the ‘pathology paradigm’, which he argues is the dominant paradigm in attempts to explain drug use: ‘The attempt is not to provide a comprehensive literature review of research ... Rather I want to emphasise the logic of research’. Working within a very different field, Said (1978) takes a similar tack. In his study of ‘Orientalism’, he states that he ‘depends neither upon an exhaustive catalogue of texts dealing with the Orient nor upon a clearly delimited set of texts, authors, and ideas that together make up the Orientalist canon’ (Said 1978:4). Instead, he turns his focus to broader trends in Western conceptions, illustrating them through the discussion of selected works, alternating always between the general and the particular.
For instance, my account of cultural and social paths should in no way be read as providing support for the so-called 'gateway' theory of drug use (e.g. Kandel 1980), that is, that because most problematic drug users begin their drug-using careers with marijuana then, its proponents argue, prevention efforts should attempt to prevent the use of this drug. It ignores the fact that most marijuana users do not go on to experiment with, or to regularly use, chemical drugs. Such an etic theory would make sense only in drug scenes in which the transition from marijuana use to the heavy use of chemical drugs is culturally encouraged, as in the Player scene. However, the validity of the theory in one social scene would not make it universally relevant but rather one belonging to the cultural dimension.

Williams (cited in Holden 1989) has termed such face-to-face cultures 'interactive'.

I have elsewhere drawn attention to the gulf between anthropological analyses of drug-using cultures, which are based on the emic view, and those 'cultural' analyses promulgated by researchers of an etic persuasion, with respect to Aboriginal alcohol use (Moore 1992a).


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