



‘Risk on the dance-floor’: An empirical analysis of young people’s perceptions of risk associated with nightclubs, methamphetamine use and young people in the Adelaide night-time economy.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memories of grandpa Ben, nanna Selma, grandpa Roy, aunty Sylvia and uncle Geoffrey. Though you were not able to complete the journey with me, your unconditional love, support and encouragement gave me strength, showed me humility and inspired me to accept each challenge, work hard and achieve this dream.

I hope that I have made you proud.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	ii
Table of Contents	iii
Abstract	vii
Declaration of Authorship	ix
Abbreviations	x
List of Figures	xi
List of Tables	xii
List of Appendices.....	xii
Acknowledgements	xiii

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 The Australian drug landscape: The rise of methamphetamines	1
1.2 Assessing the ‘war on drugs’: The gap between reality and response	3
1.3 The current research project	6
1.3.1 The Methamphetamine ‘Problem’	7
1.3.2 The Nightclub Scene.....	9
1.3.3 The South Australian Context	10
1.4 Thesis rationale, aims and structure	12
1.4.1 Research Questions.....	13
1.4.2 Research Aims and Objectives	14
1.4.3 Structure of Thesis	15

CHAPTER 2

A THEORETICAL APPROACH TO YOUNG PEOPLE’S PERCEPTIONS OF RISK IN ADELAIDE NIGHTCLUBS	19
2.1 Introduction	19
2.2 Explanatory models of risk.....	21
2.2.1 Professional or ‘Expert’ Risk Models: Objectifying risk	23
2.2.2 Ignorance Models	25
2.2.3 Folk Models	27
2.2.4 Risk-taking as Pleasure.....	30

2.3 The normalisation of youth drug use.....	33
2.3.1 The Normalisation Thesis.....	34
2.3.2 Normalisation in the Australian Drug Context.....	36
2.3.3 Applying Normalisation	39
2.4 Social context: A step towards understanding youth drug use.....	45
2.4.1 The Need for Social Context: Updating the Normalisation Thesis	47
2.4.2 Leisure, Identity, Pleasure and Risk	50
2.5 Conclusion.....	56

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY	58
3.1 Introduction	58
3.2 The practicalities of ‘doing’ club drug research: Getting access	60
3.3 Researcher role	65
3.4 The sample	68
3.5 Pilot study: A first step.....	72
3.6 The present study.....	78
3.6.1 Learning from the Pilot Study: Implications for Research.....	80
3.6.2 Using a Quantitative Research Methodology	81
3.6.3 Qualitative Interviewing	86
3.6.4 Nightclub Ethnography.....	93
3.7 The process of analysis.....	97
3.8 Conclusion.....	101

CHAPTER 4

SETTING THE (NIGHTCLUB) SCENE:

IDENTIFYING THE CLUB AND THE CLUBBER	103
4.0 Introduction	103
4.1 THE ‘CLUB’ AS A SITE OF CONSUMPTION	105
4.1.1 The characteristics of the club	106
4.1.2 Club culture	119
4.1.3 Sharing the dance-floor: The use of drugs in the club.....	128
4.1.4 Conclusion	131

4.2 THE ‘CLUBBER’ AS THE CONSUMER	132
4.2.1 The meaning of ‘meth’ in the club	133
4.2.2 The purpose of the nightclub	141
4.2.3 The meaning of the nightclub	147
4.2.4 Duality of meaning: Intimacy versus anonymity.....	152
4.2.5 Conclusion	156

CHAPTER 5

A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF ADELAIDE CLUBBERS:

CLUBS, DRUGS AND RISK.....	159
5.1 Introduction	159
5.2 Attending the club	160
5.3 Nightclub risk	171
5.4 Drug risk and the club	181
5.5 Nightclub drug use	192
5.6 Conclusion.....	202

CHAPTER 6

UNDERSTANDING RISK IN THE ADELAIDE NIGHT-TIME

ECONOMY: AN EXPERT PERSPECTIVE.....	205
6.1 Introduction: The identification of risk in the nightclub	205
6.2 Understanding the ‘club’ as a site of risk and control.....	207
6.3 Conceptualising ‘expert risk’ in the club drug landscape	210
6.4 Regulating the club: A culture of control.....	213
6.4.1 The Rise of Punitiveness	214
6.4.2 The Politicisation of the Club Drug Landscape.....	216
6.5 The limitations of ‘expert’ risk and control.....	218
6.5.1 Responsibilising the Youth: Sending Mixed Messages	220
6.5.2 Delegated Control: Security versus Crime Control	224
6.6 Conclusion.....	230

CHAPTER 7

A QUESTION OF PERCEPTION: YOUTH PERSPECTIVES	232
7.1 Introduction: The identification of another ‘voice’	232
7.2 Challenging ‘expert’ risk.....	234
7.3 Identifying risk: Awareness and knowledge of drug risks	236
7.4 Distinguishing risk: Danger versus risk	239
7.5 Defining risk: Feeling safe in the club	241
7.6 Risk management: The boundaries of hedonistic consumption.....	244
7.6.1 Risk Management Strategies in Practice	247
7.7 Recreational use versus problematic use: Is it possible to have both?.....	259
7.7.1 Identifying the Difference.....	260
7.8 Identifying the gap: The real risks of the club.....	265
7.8.1 Alcohol	266
7.8.2 Alcohol-related Violence.....	269
7.9 Conclusion.....	271

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	274
8.1 Alternative perspectives of risk.....	274
8.2 Risk perceptions and the use of drugs	276
8.3 The meaning of club drugs: The emergence of a new youth profile.....	277
8.4 The need for a new policy dialogue in South Australia	279
8.5 Recommendations for further research and future drug policy.....	281
8.5.1 Expanding the Sample	282
8.5.2 The Need for a New Drug Policy Perspective.....	282
8.5.3 Education and Drugs: Using lay knowledge	283
8.5.4 A Grounded Approach.....	285
8.5.5 Alcohol versus Illicit Drugs: Widening the focus	287
Appendices	289
Bibliography.....	299

ABSTRACT

In Australia young people's use of nightclubs has recently garnered substantial media and government policy attention due to a perceived increase in the use of illicit drugs such as methamphetamines in these leisure venues. This study sought to gain a deeper understanding of young people's risk perceptions and how they frame their nightclub use and, for some, the use of drugs. Specifically, this research examined to what extent their perceptions, and thus ultimately their leisure practices, are guided by lay models of risk-thinking, the normalisation of methamphetamine use in Adelaide nightclubs, and the characteristics, values and expectations of this social context. This research constitutes the Perception of Risk framework developed in this thesis.

To achieve this level of analysis, a mixed-method approach was employed with a sample of 549 young people in Adelaide, South Australia. Following an initial pilot study the main research used quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews and ethnographic participant-observation to collect data from 460 young people who attended one of five prominent Adelaide nightclubs during a 54-night period in 2010. In total 457 surveys and 22 interviews of drug users and non-drug users were completed that collected demographic data and evaluated their patterns of nightclub attendance, leisure practices, and methamphetamine use (perceived and actual), and perceptions of risk associated with nightclubs and drug use. This represents an original methodological approach and a first step in addressing the paucity of grounded research in this area.

Using the Perception of Risk framework the data obtained identified three pervasive themes perceived as having significant influence on young people's perceptions of risk: (1) the development of alternative forms of risk knowledge, (2) the use of risk management strategies and (3) a shift in leisure consumption ideals in the nightclub. The data also highlights the value of a bottom-up approach to understanding young people's perceptions of risk, as it not only impacts how drugs should be perceived/managed in the nightclub but also highlights the need for a broader acknowledgement of risk and other concerns within these venues. In addition, the use of informal risk management strategies by these young people

suggests that they perceive that there are effective controls that enable risk-reduced recreational forms of drug use and challenges current zero tolerance policy approaches. The data also indicates a substantive shift in the purpose and meaning of the nightclub as a site of leisure consumption for these young people. In this redefined environment drug use appears to have a limited role, suggesting the creation of a new youth profile that has moved away from traditional associations with deviance previously attached to this nightclub-drug use behaviour. Collectively, these themes demonstrate the need for a different approach to Australian drug policy that takes into account the changing nature of drug use in certain settings, particularly the nightclub, and incorporates lay perspectives and experiences in the development of realistic harm-minimisation strategies. This thesis argues that only by the adaption of this broader approach will a more effective, appropriate and situated response to young people's nightclub drug use in Australia be achievable.

DECLARATION

“I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text”.

Signature: _____

Date: 07 – 08 – 2013

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACC _a	Adelaide City Council
ACC _b	Australian Crime Commission
ACS	Australian Customs Service
AIC	Australian Institute of Criminology
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ANCD	Australian National Council on Drugs
ATS	Amphetamine-type substance
AUD	Australian Dollars
CBD	Central Business District
CJS	Criminal Justice System
CMC	Crime and Misconduct Commission
DJ	Disc Jockey
DASSA	Drug and Alcohol Services of South Australia
DUMA	Drug Use Monitoring in Australia
EDRS	Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System
GCDP	Global Commission on Drug Policy
IHRA	International Harm Reduction Association
LEA	Law Enforcement Agency
NDARC	National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre
NDRI	National Drug Research Institute
OCBA	Office of Consumer and Business Affairs
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development
OLGC	Office of the Liquor and Gambling Commissioner
OMCG	Outlaw Motor-Cycle Gang
PDI	Party Drug Initiative
PSE	Pseudoephedrine
POR	Perception of Risk
REU	Regular Ecstasy User
SBREC	Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee
SAPOL	South Australian Police
UK	United Kingdom
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
US	United States

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 2.1** *Perception of Risk framework*
- Figure 4.1** *City of Adelaide and wider metropolitan area*
- Figure 4.2** *City of Adelaide and location of key research venues*
- Figure 4.3** *Lifetime and past year prevalence of methamphetamine use in Australia by age, 2004*
- Figure 4.4** *Anonymous participants' (aged 20, non-user) impression of a stereotypical user*
- Figure 5.1** *Frequency of nightclub attendance*
- Figure 5.2** *Frequency of attendance by gender*
- Figure 5.3** *Frequency of attendance by age*
- Figure 5.4** *Preferred nights of Adelaide nightclub attendance*
- Figure 5.5** *Motivations for nightclub attendance by drug use history*
- Figure 5.6** *Motivations for nightclub attendance by gender*
- Figure 5.7** *Motivations for nightclub attendance by age*
- Figure 5.8** *Motivations for nightclub attendance by frequency of attendance*
- Figure 5.9** *Attending Adelaide nightclubs is risky*
- Figure 5.10** *Adelaide nightclub risk by frequency of attendance*
- Figure 5.11** *Commonality of drugs in Adelaide nightclubs by frequency of attendance*
- Figure 5.12** *Feeling at risk because of drugs by drug use*
- Figure 5.13** *The presence of illicit drugs negatively affects my nightclub attendance by age*
- Figure 5.14** *Perceived exaggeration of risks by age*
- Figure 5.15** *Addicts are irresponsible by drug use*
- Figure 5.16** *Perceived drug use in Adelaide nightclubs by drug type*
- Figure 5.17** *Perceived methamphetamine use in Adelaide nightclubs*
- Figure 5.18** *Perceived level of methamphetamine use in Adelaide nightclubs by drug use*
- Figure 5.19** *Perceived percentage of methamphetamine users in Adelaide nightclubs*
- Figure 5.20** *Perceived percentage of methamphetamine users in Adelaide nightclubs by drug use*
- Figure 7.1** *Spectrum of psychoactive substance use*

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1	<i>Interview participant sample characteristics</i>
Table 3.2	<i>Survey participant sample characteristics</i>
Table 3.3	<i>Summary of research methods</i>
Table 4.1	<i>Research venues' trading hours</i>
Table 4.2	<i>Methamphetamine use, persons aged 14 years or older, by age, 2007</i>
Table 5.1	<i>Motivations for particular nights of nightclub attendance</i>
Table 5.2	<i>Motivations for attendance</i>
Table 5.3	<i>Attendance characteristics</i>
Table 5.4	<i>Perceived risks of a night out</i>
Table 5.5	<i>Perceived risks of a night out by motivation for attendance</i>
Table 5.6	<i>Risk in the nightclub</i>
Table 5.7	<i>Situations that would be considered 'bad outcomes' of a night out</i>
Table 5.8	<i>Participants' perceptions of illicit drug use in the nightclub</i>
Table 5.9	<i>Perceived risks of using methamphetamine</i>
Table 5.10	<i>The impact of risk knowledge on methamphetamine use</i>
Table 5.11	<i>Perceived motivations for the use of methamphetamines in nightclubs</i>
Table 5.12	<i>Perceived motivations for the general use of methamphetamines</i>

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1	Letter of Introduction - Survey
Appendix 2	Perception of Risk Survey Questionnaire
Appendix 3	Letter of Introduction - Interview
Appendix 4	Interview Consent Form
Appendix 5	Semi-structured Interview Schedule
Appendix 6	List of Treatment Services in South Australia
Appendix 7	Qualitative Study Participants

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“...it’s not perfect...but it’s mine”.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Australian drug landscape: *The rise of methamphetamines*

Methamphetamine is a commonly used illicit drug in Australia (Chalmers, Bradford & Jones, 2009; McKetin, 2007b), where it has been prevalent in certain sections of society and engendered much debate since its emergence in the mid-to-late 1990s (Ransley et al., 2011; ANCD, 2007; McKetin, 2007a). This emergence was driven by a number of significant changes in the Australian drug market, which saw a shift in the emphasis from amphetamines to more pure forms of methamphetamine (Ransley et al., 2011; NDRI & AIC, 2007; McKetin et al., 2005). These changes included the increased domestic availability of the precursor chemical pseudoephedrine (PSE) used in the manufacture of methamphetamines (Groves & Marmo, 2009; Snowball et al., 2008; ACC, 2004), and the substantive decline in the supply of heroin, as experienced in the ‘heroin drought’ in 2001 (Bush, 2002; Weatherburn et al., 2001; Bush, 2001). The current concern is that, despite the moderate impact of a range of legislative and regulatory reforms in stabilising recent rates of use¹ (see AIHW, 2011a; Ransley et al., 2011) methamphetamine use has not declined, and remains prevalent in Australia. The 2010 National Drug Strategy Household Survey estimated that more than one million Australians – or 7.0 percent of the population aged 14 years and older – had used methamphetamines at least once in their lifetime (AIHW, 2011b), which was an increase from 2007 (AIHW, 2008). Notably, use was most common among 20-29 year olds, with 5.9 percent reporting use in the preceding 12 months (Gately et al., 2012), which forms part of the background for this research. The prevalence of methamphetamine use in Australia places it third highest internationally, at around five times the global average (UNODC, 2008a; 2007) and greater than comparable countries such as the United States (US) (Falkowski, 2004; Travis & Vereen, 2000), Canada (Lafrenière & Spicer, 2002) and the United Kingdom (UK) (UNODC, 2008b; Condon & Smith, 2003), which is significant given the levels of concern experienced in these jurisdictions

¹ There is also very recent evidence to suggest that we may be on the verge of another increase in the use of methamphetamines (Prichard et al., 2012). However, this is as yet an isolated finding and more empirical studies must be undertaken to confirm this.

(Armstrong, 2007; Midgley, 2007; Parker, Aldridge & Egginton, 2001). A central feature of governments' concerns over the use of methamphetamines in Australia is the level of dependence found among frequent users (Chalmers et al., 2009; Hando & Hall, 1997). Experts estimate there are about 395,000 regular methamphetamine users in Australia, of which nearly 73,000 are dependent (Pennay & Lee, 2008; Ritter, 2007; McKetin et al., 2005). Regular use has been associated with significant harms for the user, such as emotional instability, social exclusion, physical and mental health problems and economic disadvantage (Darke et al., 2008; McKetin et al., 2006c; Breen et al., 2004). Regular use has also been associated with harm in the wider community through criminal activity (Degenhardt et al., 2008; McKetin et al., 2005). Together with the prevalence of use among young people, these harms ensure that methamphetamine use in Australia remains a significant and consistent concern for policy-makers and law enforcement agencies (Ransley et al., 2011; AIHW, 2008; 2005).

Australia's response to the use of illicit drugs has broadly been aimed at reducing the negative effects of drug use on the community (Douglas & McDonald, 2012; Ransley et al., 2011; Duff, 2004). The most comprehensive effort to reduce these effects has been the *National Drug Strategy* (NDS), which was launched in 1985 (Hughes, 2012; NDS, 2004) and has undergone many revisions since, the most recent of which is the *National Drug Strategy 2010-2015* (MCDS, 2011). Highlighting the seriousness of the methamphetamine 'problem', in particular, the *National Amphetamine-Type Stimulant Strategy 2008-2011* was also developed to examine the characteristics of methamphetamines and other amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) to specifically address and reduce their use (NDRI & AIC, 2008). Broadly, the NDS comprises three key pillars:

1. Reducing the demand for drugs through prevention/treatment (demand reduction);
2. Reducing the availability of drugs through legislation and law enforcement (supply reduction); and
3. Reducing the harms of drugs among the people who continue to use them (harm reduction) (MCDS, 2011; NDS, 2004).

This approach has been relatively consistent across the various revisions and has rationalised and guided the creation of numerous initiatives such as clean

needle/syringe injection rooms (Iversen & Maher, 2008), increased treatment facilities for users (Jenner & Lee, 2008), enhanced drug knowledge through educational programs in schools, health care centres and through the media (DASSA, 2006a; Tobler & Stratton, 2004), and underpinned the creation and revision of substantive legislation related to illicit drugs and their precursor chemicals (Groves & Marmo, 2009; Saul, 2008; Pharmacy Guild of Australia, 2007; Porter, 2006). These efforts have been intended to create and/or enhance multi-disciplinary partnerships between the health care and law enforcement sectors, to foster a 'balanced' approach to the regulation of drug use (Douglas & McDonald, 2012). However, it is argued in this thesis that such a balance has not been achieved in relation to methamphetamine use in particular, and this has implications for the scope and effectiveness of current Australian drug policies.

1.2 Assessing the 'war on drugs': *The gap between reality and response*

Despite periodic debate over the last 20 years (see Hughes, 2012), Australia's responses to the use of illicit drugs implemented as part of the NDS have typically promoted a harm-minimisation approach (Ransley et al., 2011; MCDS, 2011; NDS, 2004; Rohl, 2000). However, what has been experienced in relation to methamphetamines highlights that, in practice, there is a gap between reality and response in terms of such a goal. Similar to what has been observed in relation to both illicit and licit drugs (e.g. alcohol) in other jurisdictions such as the UK (Shiner, 2011; Measham & Moore, 2008) and the US (Perrone, 2005; MacCoun & Reuter, 2001), at the heart of Australian drug policy lies a tough 'law and order' stance that prioritises the zero tolerance and prohibition of illicit drugs and their use (Adams, 2012). The product of this has been the expertisation of risk based on narrow conceptualisations of addiction and chaotic drug use. It has also increased regulation of the night-time economy dominated by a 'war on drugs' discourse (Adams, 2012; Katz, 2011), which has limited the effectiveness of Australian drug policy in three ways, and serves as the background to this study.

Firstly, although Australia's approach to the war on drugs has been presented as addressing the problem of drugs broadly, I argue that young people have drawn

the focus of most contemporary drug initiatives (see Adams, 2012; Katz, 2011; Coombes, 2011), which has had a specific and, arguably, deleterious impact on these young people. For example, in addressing a similar situation in the UK, Buchanan and Young (2000, p. 409) emphasise that drug policy often becomes centred on “a discourse of prohibition, punishment and abstinence”, which they perceive is “seriously misguided and ill informed”. A key consequence of a zero tolerance approach is that it considers all drug use problematic, ignoring the diversity inherent in the extent and nature of people’s drug use (Buchanan & Young, 2000) and thus criminalising and demonising drug users as ‘others’, somehow different from the rest of society (Buchanan, 2004; South, 1999). This is significant within the context of drug policy, as this ‘othering’ only serves to rationalise governments’ attempts to implement punitive policies by implying a need to protect the community from these ‘others’. This reflects a very narrow interpretation of ‘harm-minimisation’ (Tammi, 2004). These policies have further impact in that the war against drugs can all too easily evolve into a war against drug users (Buchanan & Young, 2000), which I argue has occurred in Australia. The concern engendered by such a shift in perspective is that Australia’s drug policies become underscored by punitive frameworks that marginalise alternative harm reduction approaches (e.g. rehabilitation and treatment).

A second illustration of Australia’s zero tolerance approach is evident in the continued narrow focus of many of its drug policies, despite the evidence garnered from numerous sources in recent decades that suggest the need for broad approaches to understand, explain and reduce the use of illicit drugs, particularly among youth populations (IHRA, 2009; Wincup, 2005; Wellbourne-Wood, 1999; Mugford, 1993; Hawkins et al., 1992). Contrary to specific evidence (see Caulkins & Reuter, 2006; Caulkins & MacCoun, 2003), to date the Australian Government’s response has prioritised a law enforcement approach, focused on the reduction in supply of the materials and ingredients used in drug production (Schloenhardt, 2007; PGA, 2007; Cherney, O’Reilly & Grabosky, 2006) and the use of seizure and arrest measures to limit individuals’ possession and use (Bennett, 2010; Hamilton, 2004; Wodak & Moore, 2002). However, despite repeated use of these measures to achieve a community that is less burdened by

the impact of illicit drugs (Willis, Anderson & Homel, 2011), evidence suggests that the overwhelming perception of the community is that drug law enforcement has not been effective (see Adams, 2012; Katz, 2011; Coombes, 2011; Bennett, 2010; Mazerolle, Soole & Rombouts, 2005). Furthermore, it reveals that the current law enforcement approach has not only failed to modify the behaviour of young people who use drugs such as methamphetamines (Douglas & McDonald, 2012; Bouchard, 2007), but similar to other jurisdictions (see Desjardins & Berlin, 2007; Eccles, 2006; Horwitz et al., 2000) it has negatively affected the wider community through restrictions on some medical ('cold and flu') products that share common ingredients (McKetin, 2007a). That law enforcement is still the primary option in Australia's response to illicit drugs can be attributed to the fact that current policy-making is guided by populist zero tolerance principles that despite often have academic or practical foundations, are "most often deployed by politicians" (Newburn and Jones, 2007, p. 234).

This highlights a third limitation of Australia's approach to drug policy, which relates to the allocation of resources. The social cost of illicit drug use in Australia has been estimated at \$8.2 billion (\$AUD) in 2004–05 (AIHW, 2011b; Collins & Lapsley, 2008). Although this cost has placed efforts to reduce drug-related harms at the heart of Australian drug policy, critical debate of how harm reduction efforts are funded has been largely absent (McDonald, 2011; Moore, 2008). The NDS, like similar strategies before it (MCDS, 2001), was created as a response to concerns regarding the affect and social cost of illicit drugs and encompassed two key areas: firstly, to increase drug law enforcement activities; and secondly, to expand rehabilitation and preventive approaches to reduce the demand for drugs. Despite this multi-faceted approach, many sources claim that resources allocated to law enforcement activities are disproportionate and neglect alternative methods (Douglas & McDonald, 2012; McDonald, 2011; Bennett, 2010; Moore, 2005). Government expenditure on drug-related issues in 2004-2005 was \$5288 million, of which illicit drug-related health care received the least funding (\$159 million) (McDonald, 2011). Although the management of illicit drugs received approximately 45 percent of the overall government expenditure on drugs (\$2392 million), most of that was spent on law enforcement (\$2212 million), unsurprising

given the differences in its legal status compared with alcohol and tobacco. However, within the overall context of drug policy it is of concern given that 60 percent of expenditures are directed to preventing and responding to crime, compared with only 37 percent allocated to the health sector (McDonald, 2011; Moore, 2005). Also, it has been identified that drug-related interventions in the health sector are often substantially more effective – and cost effective – than criminal justice interventions (see Boyum & Reuter, 2005), further emphasising the mismatch between where funds are needed and where they are currently being spent. This mismatch limits Australia’s response to illicit drug use.

These limitations need to be considered within a global context, where in June 2011 the Global Commission on Drug Policy (GCDP) stated that “the 40-year ‘War on Drugs’ has failed” (Douglas & McDonald, 2012, p. 4). The message presented by the GCDP was clear; current efforts and strategies have not been effective in reducing the problems associated with illicit drug use (GCDP, 2011). Despite this, there has been little debate among most policy-making bodies on alternative methods, particularly in Australia (Duff, 2004). Critical discussion of the core principles of Australian drug policy is thus needed to examine the use of illicit drugs, including methamphetamines, particularly by young people and how this knowledge can be used to create grounded, evidence-based and more effective policy to reduce the harms associated with illicit drug use.

1.3 The current research project:

The behaviour of young people has long been of concern to governments and experts,² particularly in relation to the use of illicit drugs (see Holt, 2005; Bunton, Green & Mitchell, 2004; Etorre & Miles, 2002; Muncie, 2002; Boys et al., 2001; Parker, 1999). The current research investigated the experiences of young people

² For the purpose of this study, the terms ‘government’ and ‘expert’ have been considered analogous and are used interchangeably throughout this thesis. It is noted, however, that the concept of ‘expert’, discussed particularly in chapter 6, is not intended to encompass all expert opinion regarding the relationship between young people and illicit drugs; rather, the analogous use of these terms reflects the governments’ ‘expertisation of risk’, in which illicit drug policy prioritises zero tolerance approach to drug use that does not consider alternative forms of knowledge. Thus, in this context, ‘experts’ are those who provide support for the narrow, prohibitionist stance promulgated by governments, unless otherwise stated in the text.

who attend Adelaide nightclubs in relation to their use of, or exposure to methamphetamine use by others in this social setting. This section describes the research context to this study and its significance within the field of illicit drug research. It also highlights the rationale for situating this study in young people's use of methamphetamines, the nightclub, and within the broader social and political context of the Adelaide night-time economy.

1.3.1 *The Methamphetamine 'Problem'*

In Australia's 'war' on drugs numerous studies have been grounded in critical analyses particularly of ecstasy (see Sindicich & Burns, 2011; White et al., 2006b; Mouzos et al., 2007; McDonald, Bammer & Breen, 2005; Hansen et al., 2001), as well as other illicit drugs such as heroin and cocaine (AIHW, 2008; Black et al., 2007; ACCb, 2005). However, since 2001 there has been a sudden and significant rise in the prevalence and use of methamphetamines in Australia (Sweeney & MacGregor, 2012; MacGregor & Payne, 2011; ACCb, 2010). Methamphetamine is a psycho-stimulant that affects the brain and central nervous system, resulting in the release of high levels of the neurotransmitter dopamine into areas of the brain that regulate feelings of pleasure (McKetin et al., 2006b; Anglin et al., 2000). Even in small doses, methamphetamine can increase wakefulness, mood and physical activity, and decrease appetite (Lee et al., 2007), factors which have contributed to its popularity among young people within the nightclub scene. The particular appeal of methamphetamine use lies in its relative low cost, accessibility, flexibility of use,³ sustained effect on stamina and greater feelings of pleasure compared with other substances (Ransley et al., 2011; McKetin et al., 2008; UNODC, 2008a; Lee et al., 2007).⁴ These pharmacological factors have contributed to the elevation of methamphetamines to their position as a prominent feature of the illicit drug landscape in Australia (Degenhardt et al., 2008; ANCD, 2007) and internationally (UNODC, 2010; Wilkinson, 2008; Wilkins, 2002).

³ Smoking methamphetamine has become particularly associated with young users because of its rapid effect (McKetin et al., 2008; Drabsch, 2006). However, that there are alternative forms of use is also important, especially in terms of use in recreational environments such as nightclubs where smoking is prohibited and easy and safe consumption is desired, which is facilitated by this flexibility.

⁴ Compared with heroin for example, where the intensity of the 'hit' can last between 7-10 seconds (intravenously administered), and 10-15 minutes (snorted or smoked), the effects of methamphetamine can last for up to 12 hours (Focus Adolescent Services, 2008).

Important, however, is the appreciation that despite widespread recognition of the emergence of methamphetamines in Australia, the rationale for its social and cultural acceptance and popularity among young people is yet to be fully explored and requires the allocation of considerable attention and resources for this to be understood in this setting. To date, very little research has been published on the subject of young people's methamphetamine use within the social context of the nightclub (see Blue Moon Research and Planning, 2008; Duff, 2005 for brief discussion). In addition, although evidence shows that the majority of use is concentrated among 18-25 year-olds (AIHW, 2011b; DASSA, 2006b), which has identified them as a vulnerable youth group (Ettorre & Miles, 2002), few empirical studies have engaged young people to examine their attitudes towards methamphetamine use or their perceptions of the associated risks. Two studies require mention: one examined a small sample of methamphetamine users in South Australia (Vincent et al., 1999), and the other encompassed a wider analysis of particular populations of methamphetamine users in Australia (BMRP, 2008). While these studies identify the need to examine the methamphetamine situation in particular contexts, they engaged very small samples⁵ and similar to other drug studies, they focused on users' experiences of the criminal justice system, problematic forms of use and the need for 'targeted interventions' rather than the meaning of or motivations for such drug use (Wincup, 2005; Topp et al., 1999; see also, Shearer, 2009). As such, to date there remains no comprehensive source of relevant data, particularly in South Australia (see McKetin & McLaren, 2004; Richards, Cormack & Faulkner, 2002).

The present study therefore sought to examine young people's perceptions and actual use of methamphetamines in Adelaide nightclubs. Specifically, this study examined how young people garner meaning from and ascribe value to the role of leisure activities and experiences of pleasure in the nightclub, and how this affects their perceptions of risk associated with methamphetamine use in these venues. In doing so, this research demonstrates a departure from traditional drug research by analysing young people's perceptions of risk without being limited to the

⁵ In the case of the research conducted by BMRP (2008) the sample only included 6 nightclub attendees, only one of which was South Australian.

experiences of users alone. The methamphetamine experience in Australia provides a unique opportunity to examine young people's risk perceptions and attitudes toward use of amphetamine-type substances (ATS), and this could identify the factors that for certain groups negate traditional law enforcement measures. Also, this research may foster a wider understanding of risk perceptions that will enable the recommendation of steps to reduce the effect of illicit drugs on youth populations in other drug settings.

1.3.2 *The Nightclub Scene*

The relationship between illicit drug use and nightclubs is well established globally (Hutton, 2010; Purcell & Graham, 2005; McCambridge et al., 2005; Winstock et al., 2001; Bellis et al., 2000), as well as in Australia (Ross et al., 2007; Degenhardt et al., 2006; Degenhardt & Topp, 2002). This link has considerable analytic value given that, as has been observed in the UK (Bellis et al., 2002) and the US (Kelly, Parsons & Wells, 2006), estimates of drug use by regular nightclub attendees often far exceed average levels of consumption by individuals in the general population. It is argued that this is the case in relation to the use of methamphetamines. Although overall prevalence rates in the general population have recently stabilised (Ransley et al., 2011), young people's nightclub methamphetamine use remains a concern, particularly in South Australia, evident in the nature and extent of recent drug policies and media attention (Adams, 2012). This attention has been founded on experts' assessments of the perceived risks inherent in this space and young people's relative inexperience and propensity for risk-taking. Recent studies of ecstasy users have also identified perceived high levels of methamphetamine use among Adelaide nightclub attendees (Sutherland & Burns, 2012; Weekley et al., 2006; Weekley et al., 2005), due to its pharmacological properties that appear to fit well with the nightclub experience. As such, a major tenet of this research is to elicit the attitudes and perceptions of current drug users who traditionally have been hard to reach (Taylor & Kearney, 2005; Hodkinson, 2005; Elliott et al., 2002). Due to its physical and social characteristics the nightclub has historically been difficult to access (Taylor & Kearney, 2005; Eiserman et al., 2003), preventing grounded empirical analyses of the individuals that inhabit these venues. The focus on the

nightclub setting is therefore central to this research in that, as acknowledged later in this thesis (chapter 4, part 1), the nightclub is a site of consumption that holds considerable meaning for the young people that populate it. As identified by Hobbs and colleagues (2003, p. 46), the nightclub provides the focal point for “‘experiential consumption’ and acts as an ‘amphitheatre of drug, alcohol, and sexual experimentation’”. This statement reveals much about the meaning that nightclubs hold, in that it is not only about drugs and their use, but also a multitude of sensory experiences, all of which influence young people’s use of the nightclub space and, in turn, their risk perceptions (see chapter 7). Indeed, there is a need to acknowledge and explore the nightclub as a site that has been built on ‘legal’ forms of drug consumption (e.g. alcohol). As such, understanding of this complex social setting should be the focus of contemporary research and government policy, which identifies its place in this empirical study.

1.3.3 *The South Australian Context*

The study is based on data collected from young people in nightclubs in Adelaide, South Australia. To understand the context of this study and its value in the overall research, it is essential to appreciate the social, geographical and political climate in which this research was conducted. Firstly, research (MacGregor & Payne, 2011; McRostie & Marshall, 2001) has highlighted significant increases in the prevalence of the manufacture and distribution of methamphetamine within this jurisdiction over the last decade. Many sources (ACC_b, 2007a; 2007b; Caldicott et al., 2005) suggest that this increased availability may increase local usage in the future as methamphetamine manufacture is typically domestic in nature. In addition, numerous sources have reported (Dennington et al., 2008; DASSA, 2006b; DUMA, 2005) that the rise in methamphetamine use in South Australia has outstripped that of other Australian jurisdictions (see Jenkinson & Johnston, 2006; CMC, 2006). This has been supported by numerous recent seizures and consequent arrests (Broadstock, 2012; AdelaideNow, 2011a; 2011b; ACS, 2007), including the seizure of drugs with a street value of \$32 million in 2008 (ACS, 2008). Hence, despite a moderate levelling-out since 2007, methamphetamine use remains a prevalent concern in South Australia. This can also be attributed to the different profile of illicit drug use in Adelaide (Donald et

al., 2006; Longo et al., 2003) where there is limited exposure to other substances such as cocaine and heroin more traditionally experienced in Sydney (McKetin et al., 2005) and Melbourne (Jenkinson & O’Keefe, 2004; Johnston et al., 2004). Nonetheless, this underscores the significance of context in this research as efforts can be concentrated on the methamphetamine ‘problem’ in a relevant setting to provide evidence-based policy responses.

Secondly, in South Australia nightclubs have received significant recent media (Anderson, 2011) and policy scrutiny (SAPOL, 2010; Prenzler et al., 2008; DASSA, 2003), which has occurred alongside the rise in methamphetamine use. Much of the concern reported has been focused on young people and their use of nightclubs, following a number of reports/events within the Adelaide night-time economy of violence and disorderly behaviour associated with intoxication (Churchman, 2011). As discussed later in chapter 6 (section 6.4), in South Australia the concern regarding youth club drug use has formed part of a more extensive law and order debate, occurring within the context of a ‘social conscience’ Labor Government, headed by the former Premier Mike Rann (2002-2011). The Rann Government embraced a strong ‘tough on crime’ stance that encompassed outlaw motorcycle gangs (OMCGs), young people at nightclubs, the prevalence of illicit drugs, and recently has also come to include the debate concerning binge-drinking among youth (Anderson, 2011). The ‘tough on crime’ stance targeted the night-time economy as many issues occurred after dark in the ‘entertainment’ precinct of the city of Adelaide. Given the broad focus on this night-time economy and young people’s behaviour within it, it is an appropriate time to engage in grounded analyses that have the potential to affect meaningful action and change, challenging how policy and responses to this issue are formulated and contrasting much of what has happened to date in the so-called ‘war on drugs’, which as identified earlier has all but failed (section 1.2). Thirdly, as noted above (section 1.1) the number of Australians that have ever tried methamphetamines has risen to over one million, many of whom are aged 18-25 years old (AIHW, 2008; Dennington et al., 2008). To put these figures into perspective, South Australia is the fifth largest state of Australia, comprising only 7.36 percent of the total Australian population in 2010 (22.3 million) (ABS,

2011a). The population of South Australia is approximately 1.6 million, with almost 75 percent of this population concentrated in metropolitan Adelaide (ABS, 2011b). In June 2010 the number of 18-25 year olds in South Australia was estimated at 160,973, which represents approximately 10 percent of the total South Australian population (ABS, 2011b).

This demographic data is valuable as it highlights two significant features of the present study. Firstly, the data identifies an environment that is characteristically urban having experienced substantial revitalisation in the last decade (ACC_a, 2011; ABS, 2008). It also reveals a population sample that possesses a traditionally middle-class mentality, which heavily influences their social character (Adelaide Clubber, 2009). This has a number of implications for this research, discussed later in this thesis (see chapters 4 and 7), in terms of identifying the environment in which methamphetamine use typically occurs and the profile of those people who use them. Secondly, I argue that the greater prevalence of methamphetamine use observed in South Australia makes the state a primary site in which to undertake empirical analyses of young people's perceptions of risk, given the limited size of the relevant youth sample compared with the other Australian jurisdictions. As a result, although the 545 young people that comprised this research sample represent only 0.35 percent of the population of young people aged 18-25 in South Australia in 2010 (ABS, 2011a), given that not all attend nightclubs this sample provides a useful representation of those that do. Thus, it is vital to examine and address the impact of illicit drug use on this particular youth cohort. Analysis of the perceptions of those young people who do not attend nightclubs would also greatly contribute to this discussion, which could be addressed in future research.

1.4 Thesis rationale, aims and structure:

The evaluation and management of youth methamphetamine use is a complex task that has aroused considerable policy debate between the government and experts, primarily in the health care field. However, despite a broad focus on harm reduction, this debate has typically prioritised a law enforcement or

'abstinence' approach (Kelly, 2005; Australian Crime Commission, 2005; Fitzgerald, 2005), which many sources agree has failed to produce any tangible reduction in the prevalence of drug use (Douglas & McDonald, 2012; Sweeney & Payne, 2012; Bouchard, 2007). To date there remains a significant disconnect in Australia's illicit drug policy (Duff, 2005; Wellbourne-Wood, 1999), as despite substantial policy creation and anti-drug campaigns, the prevalence of illicit drugs within nightclubs in particular, and their use by young people has not experienced the same plateauing observed in the general population and has arguably increased (MacGregor & Payne, 2011; McRostie & Marshall, 2001). A central tenet of the current research is that the major cause for this policy/reality disconnect lies in the substantial gulf between experts' perception of drug risk and that of young people and the impact this has on the effectiveness of policy responses relevant to the nightclub use of methamphetamines in Australia.

1.4.1 *Research Questions*

In order to examine this disconnect it is vital to identify and examine how young people perceive risk in relation to the use of methamphetamines, and how this is influenced by the social context of their use, in which the youth culture and the nightclub scene each play a significant role. This analysis examines contemporary literature on ecstasy and other club drug use to initially construct a unique theoretical framework that will assist in explaining young people's motivations for using methamphetamines and perceptions of risk within the Adelaide night-time economy. This study then uses a mixed method approach to obtain quantitative survey and qualitative interview data, as well as ethnographical observations to address the following questions:

1. How do young people perceive risk in relation to the use of methamphetamines at nightclubs in Adelaide?
2. To what extent do these perceptions reflect the dynamic socio-cultural interactions between, and values, norms and expectations of young people within this social atmosphere, their development of alternative definitions of risk, and the normalisation of methamphetamine use among young people in nightclubs, as developed in the Perception of Risk theoretical framework?

1.4.2 *Research Aims and Objectives*

To expand upon and respond to these research questions and increase the depth, scope and utility of the risk perceptions drawn from this sample of young people, this research aimed to:

- Identify, and gain insight into a sample of young nightclubbers' behaviours, attitudes and norms associated with attending nightclubs and methamphetamine use;
- Apply theoretical models of risk and risk-thinking to better understand the illicit drug landscape in Adelaide, challenge outdated conceptualisations of drug use and drug users, and identify how young people define risk;
- Identify risk perceptions that explain the complex interaction between young people, nightclubs and methamphetamine use;
- Frame and examine the social context of youth culture within the Adelaide nightclub scene.

By exploring these aims this research will enable a greater understanding of the disconnect between young people's perceptions of risk and current law enforcement responses to illicit drug use in Australia. Conceptualising this disconnect as a discussion of perceptions of risk, these aims jointly also question whether a contextually-appropriate understanding of risk can be identified and used to describe the illicit drug landscape within the Adelaide nightclub scene. Gaining a broad understanding of the underlying motivations for young people's decision-making in relation to methamphetamine use may, therefore, act as a catalyst for recognising the factors associated with, and that contribute to illicit drug use generally. From this platform, policy-makers and law enforcement agencies may then be able to design and implement effective drug policies framed by harm reduction principles (see chapter 8 for discussion) and guided by empirical evidence garnered from young people themselves – what some sources describe as 'new data' (Ogborne, 2006; Bennett, 2002a). This will provide the best opportunity to ameliorate the drug situation in Australia, and move away from the 'war on drugs' discourse that both scholars and many people in the community perceive to have failed.

1.4.3 *Structure of Thesis*

This thesis is presented in eight chapters and describes the results of a mixed method approach that encompassed quantitative survey data, qualitative responses from semi-structured interviews and the insights and experiences gained from a significant period of participant observation in the form of an ethnography of the Adelaide nightclub scene. This chapter described what is currently known about club drug use by young people in Australia, and described the existing literature in this area and its limitations, particularly addressing the paucity of contextual empirical research and the resultant ineffectiveness of current drug policies. As such, this chapter highlighted the importance of conducting grounded and pragmatic research and provided a foundation for the remaining chapters by identifying the weaknesses in current Australian illicit drug policy and its reliance on expert risk, and providing a new approach to remedy these weaknesses.

Chapter 2 utilises theory and data obtained from studies founded on research related to ecstasy and other club drugs to develop a theoretical framework that seeks to explain young people's use of methamphetamines within the Adelaide nightclub scene. The Perception of Risk (POR) theoretical framework combines a broad discussion of risk and a number of risk-models with an evaluation of the normalisation thesis and how it can be applied to explain the methamphetamine problem in the South Australian context. Highlighting an original aspect of this project, discussion of risk and normalisation is then drawn together to highlight the importance of social context in understanding young people's drug use. When combined, these elements constitute the POR framework, which is useful in explaining young people's perceptions of the risks associated with this night-time economy.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology employed in this study, including a description of the rationale behind the use of a mixed-methodology in this research context. The methodology incorporated a form of triangulation that used a quantitative survey questionnaire, qualitative semi-structured interviews and participant observations in the form of ethnography to collect data from young people – both users and non-users – in the Adelaide nightclub scene. This

constitutes original empirical research not only in terms of the methodology but also in respect of the use of a broader, targeted participant sample. These methods provided a unique contribution to the overall research project and were conducted simultaneously to ensure the validity and reliability of the data obtained, and also so that each aspect could build on the knowledge gained from the other methods employed. This was also necessary for factors such as access, the development of an appropriate research position and the effective collection of data. Overall, the collection of data from these young people in terms of their perceptions of risk associated with methamphetamine use in Adelaide nightclubs is a unique contribution to Australian illicit drug research.

Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 constitute the primary analysis chapters of this thesis, and present the findings of the quantitative and qualitative data. Chapter 4 identifies a number of recent changes in the nightclub environment that have significantly transformed the meaning and purpose of nightclubs for the young people that use them. Specifically, by examining the nightclub as a site of consumption this chapter challenges traditional conceptualisations of the nightclub as a location of youth deviance and transgression, and instead demonstrates that the nightclub has considerable meaning and significance for young people, fundamental to their construction of identity and experience of pleasure. This chapter is divided into two sections: *the club* and *the clubber*. Part one describes the physical and social characteristics of the nightclub and how these are created by nightclubs and enhanced by the surrounding nightlife spaces both of which contribute to the overall 'scene'. Part two describes the characteristics of contemporary 'clubbers' to reveal what consumption means for young people in the nightclub and how this influences their behaviour, including the use of drugs, and ultimately their perceptions of risk.

Chapter 5 describes and analyses the results gained from the quantitative survey questionnaire, which together with the qualitative data provides a detailed overview of the nightclub, in terms of how young people use the space, for what reasons and how it influences their perceptions of risk. This is a key feature in the contribution of this research to the broader research landscape in that, until now,

there has been no comprehensive national or international data source on young people's methamphetamine use within the nightclub scene. Although, as acknowledged in the methodology (section 3.8), further research could include a larger sample, as well as encompass the perceptions of young people who do not attend nightclubs to gauge a broader youth perspective, this research provides an invaluable foundation and source of data to begin addressing this deficiency.

Chapter 6 expands on the broad constructions of risk discussed in chapter 2, focusing specifically on the concept of expert risk and its current prioritisation in Australian drug policy. It highlights the implications of current drug policies, which embed risk discourses within a culture of control and conceptualise risk narrowly, as objective, known and unambiguous. The chapter also discusses the limitations of such a conceptualisation, suggesting that current policies are constrained by a number of competing aims that are potentially sending mixed messages to young people, reducing the effectiveness of the policies.

Chapter 7 extends the theoretical discussion from chapter 6, highlighting that the issue of risk is a question of perception and that there is need to expand conceptualisations of risk and their use in drug policy to include alternative, lay perspectives of risk. While previous research has addressed youth drug use, particularly in the last decade, few studies have actually considered or involved young people as active participants. This demonstrates the originality of this research in that it involves young people in the process and examines their behaviour and perceptions in situ. This chapter also addresses the research questions by describing how young people perceive risk in the nightclub and how this can be framed using the POR theoretical framework. Also, challenging expert risk models and the problematic-recreational use dichotomy, this chapter provides new knowledge that redefines the nightclub space. It examines how young people identify, define and manage risk to guide their leisure experiences, including drug use, in the nightclub. In doing so, it also highlights a number of other factors that are of concern for these young people and should attract greater policy attention.

Chapter 8 presents a final discussion of the integrated findings from this research. It describes how it has uniquely and significantly contributed to the

current body of knowledge regarding young people's use of methamphetamines in Adelaide, South Australia, and more broadly young people's use of illicit drugs in meaningful social contexts. This concluding chapter also provides recommendations for Australian illicit drug policy on how to approach contemporary drug research in light of the apparent failure of the 'war on drugs', as well as some suggestions for future research in this area.

CHAPTER 2

A THEORETICAL APPROACH TO YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF RISK IN ADELAIDE NIGHTCLUBS

2.1 Introduction

In recent decades much of the research in the Australian illicit drug field (Ross et al., 2007; Degenhardt et al., 2006; Degenhardt & Topp, 2002) and internationally (Kelly, 2007; Chinet et al., 2007; Riley & Hayward, 2004) has focused on the emergence of 'club drugs' and their impact on young people. Many of these studies have identified the rapid rise of club drug use as a strong indication of the need to re-think how drug use is viewed and, in turn, addressed by governments. However, much of the literature regarding perceptions of drug use has ignored the perspectives and experiences of 'insiders' such as young people (Bahora et al., 2009; Hodkinson, 2005), and this omission has had a particular influence on drug policy. Specifically, the bulk of drug policy has been informed by government assessments that prioritise danger and technical analyses of risk, and thus view drug use negatively (Kelly, 2005; Fischer et al., 2004). By examining a number of models of risk, this chapter addresses the need for a risk perception framework that expands risk discourses to encompass the diversity of perspectives in the community, particularly in the nightclub and specifically of young people. In order to gain access to this landscape of drug use and risk it is necessary to acknowledge, firstly, the existence of divergent models of risk and, secondly, that there is a need to understand how young people conceptualise risk as opposed to experts. As will be noted in this chapter and elsewhere there are significant differences, the most notable of which is related to the subjective and contextual nature of risk perceptions. Understanding young people's conceptualisations of risk not only provides insight into how young people perceive risk in their daily activities, but also how these perceptions drive decision-making practices that guide their drug use practices – whether to use drugs or not – in the nightclub.

To achieve this level of discussion, this chapter focuses on models of risk and on the normalisation thesis (Parker, Aldridge & Measham, 1998), to explore the importance of social context in relation to young people's perceptions and

management of risk in relation to drugs. This chapter examines existing ecstasy and other drug research to provide a foundation from which to frame and explain young people's methamphetamine use in Adelaide nightclubs. This approach is supported by the rapid increase of methamphetamine use in the last decade to the extent that it is now one of the most significant concerns for policy-makers and law enforcement agencies. Despite this concern, there is insufficient empirical research in Australia on this burgeoning form of drug use. This has further implications in that the limitation in number of studies has equally limited the scope of this research. Other than prevalence data obtained from surveys of the general population there is no comprehensive domestic data source regarding methamphetamines (in terms of appropriate sampling and methodology) and its use by young people within the nightclub (McKetin & McLaren, 2004; Richards et al., 2002). This lack of data limits our understanding and our attempts to reduce the impact of this phenomenon. Research undertaken in the drug policy arena to date has been based on generalised epidemiological data and existing knowledge of other forms of drug use, which arguably explains the broad strokes approach evident in governments' punitive policy responses. A rationale for examining the ecstasy and other drug research is that many studies have identified a number of similarities in particular between ecstasy and methamphetamines in relation to their predominant use in the nightclub setting by young people (Weekley et al., 2004; Kinner & Degenhardt, 2008; UNODC, 2008a; White et al., 2006). Also, a number of these studies examined youth risk perceptions (Murphy et al., 2006; Gamma et al., 2005; Panagopoulos & Ricciardelli, 2005), which, despite largely focusing only on users' experiences and thus differing from the present study methodologically, provided a valuable foundation for this research.

Using ecstasy and other drug research as a foundation, this chapter analyses the concepts of risk, normalisation and social context to assess how they interact to influence behaviour and how they can be used to explain young people's experiences with methamphetamines in Adelaide nightclubs. This analysis represents the Perception of Risk (POR) framework, which draws together analyses of risk and risk-thinking, the influence of the wider social context of the Adelaide nightclub scene and the perceived normalisation of drug use in this

setting. This framework seeks to construct a profile of young people's experience of methamphetamine use and how this translates into behaviour, such as drug use and/or the decision to attend Adelaide nightclubs. This theoretical framework informs the rest of the thesis, as highlighted in more detail in chapter 7, where the empirical work will be (re)connected with this theoretical analysis.

2.2 Explanatory models of risk

Risk is a central feature of society, where often individuals bear the responsibility for their own risk health, safety and welfare; what has been identified as 'individualisation' (Beck, 1992). As such, discussions of risk and risk-taking by young people have dominated government debates in relation to public health (Buxton & Dove, 2008; Lee et al., 2008; Beck, 1992) and community safety (Norman, 2006; Hauritz et al., 1998) where with regard to illicit drug use, in particular, it has been identified that differences in perceptions of risk can significantly impact the consistency and effectiveness of prevention and harm-reduction strategies (Akram & Galt, 1999; Wellbourne-Wood, 1999). It is often assumed that young people do not think about the risk before they take it, and if it results in a negative outcome that they perceive that it is someone else's fault. Risk is often used as "a conceptual touchstone referred to in the identification, definition and management of many social ills" (Buth, 2007, p. 451), which allows contemporary societies to construct value-systems that define acceptable behaviour as well as acceptable harms. However, drug policy debates have often been overwhelmed by narrow conceptualisations of risk that reflect various cultural and political understandings of risk, such as a blind focus on risk avoidance, which limit the scope of drug policies in reducing drug use (Duff, 2008). In the present study, the prevalence of methamphetamine use and general rates of attendance within the Adelaide nightclub scene are strong indications that those young people who are nightclub consumers, whether they are drug users or not, perceive risk differently. It is vital that researchers explore the relationship between young people, nightclub use and risk and their combined impact on illicit drug use, to assist the development of evidence-based policy that is not focused solely on abstinence but instead recognises the social context of young people's drug use and the possibility for sensible recreational drug use.

Risk is a broad, subjective and widely debated concept (O'Malley, 2004), discussions of which appear across numerous fields and disciplines (see Gregory & Satterfield, 2002; Green et al., 2000; Lupton, 1999a; 1999b; Slovic, 1998; Beck, 1992). According to Slovic (2001) who examined young people's perceptions of the risks associated with smoking, a reasonable definition of risk is that it is a function of the probability and severity of an adverse outcome, which each play a role in how young people, in particular, assess risks in their daily activities. These dimensions of risk are closely related to the way the term is used in research on illicit drugs (O'Malley & Valverde, 2004; O'Malley, 1999). For example, numerous studies have examined risk perceptions of ecstasy users (Yacoubian et al., 2003; Hansen et al., 2001; Shewan et al., 2000; Topp et al., 1999), in which users' discussions of risk usually involves an estimation of the likelihood of any adverse consequences (Gamma et al., 2005), and their perceived severity (see Bhattachary & Powell, 2001; McCann et al., 2000). This suggests a level of engagement with risk considerations by these users, which highlights that regardless of whether risk is perceived or actual, it is important for governments, policy-makers and health care professionals to understand how risk perceptions influence young people's behaviour in the nightclub in relation to drugs.

Starr and Whipple (1980) provide further background to the relationship between drugs and risk in this research context, broadly arguing that using drugs inevitably involves an element of risk, and that four basic truisms exist in relation to such behaviour: 1) that risk is an accepted part of life; 2) individuals react differently to risks; 3) decisions imposing risks are being made all the time; and 4) that there is generally conflict between experts and lay people in relation to perceptions of risk. Each of these aspects of risk highlight the need to shift discussions of risk from narrow, objective classifications of risk to broader, more subjective categories of risk perception, in which there is a wide range of diverse, relative and contextual meanings (Gamma et al., 2005). Specifically, what this discussion achieves is the framing of risk perceptions as "the content of individuals' beliefs about risk and their vulnerability to it [and] the recognition of risks inherent in [a particular] situation" (Gamma et al., 2005, p. 186), which provides background to the approach employed in this study.

A feature of this study is that the recognition that despite experts' identification of the risks associated with drug use (Shewan et al., 2000), for some young people these are risks they are willing to take, which is evident in their continued drug use (Milovanovic, 2003) or association with drug use settings defined as 'at risk', such as the nightclub. As such, narrow understandings of risk should be challenged in order to tease out the meanings that risk may hold for certain groups of people. In doing so it should be acknowledged that risk is an abstract concept coloured not only by political agendas but also by social contexts and meanings (Ewald, 1991), where risk may assume a wide variety of forms (O'Malley, 2004). Thus, as O'Malley (2004, p. 326) suggests, "there is no obvious reason why risk cannot be inclusive rather than exclusionary, why risk cannot be unifying rather than polarising" hence greater understanding of the many forms of risk is needed.

2.2.1 *Professional or 'Expert' Risk Models: Objectifying Risk*

Many sources across a range of disciplines have identified that professional or 'expert' models of risk are often favoured in society, given that they are endowed with authority and represent official knowledge of a specific action or behaviour (see Seddon et al., 2008; Kelly, 2005; Savadori et al., 2004; Shewan et al., 2000). In theoretical terms, rational decision-making and reasoned action theories dominate many policy landscapes, emerging from psychological concepts that promote the importance of health-beliefs and rational thought (Gamma et al., 2005; Rhodes, 2002). In practice this has meant that expert analyses typically involve rigid, technical estimations of risk, where the risk assessment considers only undesired outcomes and allocates a statistical probability if the event is reasonably common, or an estimated probability if it is not. It is thus only associated with negative outcomes (see Denscombe, 2001; Slovic, 1987). With regard to drug use this encompasses outcomes such as overdose and addiction (see Darke et al., 2008a; Ali et al., 2006; Krenske et al., 2004; Akram & Galt, 1999). This form of risk assessment can be categorised as calculative and context-free (Rhodes, 2002), in which the currency of discussion is often statistical data regarding the number of annual fatalities (see Fynes-Clinton, 2009; Degenhardt et al., 2005a), seizures (see ACS, 2007), and emergency department admissions (see CMC, 2008; Gray et al., 2007; Fulde & Wodak, 2007; Cunningham & Liu, 2003)

related to illicit drug production and use. This perspective assumes a single view of risk where ‘rational’ behaviour is viewed only as risk avoidance (O’Malley, 2004; Rhodes, 2002), which for drug use is characterised by total abstinence (Rodner, 2006). This is evident in South Australia where risk and drug policy discourses are embedded in a broad ‘law and order’ approach to crime that advocates populist zero tolerance drug policies (see section 6.4).

However, research on the use of club drugs (Kelly, 2007; 2005; White et al., 2006), suggests that this perspective is unrealistic and that greater analysis of how perceptions of risk are constructed within this social space is needed. It is suggested that such an unrealistic view fails to acknowledge the individual and contextual nature of risk perceptions that young people share within the night-time economy, which are fundamental in guiding behaviour and decision-making. The concern is that any perspective gained from expert assessments of risk will be used to classify young people who voluntarily engage in risk behaviours (e.g. drug use) as dysfunctional and irrational (Rhodes, 2002; Kelly, 2000). This will therefore reinforce the existent power inequalities in risk discussions where, as already noted, experts’ views are bathed in authority. Furthermore, ignorance of the context of young people’s drug use will only serve to undermine the efficacy of prevention efforts such as health promotions within these populations (Duff, 2005). This is evident in much of the research associated with ecstasy use, which has emphasised the harmful outcomes of use, such as heatstroke, overdose and depression (Kelly, 2005), despite the fact that most young ecstasy users do not perceive them to be common outcomes (Degenhardt et al., 2005c; Gamma et al., 2005). Instead of developing knowledge of drug risks and young people’s perception of them, the research into the use of ecstasy again over-emphasises the value of expert risk assessments, which do not reflect lay people’s perceptions of the risk of use of what they consider low threat drugs (Kelly, 2005; see generally, Kelly, 2000). This is likely to have a significant impact on these young drug users, as by defining them as reckless and engaging in chaotic and impulsive drug use (Shewan et al., 2000), experts strip them of any perceived capacity for rational thought or responsibility, which arguably would further distance them from the community and in particular, health and law and order initiatives.

Another important consequence of this overemphasis on expert risk is that, as has been observed in South Australia (see section 6.3), institutions often use this technical risk knowledge to underpin a multitude of advertising campaigns and scare tactics to show young people the ‘reality’ of drug use as a form of deterrence (Duff, 2008; Heimer, 1988). Of concern, however, is that in the attempt to ‘educate’ young people, these messages often overemphasise some risks and downgrade others. This may conflict with lay people’s experiences of risk and thereby widen the gap between experts’ opinions and young people’s views facilitating deviance amplification (Perretti-Watel, 2003b), rather than encouraging discussion of harm reduction in the drug landscape. Ultimately, this creates ‘objective’ risks that contribute relatively little to analyses of young people’s perceptions of risk (Seddon et al., 2008). How young people identify, categorise and define risk and whether they are able to use this risk knowledge to guide their drug use should be the focus of analysis, which raises the question of whether an expert model of risk is the most effective manner of describing young people’s methamphetamine use, and is examined further in chapter 6.

2.2.2 Ignorance Models

Ignorance models of risk are also commonly used to explain young people’s use of illicit substances (Kelly, 2005; Peretti-Watel, 2003a; Becker, 1963). It is often assumed by governments and experts, as has been the case in other discourses of risk (Lupton, 1999b, Giddens, 1990), that young people engage in risky activities such as drug use because they lack both the awareness and knowledge of or underestimate the dangers associated with these drugs and that they are content to engage in drug use despite this (Kelly, 2007; 2005; Leshner, 2005). In other words, many experts assume that young people use drugs because “they just don’t get it” (Kelly, 2005, p. 437), which further rationalises experts’ use of technical estimations and ‘objective’ knowledge. Such assumptions emerge from experts’ underestimation of the capabilities of young people to assess risks and dangers associated with drug use (Kelly, 2005). A number of sources have suggested that although closely related, danger and risk are not analogous, and commonly risk presumes danger (Green et al., 2000; Giddens, 1990). Therefore, as Giddens (1990, p. 32) notes, although young people believe they know the risks associated

with drug use, they may not understand the specific course(s) of action that evoke(s) them. Consequently, experts assume that when individuals take risks it must be the result of a lack of information or cognitive breakdown (Hunt, Evans & Kares, 2006). In this context non-experts such as young people are portrayed as possessing only a subjective awareness of risks, viewed “as free actors who are constrained only by their ignorance about the threat to which they may be exposed” (Lupton, 1999b, p. 23).

Yet, it is evident that research on young people’s use of club drugs does not support this (Kelly, 2007; see also, Perrone, 2006; Hunt et al., 2005; Winstock et al., 2001). Instead, provided with adequate resources young people are often aware of the specific dangers associated with their drug consumption and often their level of risk identification is significant (Kelly, 2005). It can therefore be deduced that young people do not regard illicit drug use as a harmless endeavour. Indeed, in numerous studies (Bahora et al., 2009; Kelly, 2007; Gamma et al., 2005) when asked about risks many of the participants recognised and acknowledged the immediate risks associated with ecstasy use, such as dehydration, grinding teeth, overdose, and overheating. And yet, although these young people acknowledge that such dangers are possible, Kelly (2005) their continued drug use suggests that in arriving at their risk position, they consider that the happening of an adverse outcome is not probable (or that if it does happen the affect will be minimal). Research has suggested that young people may gauge the probability of a number of different adverse outcomes and as a result relate potential hazards to specific features in a given context (Bahora et al., 2009), such as the nightclub in which the drugs are consumed. A product of the recognition of context in risk is that youth nurture a sense of agency over their club drug use, which translates into the construction and use of specific risk management strategies (Kelly, 2005). In addition, it appears that young people develop this knowledge base or understanding of drug use not “for social currency, but as a necessary component for the preservation of their health” (Kelly, 2005, p. 1454), which may explain young people’s continued illicit drug use in the face of the associated dangers. It is suggested that rather than absorbing expert assessments, young people engage in a process of contextualisation in which the building of

knowledge plays a key role in the development of perceptions of risk related to their drug use behaviour. However, much more research is needed to determine the impact of agency – whether perceived or actual – on young people’s perceptions of risk, and particularly in relation to the use of methamphetamines.

To some extent this highlights the more recent shift of models of control away from applications of deviance to risk management via understanding of individual practices (Miller, 2005). However, the limitation of this lies in the fact that current models of risk-taking promote an institutional approach that privileges management of populations, which fail to adequately understand why young people use drugs (Miller, 2005; Peretti-Watel, 2003a), or why young people continue to engage with drug users. Instead, this approach relies on individualistic explanations for drug use that serve to label certain activities as deviant (or non-deviant) (Miller, 2005), which does little for understanding how young people use illicit drugs, and how this is guided by their perceptions of risk. Given the importance of the social context in the development of risk perceptions (see section 2.4.1), and that substantial literature has highlighted the need to explore these perceptions through the lens of folk models, more research is required, particularly on how or whether this can be extended to methamphetamine use.

2.2.3 *Folk Models*

A number of studies have identified that the meaning associated with illicit drugs varies for each individual, almost as much as the effects of their use (Kelly, 2005; Agar, 1985). These studies have suggested that to better understand the role of illicit drugs in youth social groups, it is vital to determine how young people understand drugs and risk in the context of their own lives (Kelly, 2005). Analysing young people’s behaviour through folk models has been put forward as one way of achieving this (Agar, 1985). This is a bottom-up rather than a top-down approach, which accords with the current research aims given that as identified above (section 2.1) insider perceptions of drug use have often been neglected. Folk models arise through the everyday practices of people in society (Kelly, 2005; Kelly, 2000). Their primary significance is thus founded in how they can explain drug use practices through demonstrating the importance of

social networks and social setting in understanding risk perceptions on these practices (Gregory & Satterfield, 2002; Decorte, 2001). Despite this, folk models are often underestimated due to the perception that they are too individualistic (Kelly, 2005). However, it has been identified in some of the ecstasy research that knowledge acquisition and its use in guiding drug use practices play an important role in the young people's risk perceptions (Bahora et al., 2009; Kelly, 2005; Decorte, 2001), which ratifies the significance of bottom-up approaches in the present study. Specifically, these studies highlight that young ecstasy users ground assessments of risk within socio-cultural frameworks developed in the nightclub and the social networks that exist within them. This is useful as it provides examples of how certain forms of knowledge are generated and then translated into practice (Kelly, 2007). For example, Decorte (2001) reveals that many young people in nightclubs often perceive that ecstasy use is analogous to other forms of substance use observed frequently in this social setting, such as smoking and drinking, which has implications for the prevalence of drug use and associated perceptions of risk. In particular, these comparisons reveal that the meaning of drug use shapes young people's understanding of risk, which in turn influences how drugs are then used or not used (Kelly, 2005; see also, Derzon & Lipsey, 1999). This is pertinent in the nightclub, given the role that drug use plays in many young people's leisure time activities, which the ecstasy research has shown motivates users to implement risk management practices. A series of parallels can be drawn from this with regard to the current study that highlight the need to evaluate whether what is known about ecstasy can be translated onto evaluations of young people who use methamphetamines. This is a question this study seeks to address. However, as not all 'users' of the nightclub use drugs, it is also important to explore how the young people who attend nightclubs generally perceive of the risks. Engaging in a folk-model-based analysis may explain the everyday practices of these young people, which will not only provide insight into what had traditionally been a 'veiled' environment, but also place young people's drug use and perceptions of risk within the wider social context of the nightclub.

In providing background to the perception of risk in this social context, Collison (1996, p. 434) states that risk behaviour is a "common part of adolescent

life rather than the unusual prompt for momentous decisions”. This questions whether analyses of risk-taking and youth sociality can be discussed as isolated concepts, as for many young people risk-taking is about achieving and displaying independence, a sense of self, social identity, and maturity (Wood, 2003; Bennett, 2000; Malbon, 1998). With this view, risk-taking could be accepted as an exploration of conventional and socially-enforced boundaries, rather than resistance to them as a demonstration of deviance (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002a; Matza, 1969). For these individuals, perceptions of control remain central to risk-taking and are an important part of its appeal. Indeed, if undertaken without negative consequences (such as over-dosing), voluntary risk-taking can lead to an increased sense of control, resulting in a perception of accomplishment and agency (Lyng, 1990). Within the socialised environment of nightclubs, and surrounded by friends, these young people view this behaviour as a normal part of their lives, particularly on the weekend. As a result, this ‘normality’ can be qualified, and it can be accepted that risk knowledge is mediated through social and cultural frameworks of understanding that influence behaviour (Lupton, 1999b). This is yet to be demonstrated though in contemporary studies of methamphetamine use. Furthermore, for some others voluntary risk-taking juxtaposes “an ordered sense of self and environment” with a sense of chaos and disorder (Lyng, 1990, p. 857). Hence, drug use has traditionally been viewed as a deviant platform from which young people can transcend this ‘ordered self’, using illicit substances to lose control physically and symbolically (Wyble, 2008; see also, Fitzgerald, 2002 for discussion). The development of this theoretical framework has been to determine which of these concepts young Adelaide club-drug users represent, and what implications this has on their perceptions of risk.

It is necessary to pause, however, to consider the implication of such understandings. As Lupton and Tulloch (2002a, p. 115) state “risk knowledge and meanings are dynamic, historical and contextual”. Thus, in this research context it is argued that young people may evaluate risks based upon this knowledge and use drugs accordingly. Far from being ignorant as experts have historically identified, young people may be aware of the dangers they risk when consuming illicit drugs. In the context of the ecstasy research, Kelly (2005) has noted that the

intensity of youth awareness regarding the harms associated with drug use can be recognised in the efforts made to develop or increase knowledge about drugs. In addition to the knowledge gathered through drug use prevention education in high schools¹ and health centres, many young people actively develop knowledge about and discuss the use of illicit drugs and their associated dangers within their social or peer-group networks. This highlights the motivation for this research and something that should interest policy-makers, given that as social networks of friends and peers are primary sources of support and information that frame how youth assess risk and danger (Kelly, 2005) knowledge of risk can become contextual and may not reflect expert measures of harm (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002b). Furthermore, it must be recognised that it is not necessarily the knowledge that young people use to rationalise their behaviour, although this is of concern, but what practical foundation they use to operationalise this knowledge that is important. Put simply, does this knowledge influence young people's risk-taking behaviour? Highlighting the significance of the Perception of Risk framework, in particular the conceptualisation of risk it comprises, it is important that this research identify whether young people who use methamphetamines are able to engage in discussions of risk, examine what meaning they ascribe to risk in terms of their use of the nightclub, and importantly determine whether they share this knowledge with other members of their social group to reduce risk.

2.2.4 *Risk-taking as Pleasure*

A significant feature of many risk models is that they often presume a straightforward link between fear and risk, mediated by rationality (or alternatively irrationality) (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002a; Walklate, 1997), which has numerous implications for how risk and drug use are perceived and managed. Of concern is that it creates a binary and potentially stigmatising view of young people's behaviour, where drug use is considered risky and therefore 'bad', compared with non-drug use which is 'good' (Heimer, 1988). However, such a perspective cannot explain why young people appear to actively seek what

¹ Historically, the effectiveness of such programs has been questioned, due to the conflicting nature of research relating to effective drug prevention policy (Tobler & Stratton, 2004). Similarly, ongoing, accessible support must be considered given that school-based programs that are often offered only *once*, commonly in primary or secondary school, cannot be expected to last throughout adolescence.

experts' define as 'risks' or seek risk environments where drug users readily mix with non-drug users. This is especially pertinent when these risks can be significant such as in the use of ecstasy and methamphetamines, where overdosing, brain damage and death are perceived by experts as potential outcomes (Kelly, 2007; Gowing et al., 2002; Bhattachary & Powell, 2001). As such, in line with previous studies of risk and drug use (Duff, 2008; O'Malley & Valverde, 2004; Rhodes, 2002) the argument put forward in this thesis is that it is misleading to evaluate risk as though it only refers to risk avoidance; rather, risk is more complex and should be explored using a bottom-up approach that recognises its many forms.

A factor that is notably absent from much of the research on young people's drug use is the fact that, despite the messages inherent in drug policy and media advertising campaigns that drugs are dangerous and their harms inevitable, for the majority of drug users within the nightclub context, "their experiences are fun and exciting, result in few harmful consequences and are generally pleasurable" (Hunt, Evans & Kares, 2006, p. 2). A number of researchers have noted that in contemporary risk discourse, the concept of pleasure is often absent in evaluations of young people's motivations for using illicit drugs (Duff, 2008; 2004; Hunt, Evans & Kares, 2006; Moore & Valverde, 2000). Challenging traditional conceptualisations of youth risk-taking that typically view risk-taking behaviour as a form of resistance or deviance (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002a), what the ecstasy data has suggested is that activities that represent risk-taking, such as drug use, can be pleasurable and is the motivation for their engagement, not the risk-taking itself (Duff, 2008; Gourley, 2004; Degenhardt, Barker & Topp, 2004). These studies have noted that individuals derive different meanings from the different drugs that they use, depending on how they make sense of the drugs in their lives (Kelly, 2007; Duff, 2003). This process also shapes and is shaped by their understanding of risk. How young people assign positive value to illicit drug use through the experience of pleasure is important to both risk and drug discourses (Duff, 2008). As Milovanovic (2003, p. 116) states in relation to risk broadly, it is the "pursuit of excitement, the field of the body, and the emotional rather than rational utilitarian dynamics" that maintains some forms of risk-taking behaviour,

which demonstrates that not all behaviour is motivated by material gain or by deviant attitudes. The use of drugs such as ecstasy may therefore facilitate the sharing of pleasure, through providing opportunities for experiences that enhance social interaction, intimacy and confidence, which in certain contexts (e.g. the nightclub) would frame drug use as a valuable pleasure-seeking behaviour.

However, while a number of studies have identified that the pursuit of pleasure may be a useful explanation for recent increases in the prevalence of illicit drug use in a range of settings (see Pennay & Moore, 2010; Hunt, Evans & Kares, 2006; Hutton, 2006; Boys et al., 2001), attempts to understand the role of pleasure have been limited in most drug policy discussions (Duff, 2008). This is likely attributable to its conflict with the prohibitionist policies that define the moral stance that governments favour. Indeed, governments have commonly been reluctant to recognise pleasure as a motive for consumption. Instead they remain attached to perspectives that typically view such forms of drug consumption as deviant (Duff, 2005; Lupton & Tulloch, 2002a) or motivated by compulsion or pathology (O'Malley & Valverde, 2004). However, as noted in the introduction to this thesis (section 1.3.2), methamphetamine use has increased in certain leisure settings and levels of consumption in the general population have remained stable – but importantly not declined. This serves as an indication that further examination of young people's motivations for and patterns of drug use is needed, as well as understanding of what factors influence these consumption practices. Thus, central to the development of the Perception of Risk framework is an awareness of the need to further evaluate the role of pleasure to determine its impact on how young people use drugs, and more significantly, evaluate why young people use them and how this frames their perceptions of risk. The above analysis of risk and risk-thinking has highlighted the fact that any efforts to explain young people's risk perceptions need to take into account how drugs, their use and the associated risks are perceived by young people regardless of actual use, and how this is framed by the context in which the drugs are used. This rationalises and forms the foundation for the examination of the respective roles of normalisation and social context in the POR framework, which are each discussed in the following sections of this chapter.

2.3 The normalisation of youth drug use

In Australia, it is argued that the use of illicit drugs has steadily increased in many social settings and while once associated with ‘deviant’ subcultures is now often considered as part of broader leisure and cultural consumption habits of many young people (Matthew-Simmons et al., 2008; Duff et al., 2007; Holt, 2005; Duff, 2005). As noted in the introduction to this thesis, this can be attributed to an increase in the availability and use of certain drugs, as well as significant social and cultural shifts associated with the use of these drugs in particular leisure settings (Hughes et al., 2010b; Huggins, 2007). The concern for researchers and policy-makers in Australia is that such shifts have transformed the use of these drugs to the extent that they now appear to have become a ‘normalised’ feature of recreational pursuits for many young people (Duff, 2005; 2003; Holt, 2005). This mirrors the experience of many other jurisdictions in the last decade, notably the UK (Parker, Williams, & Aldridge, 2002; Measham, Aldridge, & Parker, 2001; Parker, Aldridge & Measham, 1998), but also Canada (Duff et al., 2011; Osborne & Fogel, 2008), the US (Bahora et al., 2009) and Europe (Sznitman, 2007; Rodner, 2006), where the perceived ‘normalisation’ of recreational drug use within youth populations has been the focus of much research and debate. By comparison, less is known about the extent of normalisation in Australia (Holt, 2005) especially in relation to the use of methamphetamines. This thesis seeks to incorporate consideration of normalisation into its theoretical framework to contribute to the explanation of young people’s use of methamphetamines and associated perceptions of risk in South Australia. A rationale for its inclusion is that it serves as a lens through which to contextualise young people’s models of risk and risk-thinking as shifts in attitudes towards drug use likely impact how young people define and understand the risks and harms associated with drug use and *vice versa*, particularly for non-users. It is also valuable in that it embraces a bottom-up rather than top-down approach to drug use, which accords with the aims of this research. This section will provide a brief overview of normalisation and examine its application in the UK and Australia to demonstrate its utility in the POR framework. It will then apply normalisation to the use of methamphetamines; in doing so highlighting the need to extend the normalisation thesis in Australia to keep pace with shifts in contemporary youth drug cultures.

2.3.1 *The Normalisation Thesis*

Although the concept of normalisation has been widely explored in recent decades, the most comprehensive description has arguably been provided by Parker, Aldridge and Measham (1998) in *Illegal Leisure*. Using original empirical research and epidemiological data the authors argued that the use of illicit substances in certain settings in the UK can no longer be seen as deviant or tied to specific subcultures and instead has “increasingly come to be seen as an unremarkable feature of young people’s lives; part of the broader search for pleasure, excitement and enjoyment framed within consumption-oriented leisure lifestyles” (Measham & Shiner, 2009, p. 502). Extending earlier understandings of normalisation from work on disabilities the thesis was an attempt to describe the process by which individuals traditionally viewed as deviant (e.g. drug users) come to be accepted in wider contexts. Parker and colleagues’ work is primarily based on extensive longitudinal study that tracked the attitudes and behaviour of a large cohort of young people aged 14-25 living in the northwest of England (Parker et al., 1998; Parker et al., 2002). This research found that over half of participants had experimented with licit and illicit drugs before the age of 18, most commonly using cannabis, amphetamines, and ecstasy, and that approximately a quarter were regular users by the age of 21 (Parker et al., 1998; Parker et al., 2002). Significantly, Parker and colleagues also sought to assess wider social and cultural changes that they perceived influenced how young people conceptualise drug use. They were interested in how young people conceive of drug use, drug users and changes in the perceived availability of drugs, as well as shifts in the way young people organise their leisure time and social interactions (Sznitman, 2007; Duff, 2005). In this way, the authors characterise normalisation as “a multi-dimensional tool, a barometer of changes in social behaviour and cultural perspectives” (Parker et al., 2002, p. 943; see also, Parker, 2005). This characterisation identifies the relevance of normalisation in the present study, given the perceived changes in youth drug culture in Australia.

Although there has been variation across more recent studies (see Duff et al., 2011; Pennay & Moore, 2010; Parker, 2005), the normalisation thesis consists of five core dimensions by which normalisation is measured (Parker et al., 2002):

- (1) Drugs availability/access;
- (2) Drug trying (lifetime prevalence);
- (3) Recent or current use;
- (4) Social acceptance of 'sensible' drug use (being 'drugwise') – including 'abstainers' (non-users); and
- (5) The wider cultural accommodation of drug use.

These dimensions have been examined in a range of settings (Bahora et al., 2009; Cheung & Cheung, 2006; Duff, 2005; Measham et al., 2001; Taylor, 2000) and have stimulated considerable contemporary drug policy debate (see Measham & Shiner, 2009; Duff, 2005). As identified above, this has been most notable in the UK, where studies (see Parker, 2005; Parker et al., 2002; Measham et al., 2001) have illustrated the utility of normalisation in describing the lifestyles of 'ordinary' young people in relation to illicit drug use. Despite some challenges to the normalisation thesis with regard to its approach (Shiner & Newburn, 1997) and the strength of its conclusions (see Wibberly & Price, 2000), the majority of these studies have supported the normalisation of cannabis use in the UK.

These studies also highlighted a range of factors that contextualise the significance of normalisation in contemporary drug research and how it can be used in other contexts in relation to other illicit drugs. Firstly, the normalisation thesis provides a range of conceptual and methodological tools (Duff et al., 2011, p. 2) that, in addition to examining prevalence data, seek to capture the shifting social and cultural meaning(s) of drug use in certain contexts. This is an important feature of normalisation, given that epidemiological data alone cannot explain the social meaning(s) of drug use, or why certain patterns emerge and how these patterns change over time (Duff, 2004; 2003). Secondly, Parker and his colleagues characterise normalisation as being concerned only with 'recreational' drug use, which Parker (2005, p. 206) defines as the 'occasional use of certain substances in certain settings and in a controlled way'. This definition links drug use with young people's recreational 'time out' or leisure practices, which brings to bear the importance of social processes, including education, employment and the family (Sznitman, 2007), and their impact on young people's consumption decisions and practices in relation to illicit drugs. Thirdly, these studies identify

the nightclub as a prominent drug use setting where, although support for normalisation in this setting is mixed (Measham et al., 2001) there is scope for further analysis. Although it is only with the recreational use of cannabis that Parker and colleagues fully satisfied the normalisation criteria (Parker et al., 2002), they suggest that dance/stimulant drugs (including amphetamines) have become more prevalent and have ‘moved towards’ normalisation, providing further background to the current research study. The implications of these factors are discussed further later in this section. However, it is important to first examine the application of the normalisation thesis in the Australian context as it provides critical insight into understanding contemporary drug trends in this setting.

2.3.2 Normalisation in the Australian Drug Context

As noted above, debates about the normalisation of young people’s drug use have emerged in Australia in recent years, in both media reports (Stevenson, 2004) and a small number of empirical research studies (see Duff et al., 2007; Duff, 2005; 2003; Lindsay, 2003). Discussion of the normalisation thesis has occurred as a response to the tensions between Australia’s long-standing commitment to harm reduction (noted earlier in chapter 1) and the fact that many governments, particularly in South Australia, continue to embrace strict zero tolerance drug policies (Holt, 2005). This tension has prevented the development of consistent and effective responses to drug use by young people, caused in large part by a lack of knowledge of contemporary youth drug trends and practices. Consequently, the normalisation thesis provided an opportunity to examine what is known about young people’s drug use in Australia and to collect this data for the purpose of developing more appropriate policy and practical responses. However, by comparison with the UK, the Australian data has provided a different picture of young people’s drug use (Holt, 2005). Garnered from a range of sources, including the NDSHS and Victorian Youth Alcohol and Drug Survey (VYADS), the data has revealed increases in the lifetime and recent rates of use of a number of substances, primarily cannabis but also ecstasy and amphetamines. However, the use and perceived tolerance of most of these drugs is reported only by small minorities of young people (Holt, 2005), as opposed to the more widespread use identified in the UK. As such, these findings have illustrated that

the normalisation of drug use is occurring in Australia, but in limited contexts ('selective normalisation') and for specific substances, indicating the need for greater evaluation of the specific settings and groups of young people involved.

A small number of research studies have evaluated the patterns of drug use of a range of young people across diverse social settings (see BMRP, 2008; Duff et al., 2007; Duff, 2005; Panagopoulos & Ricciardelli, 2005; Lindsay, 2003; Carroll, 2000). These studies have demonstrated that, similar to the UK, there is strong evidence in Australia that 'sensible' or recreational drug use is becoming more socially accepted and even tolerated in certain settings by certain groups of people, including users and non-users (Duff et al., 2007; Duff, 2005; Holt, 2005). It is important to make the distinction here, however, that this normalisation does not apply generally to all drugs and drug use settings in Australia. Rather, it is argued that this is only evident in relation to young people's use of 'party drugs' in leisure settings (BMRP, 2008; Duff et al., 2007; Duff, 2005), which is confirmed in other Australian data (see Sutherland & Burns, 2012; AIHW, 2011b). In particular, normalisation has been used to examine the apparent 'blurring' of licit (e.g. alcohol) and illicit drug use in particular social contexts (see Duff, 2003), primarily the nightclub scene (Holt, 2005). Broadly, these studies have illustrated that the increased availability of party drugs and an increase in usage by young people have caused a cultural shift, which has effected change in these young people's attitudes towards such drugs and their use (Holt, 2005; Johnson et al 2004). Indeed, much of this research has revealed higher rates of party drug use, offers of use and exposure to drugs in nightclubs than in the general population,² as well as more widespread acceptance of these behaviours in nightclubs (see Duff, 2005; Holt, 2005; Lindsay, 2003; Carroll, 2000), suggesting normalisation, at least in this social setting. In terms of the current research, this perceived normalisation is significant given that, as noted above, it is likely that any shift in attitudes towards drug use will influence how young people understand and define the associated risks and harms, which will affect the potential success of drug policy interventions. Previous research in Australia has

² Although it is also important to note that rates in the general population have remained stable and not declined (AIHW, 2011b), indicating the need for a broad and inclusive response.

supported this (Carroll, 2000), revealing that young people with a more tolerant attitude towards the use of illicit substances are more likely to report both lifetime and recent drug use, suggesting the need for a different approach.

These studies have further implications for the current research. While the majority have focused on young people's use of ecstasy (Duff et al., 2007; Panagopoulos & Ricciardelli, 2005), a small number also examined the use of methamphetamines providing a foundation for further research. For example, during 2003-2004 Duff (2005) undertook an empirical study of 379 bar and nightclub patrons in Melbourne, replicating earlier work in the UK (see Measham et al., 2001). In this study he found that in addition to those who consumed ecstasy and alcohol (the primary focus of the study) methamphetamine users had also shifted into more mainstream cultural networks. In a later study, Duff and colleagues (2007) identified similar findings in their examination of Ecstasy and Related Drug (ERD) use (which includes methamphetamines) in Victoria, highlighting social acceptance among peer networks (including other users *and* non-users) in the nightclub. More recently, a study focused on methamphetamine use in a range of social settings (BMRP, 2008) identified a series of different types of users, for some of whom their drug use appeared normalised.³ These studies suggest that drug use is common among some groups of young people in Australia, especially those associated with the nightclub scene, and that aspects of the normalisation thesis may be valuable in understanding their drug use in this context. However, the samples and methodologies used were limited in that they focused primarily on other drugs (e.g. Duff, 2005) and users' and experts' accounts of drug use (e.g. BMRP, 2008; Duff et al., 2007). As such, this research seeks to extend the normalisation debate to include a more in-depth evaluation of methamphetamines, using existing prevalence data together with empirical research to provide a picture of the drug landscape in South Australia and demonstrate the link between the normalisation of methamphetamine use and young people's perceptions of risk in the nightclub.

³ This also only applied to recreational users, who were identified in the study as 'social users' (BMRP, 2008). This was achieved using evaluations of the perceptions of and attitudes towards drug use of 'affinity triads', which were comprised of drug users and up to three friends (including both other users and non-users).

2.3.3 *Applying Normalisation*

As identified, the normalisation thesis broadly focuses on two key factors: recent increases in the prevalence of young people's illicit drug use, and social and cultural shifts in young people's attitudes regarding drugs and their use, including the attitudes of non-users (Duff et al., 2007; Duff, 2004). In terms of evaluating rates of recent use, prevalence data is relatively easy to obtain from a number of sources in Australia. According to the 2010 National Drug Strategy Household Survey (AIHW, 2011b), 20.4 percent of the Australian population aged 14 years and over have used illicit drugs in their lifetime. This survey also reported that 14.7 percent of this sample had used illicit drugs in the preceding 12 months, which is an increase from 2007 (13.4 percent) (AIHW, 2011b). What is perhaps more concerning is that these figures tend to disguise the prevalence of use among certain sub-populations with nearly a quarter of young people (23.0 percent) using an illicit drug in the preceding 12 months (AIHW, 2011b). This concern is relevant to the discussion of methamphetamines where the 2010 NDSHS estimated that 7.0 percent of the population aged 14 years and older had used methamphetamines at least once in their lifetime, which is also an increase from 2007 (6.3 percent) (AIHW, 2011b). Use was again most common among 20-29 year olds, with lifetime use estimated at 14.7 percent and 5.9 percent reporting use in the 12 months prior to 2010 (Gately et al., 2012; AIHW, 2011b). As a point of comparison, as noted in the next chapter the data from the participants in this study reveals lifetime use of 21 percent, which is greater than the national average and supports the potential 'selective' normalisation of methamphetamine use in the nightclub scene. With regard to the availability of and access to illicit drugs a series of studies indicate that in Australia levels are high and have remained stable for a number of years and hence access is not viewed as a barrier to use (Sutherland & Burns, 2012; Weekley et al., 2006; Degenhardt et al., 2005c).⁴ In South Australia, in particular, the data regarding the availability of methamphetamines affirms that the majority of regular ecstasy users (REUs)⁵

⁴ Sindicich and Burns (2011) identify that this has followed a decline in availability of all forms during 2006-2009, which they suggest provides a strong indication of a recent 're-emergence' of methamphetamines and the need to continue research efforts.

⁵ As noted in the introduction, there is limited data available regarding perceived levels of methamphetamine use from actual users, particularly in South Australia, hence it is necessary to use data obtained from REUs collected as part of the Ecstasy and related drugs Drug Reporting System (EDRS), formerly the Party Drugs Initiative (PDI).

reported that all forms of methamphetamine were 'easy' to 'very easy' to obtain in 2011, and that this availability had been stable in the previous 6-12 months (Sutherland & Burns, 2012). These studies confirm the relative availability of and ease of access to methamphetamines, which arguably contributes to the patterns of recent use observed in the general population, especially among young people.

A key feature of the normalisation thesis is that it rests on more than an assessment of the prevalence of young people's drug use (Blackman, 2004; Duff, 2003). The social accommodation of 'sensible' recreational drug use is "an essential measure of the extent of normalisation" (Parker, 2005, p. 207), which not only focuses on users' consumption practices and perceptions, but also that drug use is becoming more socially accepted among young people generally, including non-user groups. An important aspect of social accommodation relates to the level to which young people are 'drug-wise' (Parker et al., 2002; Parker, 1999; Parker et al., 1998). This is because, as Shildrick (2002, p. 39) notes, drugs are no longer deemed to be "alien to the majority of 'ordinary' young people, but they shift into a position where they are an accepted and integral aspect of the cultures and contexts that most young people inhabit". Indeed, contemporary youth more frequently find themselves in social situations, such as nightclubs, where they are offered or are exposed to drugs (Seddon et al., 2008). Returning to the discussion of risk, experts claim that greater exposure to drugs will increase the levels of drug use, especially among young people, and that this use will be chaotic, reckless and excessive. However, a number of studies have identified that this is not the case in Australia (Duff, 2008; 2005; Hansen et al., 2001). Rather, these studies suggest that these young people are aware of the role that drug use has in their lives and, in one study in particular, that it may not be focused on the use itself (see Hansen et al., 2001), the significance of which is discussed further later (see section 4.2.1). Thus, within the nightclub where users and non-users co-exist in the knowledge that drugs are present and used at least by some, capturing these young people's perceptions is central to assessing their attitudes and behaviour relating to illicit drug use, in other words whether drug use for them is normalised. However, to date there has been little research to evaluate the perceptions and behaviours of young people especially non-users with regard to

nightclub methamphetamine use. In order to address this, the current study conceptualises the evaluation of social accommodation as a discussion of three key aspects of the normalisation research, as it has been applied in the UK and Australia: firstly, the movement away from subcultural theories of deviance; secondly, shifts in the typical user profile; and thirdly, the need to embrace a generational shift which brings with it a new broader youth profile.

2.3.3.1 Moving Away from Subcultural Theories of Deviance

An implication of the normalisation research across a wide range of studies is that many scholars have claimed that young people's drug experiences can no longer be solely described in terms of pathology or deviance (Parker, 2005; see also, Measham & Shiner, 2009; Duff, 2005). Although early research posited that youth drug use was learnt and undertaken primarily in deviant subcultures (Young, 1971; Becker, 1963), today the nature and extent of illicit drug use in contemporary youth cultures has changed markedly, whereby widespread recreational drug use has emerged amongst relatively large and diverse groups of ordinary youth (Duff et al., 2011; Gourley, 2004; Parker et al., 1998). Parker and colleagues (1998, p. 2) suggest that contemporary societies have experienced wide-ranging 'social transformation' in which illicit drug use has moved from the "margins towards the centre of youth culture". Indeed, a number of studies have suggested that drug use is now more closely associated with lifestyle, leisure consumption and the increasing individualism inherent in the pursuit of leisure (Duff et al., 2011; Pennay & Moore, 2010; Roach Anleu, 2006; Hammersley et al., 2002). This shift has meaningful implications as it highlights that, in response to the individualisation of risk decisions (Beck, 1992) noted above (see page 21), rational-choice decision making about consumption and leisure preferences lie at the heart of normalisation. It is this that challenges traditional perspectives that associate drug use with subcultural notions of deviance, as drug use becomes merely one more leisure decision. It is argued here that this reflects the current situation with regard to the use of methamphetamines in the Adelaide nightclub scene, which affects how young drug users and, by implication, how young people in drug use environments generally engage and accommodate drug use. This will be examined later in this thesis (see section 4.2.1.2). It is important to

acknowledge here that this movement away from subcultural notions of deviance has been critiqued in Australia. Within her qualitative study of recreational ecstasy use among youth Gourley (2004) claimed that subcultural theories remain relevant to the use of ecstasy, guiding understanding and appropriate patterns of use. While it is recognised that this study provided valuable insights into the drug practices of this youth group, it focused only on users whose drug use was the focus of their social interactions,⁶ which not only shaped their drug use but also contrasts the current sample.

2.3.3.2 The Change in User Profile

A further impact of transformations associated with normalisation has been the blurring of the definition of the typical illicit drug user. Although some young people continue to use drugs in problematic ways,⁷ it has been identified that contemporary youth culture has produced a very different type of user (Duff, 2003). For example, previous studies have focused on ‘embodied deviance’ (Etorre, 2007), the ‘dope fiend’ (Peretti-Wattel, 2003b) and ‘undesirable types’ (Cusick et al., 2007). In contrast, as has been noted in other settings (see McMillan et al., 2003) it would be misleading to suggest that the young people engaged in the Australian nightclub drug use scene are somehow different or unique in a deviant sense. The Australian studies discussed above describe purposeful and rational consumption of party drugs among certain groups of young people (see Duff et al., 2007; Duff, 2005; Lindsay, 2003). In this way, these studies correspond with the UK experience, suggesting the emergence of a new type of drug user who is a “responsible, and outgoing adolescent or young adult who uses drugs recreationally, very deliberately, and very strategically” and is “successful, goal-oriented, non-risk taking ... [and] who sees drug taking as part of their repertoire of life” (Parker, 1997, p. 25). Furthermore, the ‘new’ user is well-educated, maintains steady employment, and views drug use as merely one aspect of their social lives (Kelly, 2007; Duff, 2005). By prioritising their social

⁶ What others have labelled ‘drug enthusiasts’ (Pennay & Moore, 2010).

⁷ Although this point is discussed in greater depth in chapter 7, it is important to identify here that the POR framework does not extend to explain excessive and/or dependent use of drugs. As demonstrated by Parker and colleagues (1998, p. 152) normalisation is concerned with ‘recreational’ drug use, as “chaotic, combination drug use and dependent, daily drug use form no part of their conceptualization”.

responsibilities, such as employment, education, and family relationships, it has been observed that these users appear to frame their drug consumption in keeping with these activities and believe their drug use to be an activity that fits into their leisure time, rather than as a display of deviance.

In this sense, normalisation describes the processes whereby drugs become an accepted aspect of 'ordinary' young people's lifestyles in more mainstream spaces (Parker et al., 2002). For example, within a study conducted by Duff (2005, p. 162), participants viewed ecstasy use as a behaviour that did not interfere with leading a normal life in mainstream society, with use "perceived and sometimes tolerated as an embedded social practice". In a similar study, reputation was considered important and that drug use should not impact on everyday life or transfer into other areas such as work or family life (Panagopoulos & Ricciardelli, 2005). Accordingly, Bahora and colleagues (2009) found in a recent study of ecstasy users that participants distanced themselves from individuals unable to achieve this, with many indicating disdain towards excessive or reckless use. Instead, participants believed in their own ability to control their use, maintain day-to-day activities and function effectively in mainstream society. Although nightclubs have traditionally been identified as sites of deviance (Rigakos, 2008), the comparatively conservative nature of the Adelaide nightclub scene arguably challenges these traditional conceptualisations and represents a more mainstream space. This thesis therefore seeks to evaluate whether such a shift has occurred in relation to the profile of young methamphetamine users in Adelaide nightclubs (see chapter 4, part 2), whether this constitutes the social acceptance of this drug use and what implications this has for understanding young people's risk perceptions (see section 8.2).

2.3.3.3 Understanding the Youth Profile

This shift away from traditional stereotypes of the illicit drug user has had broader implications for the use and social acceptance of certain drugs in the nightclub in terms of how youth culture generally is conceptualised. Firstly, the Australian normalisation research examined above identified that the young people that attend nightclubs and use drugs have become embedded within more mainstream

networks, and thus appear to be distancing themselves from the stigma that has long plagued young illicit drug users (Duff, 2005; Holt, 2005). Secondly, these studies noted that it is not only drug users that tolerate the recreational consumption of drugs. Non-users have also become more 'drug wise' and accepting of drug use from exposure to and experience with drug users in the nightclub, which has created an environment where both users and non-users perceive that they have the capacity and freedom to make their own choices about drugs (Duff, 2003). This is important as it is in making these choices about whether or not to use drugs that young people reinforce particular identities, some of which appear to reflect that of the "rational, free and self-reliant citizen that so much of our politics and economics today celebrates" (Duff, 2003, p. 443). Expanding the traditional user versus non-user dichotomy allows a more precise understanding of youth (see McMillan et al., 2003; McMillan & Conner, 2003), and this suggests that young people's illicit drug use is not subcultural in form but instead reflects broader cultural shifts in the leisure time activities of what may be considered a new youth culture.

Another facet of this cultural shift and new youth culture is the effect of globalisation. Globalisation has often been identified as an economic phenomenon, where advancements in technology and information sharing have transformed how young people view, obtain and use consumer products, which in turn influences their behaviour (Beck, 1999; Giddens, 1990). However, a number of studies have also suggested that globalisation has been a cultural experience (Seddon et al., 2008; Langman, 2003; Young, 1999), in which networks of capital and commodities have expanded dramatically to shift how leisure is viewed and engaged by many people. Underpinning this shift has been the concept of consumption (Seddon, 2006; Collison, 1996; Giddens, 1991), which in their application of the normalisation thesis Parker, Aldridge and Measham (1998) argue has become the new cultural commodity that young people trade, contributing to personal and social identity. The significance of normalisation, therefore, is that it reveals a culture of illicit drug use that has been guided by broader changes associated with globalisation. The perception that drug use has become normalised is linked with these wider social and cultural changes (Parker

et al., 1998) due to the nature of drug use as a prominent form of youth consumption. The examination of these consumption practices is thus valuable to understanding the attitudes young people hold towards illicit drug use, as the social acceptance of particular forms of drug use is grounded in perceptions of their role or function. For example, Seddon and colleagues (2008) found that young people's consumption of and perception of risks related to drugs is fundamental to how they establish their identities (see chapter 4). Bennett (1999) similarly suggests that the existence of such consumption ideals serves to highlight the shifting nature of contemporary youth identities within a globalised environment, which significantly shapes young people's drug use behaviour and how they view risk. Therefore, it is necessary to examine whether this can be translated onto young people's perceptions of risk in South Australia with regard to the use methamphetamines, and also how broader aspects of globalisation have affected how this nightclub scene (including the use of drugs) is used, and importantly accepted, by young people generally (see section 4.2.4).

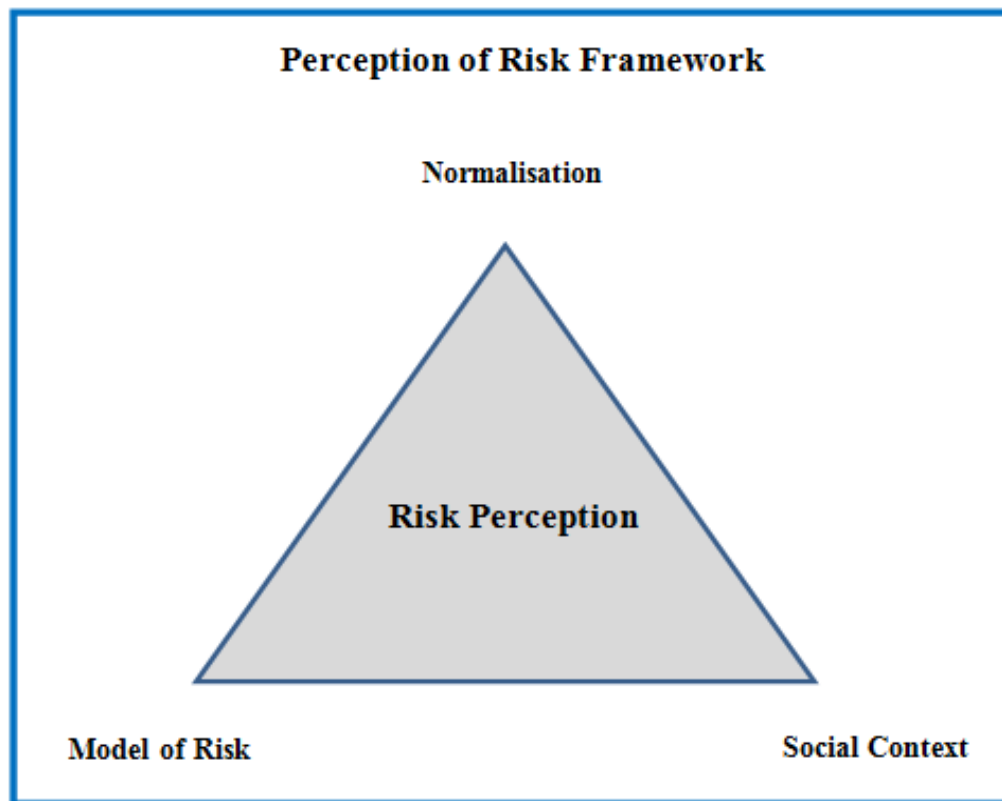
2.4 Social context: *A step towards understanding youth drug use*

In recent years it has been identified that risk and risk-taking are factors that have increasingly dominated debate and studies in the fields of health, crime and welfare (Jones, 2004), especially in relation to young people (Green, Mitchell & Bunton, 2000). This chapter brings together a discussion of models of risk and risk-thinking and the concept of normalisation to highlight that this has been a result of changing social conditions in which young people have experienced significant upheaval in their transition into adulthood (Jones, 2004; Arnett, 2002; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). It is widely argued that the transition has become longer and more complex (Miles, 2000), with more traditional goals, such as marriage, parenthood and full-time employment pushed into later life as young people seek to develop themselves through greater education and professional training (Duff et al., 2011; Larimer et al., 2005; Lupton & Tulloch, 2002b). The transition arguably places greater pressure on young people as although they may welcome greater control and influence over their lives, it is juxtaposed with increased responsibilities, expectations and risks. This has led scholars to argue

that the opportunities for engaging in risk behaviours are more prevalent and hence are perceived by a growing number of young people to be ‘normal’ activities (Miller et al., 2005; Duff, 2005). This trend is particularly evident in relation to the use of illicit drugs. As studies have shown, drugs are increasingly seen as one of many consumable commodities in youth culture, which has located them within more mainstream networks (Duff et al., 2011; Arnett, 2005; Miller et al., 2005) where drug users ‘consume’ alongside non-drug users in certain social settings, such as the nightclub. Recognition of this more consumerist approach is crucial. It provides young people with the opportunity make lifestyle choices (Brain, 2000), which includes the decision of whether or not to use drugs.

This has made it more difficult for the risk expert to read the situation and construct a model of risk that is applicable to this social space and the young people that inhabit it. Furthermore, what appears to be an under-researched area in the South Australian context is the conceptualisation of risk perceptions of non-drug users in the nightclub environment (see methodology, section 3.6.2). Given that the choices that underpin these perceptions are often embedded in broader attitudes with respect to identity and lifestyle (Duff, 2003), it can be argued that drug consumption fulfills a range of acceptable functions for young people, even if they do not use drugs themselves, which highlights the need for a broad understanding of the social context in which drugs are used. This section will therefore complete the development of the Perception of Risk framework (see Figure 2.1) by highlighting the role and significance of social context in explaining young people’s risk perceptions. To achieve this, the following discussion will analyse the intersections between risk and normalisation, as well as how they each provide support for the need for analysis of social context in future accounts of young people’s drug use. Specifically, the focus will be on the examination of recent calls for the reworking of the normalisation thesis and how risk has been conceptualised and used by young people.

Figure 2.1 *Perception of Risk framework*



2.4.1 *The Need for Social Context: Updating the Normalisation Thesis*

Recent shifts in the understanding and conceptualisation of drug use in Australia, combined with a series of cultural and structural transformations, illustrate that the normalisation thesis continues to have considerable value in explaining the use of drugs by young people. As noted above (page 33), its value lies in its attempts to understand the “shifting contextual meanings of the social practice of drug use” (Duff, 2005, p. 168). However, although considered somewhat of an “orthodoxy in the field” (Measham & Shiner, 2009, p. 502), the normalisation thesis has been contested both prior to and since its conceptualisation in the late 1990s (see Shildrick, 2002; Shiner & Newburn, 1999; 1997). Critiques of it focused on the perception that normalisation over-simplifies the extent and acceptability of drug use among groups of young people. As noted by Shiner and Newburn (1999, p. 142) “claims about the extent, and the normative context, of youthful drug use are exaggerated and inaccurate”. While it has been suggested that the debate surrounding normalisation has moved on (Measham & Shiner, 2009), it is argued here that aspects of this debate remain relevant to the

evaluation of contemporary youth drug use. Indeed, recently many scholars have called for a re-evaluation of the normalisation thesis (Duff et al., 2011; Pennay & Moore, 2010; Measham & Shiner, 2009; Sznitman, 2007). Perhaps the most notable of these calls has come from Measham and Shiner (2009), two of the key proponents on either side of the normalisation debate, who have come together to update the thesis in the attempt to explain contemporary illicit drug use. Measham and Shiner (2009, p. 502) argue that normalisation remains a “contingent process negotiated by distinct social groups operating in bounded situations”. Many scholars have supported this, citing the need for greater research of both the broader, structural features of normalisation, as well as the more ‘local’ or situated processes that shape drug use behaviours in specific sites and settings (Pennay & Moore, 2010, p. 558; see also, Sznitman, 2007; Rodner, 2006; Duff, 2004). These studies have sought to achieve greater consideration of the social, economic, cultural and structural factors (Measham & Shiner, 2009), what Pennay and Moore (2010) brand as the ‘micro-politics’, of normalisation. The rationale for this is that it is hoped that such an approach will allow researchers to account for “the complex ways that risk, pleasure, identity and belonging are negotiated in the context of young people’s drug use” (Duff et al., 2011, p. 2); in essence responding to the call for greater understanding of the social context of youth drug use.

In accord with this approach, this thesis argues that evaluations of young people’s drug use need to be situated at what Measham and Shiner (2009, p. 507) contend is the nexus of individual agency and social structural conditions, what they term ‘structured action’ and ‘situated choice’ respectively. As many researchers have acknowledged (see O’Malley & Valverde, 2004; Lupton & Tulloch, 2002b), drug use often takes place within distinct social settings which feature a collection of particular social norms, values and bonds that interact to affect consumption. Evaluating the wider social context of the nightclub helps in understanding the environment in which drugs such as methamphetamines are consumed, experiences are shared and new meanings are learnt. It is further significant to evaluate the broader social and political atmosphere in the geographic locale in which this club drug use occurs (i.e. in South Australia)

given that, as Knipe (1995) argues, the dominant culture also imposes expectations of what is acceptable individual and/or group behaviour, which influence young people's drug use, or behaviour within an environment in which drugs are commonly available. It follows from the idea that "uncommon behaviour, such as drug taking, is not necessarily deviant in all respects because it might be consistent with cultural values" (Rodner, 2006, p. 934). Indeed, as has been identified in this chapter, illicit drug use may have a number of other functions and meanings for young people both within and external to the social setting of the nightclub, which accord with broader values and norms held by the community (e.g. consumption, identity formation). However, few studies have examined young people's perceptions and use of methamphetamines in nightclubs, or the role that such leisure spaces and surrounding environment play in this drug use (see White et al., 2006a; Degenhardt & Topp, 2002).

This research therefore is a unique attempt to extend the application of this broader perspective of normalisation in South Australia as part of the Perception of Risk framework (see figure 2.1). As described by Parker (2005, p. 206), normalisation is "not a coherent theoretical paradigm; it is more a conceptual framework to monitor...how attitudes and behaviour in respect of illegal drugs and drug users change through time". As Parker (2005) further notes, the normalisation framework is best included within analyses able to measure social and consumption trends, cultural shifts and importantly social context, in relation to young people and the use of leisure spaces such as nightclubs. Hence, the Perception of Risk framework seeks to ground the normalisation thesis within a broader framework that includes an analysis of risk discourses and a contextual understanding of drug use within a particular social setting. This framework aims to identify and build understanding of both the local processes associated with drug use and the broader structural influences of the Adelaide nightclub scene, which are important in assessing methamphetamine use in this context, and its subsequent influence on young people's perceptions of risk. It is argued that doing so will contribute positively to understanding the complex relationships that some young people have with illicit drugs and risk within the night-time economy. This, has implications for understanding young people's

conceptualisations of risk as a bottom-up construction, and the social context associated with Adelaide nightclubs and thus rationalises the perception of risk framework (see figure 2.1).

2.4.2 *Leisure, Identity, Pleasure and Risk*

In further examining the social context of young people's use of the nightclub and how it influences their perceptions of risks associated with drug use, it is important to again reflect on the interplay between pleasure and risk. It has been argued that drug use has positive functionality for some young people, which highlights two key implications for understanding the social context of young people's consumption of leisure, particularly with regard to risk (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002b) given the common association between drugs and deviance (Jones, 2004). Firstly, as highlighted above (page 45-6), changes in how young people view the transition into adulthood and the globalisation of social and economic markets has meant that young people now view opportunities for recreation as consumable commodities that contribute to the development of identity and self-awareness (Duff, 2003; Giddens, 2000; Beck, 1999). Hence, many young people perceive that such forms of consumption represent an opportunity for individuality and freedom within a globalised society, which can be displayed through attendance at nightclubs and the consumption of alcohol and, for some, illicit drugs (Miller et al., 2005; Duff, 2003). For these young people, the use of both licit and illicit substances is a statement of their capacity to exercise individual responsibility and rational judgement to engage in 'controlled leisure'. Indeed, as Green and colleagues (2000) claim, risk identification and management within the nightclub may thus be seen as a routine feature of young people's search for, and development of 'self' or identity in this leisure environment (which also extends beyond this setting). For example, in examining young people's smoking practices, Denscombe (2001, p. 161) considered the relationship between the aesthetic appeal of risk and young people's identity formation to suggest that "agentful decisions to smoke are interpreted as presentational symbols of self-affirmation and self-empowerment". In this sense, this thesis examines whether young people's use of methamphetamines within the nightclub setting can be seen as a similar way to convey notions of identity and freedom.

Secondly, it is not merely that drug use, as a form of risk-taking, facilitates the construction of a particular identity for a young person, but also what the process of drug use can provide for the individual in terms of facilitating exciting social interactions and pleasures that extend beyond the purely physiological (Duff, 2008). As Shewan, Dalgarno and Reith (2000) observed from their study of ecstasy users, the ‘drug experience’ is a key factor in the construction of meaning as using ecstasy affords young people the capacity to ‘have fun’ and engage in a wide range of leisure activities. Ecstasy consumption has consistently been linked to young people and the dance music scene (Holt, 2005; Duff, 2003; Measham et al., 2001; South, 1999; Malbon, 1999), to an extent that it has become increasingly mainstream within the nightclub atmosphere where it is frequently used (Weekley et al., 2004). However, it is important to recognise that as Duff (2008) notes, for drugs such as ecstasy (and thus arguably methamphetamines) the drug itself may not be the focus of the recreational setting, rather its consumption may enhance other aspects of this setting.⁸ As Bahora and colleagues (2009, p. 65) support, one of the unique features mentioned by almost all of the participants in their study was “that one of the effects of ecstasy use was an ability to easily connect with others. Some added that it allowed them to be more open and less shy or withdrawn”. The question that remains is whether these features can be translated to the use of methamphetamines in Adelaide, which is an aim of the POR framework. Given the pharmacological properties of methamphetamines, which enhance stamina and the euphoric effects experienced and explain its use within the nightclub environment, it is conceivable that individuals who engage in methamphetamine use could view this particular form of risk-taking as pleasurable. It can also be argued that young people’s continued use of methamphetamines in nightclubs provides evidence of this. However, despite the above research that links pleasure with the social interactions and practices within the social setting of the nightclub, there is little empirical evidence in contemporary studies that is able to identify what meaning or value is

⁸ This was a valuable finding garnered from the ecstasy data, which was used to inform a number of the practical aspects of the empirical analysis undertaken in the present study. The greatest influence of this finding was felt in terms of the layout of the survey questionnaire (see chapter 3, section 3.6.2.1), where questions regarding the use of drugs, particularly methamphetamines, were placed at the end of the survey to allow participants to describe the role and meaning associated with their own or others’ drug use without being led in their responses.

extracted from this process and what affect it has on young people's drug use practices and general function within the nightclub in terms of methamphetamine use. Consequently, it is crucial to assess the role of social context in framing the meaning(s) that young people derive from the Adelaide nightclub scene and how this affects their decision-making. To achieve this, analysis of the cultural values and norms inherent in young people's use of the nightclub scene is needed, and an understanding of what activities drug use facilitates for young people within the nightclub setting. From this it will be possible to evaluate how social group values and individual expectations regarding the interaction between risk and pleasure guide young people in their drug use, and determine how this affects their perceptions of risk. The ecstasy literature highlights the value of analysing the social context of young people's drug use, which will be translated to the use of methamphetamines in this thesis by focusing on two key factors: the role of social rules and rituals and the influence of risk management strategies.

2.4.2.1 Rules and Rituals

As identified above (section 2.3.3.3), many young people have come to view drug use as a consumable leisure commodity, the pursuit of which is often fraught with risk and also stigma from the wider community (Cusick & Kimber, 2007; Duff, 2003; Topp et al., 1999; National Research Council, 1997). Social groups and networks therefore become fundamental resources for young people in their drug use practices, not only providing guidelines for use but also surrounding an individual with a supportive environment. It has been shown in previous studies (Rohrbach et al., 2005; Allaste & Lagerspetz, 2002) that the likelihood of becoming a recreational user is determined by the characteristics of the drug itself, by the individuals' personal characteristics, and by the influence of social group values and norms. However, given the variable quality of club drugs (ANCD, 2007) and that this form of drug use tends to be focused on settings that attract a relatively homogenous youth cohort, it is argued in this thesis that social group values and guidelines play a greater role in the decision to use drugs in recreational settings. Specifically, these values not only support use of illicit drugs in specific cultural and social settings, but also frame the practices used to regulate their use, which each suggest that the meaning of drug use is important

and bounded by rules. For the individual user, “[t]he morals, the patterns of behaviour, the goals for using the drugs, and the norms regulating use will set the framework for the user culture...[where]...the subjective and socially constructed meanings of drug use are formed together ... and are related to the group’s lifestyle as a whole” (Allaste & Lagerspetz, 2002, p.189). What this research, and in particular this account, highlights is that understanding how young people identify themselves both within the social space of the nightclub and their more localised peer-groups is vital. In addition, understanding how social membership influences individual drug use practices is fundamental to understanding the development of young people’s perceptions of risk in the nightclub scene.

The fostering of peer-group rules and rituals therefore forms another aspect of the social context of drug use within the nightclub scene. Although it can be generalised that many activities are guided by values and rules of conduct (social sanctions), and patterns of behaviour (social rituals), much of the research into the use of ecstasy within the nightclub scene has revealed that this is especially pertinent in regards to illicit drug use (Duff, 2008; Panagopoulos & Ricciardelli, 2005; Gourley, 2004). In contrast to research that suggests that young people who use illicit substances often do so in contexts where significant others, such as peers and parents, perceive their drug use to be harmful (Measham & Shiner, 2009; Pearson & Shiner, 2002), and where drug use is perceived as chaotic and unregulated (Shewan et al., 2000), the theoretical analysis in this research supports the accepted use of certain forms of drug use. Moreover, it is crucial for the development of the POR framework and its efficacy in explaining contemporary drug use that, as noted previously (Kelly, 2005; Gourley, 2004), the meaning of drug use be considered in the context of the shared norms, values and understandings of the wider social setting in which it occurs. In revisiting the discussion of whether risk-taking can be considered pleasurable, O’Malley and Valverde (2004) note that pleasure is dependent on rational moderation, whereby once consumption becomes problematic the level of enjoyment experienced is also negatively affected. As such, individuals who become aware that their drug use lifestyle puts them at risk may make a deliberate decision to refrain from or reduce their drug use (Gideon, 2010). Panagopoulos and Ricciardelli (2005)

reveal that the ecstasy users in their study engaged in harm-minimisation strategies through utilising the peer-relationships within their social network, which appeared to have rules and guidelines about behaviour, such as excessive use and addiction. This suggests that peer-group associations influence the setting of norms, values and expectations related to behaviours such as drug use that maximise the opportunity for pleasure and mitigate the impact of associated risks, which further supports the evaluation of social context in the present study. Bahora and colleagues (2009, p. 65) attest to the value of such social-regulation in relation to ecstasy use, revealing that their participants:

“expressed concerns about persons who used ecstasy alone, commenting that solitary use was ‘depressing’ and a sign of problematic and unregulated habits. A main component of the recreational use in the company of friends is that they would keep ‘each other in check’. Some referred to ecstasy as solidifying their friendship”.

The significance of these protective mechanisms for young people within social groups rests in the fact that they assist group members to prevent the disruption of everyday life, reduce the likelihood of experiencing risk and maximise the experience of pleasure garnered from a given behaviour. Given that for these young people such outcomes appear paramount, understanding how this translates into drug use practices and the management of risk is important.

2.4.2.2 Risk Management

The importance of social context in the POR framework in explaining youth drug use is evident in how young people manage risk in relation to the perceived risks they face when deciding to use drugs. As such, it is important to look at the risk management strategies employed by young people to reduce perceived risks. Central to this research is an evaluation of how young people’s responses to these risks are socially regulated, and how these practices enable these young people to perceive and accept risk as a broad construct that can be used to guide behaviour. Studies have shown that the perception and acceptance of risk generally is socially organised and grounded in social and cultural factors (Jones, 2004; Denscombe, 2001), where there exists a relationship between how social structures frame the perception of risk in individuals’ lives and how individuals

act in response to this (Rhodes, 1997). These findings are significant as they highlight that a key adjunct of these social structures is that processes of risk management become an increasingly central feature of and thus influence both the constitution and calculation of social behaviour, such as the use of drugs (Jones, 2004). This emphasises the importance of social context in drug research given that risk management implies an initial analysis of the social context of hazards and associated risks, including the determination of what is at risk, which for users of illicit drugs can include a broad range of outcomes (such as overdose, social exclusion and so on). The perception of risk follows from these considerations, leading ultimately to the acceptability of risk, which as Rhodes (1997) reveals, is heavily dependent on the expectations that social actors have of one another in the social context of the nightclub.

The influence of young people's risk management is evident in the wide variety of risk management strategies and practices that young people employ within the night-time economy in regard to the use of ecstasy (Bahora et al., 2009; Kelly, 2007; 2005). Their risk management practices demonstrate significant rational-thought and agency, particularly for this cohort of young people. However, despite this knowledge, it is not known if, how and for what purpose these practices are implemented within the nightclub with regard to methamphetamine use, and whether they represent attempts to address micro-social or macro-social forces. Greater understanding of the purpose of these practices may therefore have significant implications for the creation of more effective illicit drug policy. In addition, an analysis of these practices may be important to understanding young people's perceptions of risk more broadly, as they further delineate the distinct social relationships of young people and subsequently how such risk management practices function to facilitate activities such as drug use in particular social contexts. Therefore, what is needed within illicit drug research is a framework that addresses the meanings participants attach to their actions derived through social interaction and its social context, and how this then interacts with the broader constructs of normalisation and risk to influence perceptions of risk within the night-time economy.

2.5 Conclusion

Studies of young people's ecstasy and other drug use have suggested that the meaning of certain types of recreational drug use for young people is changing, marking a significant shift to an atmosphere in which drug use has become increasingly integrated into the leisure and consumption landscapes of many Australian youth cultures (DASSA, 2007; Duff, 2005). These studies also highlight that this type of recreational use has arguably become very mainstream, even normalised, while moving away from traditional associations with deviance. These findings suggest that, given the increased involvement of non-users in the nightclub space and their acceptance of recreational drug use practices (as distinct from excessive use), subcultural theories of deviance are no longer the only relevant theories for understanding all forms of recreational drug use in contemporary society and that other perspectives are needed, which will be discussed further in chapter 4 (section 4.2.2). Thus, given the increased prevalence of methamphetamines in contemporary nightclub venues in South Australia, which indicates that young people may have different attitudes to drug use and risk from experts, young people's perceptions of risk in this context need to be mapped out to see if they also diverge from traditional conceptualisations of risk and how this effects the use of illicit drugs by young people and their regulation by governments.

The Perception of Risk (POR) framework (figure 2.1) seeks to achieve this through the development of a lens through which particular young people's behaviour can be viewed in terms of three key factors: 1) the existence of a normalised pattern of drug use among a particular group of young nightclubbers, including acceptance by non-users; 2) the level of awareness and knowledge that young people demonstrate in their identification and management of risks inherent in the night-time economy; and 3) an understanding of the social context created by the nightclub scene and its patrons, and how this affects young people's development of social identity and drug use practices within a consumption-oriented, leisure-seeking contemporary society. As highlighted earlier in this chapter, in discussing young people's drug use the concept of risk should no longer be viewed as narrow, objective and devoid of context but

instead, through this POR framework, as broad, reflective of wider cultural shifts and responsive to the influences of the physical and social context that emerges as a result of young people's pursuit of leisure in the night-time economy. As Shildrick (2002) suggests, if any approach to understanding young people's illicit drug use is to be effective, it should reflect the experiences and attitudes of young people themselves. Otherwise, as Heimer (1988, p. 511) notes, young people's reactions to risk may continue to be "more inchoate, more ingrained, and therefore remain resistant to reduction to common denominators". Thus, returning to the idea of a bottom-up approach to illicit drug policy, this thesis argues that in order to explain young people's perceptions of risk within the night-time economy, the use or non-use of illicit drugs within nightclubs should be understood as a product of a normalised youth drug culture. In addition, conceptualisations of risk should be guided by informed processes linked to an understanding of a unique social context that is guided by peer group interactions and the changes in leisure consumption ideals inherent in a globalised society that is "compelling everyone to adapt and respond in various ways" (Beck, 1999, p. 20). And while it may be challenging, the identification and understanding of young people's perceptions of risk within the night-time economy is a task that should be undertaken if the creation and implementation of more effective, evidence-based policy is the desired goal for governments in their attempts to reduce the harms associated with drug use.

CHAPTER 3

THE VALUE OF A 'MIXED-METHODS' APPROACH FOR YOUTH CLUB DRUG RESEARCH

3.1 Introduction

Given its enigmatic and veiled nature many researchers have been reluctant to enter the nightclub, particularly in Australia, in order to develop an understanding of its functioning and patronage although there have been exceptions (see Duff, 2005; Gourley, 2004). In addition, although research has explored aspects of the night-time economy (Hobbs et al., 2003; Calvey, 2000), exploration of the link between nightclubs and young people's methamphetamine use has been limited. The goal of this chapter, therefore, is to describe how this research project was conceptualised in its effort to address this hiatus and to detail the sequence and significance of the methods used. In doing so, it will illustrate that a mixed-methods approach was integral to the success of the research.

While much literature has focused on the separate quantitative and qualitative traditions of criminological research, recently a number of researchers have suggested that these methods can complement one another (Tewksbury, 2009; Pope & Mays, 2008; Buckler, 2008; Tewksbury et al., 2005; Silverman, 1998), which within the boundaries of a single study represents a mixed-method approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). In researching young people's risk perceptions of drug use in Adelaide nightclubs, a mixed-method strategy was adopted combining survey questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and ethnographical observation of participants within five Adelaide nightclub venues. A key feature of this approach was that it incorporated methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1970), which Jupp (2001, p. 308) defines as "the use of different methods of research and sources of data to address the same research question". Although re-defining it as 'methodological pluralism', Walklate (2000, p. 193) notes that this approach is valuable as it:

"reflects a view of the research process which privileges neither quantitative nor qualitative techniques. It...recognises that different research techniques can uncover

different layers of social reality and the role of the researcher is to look for confirmation and contradictions between those different layers of information”.

Using methodological triangulation in the collection of data from Adelaide nightclubbers provided valuable insights into an industry that has been largely unexplored, and in which key participants are often ignored (18-25 year-olds). The significance of a mixed-methodology in this study, therefore, is its capacity to establish the link between the research objectives and the Perception of Risk theoretical framework, and address the three key factors: normalisation, risk and social context in order to contextualise and quantify young people’s risk perceptions associated with methamphetamine use.

3.1.1 *Link to Perception of Risk Theoretical Model*

Nightclubs provide a relaxed, leisure-focused atmosphere in which young people have the opportunity to express themselves freely (Shiner & Newburn, 1997). Using informal, complementary and embedded forms of analysis can offer culturally-specific and grounded data that reflects the nature of this social atmosphere. In this study the mixed-methodology provided a unique point of analytical departure from previous research by giving participants the opportunity to reveal their own narratives of their ‘lived’ experiences in the Adelaide nightclub scene, which is an important consideration in this form of research (Silverman, 2010). In practice, a number of key features emerged, which demonstrated that a mixed-method was well-suited to identifying and exploring participants’ perceptions of risk.

Firstly, each of the methods employed afforded participants the opportunity to reveal their own experiences or ‘stories’ without feeling constrained by the terms used, or feeling influenced by ‘expert knowledge’, which is a common criticism of previous research (O’Malley, 2006; Savadori et al., 2004; Kelly, 2000). Secondly, the research strategy was deliberately cumulative (Noaks & Wincup, 2004), with the intention of each step informing the next and allowing reflection on the approaches and techniques used across the research period (O’Cathain, Murphy & Nicholl, 2008). This enabled the lessons learned from participant observation to influence the focus and structure of the survey questionnaire and

sampling method. Knowledge and experience from the ethnographic observation and survey similarly guided the semi-structured interviews in relation to the direction and scope of the interview questions, as well as fostering the development of general rapport with the researcher, which allowed more in-depth data to be mined from participants. Finally, from a methodological perspective, the mixed-methodology used had a specific practical benefit, in that by employing a range of methods, the weaknesses of one were countered by the strength of another to allow the researcher to overcome factors, such as intrinsic bias, often associated with single method research (Noaks & Wincup, 2004). Indeed, Bryman (2008) argues that triangulation enhances the validity of social research, compared with the limitations faced by 'single-method' approaches. As such, this mixed-methodology has provided a more complete set of findings than could have been gleaned from the administration of each method in isolation.

3.2 The practicalities of 'doing' club drug research: *Getting access*

This section discusses the importance of gaining access to what has been considered a hard-to-reach population (Taylor & Kearney, 2005; Moore, 2002; Elliott et al., 2002; Adler, 1990), and examine the process of site selection and the role of the researcher in gaining individual access. Specifically, this section examines the diversity of the environment, the participants and the activities in the Adelaide nightclub scene to highlight a number of the significant challenges faced in researching this field and describes how these were managed through the research methodology.

Young recreational drug users are a 'hidden' population, often identified as deviants in the eyes of law enforcement and the community (Cadet-Tairou et al., 2010; Elliott et al., 2002). In addition, in contrast to traditional depictions of drug users as a uniform group often associated with more 'serious' drugs such as heroin and cocaine (see McDonald et al., 1993; Cohen, 1986), what has been observed in this study is that consuming drugs does not place an individual within an obvious sub-population (Cadet-Tairou et al., 2010). Consequently, this study utilised a mixed-methodology to gain access to, move within, and develop

understanding of the physical and social environment of the field, and to account for young people's – including drug users' – heterogeneity, in terms of their behaviour, practices, and needs. In this study, the selection of research sites was an important task guided by three sources. Firstly, information was gained from the pilot study where, as part of the survey, participants were asked to identify which clubs they most attended and how often they attended each venue. This data was compiled to develop a profile of the most popular Adelaide nightclubs. Secondly, in undertaking preliminary visits to venues, the researcher's own social networks¹ were used to garner descriptions of suitable research sites. This additional, perhaps more informal, data provided insight into young people's pattern of attendance at popular venues, confirming much of the pilot study data. Thirdly, these sources of data were complemented by the use of classification and licensing regulations information (OLGC, 2011), which detailed each venue's capacity, trading hours, sale of alcohol, and whether they played live music or used a number of regular local and international DJs. Using this method, five Adelaide nightclubs were chosen out of a total pool of approximately 45 (OLGC, 2011), all of which were located in the city: *Hq*, *Savvy*, *Electric Circus*, *Red Square* and *Sugar*.

3.2.1 *Behind Closed Doors*

Many researchers have recorded the critical nature of negotiating access in empirical studies (Rigakos, 2008; Rácz, 2005; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005; Noaks & Wincup, 2004), noting that it is often the first step in a complex process of effective data collection. However, while entry to research sites is a prerequisite for the physical access to participants, it does not guarantee personal access to their support and/or knowledge (Noaks & Wincup, 2004). The principal concern surrounding access in this research was that the illicit drug market and nightclub scene are areas that have typically not been receptive to investigation. Given the illicit nature of and potential stigmatisation associated with drug use, it was recognised that the cooperation of participants, the quality of their responses, and the access to research venues may be difficult to achieve. Therefore, although the research sites used in this study were nightclubs publicly accessible to Adelaide

¹ These contacts were only used in this manner and had no further influence on the project.

youth (limited only by an age restriction of 18 years and over), gaining access was not a homogenous process and required constant management throughout the research period. Three key challenges to access and how they were managed by the research methodology are discussed herein.

The first concern is related to the process of ‘gate-keeping’, and the roles of club owners and bouncers as ‘gatekeepers’ (Saunders, 2006). This is often a first challenge to access for empirical research, particularly in studies of hard-to-reach populations (Gallan, 2012; Parsons et al., 2008), where there are often limited opportunities to ‘reach’ participants, which can limit the success of research if access is blocked. Therefore, despite the fact that this research does not question the responsibility of nightclub venues in relation to drug use, it was recognised that venue owners and door staff may have challenged the research and the researcher’s role within it. However, despite prolonged and repeated presence in the field, there was little meaningful reaction from the staff or management. Whether this was as a result of the transient nature of doorwork (Monaghan, 2004) or a general lack of concern by nightclubs is not known, however the outcome was valuable in limiting the concerns faced by the researcher.

A second concern related to access in empirical research is the potential harm to either both researcher and participants, associated with attempting to engage participants *in situ*. Studies have emphasised that when engaging young people in nightclub contexts it is often difficult to secure participants’ confidentiality, and therefore safety (Pape & Rossow, 2004; Measham et al., 2001). In addition to the well-documented dangers associated with illicit drug use (see McKetin et al., 2006a; Sommers & Baskin 2006), participants in nightclub studies often experience increased exposure to other groups that have the potential to cause harm or have different views regarding disclosure of group information, such as bouncers, police, and young people who are either intoxicated or otherwise affected by drugs and alcohol. Such studies may also be dangerous for researchers (Tewksbury, 2009; Jamieson, 2000). As was the case in this study, nightclub researchers typically endure limited visibility, reduced support mechanisms, exposure to large groups of young people and venues that are unfamiliar.

However, although it is inherent in any analysis of club drug use that the need to interact with drug users may draw unwanted attention to the research and the researcher's role within it (Bahora et al., 2009; Rácz, 2005), few problems were experienced throughout the fieldwork associated with this study. This may be attributed to a number of practices employed by the researcher. Firstly, in order to maintain safety, a research schedule was developed so that members of my support network (e.g. family and supervisors) were aware of my location within the field. In addition, increased communication with them during and, importantly, at the conclusion of the fieldwork provided access to support to limit the harm. Secondly, despite being of a considerable physical presence,² the aim of the research role was to avoid dangerous situations, conduct the research in populated and well-lit areas, have transport proximal to venues, and not accept offers from patrons of drinks, drugs or transport. Despite being somewhat common sense, these strategies were central in mitigating the potential harms of the Adelaide night-time economy and enabling the safe access to participants.

Thirdly, the physical characteristics of the nightclub and the environment that it creates, typified by intense dance music, vivid and random lighting and often a hazy atmosphere caused by smoke-machines, is another challenge in access to participants. The problems associated with the physical environment of the nightclub and its influence on research participation have been well-documented (Pape & Rossow, 2004; Bellis et al., 2002; Measham et al., 2001), particularly in terms of the researcher's role and the ability to extract useful data. One of the initial concerns facing this research was whether this sample of young people would be willing to provide candid information regarding actual drug use, and experience or knowledge of its use and effects within the Adelaide nightclub scene. However, it is suggested that the methodological approach employed in this study mitigated the potential difficulties associated with access.

² Many comparisons can be made here with previous ethnographic research of the 'night-time economy' that highlights similar concerns. Monaghan's (2004) depiction of the need for 'bodily capital' to gain access demonstrates the importance of embodied masculinity and presence within reflexive nightclub ethnographies. Therefore, although I possess a non-violent self-image and my role within the current research was not dependent on physicality, I considered being 186 centimetres in height and in excess of 110 kilograms in weight to mitigate concerns regarding personal safety, although avoiding physical confrontation was also a primary goal.

3.2.2 *The Implications of Gaining Access*

This background details the setting in which these young nightclubbers were ‘accessed’, and highlights the challenges faced. However, as noted above, the extent to which these challenges affected the research was limited, illustrated by the level of participant response. Overall, 457 surveys were completed (out of a total of 600) and 22 interviews were conducted with a sample of young people who represented the target age bracket. This constitutes a representative sample as the participants were randomly-selected and there was a low non-response rate (23 percent) (Creswell, 2003). An important feature of the quantitative methodology was the development of specific field practices that maximised participant response. Questionnaires were presented to young people outside each of the research venues, hence the limitations posed by lighting, loud music, and crowded venues were reduced. One problem, however, was the exposure to inclement weather, which given that the research was conducted during winter posed some challenges. To account for this the researcher used an umbrella, which not only enabled the research to continue but also increased research participation as clubbers were able to stay dry while completing a survey. The effects associated with the consumption of alcohol and drugs were also not experienced fully as data was collected prior to participants’ entry to nightclubs. It is acknowledged, however, that many participants routinely engage in ‘pre-loading’, which is the consumption of alcohol at home prior to going out as a way to reduce cost and “kick-off the night” (Emmy, aged 21, non-user). As such, the researcher was careful to avoid individuals who were visibly intoxicated.

An innovation of the quantitative methodology was how participants were approached in the field. Much has been written on the difficulties in accessing hard-to-reach populations, in particular youth (Parsons et al., 2008; Hodkinson, 2005; Bennett, 2002a). In this study, it was recognised early that as most clubbers went out in large groups often comprised of 10-15 people, a direct approach that placed the researcher at the centre of this group dynamic would not be effective. Accordingly an alternative technique was used, whereby one member of the group was approached and, if participation was obtained, the rapport achieved was used as a form of social capital to provide access to the remaining members

of the group. This was extremely successful, with considerably fewer ‘knock-backs’ than the former approach. Moreover, this approach increased research participation and preserved the researcher’s place in the field as access was guided, even though a random sample was still achieved. Access was also a condition of the interview process, but did not constrain the present study. By establishing a number of reliable contacts throughout the field work, the participants’ cooperation in the field and in organising follow-ups was more forthcoming than expected. Interviewees were willing to engage with the research and provided contextual and in-depth responses. Overall, only eight participants did not respond to initial contact from the researcher. However, it was felt that an appropriate level of participation was reached, with equivalent representation from each of the sample groups (e.g. user and non-user).

3.3 Research role

There is substantial literature that has examined the research role in qualitative and ethnographic research (Measham & Moore, 2006; Noaks & Wincup, 2004; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Spradley, 1979), particularly in relation to youth, the atmosphere of the nightclub and the musical, fashion and identity styles they each connote (Slavin, 2004; Bennett, 2002a). Much of this literature has emphasised the need for researchers to be reflexive in their relations with participants and the field (Silverman, 2010; Measham & Moore, 2006; Noaks & Wincup, 2004; Delamont, 2004). In fact, a common theme in these studies is that establishing a research role takes time and may require researchers to adopt various roles throughout the process (Measham & Moore, 2006; Noaks & Wincup, 2004; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). In particular, a researcher may experience many shifts “along a continuum of insider/outsiderness, slipping backwards and forwards along it throughout the life of the study” (Westmarland, 2001, p. 527). As someone who typically does not attend nightclubs, this presented some practical challenges.

In order to be accepted within the field, Noaks and Wincup (2004, p. 65) suggest that researchers should engage in ‘impression management’, the forms of

which may vary according to the groups and settings being accessed. Similarly, it has been identified that aspects of a researcher's biography, such as age, sex, and ethnicity, which cannot be varied, equally shape the researcher's role (Noaks & Wincup, 2004). However, the researcher's physical characteristics did not differ greatly from those of the young nightclubbers. Of more concern was the need to modify behavioural and social characteristics in order to better integrate with this social cohort. These changes were related to the type of clothes worn, and the need to be seen consuming alcohol. Typically, male clubbers wore blue jeans, vivid and attention-grabbing t-shirts, and neat casual shoes, an image that was easily matched by the researcher. More challenging was the need to present a socially-acceptable appearance, through having a drink in-hand, while maintaining ethical and practical standards to ensure a valid and reliable data collection process. This task turned out to be relatively simple, however, and was maintained throughout the field work. It involved the consumption of soft drinks that were provided in the same glasses as 'mixers'³, which created the illusion of alcohol consumption. As such, the research role was consistent in terms of the impression offered, which aided in the process of data collection.

3.3.1 *Biases in Qualitative Research: Critical evaluation of club research*

In discussing the research role in empirical and, particularly, ethnographic studies, it is necessary to identify the experiences and biases that the researcher brought to this study. It is equally essential to acknowledge that this discussion occurs within a broader research discourse where, although currently underutilised, insider research is increasingly viewed as a valuable resource that has been gaining considerable academic support since the 1990s (Measham & Moore, 2006; Bennett, 2003; 2002a). In fact, there is a strong base of social researchers who research what they commonly experience themselves, thus locating them as insiders (Hodkinson, 2005; Ellis & Bochner, 2003; Maher, 2002; Calvey, 2000; Lyng, 1998) or, at least, as partial insiders (Measham & Moore, 2006). And yet, this was not the case in this research experience of the Adelaide nightclub scene. The researcher is comfortable in describing himself as an infrequent nightclubber who, prior to this research had only attended nightclubs once or twice, and as a

³ 'Mixers' are typically comprised of spirits (alcohol) and soft drinks (commonly cola).

non-user who has not consumed any form of illicit substance. It is recognised that the impressions of this field could, therefore, have easily been shaped by unconstructive generalisations of chaotic and careless drug use as often conveyed in popular media. However, despite personal choices and values, and perhaps *because* of them, the researcher was interested in this social landscape and, importantly, recognise that there is value in exploring young people's experiences of nightclubs and the leisure activities that they comprise. Most significantly though – and in wishing to avoid appearing as though this research challenges this important discourse, as it does not intend to – I argue that there is value in engaging research of the club drug landscape from what could be considered an outsider perspective.

Bennett (2002a) emphasises that there is value in 'outsider' research in that outsiders may be able to provide critical evaluation with the necessary objectivity and detachment central to the social-scientific rigour of empirical research. It may result in researchers "listening more intently to the accounts of...participants, thus gaining a more comprehensive insight into the rules and systems underpinning everyday life in that particular setting than could be achieved by an insider whose views would inevitably be coloured by existing knowledge and value judgments" (Bennett, 2002a, p. 460). However, in again wanting to avoid 'taking sides', it is note that although a level of critical distance from the subject is important, it should not be to what Jenson (1992, p. 25) labels the "savannah of smug superiority", to ensure that subjects' behaviour is not perceived as what 'they' do. Thus, in addressing the theoretical underpinnings of this research, the research role was not intended to involve entering the nightclub to discover 'truths', but rather to uncover the clubbers' versions of its reality (Noaks & Wincup, 2004).

Overall, the research role in this study was facilitated by the fact that the participants belong to a social group the researcher was familiar with in terms of language and age. Although the researcher is not a 'clubber', the minimal distance between researcher and participants was effective in reducing cultural, behavioural and attitudinal differences and hence influenced how this research was approached. An important and innovative feature of this research was that it

encompassed a diverse sample of youth that included drug users as well as non-drug users. As argued later in this thesis (section 4.2.1.2), there are negligible differences between these groups, which has a number of implications for how future club drug research may be conducted (see section 8.5). Specifically, the role of drugs in evaluating this difference should not attract as much attention as it has previously, which challenges researchers and governments to engage in a fresh approach to youth nightclub drug use.

3.4 The sample

3.4.1 Selection Criteria

To be eligible for this research, participants were required to: (a) be aged between 18 and 25 years-old, (b) have indicated that they attend Adelaide nightclub venues at least once every 6-months, and (c) be waiting to enter one of the five research venues. There were no other eligibility criteria given the broad scope and originality of this research in its departure from a traditional focus on the drug user. Also, in contrast to other traditional narcotics such as heroin and cocaine, gender was not a selection criterion as there are limited gender differences in the use of methamphetamines (Brecht et al., 2004; Schindler et al., 2002).

3.4.2 Exclusion Criteria

The exclusion criteria for this study can be placed into three groups. Firstly, participants who did not meet the selection criteria were excluded from the sample. Secondly, participants who were unable to participate in an interview in English or comprehend the survey due to language difficulties were also excluded due to the practical constraints of the research. Thirdly, and most importantly, participants who were intoxicated or otherwise affected by alcohol or drugs were not included for ethical and reliability reasons. The researcher was appropriately placed to manage the difficulties associated with language through verbal communication with the participant at the time of survey completion; however, this was not required, and accordingly did not affect the results obtained. Although participants' ages could not be verified through witness of any form of identification due to the need to maintain their anonymity and confidentiality, it

can be reasonably assumed that the innate characteristics of the nightclub environment minimised potential variations. In particular, the fact that each of the nightclubs visited during this research was regulated ‘on the door’, with entry restricted to patrons 18 years of age and older (policed by private door staff), should have minimised the impact of variations caused by underage participants. Similarly, the stylistic and cultural features associated with young nightclubbers, which Bennett (2002a; 2000) purports are manifest in the type of music, alcohol consumption and overall ‘scene’ experienced, would not have appealed to older patrons, although it is acknowledged that this cannot be universal.⁴

Given the characteristics of the research sites, in which drugs and alcohol, were consumed, participant intoxication posed a significant challenge for data collection. The researcher was not a qualified healthcare professional and was therefore unable to objectively identify whether an individual was intoxicated due to alcohol or illicit drugs. Consequently, the research process was viewed conservatively and any information that was received from respondents who were perceived to be intoxicated was excluded. A total of 25 surveys were identified as being completed by intoxicated respondents and were excluded from the data set. Overall, however, alcohol or drug use did not have a significant impact on the research due to the methodology employed.

3.4.3 *Demographic Data*

A total sample of 460 participants, consisting of 166 males and 294 females, were directly involved in this study, all of which were recruited through random or snowball sampling. The survey sample consisted of 457 individuals aged between 18-25 years, of which 19 also completed an informal interview. The remaining

⁴ I refer to a particular fieldwork experience that highlights an interesting feature of the aesthetic nature of the nightclub and provides context for the patronage observed at the research venues, as well as an example of the process of ‘gate-keeping’ discussed earlier in this chapter. On this particular occasion, a woman who was visibly in her mid-to-late 40s sought to gain entry to *Hq*, as part of what I later learned was a birthday celebration for her daughter. However, despite being old enough to meet the entry requirements for this venue, the woman was denied entry as she did not have any form of identification with her. This event is significant because it not only defines the role of the gate-keeper, in this case the bouncer, but also provides an insight into its purpose – to exclude individuals who do not meet the ‘look’ or ‘vibe’ of a particular venue, despite meeting entry requirements (see Rigakos, 2008). The significance of social capital is discussed further in chapter 4 (section 4.2.2).

three participants who were interviewed did not complete a quantitative survey as they were introduced to the researcher by other interviewees (e.g. snowball sampling) away from the nightclub setting. Table 3.1 describes the sample obtained for the qualitative phase of the research, in which a proportionate sample was achieved in terms of drug history, gender and age. In terms of drug history, the majority of the participants who identified themselves as users could be considered current users, with most indicating that they had consumed methamphetamines within the 4 weeks preceding their participation in the study.⁵ Two of the interviewees indicated that they were ‘former’ users and, although they had not consumed methamphetamines for the 6-12 months prior to their participation, were able to contribute to the research. The participants’ occupational status was somewhat skewed, although this arguably reflects the shift in youth profile discussed in chapter 4 (section 4.2.1.2).

Table 3.1 Interview sample characteristics

	Frequency	Percent
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	10	45.5
Female	12	54.5
<i>Age</i>		
18-21	11	50.0
22-25	11	50.0
<i>Drug history</i>		
Users	11*	50.0
Non-users	11	50.0
<i>Occupation</i>		
Part-time/casual	14	63.7
Full-time	7	31.8
Unemployed	1	4.5

n = 22

* Including two former users

Table 3.2 Survey sample characteristics

	Frequency	Percent
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	165	36.1
Female	292	63.9
<i>Age</i>		
18-21	340	74.4
22-25	117	25.6
<i>Drug history</i>		
Users	96	21.0
Non-users	361	79.0
<i>Occupation</i>		
Part-time/casual	371	71.2
Full-time	27	19.9
Unemployed	59	8.9
<i>Level of Education</i>		
Secondary	43	9.4
Attending University	380	83.2
Tertiary	27	5.9
Postgraduate	4	0.9
Other	3	0.7
<i>Residential Location</i>		
Northern suburbs	29	6.3
Eastern suburbs	130	28.6
Southern suburbs	175	38.3
Western suburbs	96	20.8
City	27	6.0

n = 457

⁵ In terms of the reliability and validity of the qualitative interviews and the data that they provided, as well as a broader consideration of ethics, it is important to note that none of the participants were affected by methamphetamines during the interview process.

Table 3.2 describes the survey participants' demographic data, which revealed a significant gender bias and a greater proportion of younger nightclubbers in the sample. However, from observation of the participants in the research sites, and in line with recent data (Weekley, Pointer & Ali, 2004; Longo et al., 2003), it can be noted that these biases are a common feature of the Adelaide nightclub scene. As such, this sample can be considered representative and indicative of the wider Adelaide general youth profile (see introduction, section 1.3, for discussion). It is acknowledged, however, that further research may benefit from exploring the influence of gender and age in youth nightclub populations.

Table 3.2 also reveals that 21 percent of the sample had used methamphetamines. Although these figures are moderately higher than the recent 2010 National Drug Strategy Household Survey data (AIHW, 2011a), it is argued that this reflects the limitations of the NDS survey in that it does not collect data within key contemporary usage sites, such as nightclubs, or access the primary users, young people. In terms of gender, although a greater proportion of females (26.1 percent) reported use than males (16.1 percent), this difference was not statistically significant and most likely reflected the gender bias in the sample. Gender was also not a concern in the qualitative sample, contributing to an overall finding that contrasts previous research that suggests males' drug use is often greater than females' (Shiner, 2006; see also Measham & Shiner, 2009; Measham, 2002). It is important to note, however, that these findings are not considered evidence of a widespread reduction in the influence of gender on youth drug use (see Measham, 2002), but merely the limited role of gender in this drug use setting. This can be explained, at least in part, by the emergence of a new youth profile guided by broad consumption ideals (section 4.2.1.2), in which traditional gender roles associated with young people's transitions into adulthood appear to have less influence on young people's behaviour than previously thought (see Measham & Shiner, 2009).

Occupationally, the majority of participants were engaged in part-time/casual work across a range of areas, including food and hospitality, retail, security or clerical work, with the remaining participants either working full-time or

unemployed, a finding that matches national data (ABS, 2010). Given the requirements of employment for these positions (albeit casual), it was not unexpected that the majority of the sample had at least completed secondary education (high school). More notable, however, was that a significant proportion of the sample were currently attending university, including most of those who identified themselves as users, which challenges traditional understandings of the typical drug user as uneducated and thus delinquent (Duff, 2005). In terms of residential location, although the research sites were located centrally in the city of Adelaide, the majority of the sample indicated that they resided in the southern, eastern suburbs and western suburbs of Adelaide, with few participants residing in the northern suburbs or the city. To situate this data in the context of the geographical characteristics of Adelaide, it is important to identify that the southern and eastern suburbs, in particular, as well as to a lesser extent the western suburbs of Adelaide are considered to be of higher socio-economic status when compared with the northern suburbs (City of Playford Council, 2011). This data reveals much about the characteristics of the sample, in particular its transformation and shift away from stereotypical descriptions of deviance (Williams & Parker, 2001; Shiner & Newburn, 1997) to a new youth profile of young Adelaide nightclub attendees, which encompasses those who sometimes use drugs. This reveals the need for greater understanding and examination of this youth cohort to ensure that government and policy responses adequately identify these characteristics and therefore address the needs of these young people (see chapter 5). This provides background to the rationale for this research.

3.5 Pilot study: *A first step*

There are substantial claims that Australian youth are facing a greater risks in their lives than in previous decades (O'Malley, 2004; Lupton & Tulloch, 2002b), many of which are caused by the prevalence of drug use within traditional youth leisure activities (Black et al., 2008; Dew, Elifson & Sterk, 2007; Degenhardt et al., 2005d). In South Australia there has been significant concern regarding young people's use of methamphetamines in nightclubs (Dennington et al., 2008; DASSA, 2007). Despite this, as identified in the introduction (section 1.3.1) there

remains no comprehensive data source of young people's experience with methamphetamines (McKetin & McLaren, 2004; Richards, Cormack & Faulkner, 2002), particularly in this social nightlife setting. As such, a pilot study was undertaken by the researcher to assess the prevalence of methamphetamine use in Adelaide, to identify the primary locations in which it is used and the characteristics of these sites, to determine who represents the young people who are exposed to its use and to outline the risks that they face.

3.5.1 *Initial Research Methodology*

During a 2-month period from March to May 2009, a multi-question survey was distributed to 120 male and female, first and second-year Criminal Justice students at Flinders University, between the ages of 18 and 25 years old. This purposive sample did not include individuals less than 18 years of age for ethical and practical reasons. This does not imply that younger individuals do not use methamphetamines or are less at-risk from the harms associated with use. Rather, the sampling method reflected national and state census data requirements (ACC_b, 2011; ABS, 2004), as well as the widely acknowledged limitation that entrance to nightclub venues is restricted to people 18 years of age or older. The survey consisted of 24 questions that covered a broad range of issues relating to the participants' frequency and location of attendance at Adelaide nightclubs, description of individuals' use of nightclub venues, awareness of the prevalence of methamphetamine use in Adelaide, and the link between young people, illicit drugs and the Adelaide night-time economy. The questionnaire also sought demographic data on respondents' age, gender, educational attainment and current employment status. Of the 120 surveys distributed, 92 were completed.

A quantitative survey was perceived to be the most effective tool to capture participants' data as it enables a large group to be accessed efficiently and without substantial cost (Bachman & Schutt, 2008). This was important given the practical constraints of the research environment, where it was recognised that given participants' busy study schedules, in most cases the researcher was allowed only 10-15 minutes in which to introduce, present and collect the survey questionnaire. To ensure that the survey was not affected by these constraints its

distribution was well-planned and utilised efficiently. Participants were presented with a Letter of Introduction (see Appendix 1, page 289) which identified the researcher, outlined the research aims and rationale, detailed the participant's role within the study and included all ethical considerations as per the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (SBREC) guidelines.⁶ As the survey was anonymous written consent was not required, which also expedited this process. Also, as the questionnaire was administered by the researcher, additional verbal instructions were available to the respondent, though this was not required.

The survey was valuable in that it provided situated data that could be compared with national and international prevalence data to make assessments about the level of concern associated with drug use. As identified above, there is no comprehensive data source regarding young people's use of illicit drugs within the nightclub scene, and hence estimates of the prevalence of youth drug use have been based on data obtained from drug seizures, police detainee drug testing and emergency department admissions (see section 2.2.1). The use of this survey was thus crucial in not only increasing the level but also the type of information available to researchers in examining young people's club drug use. This primary methodology was also complemented by one informal, semi-structured interview that was conducted with a female participant who identified herself as a former methamphetamine user. Given that this sample could not be representative, the data obtained was considered conservatively, and primarily used to structure the main study in terms of the format of the interview process, the questions used and how best to approach potential participants. The data was also used to create an initial thematic framework based on the data obtained in the pilot study, as well as for the development of the methodological approaches used in the main study, although these were predominantly structural in nature.

⁶ Application was made to the Flinders University SBREC 25 July 2008 for approval to survey young Adelaide nightclub attendees. Approval was granted 19 September 2008. Modification to this approval to interview nightclub attendees to supplement the data obtained from the survey questionnaires was granted on 20 November 2008. This project is identified as project no. 4271 and represents each of the methodologies outlined in this chapter. All matters relating to the ethical considerations and obligations within this research, such as participant anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent are detailed within appendices 1,3, 4 and 6.

3.5.2 *Pilot Study Results*⁷

As noted above (page 73), for the pilot study a tutorial group of 92 students was enlisted and presented with the survey. The prime inclusion criterion was that participants needed to be aged between 18 and 25 years. On return of the completed questionnaires it was found that 4 of the students did not meet this criterion and thus their responses were excluded from the data set, thereby reducing the overall sample to 88. A significant gender bias was also identified in the sample with a greater proportion of females (70.2 percent) than males (29.8 percent). It can be reasonably stated that this bias reflects the gender differences characteristic of Australian university attendance (Booth & Kee, 2010; OECD, 2008). The majority of the sample was employed in casual work (60.7 percent), although a number also identified as full-time students (23 percent). All respondents had achieved at least secondary education with one-in-five participants also having achieved tertiary qualifications. Again, this likely reflects selection bias, as participants were recruited from Flinders University where completion of secondary education is an entry requirement for most courses.

With regard to their residential location, the majority of participants lived in the southern (59.5 percent) and eastern (25.2 percent) suburbs of Adelaide, with none residing in the northern suburbs. This likely reflects the location of participants' residences relative to Flinders University⁸ as the research site. Notwithstanding, this trend is noteworthy as although previous research (Peretti-Watel, 2003b; Kenkel et al., 2001) has linked drug use with limited financial capacity and low socio-economic status, the data does not support this. Rather, the demographic data revealed that many participants reside in financially stable and, in some cases, affluent neighbourhoods in Adelaide (City of Playford Council, 2011), which is significant relative to the overall research in terms of the conceptualisation of the assumed typical profiles of the young nightclub attendee and young illicit drug user. This conceptualisation has been addressed in the design of the main research project through random and snowball sampling techniques (see page 82), the results of which are discussed in chapter 5.

⁷ Given that this information is not discussed elsewhere in this thesis, a brief summary of the pilot study results is provided here.

⁸ Flinders University is located in the southern suburbs of metropolitan Adelaide.

3.5.3 *Key Survey Data*

The pilot study survey identified a number of key results central to the overall research project. All participants had attended an Adelaide nightclub in the previous 12 months, with most attending occasionally (48.8 percent), often (33.3 percent) or very often (10.7 percent). The primary motivations for attending Adelaide nightclubs were socialising (82.1 percent), dancing (72.6 percent), fun (70.3 percent) and drinking (58.3 percent). Participants also revealed that methamphetamines (50.5 percent) and ecstasy (29.3 percent) were the drugs most consumed within Adelaide nightclubs, while heroin and cocaine were perceived to be used only infrequently, contrasting trends observed in the Sydney and Melbourne nightlife scenes (McKetin et al., 2005; Duff, 2005). Many respondents also identified that they had witnessed illicit drug deals (45.2 percent) or had been exposed to others' illicit drug use (57.1 percent).

In terms of personal use, a third of participants revealed that they had used illicit drugs, with 21.4 percent of the overall sample indicating that they had specifically used methamphetamines. Despite this, only four participants indicated that drugs were their motivation for attending nightclubs. Rather, closely matching the responses of the overall sample, their attendance was motivated by fun (64.2 percent), socialising (54.3 percent), and dancing (37.4 percent). Notably, drinking was not perceived as a motivation for attendance by users, the implications of which are discussed later (see section 7.8.1). In addition, although some attendance was motivated by partners' drug use (25.7 percent), none of the drug-using participants engaged in drug use because of peer pressure. Rather, it was noted that participants perceived that they were aware of the context of their drug use and were able to make rational choices based on a number of sources of information. In challenging traditional depictions of users and young people as lacking in knowledge, the majority of the sample (70.2 percent) had received some form of education about methamphetamines, predominantly from school and friends, and had seen the anti-drug campaigns prepared by the South Australian Government. These young people hence perceived that they held the capacity to incorporate this information into their decision-making processes and behave accordingly.

3.5.4 *A Preliminary Discussion*

This perception highlights a complex interplay between young people, their leisure activities and risk, which for many is also affected by illicit drugs (whether they use them or not). A central feature of participants' descriptions of personal or others' methamphetamine use was that it contextualised how they perceived risk, and what this meant for their use of the nightclub. Particularly, these young people recognised that there are risks associated with methamphetamine use. However, they also noted that the concept of risk is broad and manifests in various forms. Indeed, many of the risks participants identified contrasted with those defined by experts, revealing the existence of contextual and lay understandings of illicit drug use within the nightclub scene and this gap provides a foundation for further analysis.

These findings were supported by data obtained from the interview conducted with Sarah⁹ (aged 24, former user). Although this data must be considered carefully, a number of key themes emerged that support the patterns observed in the quantitative data. As such, this information was used to develop revisions made to the survey instrument for the main study to ensure effective data collection, discussed later in this chapter. In addition to the data obtained, the interview process itself provided valuable insight into how to best approach participants in the main study to optimise data collection. Specifically, it was noted that particular strategies (such as allowing participants to identify comfortable and safe interview locations, engaging in appropriate forms of body language, and the use of accessible terms and language) were crucial to successful data collection. The manner in which questions were structured, ordered and delivered in the main study was also guided by Sarah's comments, which are discussed later in this chapter.

Although using a small sample, these results illustrate that the use of methamphetamines is perceived, by both users and non-users, to be prevalent among young Adelaide nightclub attendees and influences these young people's

⁹ As was the case in the main study (section 6.3.3), the participant was given the opportunity to create a pseudonym for their data, however, this was not needed and the participant's first name was used.

perception of the risks associated with this leisure space. A key outcome of the pilot study, therefore, is the identification of the need for further research within a more representative sample to examine young people's situated 'lay' perceptions of risk and evaluate their impact on young people's use of the nightclub, which is discussed in chapter 6. In the following section the research methodology used to undertake this task is outlined.

3.6 The present study

The aim of this section is firstly to consider the ramifications of the pilot study and, in rationalising the current research, demonstrate the need for in-depth empirical research to examine youth club drug use. Secondly, the section will outline the methodology employed in the current research. Specifically, it will describe the survey process used to garner quantitative data from participants, including a description of the survey instrument, describe the interview process and its benefit for club drug research, and complement these strategies with an evaluation of the process of ethnographic observation and its impact on the overall project. Finally, the implications of collecting data within a mixed-methodology are considered to describe the process of analysis used.

Table 3.3 provides a summary of each of the research methods used in the Perception of Risk research project, providing a review of the approach used in the pilot study (section 3.5) and an outline of the methods employed in the present study, examined herein. This summary articulates the key features of the data collection and analysis processes, defines each of the relevant samples, as well as frames the research environments in which fieldwork was undertaken. Specifically, the instruments used to gather participants' data, the type and method of analyses and characteristics of the research fieldwork (e.g. time, duration, period and location) are identified to provide context to the overall research approach described in more detail in this chapter, as well as the results obtained and examined later in this thesis (see chapters 5, 6 and 7).

Table 3.3 Summary of Research Methods

	Pilot Study	Survey Questionnaire	Interview	Ethnography
Thesis Section	pp. 71-77	pp. 78-83	pp. 83-90	pp. 90-93
Method	Survey questionnaire	28-question survey	Semi-structured interview	Participant observation
Sample (n)	88	457	22	n/a
Analysis	Quantitative data / Statistical analysis	Quantitative data / Statistical analysis	Qualitative data analysis, Thematic / Content analysis	Qualitative data analysis, Thematic / Content analysis
Time	2 months	43 nights* (4 nights of the week)	2 months	31 nights* (4 nights of the week)
Duration	n/a	98 hours* (avg. 3-4 hours per night)	1-2 hours (avg. 90 minutes)	77 hours* (avg. 3-4 hours per night)
Period	March-May 2009	May-August 2010	September-October 2010	May-August 2010
Location	Flinders University, Bedford Park campus	5 designated research venues in Adelaide nightclub scene.	Interviews were conducted at mutually agreed locations as per the guidelines detailed in the ethics application.	5 designated research venues in Adelaide nightclub scene.

* *Note:* Participant observation was typically undertaken alongside the dissemination of the survey questionnaire (either before or after) to maximise the time spent in the field and to provide context to the data obtained. The total time spent in the field was 54 nights (175 hours).

3.6.1 *Learning from the Pilot Study: Implications for Research*

The pilot study revealed a number of outcomes that importantly condition and guide the current research. Firstly, the data revealed a tangible link between Adelaide nightclubs and methamphetamine use, which confirms the nightclub as a site of drug research. The participants that comprised the pilot study sample also identified their age group as the primary users of the Adelaide nightclub scene, with the majority of participants attending nightclubs at least occasionally. In addition, despite drug use not being a significant motivation for attendance, the majority of the sample, including non-users, identified that methamphetamines are the most commonly used drug by young people within these venues. Specifically, the survey revealed that even if they do not consume methamphetamine themselves, just by their exposure to club drug use, young people believe they are the main consumers and are more likely to encounter them and their use than young people who do not attend Adelaide nightclubs. A feature of the current research, therefore, is understanding why despite the perceived or actual presence and use of methamphetamines these young people continue to ‘expose’ (as per experts’ language) themselves to this environment on a regular basis. Secondly, what was drawn from this was that such behaviour places these young people within a discourse of risk where, irrespective of whether they used drugs or not, risk must be considered when examining young people’s nightclub leisure activities. The pilot study data demonstrated that although these young people are aware of risk and engage in discussion of its impacts, they may have a perception of risk that is not homogenous with that of mainstream society (which contends that illicit drugs are dangerous). For example, in contrast to stereotypical depictions of youth, these young people appear educated, informed and engaged in particular social group practices to manage their nightclub experiences. Therefore, understanding young people’s risk perceptions, and whether they are informed by rational decision-making, is not only central to this research but also enforcement, policy or healthcare initiatives aimed at reducing drug-related harm. Thirdly, these aspects combine to contribute to the normalisation of illicit drug use within the Adelaide night-time economy. That young people continue to attend these venues knowing that methamphetamines are present and consumed, and that they are able to openly engage in discussions of risk, in particular risk

management that influences their pursuit of leisure, is an important factor, the analysis of which will make a major contribution to drug-research. Specifically, viewing young people's illicit drug use through a normalisation perspective has a number of implications, primarily in terms of how it can be controlled. As such, there is need for greater analysis of how young people perceive of, describe and engage with risk within the nightclub.

3.6.2 Using a Quantitative Research Methodology

Surveys conducted within the general population provide an essential foundation for monitoring drug use (Cadet-Tairou et al. 2010). However, although the social survey has become common currency in the criminological field as a means of addressing the inadequacy of relying on experts and their understanding of illicit behaviour (Maguire, 2000; see also, Mayhew, 2000), the surveys often fail to reach relevant users or to critically examine the behaviours and contexts that surround them (Cadet-Tairou et al. 2010). That is why research that is embedded within the contexts in which drugs are used is vital to the development of drug knowledge and effective drug policy.

In this study, a survey questionnaire was constructed to garner understanding of the life experiences of young people who attend Adelaide nightclubs, some of whom use methamphetamines, and how they manage the risks of being in a venue where drugs are used. An original feature of the overall research, as well as the methodology used lies in the fact that it encompasses both users and non-users and seeks to evaluate their perceptions of risk within the Adelaide nightclub scene. Also, in contrast to much of the Australia drug literature (although there are some exceptions, see Duff, 2005), a further feature of this methodology was that it engaged the sample *in situ*, a method that has been used effectively in previous notable drug studies (see Measham & Moore, 2009; Measham, Aldridge & Parker, 2001). Although participants were not approached 'in the club', the fact that they were recruited while waiting to enter venues provided a comparable opportunity. It was found from observation of these young people that most, if not all, were thinking about their experience of the nightclub and engaging in actions

and behaviours typical of being inside the venue, even before entering it. In this space these young people were no longer thinking about work or study, and instead had become what can be identified as ‘the clubber’. The distribution of the survey questionnaire in this manner allowed an efficient and contextually appropriate method of assessing the perceptions, feelings and experiences of a significant number of Adelaide’s young nightclubbers as they were feeling them.

The survey questionnaire was also significant in addressing a number of limitations identified in the pilot study survey. Firstly, what was learned from the pilot study was the importance of context. A key limitation of the pilot study sample was its location, homogenous profile of participants (university students) and potential familiarity with the research aims, which limited the generalisability of the data. Specifically, given the narrow recruitment strategy and small sample size used, a limited and biased sample was produced. Consequently, in the main research project random sampling and snowball sampling techniques were employed among a significantly greater overall population (see introduction, section 1.3.3 for population statistics) to produce a more representative and much larger sample (n=457), reducing the effects of selection and response bias. Given the characteristics of the fieldwork, the researcher was careful to attain a random sample in terms of research venue, day of the week and time of evening. Overall, the research was conducted on a total of 54 days that encompassed five venues, four different days of the week, and ranged from 7pm to 3am on any given night, with each visit lasting an average of 3-4 hours. Of this period, surveys were handed out on 43 nights across a total of 98 hours (see Table 3.3, page 79). A limitation of this sample, however, is that it does not include those young people who do not attend Adelaide nightclubs, which is discussed further later in this chapter. Secondly, despite random sampling, a gender bias remained in the sample, although to a lesser extent than the pilot study, with the sample comprised of a greater proportion of females than males (see Table 3.2, page 70). However, as identified in chapter 5, despite this imbalance, gender did not have a significant effect on the data, other than in areas in which it was expected (e.g. safety and risk of sexual assault). The third limitation of the pilot study data related to the structure, ordering and content of questions within the survey instrument. A key

outcome of the pilot study was the identification of the need to increase the specificity of detail extracted from participants to provide more practical information not only for the use in this research, but in terms of providing practical outcomes for the development of evidence-based policy. Also, it was necessary to review the order of the survey questions so as not to lead participants in their responses (Fink, 2003), which is discussed further shortly. In addressing these limitations, the survey instrument used in the main study provided a snapshot of young people's use of the Adelaide nightclub scene, the use of methamphetamines by some patrons, and how these factors each contribute to young people's perceptions of risk. The following section describes how the survey questionnaire achieved this.

3.6.2.1 The Perception of Risk Survey

From May to August 2010, the Perception of Risk survey questionnaire (see Appendix 2, p. 290) was disseminated to a randomly-selected sample of 18-25 year-olds recruited from five popular Adelaide nightclubs (*Hq*, *Savvy*, *Red Square*, *Electric Circus* and *Sugar*). Potential participants were recruited while waiting to gain entrance to these venues and were presented with a Letter of Introduction (See Appendix 1, page 289) which contained all the information relating to the aims and rationale of the research project, the participant's role within it and all ethical considerations, as per the SRBEC guidelines.¹⁰ A concern identified in the planning of the quantitative methodology was the reduced privacy associated with completing the survey in public. Although the survey was anonymous, it was recognised that individuals would be exposed to other clubbers while participating in the study. However, this concern was mitigated by the peer group dynamics observed within the lines at each of the research sites, where groups of friends and peers formed boundaries between themselves and other social groups (typically by standing in closed circle), insulating group members from exposure to others. In addition, friends did not generally appear interested in each other's responses, thus maintaining anonymity and confidentiality.

¹⁰ See footnote 6 above for discussion of ethics. The practical considerations related to the survey method outlined in the pilot study were similar for this survey questionnaire, other than in terms of the location of the research sites and the sampling techniques used to obtain a random sample.

The Perception of Risk survey consisted of 28 questions that, in addition to obtaining demographic data, were thematically divided into four sections that examined participants' nightclub attendance, awareness of drug use, identification of risk, and perceptions of methamphetamine use. The structure of the survey in terms of the order and depth of questions was such that participants were not guided in their responses (Berg, 2007; Creswell, 2003; Fink, 2003). Specifically, that the research particularly focused on methamphetamines was not conveyed to participants. As such, following the demographic data, participants were asked to indicate their frequency and type of nightclub attendance, which not only provided a more comfortable point of entry to the research, but also a foundation from which to move to more central and personal topics (Fink, 2003). Following this, questions examined participants' awareness and understanding of risk within the nightclub, their attitudes toward drug use generally, and finally their knowledge, and experience of methamphetamine use, irrespective of personal use. That questions related to participants' own drug use history were left to the end was strategic in achieving participation as well as not leading participants' responses (particularly with regards to what they perceived as nightclub risks).

In terms of the practical elements of the survey instrument, the majority of questions were structured as content, order, and response choices (Bachman & Schutt, 2008), although a small number of questions provided space for qualitative responses. Of the 28 questions, 17 utilised Likert Scales (Creswell, 2003) to convey the perceived prevalence of specific behaviours or the level to which respondents' agreed with given statements, such as 'attending Adelaide nightclubs is risky' (see Appendix 2, p. 290). Responses were rated on a 5-point Likert Scale and ranged from 1 'Strongly Disagree', to 5 'Strongly Agree'. To address neutral perspectives and reduce false responses (Bachman & Schutt, 2008), a 'Neutral' category was included in each scale, represented by the number '3'. Although the disadvantages of this inclusion have been noted (Bachman & Schutt, 2008), reducing false responses provided by individuals who do not know anything about a given question is more important than missing out on responses from individuals who do not wish to reveal their perceptions, especially given the illicit nature of the behaviour in question. It is important to note that the content

and structure of the survey questionnaire was principally guided by information garnered from the pilot study survey and related feedback, as well as from preliminary fieldwork within the five research venues undertaken in the week prior to first approaching potential participants. For example, the order and type (e.g. tick-box versus short answer) of questions was directly influenced by the pilot study feedback, as was the need to limit the survey to one A4 size sheet of paper, given the time and attention constraints associated with approaching individuals prior to their entry to the nightclub. Broadly speaking, the high response rate for survey participation provides support for the overall presentation of the survey.

The final feature of the survey to be discussed is that of question 28, which asked respondents to indicate whether they would be willing to participate in an interview regarding the information provided in the survey. This question functioned as the primary method by which interview participation was achieved, and was thus important. Moreover, from the field work it was noted that asking participants in a written form was far more effective than verbal sampling techniques, which provides a useful insight for future empirical research on comparable research populations and topics.

From this study, it was learnt that the effectiveness of quantitative methods relies heavily on a number of issues, such as gaining access, the level of cooperation of gatekeepers (in this case signified by a lack of negative response, rather than actual cooperation), the willingness of participants and the theoretical and structural foundation of the survey instrument. However, the level and type of data obtained from the quantitative methodology has provided valuable information about young people's attitudes, knowledge and behaviour in relation to when, how and why these individuals attend Adelaide nightclubs and the extent to which drug use affects and influences this social milieu. For these reasons, the survey questionnaire was considered practically and methodologically suitable for this research project (Noaks & Wincup, 2004).

3.6.3 *Qualitative Interviewing*

The second feature of this mixed methodology was the qualitative interviews conducted with young people recruited from Adelaide nightclubs. The aim of this section is firstly to consider the importance of the interview as a qualitative methodology in collecting data from hard-to-reach populations, and its significance in this research methodology. Secondly, the section will describe the interviewees and the method of recruitment used to construct the research sample. Thirdly, it will delineate the practical aspects of the interview, including discussion of what worked and what did not.

3.6.3.1 The Value of Qualitative Interviews

There has been a perception within some disciplines that qualitative research is less authentic or less scientific than quantitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2007; Creswell, 2003) and therefore less valuable in empirical studies (Kurtin, 2010). This is especially the case in research where samples may be considered deviant or unreliable, such as young drug users (Tewksbury, 2009; Eiserman et al., 2003). However, other sources have acknowledged that qualitative methods can be just as rigorous as quantitative analyses (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Berg, 2007; Mays & Pope, 2000). The use of a qualitative approach, in particular interviews, was particularly suited to this research project due to its flexibility and core features that distinguish it from other methodological approaches and validate it as a valuable method for generating data (Creswell, 2003; Mason, 2002). Bachman and Schutt (2008) illustrate that response rates are higher for this research method than for any other, particularly when respondents are recruited through a mediator as in snowball sampling. Qualitative interviews also provide a relatively informal style with the opportunity for the interactional exchange of dialogue between the researcher and participant, rather than a formal and structured question-and-answer format. This method allows the data obtained to be thematic, topic-centred and to follow a more biographical, or narrative approach (Mason, 2002). Additionally, qualitative interviewing commonly operates from the “perspective that knowledge is situated and contextual” (Mason, 2002, p. 62), which reflects the aims of this research.

Qualitative research focuses on the meanings, traits and characteristics of people, events, interactions, settings and experiences (Tewksbury, 2009). Pope and Mays (2008) expand this, noting that qualitative research examines not only the personal meanings, but the interpretations individuals attach to their experience within their social contexts. Qualitative research thus refers to the “meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things” (Berg, 2007, p. 3). This challenges social researchers to examine often long-held assumptions, stereotypes and particular social phenomena by asking questions and by studying individuals in their usual environments (Kurtin, 2010). As such, in contrast to quantitative research, which is often conducted in artificial environments (although this was not the case in this study), qualitative methods not only offer a deeper personal connection,¹¹ but also allow the researcher to question the notion of objective knowledge (Kurtin, 2010), a notion that is central to this research.

How young people interpret their world constitutes ‘knowledge’, which guides researchers in understanding their behaviour as young people, in particular, act on the way they interpret their experiences (Kurtin, 2010; Tewksbury, 2009). As Warr (2004, p. 578) reveals, such narratives provide researchers with “an opportunity to listen to people tell their stories, and the method yields rich and complex data. The stories give researchers a window into lives that might be very different from their own”. The purpose of this approach was not for participants to make quality judgements about their experiences; rather, it was to provide context to their experiences, as well as provide an opportunity to reflect on what they have discussed (Berg, 2007). In this way, gaining understanding of young people’s experiences in culturally-grounded contexts strongly reflects the aims of this research by departing from expert knowledge centres that are often relied on by government and law enforcement agencies. As such, examining young people’s narratives and contextual knowledge of Adelaide nightclub venues is central to this study and demonstrates the strength of using informal, semi-

¹¹ As part of the quantitative research methodology, a focus group was organised to pilot test the revised survey instrument. A key outcome of this session was that the respondents indicated that the research needed to ask young people what nightclubs, drugs and the social context that surrounds them meant to them, in their own words. In other words, the research needed to give them the opportunity to tell their ‘stories’; arguably this methodology has achieved this aim.

structured interviews as one part of a mixed-methodology research strategy (Mason, 2002).

3.6.3.2 Constructing the Qualitative Sample

During a 2-month period from September to October 2010, a group of 22 young people (18-25 years old) participated in a series of semi-structured interviews regarding their experience of Adelaide nightclubs, and their perceptions of risk associated with methamphetamine use. Participants were recruited for interview via two methods. As noted above, the final question of the Perception of Risk survey served as the primary method of recruitment by asking respondents if they would like to participate in an interview, from which a sample of 19 participants was obtained, which has previously also been described as an ‘open sample’ (Payne & Payne, 2004) or an ‘opportunistic self-selecting sample’ (Duff, 2005). Although Hutton (2010) suggests that these kinds of samples can be criticised for not being representative of the general population, this was considered the most effective recruitment method due to the challenges presented in researching an otherwise hard-to-reach population. The remaining three participants were recruited via snowball sampling. This was a valuable feature of the methodology in that, as Kaplan, Korf and Sterk (1987, p. 567) identify in relation to heroin use, through this method “it is possible to make inferences about social networks and relations in areas in which sensitive, illegal, or deviant issues are involved. Equally important is its utility in exploring populations about whom little is known”. Therefore, in contrast to the ‘self-selecting sample’, this method not only presented greater opportunities for recruitment, but also provided greater insight into the social structure of the Adelaide nightclub scene by making use of social contacts and networks fostered through the field work. This was a positive outcome of the fieldwork, in that the researcher was challenged to be active and reflexive within the research environment (Tewksbury, 2009) and was able to establish contacts without the use of the survey material, and often without the presentation of any written material due to the practical and social constraints engendered by the field, which allowed me to become an ‘insider’, if only briefly.

The response to each method was positive and produced an overall sample of 30 participants,¹² of which 22 completed the interview (see Appendix 5, page 293). As noted earlier in this chapter, a practical challenge faced in this study was that despite participants' indications that they wished to participate, pinning them down proved difficult due to work commitments and social schedules. The difficulties of interviewing what can be identified as 'active offenders' (which some interviewees represented) are well documented (Sanders, 2005; Maguire, 2000; Lee, 1995), however, the recruitment methods used in this study were effective in providing a valid sample. Furthermore, the interviewees that comprised the sample were all friendly and provided detailed descriptions of the nightclub and their drug use experiences, which, especially for those who identified themselves as users, demonstrated considerable openness and candour that represents a valuable feature of this research.

The use of this approach was also valuable in that it was flexible and adaptive, which increased the sample size and provided a more representative sample. By comparison with the pilot study, this sample was more representative in terms of participants' age and drug history, with a comparable number of users and non-users, and 18-21 and 22-25 year olds making up the sample, which increased the practical value of comparisons drawn between participants' responses. Given the random sampling, the concerns related to response bias were also reduced. Although a gender bias was observed within the quantitative sample (see Table 3.2, page 70), the qualitative sample comprised 12 females and 10 males, who were also evenly distributed in terms of drug use history (i.e. user and non-user) (see Table 3.1, page 70). Overall, although gender did not affect the data, future research may benefit from attempts to understand why young females appear more motivated than males to attend nightclubs in Adelaide.

3.6.3.3 The Practical Aspects of the Interview Process

Many studies have noted that interaction lies at the heart of the qualitative data collection process (Tewksbury, 2009; Berg, 2007; McCracken, 1988), which

¹² Of the 8 participants not interviewed, 6 did not respond to attempts from the researcher to make contact, 1 indicated that they would no longer be available as they were moving interstate and the final participant withdrew from the study due to personal reasons.

distinguishes it from quantitative approaches as qualitative data is drawn directly from people, whether by observing and interacting with them *in situ* or talking with them face-to-face. As such, the qualitative researcher needs to be able to establish rapport with the people being studied, maintain flexibility throughout the process and employ strategies that will produce useful interactions with participants (Berg, 2007). However, what is perhaps more important in qualitative research is that researchers rely on participants “to agree to give their time...show up, agree to talk with the researcher, stay for the duration of time required and to participate in ways that are productive” (Tewksbury, 2009, p. 49). Otherwise, there can be serious implications for the success of the project in that data may be limited or biased, or the project itself may be delayed or not completed at all (Tewksbury, 2009). Understanding the practical aspects of the interview process is therefore important, and central to a successful methodology.

When participants arrived for their interview they were presented with a Letter of Introduction (see Appendix 3, page 291) that outlined all ethical considerations, as per the SBREC guidelines. Before starting each interview, permission to audio-record the interview was sought (see Appendix 4, page 292) and promptly granted in all cases. All interviews were conducted face-to-face between the researcher and the interviewee only. Interviews were also audio-recorded to ensure that: 1) conversations flowed and did not interrupt participants’ natural responses; 2) the content could be reviewed after the fact to minimise record keeping errors and increase the depth of analysis; and 3) participants did not feel they were being judged at particular times or on particular questions. Handwritten notes were also made throughout each interview, primarily when key concepts were raised but also as a back-up to ensure that remarks were recorded clearly. In order to identify participants’ responses, participants were offered the opportunity to create a pseudonym to identify their data. Only three interviewees provided pseudonyms, with the remaining participants providing consent for use of their first names.

The interviews were conducted at mutually agreed locations, primarily the interview rooms located within Law School, Flinders University, but also at a

local coffee shop, and a suburban pub. The benefits of a neutral meeting place have been studied extensively within empirical research (Noaks & Wincup, 2004; Creswell, 2003), and were important in this study for two reasons: 1) nightclub venues typically prevent effective communication due to loud music, vivid light displays, and the greater likelihood of intoxication by alcohol and/or drug consumption; and 2) participants' responses may be restricted through fear of law enforcement intervention. However, both concerns were mitigated by the increased confidentiality and anonymity afforded by informal interviews in an external setting. Similarly, although the effect of time constraints on qualitative research have been widely discussed (Berg, 2007; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998), particularly in terms of the reliability and validity of data collected, it was not a concern in this study. The average length of interview was 90 minutes, with a range from 1-2 hours, and interviewees were offered regular breaks if required.

A key part of the interview process was the interview schedule (see Appendix 5, p. 293), in terms of the structure and scope of the questions asked, and their capacity to garner valuable data. This was largely guided by the pilot study, which highlighted the need to revise the quantity, order and content of questions to ensure relevance to the research aims as well as keep within the time constraints of the interview. These revisions not only enhanced the quality of the interview process (Seale, 2004) but also ensured that it was not too onerous for interviewees who may have already been reluctant to discuss sensitive topics. In particular, the interviews were semi-structured, which allowed them to be driven by participants themselves and therefore embed the data in a more personal and contextual narrative of their perceptions of this social environment. The semi-structured nature also allowed the researcher-participant relationship to build and for the conversation to flow naturally, which is an important feature of qualitative studies (Berg, 2007; Noaks & Wincup, 2004; McCracken, 1988). The semi-structured nature also ensured that the interviews followed a general pattern, which is essential for data consistency and reliability (Berg, 2007; Noaks & Wincup, 2004; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The interview schedule was divided into four sections that moved gradually from broad questions about interviewees' experiences of Adelaide nightclubs, to more in-depth questions about leisure within a broader

socio-cultural context, risk and risk-taking and drug use within nightclubs which, for some, included discussion of their own methamphetamine use. Although not always presented in the same order due to the semi-structured nature of the interviews, all sections were completed by participants. To this end, the data obtained from the interviews was thematically coded, with participants' responses disaggregated into themes that reflect the four categories identified above. These categories were largely informed by the pilot study, as well as the preliminary data analysis from the survey questionnaire. In this way, the themes closely reflected those in the survey, thereby enabling useful, value-adding comparative analyses while also allowing elaboration on key points, which are teased out in the qualitative analyses presented in chapter 7.

That the interviews were semi-structured and allowed the researcher to engage in dialogue with participants was valuable as it enabled the collection of more detailed information, not only about certain behaviours or attitudes of participants, but also the decision-making processes that underpinned them. Specifically, the participants were invited to reflect on their responses to particular questions, including responses from other participants, to delve further into *why* they had answered in the way that they did. For example, it was evident from the body language and terms used by one participant, 'Ariel' (aged 24, user), that she was reluctant to discuss certain aspects of her methamphetamine use. However, her interview revealed that it was not her drug use that evoked concern, rather, a number of negative and extremely personal problems had occurred alongside her drug use, which triggered these emotions. At this point the question arose whether to continue the interview, not only in regard to ensuring the quality of data obtained, but more importantly to maintain the safety and well-being of the participant. However, after a brief pause in the interview, the participant assured the researcher that she was able to continue. Nonetheless, it highlights the need to be aware of possible ethical and practical issues that present in qualitative studies. Moreover, in addition to discussions of sensitive topics, such as drug use, it may also be necessary to acknowledge that the issues faced may not be the focus of the research, but that they may occur as a result of the research.

Within qualitative research methodologies, in particular those that use interviews, a well-prepared plan, a flexible and adaptive approach, and an established researcher-participant relationship are essential features of a successful project (Berg, 2007; Noaks & Wincup, 2004). Overall, the interviews conducted within this study provided in-depth, contextual and relevant empirical data about young people's use of the Adelaide nightclub scene and the presence of drugs within these venues. In re-stating an aim of the qualitative methodology highlighted above, an important feature noted throughout the interview process was that, although the temptation as a researcher is to lead the research (McCracken, 1988), what was found was that listening to these young people tell their stories yielded richer and more complex data, while still managing to follow the structure outlined in the interview schedule. This highlights the importance of the semi-structured nature of the methodology, the rapport developed with the participants and the guidance provided by the pilot study findings. As such, the data obtained from the qualitative methodology should be read in the context of the young people who offered it and within the dynamic social environment in which it was obtained, which is discussed further in the next section.

3.6.4 *Nightclub Ethnography*

This section discusses the value of ethnographic research, particularly in studies of hard-to-reach populations (Bennett, 2003; Lyng, 1998; Adler, 1990), and outlines the practical and theoretical challenges faced by ethnographers and highlights the contribution of this method to the overall research.

3.6.4.1 The Need for Participant Observation

Although review of the methodological literature highlights a lack of clarity about what ethnography actually is, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995, p. 2, emphasis in original) suggest that “the boundaries around ethnography are *necessarily* unclear”, so as to encompass a number of broad strategies that seek to reveal and acknowledge people's daily lives and the meaning they attribute to the experiences had within them. Ethnography is an explanation of how a cultural setting or a specific group of people operates. It focuses on their behaviour,

attitudes and experiences and the contextual details of their actions (Tewksbury, 2009). As Moore (2002, p. 272) emphasises, ethnographic research “involves long-term immersion in a social context as those with whom the ethnographer moves go about their daily (and nightly) activities”.

From a theoretical perspective, the purpose of this method for this research was to identify how the physical characteristics of nightclubs and the social interactions experienced within them contributed to young people’s understanding, use, and perception of methamphetamines within this social context. It is noted that there is limited ethnographical club-drug data in Australia (Moore, 2002; MCDS, 2001). That there is limited data on young people’s use of the nightclub is because little research has actually been conducted in this social space (Moore, 2002). As a result, the benefit of this approach here was that in complementing the other methods employed in this study and providing context to the findings obtained, the observation of participants *in situ* not only provided access to the relevant sample, but also to a form of data regarding youth leisure practices, including the use of drugs, and social interactions that has not otherwise been collected. In practice, the observation of participants extended from May until August 2010, coinciding in large part with the survey data collection. As identified above, the field work was conducted over 54 days that encompassed five venues, four days of the week, and ranged from 7pm to 3am on any given night. A total of 175 hours was spent within these sites. Observations were conducted on 31 of these days, at a range of times and for a total of 77 hours to ensure consistency and random sampling (see Table 3.3, page 79). The only exception to this strategy was when venues held themed nights, hosted visiting international and interstate DJs, or sponsored fashion shows that by their nature required alternative strategies, often formed by discussion with participants and other patrons. Overall, however, using this method it was possible to gain valuable insights with which to contextualise the data obtained from survey questionnaires and informal interviews.

Within the scope of the broader methodological triangulation employed in this thesis, it is important to frame the specific role and utility of the ethnographic

observation of participants as a discrete research method. The use of participant observation as part of a broad nightclub ethnography was not intended, or indeed able to match the function or extent of other ethnographies (see Flood, 2005; Monaghan, 2004). Indeed, the utility of the ethnographic observation in this project was constrained to a number of key purposes. In the first instance, attending Adelaide nightclubs was a useful source for identifying and approaching potential participants for the purpose of completing the survey questionnaire and follow-up semi-structured interview. However, its utility was most evident in its capacity to value-add to the other research methods by providing detailed, first-hand experiences that created context and increased knowledge otherwise not possible. It allowed the research to situate participants' responses and vignettes more accurately, which amplified the nuances in the data. As identified in the previous paragraph, the use of ethnographic observation was intended more to complement and situate the other features of the triangulation process – to serve as the “glue”, so to speak – rather than as a stand-alone data source (as in Monaghan, 2004, for example).

Elaborating further on this point, it is noted that the ethnographic observation of participants provided an opportunity to achieve an ethical position and, importantly, what could be considered more as an “insider's” view of this space, which to-date has been absent in both policy and academic debate and research in South Australia. This approach not only served to provide access to the nightclub scene and the people that inhabit it, but also to a large extent reflected the intimate, visceral and contextual nature of the relationships (with each other, the space and with illicit and licit drugs) and social atmosphere inherent in this space. As such, it is argued that whilst this method has constrained value as a direct data source in this context, its utility in framing and providing context to the research environment and participants was instrumental in this research and served as an effective part of a broader methodology. Understanding of the process associated with this method and how it was employed within the Adelaide nightclub scene is therefore the logical next step, and is discussed herein.

3.6.4.2 Ethnography in Practice

In discussing the practical elements of this study it is necessary to recognise that although ethnographic research appears straightforward, in practice it is a challenging data collection method (Tewksbury, 2009). This is especially pertinent when observation is not openly disclosed to those being studied, as was the case in this study given the sensitive nature of the research. This has a number of implications for the process of observation where, in returning to an earlier discussion (section 3.3), the researcher's role necessarily swings toward that of an 'insider' given that not all contexts are accessible to an 'outsider' (Tewksbury, 2009). For example, not only must a covert researcher make sense of the actions and structures inherent in a sometimes unfamiliar environment, but also must manage their own presence in the field so as not to be detected and thus disrupt the setting they are observing (Tewksbury, 2009). Although this is a persistent concern in ethnographic studies, in this research it did not appear to pose a significant problem.

Due to the length of this project, as well as the physical and social characteristics of the nightclub environment, which included drug use, a number of strategies were adopted to manage the researcher's position within the field. Gaining understanding of the nightclub environment involved analysis of attendance, drinking and behavioural patterns across the research sites (which entailed attending each venue), being seen to consume alcohol,¹³ listening to contemporary music, and engaging in conversations with patrons and staff. Notably, however, there were limitations in the scope or level of immersion within this social context. Indeed, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995, p. 104) describe the roles adopted by ethnographers on a continuum from complete participation to observation only. Given the ethical, safety and personal concerns related to a true ethnographic observation of club drug use, the researcher's role in the field could be considered as somewhere between these extremes. At no point were drugs used by the researcher. In addition, after a number of field excursions and in recognition of the sometimes arduous and late-night schedule of

¹³ As noted earlier, it is important to acknowledge that alcohol was not consumed. This appearance was merely illustrative to adhere to social norms; in other words to 'fit in'.

this research, a strategy was required to maintain the researcher's well-being and facilitate a regular attendance schedule. As such, active and reflexive strategies were developed that enabled the creation of a schedule of venue attendance. Specifically, in order to address these concerns, research was not generally conducted on consecutive nights, except on occasions when special events at venues required it, and for an average of only 3-4 hours on a given night.

Overall this strategy proved to be effective, enabling the researcher to access each of the research venues, and surrounding areas, in an appropriate, timely and safe manner, which positively contributed to the data collection process and research generally. It has been noted that the goal of the ethnographer is to provide "an analytic description of the setting under study that allows readers to not only understand how the setting is structured and operates, but also why it is the way that it is" (Tewksbury, 2009, p. 46); the use of ethnography within this mixed-methodology has gone some way to achieving this and has provided a useful snapshot of the Adelaide nightclub scene.

3.7 The process of analysis

The previous sections have described the data collection process employed in this mixed-methodology. This section will explain how the data was coded and how these codes were applied to guide the analysis of the data. It will also consider the validity and reliability of the data analysis process and the data it produced.

A key research objective was to examine the effect of Adelaide nightclub drug use on risk perceptions from the perspectives of the young people who 'live' this experience. A consistent challenge to youth club drug research, however, has been the limited (or often non-existent) voice of these young people in providing contextual descriptions of the nightclub and drug scenes (Eiserman et al., 2003). Therefore, as discussed above, providing these participants with the opportunity to tell their stories has been a difficult task. However, given the complex nature of the sample population and the methodology employed to investigate it, understanding and grouping the data in order to gain meaning and insight into this

social context appeared to be an even harder task. As such, the codification process was an important stage of the data analysis (Silverman, 2010; Bryman, 2008), in which themes were established and grouped, according to the key research topics.¹⁴ This was a complex and multistage process given the mixed-methodology data collection strategy, but it contributed to the application of codes to the data.

This study employed content analysis, the significance of which has been well-established in both quantitative and qualitative research (Tewksbury, 2009; Krippendorff, 2004; Basit, 2003; Neuendorf, 2002; Lupton, 1999c). Content analysis focuses on how meaning is constructed, replicated and communicated, through common patterns and the categorisation of similar text (Silverman, 2010; Tewksbury, 2009). However, it is important to note that, in contrast to its original form, in this analysis evaluation of the frequency of particular phrases in the data was not viewed as an effective coding strategy, for two reasons. Firstly, many key phrases appeared in numerous responses. An evaluation of the frequency of these phrases would have only clouded the data and not said anything about their significance in participants' responses. Secondly, the fundamental characteristic of this research is that young people's perceptions of risk are subjective. Therefore knowing that participants' responses were similar in terms of content is useful, but what is more valuable is identifying how they expressed themselves and their perceptions, and this could not have been gained from a statistical or frequency analysis. As such, this content analysis refers to what participants said, how they said it and also how they interpreted it (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The coding of data has an important role in analysis as it allows the researcher to gain an understanding of the social world under scrutiny and the way in which participants view it (Basit, 2010). In this sense, the researcher was able to listen to the participants and use their responses to construct a view of the Adelaide night-time economy and their roles within it (Basit, 2003). This constituted a way to emphasise the interviewees' opinions and stories rather than the researcher's point

¹⁴ These topics were developed by the research aims and the pilot study findings, as well as part of a reflexive process in which participant data was repeatedly evaluated throughout the project.

of view. Consequently, in order to code the data a thematic form of content analysis was conducted (Ezzy 2002), coding by significant sentences, paragraphs relating to themes, narratives about particular incidents, and the structure of the interview questions. As the semi-structured interviews involved open-ended questions, the codes used were applied as a layer on top of the data, and hence were more thematic in their use (rather than in terms of frequency) (Ezzy, 2002). The coding process was therefore organised in relation to the grouping of responses to particular questions;¹⁵ for example, how risk was conceptualised by participants and in what contexts, as well as how this was guided by their personal characteristics (i.e. user or non-user).

An important feature of this approach was that the themes used to structure and code the data were guided, in large part, by the participants themselves as the core themes were constructed with reference to the pilot study data, the quantitative data and accounts from ethnographical field observations, and as such reflected the broader themes of the Perception of Risk framework. The significance of this method is that it provided a degree of measurement validity (Seale, 1999, p. 35) and reliability (Silverman, 2010) through the construction of a framework of comparable participant responses. However, it is recognised that two key issues linked to the justification of validity and reliability remain. The first is about the consistency of the data collection, and the second is the consistency of the analysis of the collected data. In terms of the first point, the validity and reliability of data collection lie in the fact that the selection of respondents was not conditioned by their degree of agreement with the research aims and objectives, but according to the principles of random sampling. As such, the outcomes of this thesis have not been founded solely on what Seale (1999, p. 75) emphasises as a “personal perspective”, which in this case could have been criticised as having listened only to drug users who, historically, have been considered deviant. In addressing the originality of this study, this approach instead encompasses a diverse range of perspectives that are representative of the views of the sample

¹⁵ The use of software programmes such as nVivo in the data analysis process was considered. However, given the theoretical and practical limitations mentioned above related to the need for a contextual and interpretative analysis rather than a statistical one, the encoding process was done manually, which also allowed the researcher greater familiarity with the data.

population and provide a unique examination of club drug risks in the Adelaide night-time economy. Moreover, the data also indicated that club drug research, particularly in relation to youth, needs to be modified to maintain relevance within a harm reduction approach.

In relation to the second key issue, Silverman (2005, p. 48, emphasis in original) emphasises that empirical research should be “concerned with data *analysis* rather than the mechanics of data gathering”, particularly in relation to the consistency of data collected. This refers to the type of questions used, how they are employed and, crucially, how they are interpreted by the researcher. This is especially pertinent in a mixed-methodology where there are different aims and methods employed in the same sample population. Qualitative research is focused on looking at the data, finding patterns and similarities across cases, times and instances and interpreting what these issues mean. Quantitative research, on the other hand, is focused on testing the strength and persistence of relationships between distinct measures (Tewksbury, 2009, p. 53). Thus, inherent in discussion of both concepts is the perception that the researcher knows how to interpret the qualitative data, or knows the quantitative variables being used and how they measure particular outcomes. This assumption challenges the validity and reliability of the data analysis process through highlighting its subjectivity (Silverman, 2010; Denzin & Lincoln, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). However, such analyses are not necessarily destined to fail, as by its nature data analysis involves a degree of reflexivity and subjectivity (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Denzin, 1970). Therefore, as was the case in this study, the researcher interprets the data based on their individual knowledge and background, which Seale (1999, p. 41) claims is a valid explanation of their reality.

Overall, this research strategy was invaluable as it provided access to complex data that has previously been absent from traditional drug studies. In particular, the survey data analysis and interview transcribing processes were constructive features of the overall analysis as they allowed a closer examination of the data to provide valid and more reliable analyses of these young people’s perceptions. Although necessarily subjective in nature, this process of data analysis was found

to be a strength of the research as it provided these young people with a voice within what has typically been an expert field. Using a flexible approach that encouraged reflection, openness, and an evolving approach to critical discussion from both the researcher and the participants being studied, this research took an important step toward understanding young people's perceptions of risk within the club drug scene.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed how the task of collecting and analysing the empirical data was achieved within a mixed-method research strategy. In achieving this, the chapter provided an overview of the rationale behind a mixed-methods approach, and described the contribution each approach offered. It also described the participants were accessed and the difficulties encountered. This strategy was invaluable in that it was able to integrate three key methods into a comprehensive snapshot of the participants' experiences or 'stories', and how these influence their perceptions of risk. It is important, however, to acknowledge that this research does not encompass an evaluation of the risk perceptions of young people who do not attend nightclubs, a limitation that could be addressed by further research that incorporates a larger and more diverse sample of youth in the general community, a point that is considered in the conclusion to this thesis (chapter 8).

Overall, however, this research constitutes an innovative effort to understand young people's place in the club drug scene. Using this research methodology to examine the ways of young people who frequent Adelaide nightclubs has produced empirical data that is not available anywhere else. This is not only a significant practical outcome but also has a number of implications for how drug use should be considered, particularly within future government policies and initiatives. Another original feature of this methodology is its evaluation of young nightclubbers generally, encompassing both users and non-users. In addition, in contrast to previous studies of youth illicit drug use, this study examined young

people's behaviour *in situ*, which has not been done before in this research context in relation to methamphetamines.

This research also evaluated young people's risk perceptions and how these guide behaviour, rather than assessing the actual risks associated with the nightclub, which provides a new perspective in this area. Existing literature related to the club-drug field has typically focused on narrow definitions of risk, stereotypical descriptions of young drug-users and what impact this has on illicit drug policy (typically expressed by zero tolerance paradigms), rather than examining young people's awareness and understanding of risk within the social space of the nightclub and how this influences their behaviour. A key outcome of this study, therefore, has been the recognition that young people's 'lay' experiences must be taken into consideration when examining illicit drug use within Adelaide nightclubs, as individuals' perceptions differ according to their experience, knowledge, and desires within the nightclub. Specifically, this methodology has helped to identify that there is a substantial gap between how experts and young people each view the nightclub as a site of youthful social leisure consumption, which forms the basis of the argument presented in this thesis.

CHAPTER 4

SETTING THE (NIGHTCLUB) SCENE: IDENTIFYING THE CLUB AND THE CLUBBER

4.0 Introduction

For many young people nightclubs provide a unique and private space that represents freedom, independence and status. In Australia, the opportunity to attend nightclubs (by reaching the age of 18) is seen as a rite of passage for some youth, which symbolises their transition into adulthood and where they gain greater control over their lives, particularly in how they spend their leisure time. A number of studies have identified that consumption practices within the nightclub play a central role in this transition (Measham, 2004; Brain, 2000; France, 2000; Hesmondalgh, 1998), with many young people “attempting to find self-fulfillment and ways of identifying with other young people through ... consumption” (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997, p. 61). The opportunity to attend nightclubs, where the consumption of image, music, licit and illicit substances and social interactions is ubiquitous, thus provides many young people with feelings of independence, as well as opportunities to build identity and strengthen social relationships (see Measham, 2004; Chatterton & Hollands, 2003; Malbon, 1999). However, many sources have acknowledged (Dew et al., 2007; Kelly, 2007; O’Malley, 2004; Lupton & Tulloch, 2002b) that the changes inherent in this transition may result in young people facing greater risks in their leisure time due to the increased opportunities and choices associated with the nightclub. Similar to what has been experienced in the UK (Cusick & Kimber, 2007; Buchanan, 2004) and the US (Bahora et al., 2009; Kelly et al., 2006) in the last decade, one of the most significant risks identified by governments in Australia has been the increased prevalence of drug use in nightclubs, and its effects on individuals and the broader community (Black et al., 2008; Degenhardt et al., 2005d). This concern has been particularly notable in South Australia, where youth methamphetamine use has been more prevalent than in any other Australian jurisdiction (DASSA, 2006b; DUMA, 2005). A prominent feature that underlies this concern has been that many experts assume that the meaning youth derive from the nightclub is deviant and inextricably

linked to the use of drugs (Hunt, Evans & Kares, 2006), which has only further problematised young people (Moore & Miles, 2004). Many of the risks associated with the Adelaide nightclub scene in recent years have been linked to the use of illicit drugs (Ali et al., 2006; DASSA, 2003), which has rationalised the identification of a number of 'club-drug' risks, and in turn, a series of punitive responses to them (Nicholas, 2001). However, despite these risks many young people continue to attend Adelaide nightclubs, and more frequently than in previous decades (DASSA, 2006b; DASSA, 2003). These findings indicate that the club-drug-risk nexus is thus not as linear as others have suggested (Buxton & Dove, 2008; Leshner, 2005), and that nightclubs instead may encompass a broader range of forms of consumption that have a complex influence on young people's leisure practices in the nightclub.

To understand the interplay between youth and the nightclub and its relationship with the use of illicit drugs, this chapter is divided into two parts: the *club* and the *clubber*. Part one describes the Adelaide nightclub scene, outlining its physical and socio-cultural characteristics and how these influence young people's leisure time in the nightclub. In describing these characteristics, part one identifies a number of global changes in how the nightclub and broader night-time economy have been fashioned around the needs of young people, which suggest that nightclub and other business owners recognise the role that consumption plays for young people, thus locating the nightclub as a site of leisure consumption. Part two builds on this foundation by exploring the characteristics of contemporary Adelaide 'clubbers' to reveal what consumption means for young people in the nightclub. In doing so, this section delineates the role and meaning of drugs, particularly methamphetamines, in young people's leisure consumption. The findings obtained challenge subcultural perspectives of the role of drugs in the nightclub and stereotypical depictions of drug users. They also identify the emergence of a more responsible youth profile that frames the use and meaning of the nightclub for young people in broader terms of leisure consumption, which influences how risk is viewed by youth in the nightclub.

4.1 THE 'CLUB' AS A SITE OF CONSUMPTION

A number of studies have identified changes in the global community in recent decades that have placed consumption, notably the consumption of goods, as a central cultural feature of society in terms of individuals' efforts to create self-identity (Murphy, 2000; Young, 1999; Beck, 1999; Giddens, 1991). Within such a consumer society, people are often encouraged to believe that pleasure can be achieved by purchasing and consuming a wide range of products (Perrone, 2006; see also, Fiske, 2004; Miles, 1998). However, many studies have also identified that some products and experiences appear to exist outside conventional consumption boundaries and are therefore discussed within a discourse of risk (O'Malley & Valverde, 2004; Murphy, 2000). Perhaps the most prominent form of consumption featured in these discourses has been young people's use of drugs, particularly within leisure settings such as the nightclub (France, 2000; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). Indeed, many studies have examined young people's club drug use, claiming that such forms of consumption have little or no positive value (Hunt, Evans & Kares, 2006; Miller et al., 2005; Miles, 2000), thus rationalising their classification as a 'risk'.

However, a number of sources have identified that there is a problem in locating young people's use of drugs within discourses of risk in that doing so often neglects discussion of what drug use means for young people (Moore & Miles, 2004; France, 2000). Governmental discourses often discount pleasure as a motive for drug consumption, both licit and illicit, and this perspective is used to problematise drug users (O'Malley & Valverde, 2004; Valverde, 1998). Although this rationalises punitive responses, it limits what these studies can contribute to knowledge. Such approaches are also limited to narrow, linear conceptualisations of individuals' experiences, which prevent comprehension of the role of broader cultural influences (Moore & Miles, 2004), such as the influence of the nightclub setting itself. Specifically, without immersion in the everyday realities of young people, researchers cannot comprehensively understand how value or meaning is conferred "as nothing has value by itself" (Rigakos, 2008, p. 243). Thus, as identified by many sources, greater research attention is needed to address the symbolic and practical

significance of consumption, particularly the links between consumption practices, identity and the role that consumption spaces, such as nightclubs, play in this process (see Moore & Miles, 2004; Malbon, 1998; Mort, 1996; Crewe & Lowe, 1995).

This is important within the present research context, where a series of changes have been observed with regard to the Adelaide nightclub scene, which have affected the role of consumption in young people's use of these spaces. Similar to what Hobbs and colleagues (2000, p. 707) noted in relation to certain venues in the UK, traditional or 'local' leisure venues in Adelaide are being replaced by large "disco bars that feature an undercurrent of heightened sexuality, dimmed ... lighting..., booming sound systems, and always the necessary cast of bouncers on the door". In this chapter it is suggested that, as discussed by Rief (2009), the study of club cultures needs to be placed within broader contexts such as urban regeneration and the development of urban nightlife areas, to evaluate how these spaces are changing in a broader globalised environment, and what effect this has on young people's cultural practices of consumption, including the use of drugs. The aim of the first part of this chapter, therefore, is to describe the physical and social characteristics of the nightclub and examine how these interact to create a consumption space, in order to identify that nightclubs have significant meaning for young people and to articulate that broad principles of consumption, and not merely the use of drugs, play an important role in this process.

4.1.1 The characteristics of the club

Many studies have identified that the urban nightlife spaces available to young people have changed significantly over the past few decades, which has transformed young people's consumption practices (Rigakos, 2008; Roberts, 2006; Purcell & Graham, 2005), particularly in regards to the use of drugs (Reith, 2004; Fischer et al., 2004). These changes have formed part of a new global trend, in which large corporately-owned nightclubs that produce exciting social environments for young people around the world are "changing and homogenizing [sic] the public drinking

cultures in many large cities” (Purcell & Graham, 2005, p. 135). Many researchers have argued that the increasing influence of commercial interests in the nightclub industry around the world can be viewed as a reflection of the broader changes in the global economy (Miles & Paddison, 2005; Chatterton & Hollands, 2003; 2002; Hollands, 2002). In particular, Chatterton and Hollands (2003, pp. 369-370) note that traditional leisure spaces are being displaced by “gentrified nightlife environments that consciously sanitise and exclude the poor and disenfranchised, reinforced through subtle demarcations based around dress and style codes, interior design, drink prices, and entry requirements”. Central to this shift is the understanding that while it has been primarily driven by broader economic considerations, of necessity it has included a need to change perceptions of fear often associated with nightlife spaces in order to revitalise city spaces to provide the new venues (Thomas & Bromley, 2000). However, what this research identifies is that in doing so, the nightlife space of the city has experienced a series of other changes that paradoxically make it available for youth consumption, which includes the use of drugs.

This shift describes recent developments in Adelaide, where the tradition of suburban and city pubs is giving way to mainstream and commercially-orientated nightclubs that target a more urban profile of young people. Although Adelaide has seen a substantial increase in the level of up-market development to ‘local’ pubs, which can be seen to reflect the broader social and economic values of urbanisation (Miles, 1998), the meaning and value of these venues has also changed. These venues have focused on providing a high quality contemporary space for a broad spread of age groups including young people that is frequented during the week, often after work, and during the day on weekends. However, at the same time there has been a shift away from pubs as the predominant leisure venue for young people following the development of a new urban leisure landscape in the Adelaide CBD which, especially on Friday and Saturday nights, transforms into an up-market entertainment and leisure centre. Although city centres have traditionally been viewed as places of entertainment and leisure (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003), a feature of the recent

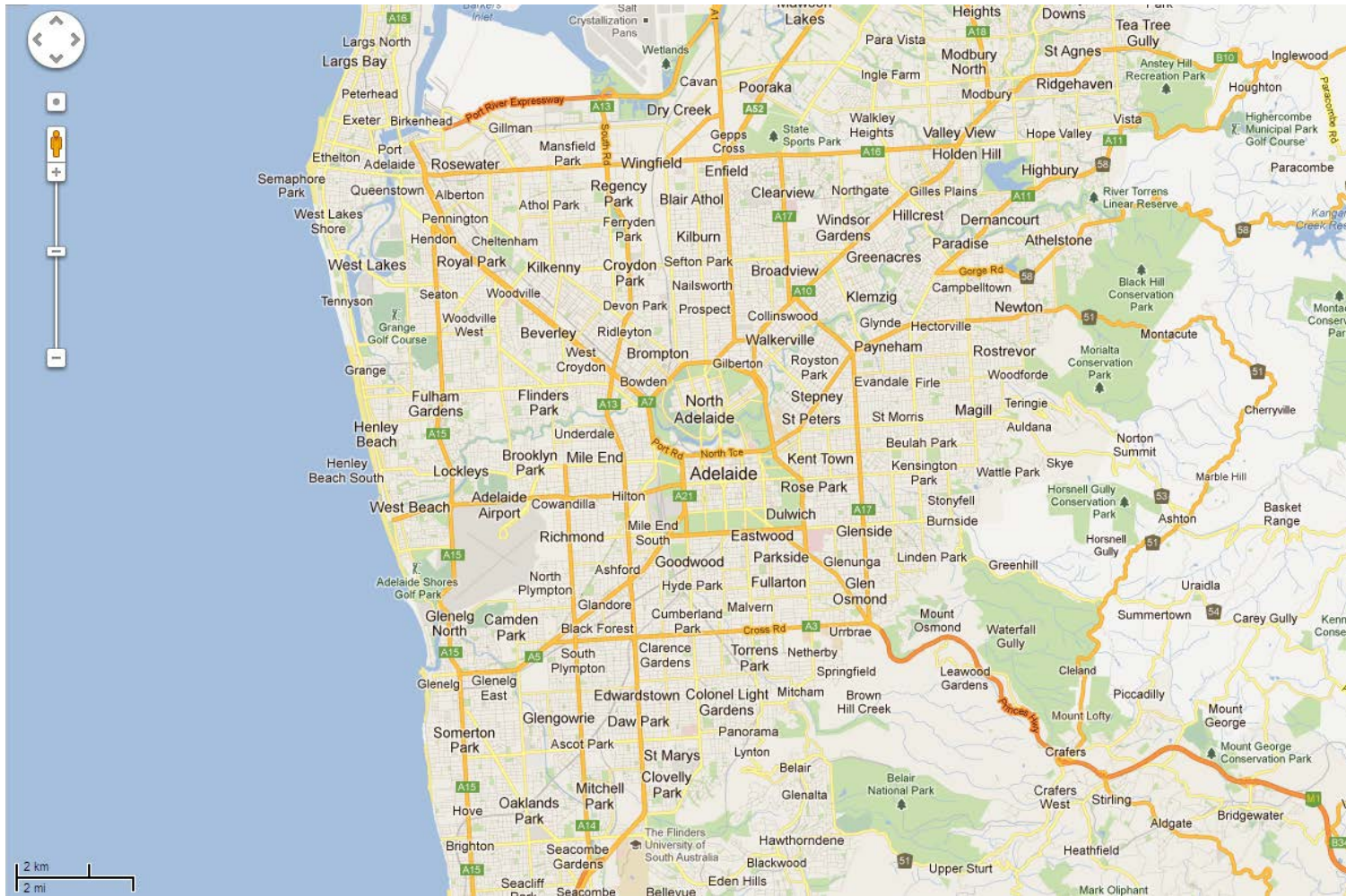
urbanisation has been the promotion of the wider night-time economy,¹ which is characterised by “the ritual descent of young adults into city-centre nightclubs especially during the weekend” (Hollands, 1995, p. 95). The impact of this urbanisation is evident in the physical characteristics and type of services provided by Adelaide nightclubs and the businesses that surround them. Understanding how these spaces are occupied by the actors within this atmosphere (young people, club owners, and shop owners) is vital, as it highlights the importance of the nightclub to the night-time economy and young people’s consumption of it.

4.1.1.1 *Location, Location, Location: The City as a Site of Consumption*

An important aspect of the urbanisation of the city as a nightlife space described in these cultural studies (see Chatteron & Hollands, 2003; 2002; Hollands, 2002) has been the focus on the physical area that nightclubs occupy, and the process by which previously marginal areas have been transformed into licensed venues that now represent major features of the commercial viability of the city as a night-time economy (O’Connor & Wynne, 1996). As such, it is necessary to recent changes to the city of Adelaide that have triggered this transformation (SAPOL, 2010). A significant factor has been the steady growth of the city generally, which has occurred in particular ways. In the last decade Adelaide has experienced a 22 percent increase in the number of people working in the city, an increase in the number of students enrolled in city educational and vocational institutions, a 42 percent increase in the city’s residential population (between 2001 and 2007), a 51 percent increase in young adults and tertiary-aged students living in the city, and three times the percentage of 18-25 year-olds living in the city compared with the wider Adelaide metropolitan area (ACC_a, 2009a). Given the geographical layout of greater Adelaide, in which the city is largely isolated (see Figure 4.1), such increases and changes to the city’s population have had a substantial affect on public spaces.

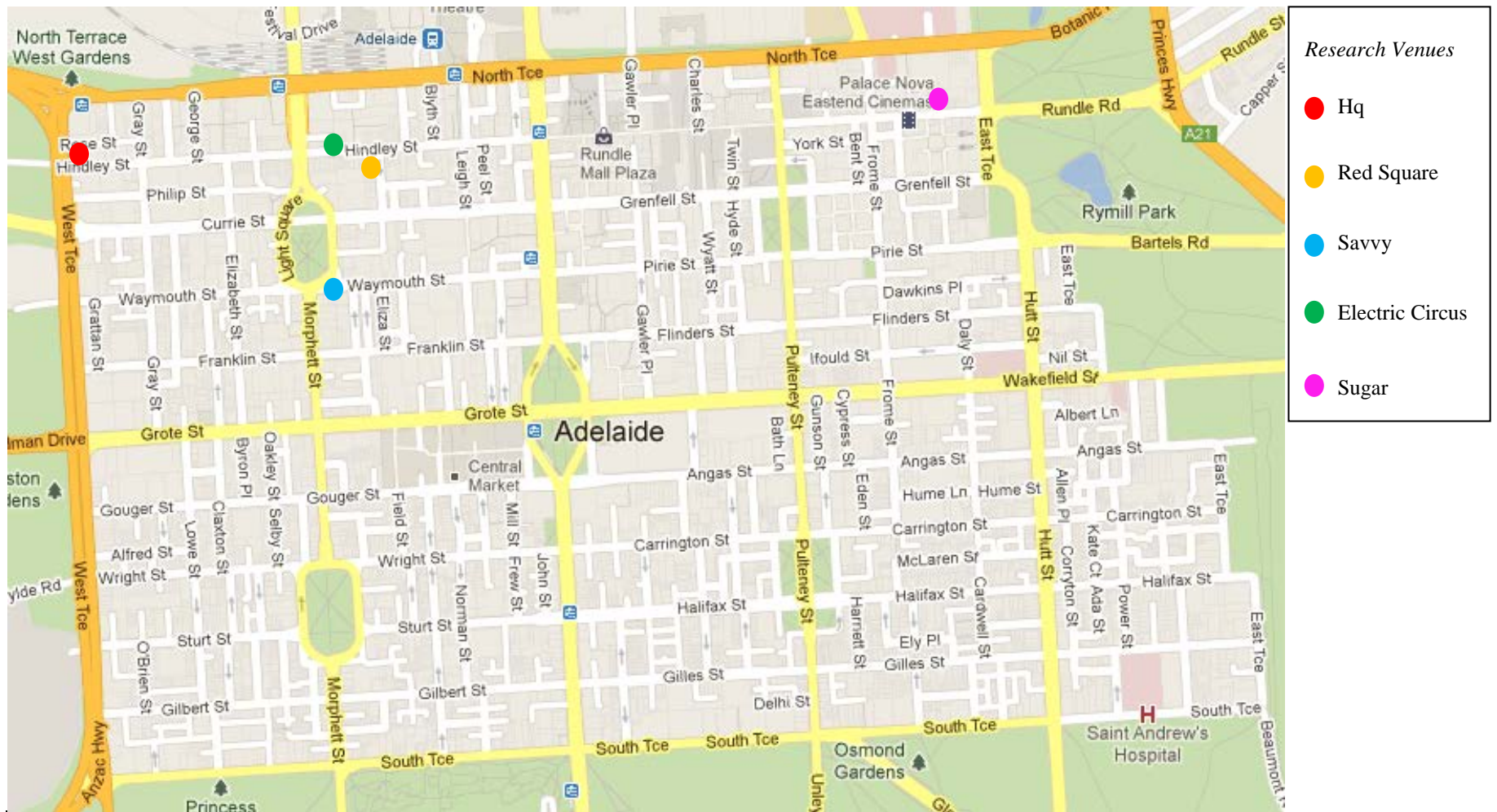
¹ The term ‘night-time economy’, created by Hobbs and colleagues (2003) describes the expansion in the numbers of bars and nightclubs operating with extended licenses into the early hours of the morning that resulted in dramatic increases in night-time entertainment in the UK (Roberts, 2006), which has also been experienced in South Australia in the last decade.

Figure 4.1 City of Adelaide and wider metropolitan area



Source: Tele Atlas (2011).

Figure 4.2 City of Adelaide and location of key research venues



Source: Tele Atlas (2011).

The increased number of people, in particular youth, attracted to the city has had a considerable impact on its nightlife atmosphere. In the desire to revitalise the city of Adelaide as a social space, which could be argued forms part of a broader gentrification of the city (see Chatterton & Hollands, 2002; Hollands, 1995), the centralisation of leisure sites has formed an ‘entertainment district’. In Adelaide this contains a large concentration of nightclubs, pubs, restaurants, hotels and shops in the north-western corner of the city, which is colloquially known as the ‘West End’. The majority of nightclubs are situated on or near Hindley Street (see Figure 4.2), which is located at the heart of the West End. This is where the most popular nightclubs in Adelaide are found, including four of the five main research sites, with *Sugar* the only venue located elsewhere (see Figure 4.2). During the weekend (or during specific events), more than 40,000 people occupy this area, frequenting more than 30 clubs, bars and lounges, as well as a wide variety of 24-hour food and leisure venues (Anderson, 2011; DASSA, 2007). This is due to the fact that the city centre is the only location in South Australia that has a large number of proximate entertainment venues. Although this notionally isolates it from the rest of the community (see Figure 4.1), it is a feature that is celebrated as it is perceived to centralise and enhance the “vibrancy and cultural vitality of the city” (ACC_a, 2009b, p. 1).

Given the creation of a centralised entertainment district, the specific location of nightclubs, how they relate to one another and the other shops and services that share this space, and how this relationship generates the experience of a ‘night-out’, is of particular significance to the appreciation of the city as an urban and contemporary social environment. Nightclubs appear to be central to this space and form the predominant site of leisure. As illustrated in the following comments, the location of popular nightclub venues and what they are able to provide for young people characterises the experience of leisure and its importance to young people:

“It’s all about having a good time and just getting your groove on. It’s how you spend a Friday night with your mates...a schnitty at the pub, drinks at Reds [*Red Square*], hopefully some ‘action’, a yiros at midnight, and then home by 3...that’s a good night...that’s what is good about Adelaide” (Tom, aged 21, user).

“It’s about the atmosphere...yeah definitely... you can go out with the girls and have a great night and meet people. It’s about having choices too...that’s what I like about [the city]...like if you’re not all having fun in one place ‘cause of the music or a guy is being sleazy or whatever, there are other options. Everyone around just seems to be having a good time and that makes you feel good too” (Becky, aged 18, non-user).

These statements capture the notion that the consumption of the nightclub is perceived by these young people as the consumption of ‘a good night’, centred on a dynamic social experience that does not appear to be available in other locations (Chatterton & Hollands, 2002). This perception is composed of a number of factors, the importance of which is viewed through the lens of how they affect young people’s experience of a ‘good night’. Despite revealing a common gender difference in what they each sought to gain from social interactions within the nightclub (Moss, Parfitt & Skinner, 2009), these comments also highlighted a series of shared values that were consistent across the sample and, notably, were shaped by the nightclub scene. Overall, these observations suggest that these young people, whether consciously or subconsciously, engage in a social routine that is guided by a wide range of sources in the nightclub, and which together constitute their ‘night out’.

4.1.1.2 *Consuming the Night*

From observing these young people *in situ* it can be identified that the site of young people’s leisure consumption is not limited to the nightclub. The provision of numerous food outlets and leisure options within the entertainment district contributes to a broader night-time economy. This not only highlights the importance of consumption, but also the role that the physical environment of the nightclub and surrounding spaces play in providing opportunities for it (Rigakos, 2008). Stepping outside any of the research sites during the fieldwork, it was evident that these young people also dominated the wider spaces of the entertainment district (which included footpaths, car parks, nature strips and venue entrances) and were engaging in numerous forms of consumption. For example, it was observed that when not in the nightclub most of these young people were content to ‘hang around’, representing a form of ‘chilling out’ (see section 7.6.1.4), using the surrounding space and

businesses/shops to catch up with friends, consume energy drinks (given their lower cost in local delis than in nightclub venues) to enable further ‘clubbing’ and, given the often cold weather associated with the fieldwork period (see section 3.2.2), consume hot food from local pizza and yiros vendors. As has been observed in other studies of nightlife leisure consumption (Rigakos, 2008; Purcell & Graham, 2005; Chatterton & Hollands, 2002), these social practices are seen as a demonstration of social collectiveness or a part of ‘going out’, in that the consumption of leisure as a broad and inclusive concept brings these people together, in a sense, to celebrate the ‘night’ and their consumption of it. In addition to the sense of togetherness that these practices provided, many Adelaide clubbers also described narratives that suggested that participation in these broader forms of consumption was a marker of personal achievement given that they commonly occurred later in the evening (or early morning) and thus symbolised a successful ‘night out’. Self-reflections such as “we made it” and “I feel like I can go all night” were common among patrons in each of the research sites.

These observations serve to link young people’s use of nightclubs to the night-time economy as a whole and reflect an inherent sociality that is aimed at seeking pleasure, making the most of leisure time and ultimately having a good night out, the meaning of which will be discussed further in part two of this chapter. What is also important to note here is that the significance of this environment for young people appears to have been acknowledged by a night-time industry that has grown substantially in the last decade, with many establishments emerging to cater for this particular youth cohort. As Roberts (2006, p. 331; see also, Miles & Paddison, 2005) notes, cultural activities are important “catalysts for urban change and as important factors in the growth of the ‘new’ cultural industries”. This acknowledgement is apparent in the marketing strategies of nightclubs and how they promote a pleasure-orientated image to young people that not only draws customers into their venue, but also encompasses the broader night-time economy and the perception that it can cater for young people’s feelings, desires and ‘needs’. For example, as represented on its website, *Sugar* is described as:

“...a club for a discerning niche market looking for a late night up-market...friendly and creatively comfortable environment to relax and celebrate with friends without fear or worry; with great music from local, national and international disc jockeys and original art by local artists. A place where young people can dance the night away after eating in any one of the restaurants in the street, after the cinema or just wanting to kick on after the pub shuts, without having to leave the area” (Sugar Club, 2010).

In an industry in which the competition for young people’s patronage is high, it is not surprising that similar descriptions are found on each of the five research venue’s websites. What can be drawn from this is that not only is the location of the entertainment district important to its success, but also what each nightclub can provide to the young people that consume/inhabit it. As a number of studies have identified, providing a space that is focused on leisure consumption, in which there is ample access to food, an array of leisure activities and opportunities for pleasure is vital to the overall atmosphere of the night-time economy (see Rigakos, 2008; Chatterton & Hollands, 2002). Thus, not only does this analysis of the Adelaide nightclub scene highlight the importance of the physical environment in young people’s use of the night-time economy generally, but it also demonstrates that a shift has occurred in how this space is created for young people’s consumption, which has seen the development of nightclubs and the areas that surround them within a broader trend of the commercialisation and urbanisation of the city as a nightlife space.

4.1.1.3 *Inside the Club: The Role of Design*

Although research has examined the influence of internal design of nightclubs on violence and aggression within the night-time economy (Graham et al., 2006; Hauritz et al., 1998; MacIntyre & Homel, 1997; 1994), little research has examined the influence of design on young people’s consumption practices. In contrast to other areas, where analysts suggest that ‘curated consumption’ is driving time-poor consumers into the arms of a new breed of entrepreneurs, who pre-select for them what to buy, wear and drink (Trend Watching, 2009), nightclub owners are engaging interior designers who draw their inspiration from the demands, lifestyles and tastes of the consumer; that is, young people (Chatterton & Hollands, 2002; Hannigan, 1998). A common sentiment among club designers is that “when people are

uncomfortable because of poor air conditioning, they leave. They can't get a drink, they leave. There are always other places out there where they can be comfortable” (Telesco, 2005, p. 1). Creating a desirable and exciting space is therefore vital in facilitating young people’s leisure consumption, which reflects the importance of consumption for young people and also that nightclub owners are conscious of the need to provide such a space. On entering any of the five research venues, it was evident that the interior design of the club is equally as important to a nightclub’s image and role in providing a consumption space as its location. Similar to descriptions of other nightlife spaces (see Rigakos, 2008; Purcell & Graham, 2005), Adelaide venues convey a contemporary and up-market atmosphere, what Purcell and Graham (2005, p. 133) describe as “slick”, with contemporary images, art and music posters displayed in each venue, particularly *Hq*, given its additional role as a music venue. This was matched in each venue with vivid lighting displays, smoke-machines and a large supply of brightly-coloured balloons, glow sticks and streamers, which create a sense of escape to a different space (see below, section 4.2.3.1).

A notable feature of Adelaide nightclubs is that they are remarkably similar. The five research sites typically consisted of one main room (or ‘stage’), although *Hq* and *Red Square*, given their greater capacity, also have a number of smaller rooms adjacent to the main stage, to provide greater choice of DJs and opportunities for ‘chilling out’. The benefit of the general design of nightclubs is that it creates an atmosphere for patrons that enhances consumption. A prominent feature of the design is the use of mirrors and reflective surfaces, which appear in each of the research sites in some shape or form and take up a significant portion of the available wall space, which is a common feature of nightclubs as observed in other nightlife research (see Rigakos, 2008; Jackson, 2004; MacIntyre & Homel, 1994). Not only do the mirrors allow these clubs to manipulate the perceived size and atmosphere of the club through the combination of mirrors and lights, but from the observation of young people in the field, it can be identified that patrons use these surfaces to engage in self-reflection to ensure that they are looking good, and that they are seen to be looking good, which is important to the creation of a certain image (see below,

section 4.1.2.1). This was observed on a number of occasions, particularly when nightclub patrons were waiting to purchase drinks at the bar or go to the bathroom, as queues were common given the limited amenities compared with the number of patrons. The significance of the general design of the nightclub was articulated by a number of patrons, who suggested that nightclubs “know what young people need”, again highlighting nightclubs’ efforts to provide a particular environment for young people’s leisure consumption. This was also evident in the number of alcohol service areas observed in each venue. Despite alcohol being a core service offered by most, if not all, nightclubs (Moss et al., 2009), the number of service points is disproportionately high in Adelaide nightclubs given their size and number of patrons. It is argued that this reflects nightclub owners’ acknowledgment of the role of alcohol in young people’s social routine and their desire for immediate consumption (Rigakos, 2008; Chatterton & Hollands, 2002). As noted in other nightclub studies (Wells et al., 2010; Moss et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2006), alcohol consumption is a key feature of distinction within this social environment, particularly with regard to gender, with males primarily drinking beer, and females consuming a variety of cocktails and ‘mixers’ (alcohol mixed with non-alcoholic beverages, such as soft drinks and orange juice). These features thus distinguish the nature of the nightclub and the role of design in providing opportunities for consumption for young people.

4.1.1.4 *The Nightclub Schedule: The Importance of Being Available*

Another important characteristic of the night-time economy observed during this study was young people’s pattern of attendance or, more simply, at what times clubs were busy. As noted in other studies, the night-time economy is becoming an increasingly important market in consumerist societies, within which the concept of a 24-hour city has become a critical element in urban regeneration (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003; Crewe & Beaverstock, 1998). More than this, the consumption of leisure by young people associated with the night-time economy has also become a central tool of urban revitalisation (Lees, 2008; Chatterton & Hollands, 2002). The opening hours of the five nightclubs in this research are thus an example of the

intentional design to cater for this particular youth cohort, while simultaneously revitalising the broader environment as a physical space. Evident in Table 4.1, the opening hours of each of the research sites reflect this 24-hour trend, or at least the need to provide a space that is available after-hours, particularly after work.

Table 4.1 *Research venues' trading hours*

Club	Opening Hours	
<i>Hq</i>	Wednesday – Friday	9 pm – 3 am
	Saturday	9 pm – 6 am
<i>Red Square</i>	Daily	5 pm – late
<i>Sugar</i>	Daily	9 pm – late
<i>Electric Circus</i>	Friday and Saturday	10 pm – 5 am
<i>Savvy</i>	Friday – Sunday	9 pm – 5 am

Despite some variation across the venues, these Adelaide clubs appear to cater for a particular pattern of attendance, which matches participants' schedules observed in quantitative data (see section 5.2.2). For *Hq*, it was identified that, in order of preference, Saturday, Wednesday and Friday nights were most popular for this sample of young people. A notable feature of *Hq*'s schedule is its popularity on Wednesday nights, which is in contrast with many of the other venues in Adelaide, and can be attributed to the promotion of 'Flash Dance' (or 'Flashies'), an event that presents a wide variety of popular DJs, and sponsored and themed nights. It also reflects the fact that only a few other establishments are open mid-week. For example, due to their limited trading hours, *Electric Circus* and *Savvy* are attended only on Friday and Saturday nights. Similarly, although both open daily, *Red Square* and *Sugar* are found to be most popular on Friday and Saturday nights. There are some exceptions to this, however, as it was noted that a Sunday night followed by a public holiday also held substantial value for young people. Such a sequence not only provides greater opportunities for leisure, but as it is also valued by nightclubs due to the bonus revenue, larger and more popular events are often scheduled (and well-attended). The nightclub opening schedules indicate that despite current debate in Adelaide regarding the need for such extended traded hours, linked to concerns

surrounding youth binge-drinking (see Churchman, 2011; Anderson, 2011), the nightclub industry appears to want to meet the ‘needs’ of young people and provide opportunities for consumption. As identified earlier in this chapter, choice is a key aspect of young people’s consumption that guides how they view and use the nightclub and surrounding nightlife areas. The following comments highlight the nuanced fashion in which young people attend Adelaide clubs and how these spaces are created for them:

“We go out mostly on Friday and Saturday nights because there are more people out and about - it’s a better atmosphere. Like me, most of my friends are at uni or working part-time, so we can’t afford to go out every night. One of the main reasons we go out is to see each other and have fun, so it’s not as enjoyable when the whole group can’t get out – I think clubs tap into that, you know, and make sure that they are in touch with youth” (William, aged 22, non-user).

“Yeah most clubs are open just on weekends, which is great because I have no uni commitments...and although I sometimes work on the weekend, if I don’t have work the next day then I’ll go on both a Friday and a Saturday night...which also means I can go to more places and see more people” (Aimee, aged 18, non-user).

Although essentially similar in their provision of nightlife entertainment and leisure, these venues embrace a number of subtle differences in terms of music, style, atmosphere and mood, which are widely known by patrons and influence how they will spend their leisure time. As one participant revealed:

“Yeah...Friday and Saturday nights are great because everything is open so you have more choice and you can find something that everyone likes. Plus it means you can have a longer and bigger night because places are open all night and you can sleep in on Sunday. So yeah, if a [club] is playing [music] you don’t like or there’s trouble with other groups, it’s easy to move and still have a great night” (Eddie, aged 23, non-user).

This comment describes a common feature of a ‘night out’ frequently observed during the study, where participants would move between venues, often up to three times in a given night to take advantage of drink specials, sponsored events or in order to match their mood with a particular atmosphere. Although participants would not usually travel far when moving from one venue to another (often associated with females’ choice to wear high-heels), young people’s movement between nightclub

venues demonstrates that consumption itself is a key feature of young people's night-time experience which needs to be taken into account in understanding how the broader night-time economy is created and, in turn, used by young people. The patterns of attendance displayed by these young people and how they are guided by the location, design and scheduling of nightclubs are significant in understanding the nightclub as a site of consumption in that they delineate how the night-time economy is, in a sense, 'owned' by young people (Roberts, 2004), as captured in the following statement, which was common among the interviewees:

"It's about being out late and making use of the space when no one else is around...that's when [the city] becomes ours" (Emmy, aged 21, non-user).

Overall, the centralisation of leisure spaces in the confines of an entertainment district has identified the Adelaide nightclub as a site of consumption,² which not only conditions how young people engage this space, but also that nightclubs appear actively involved in encouraging and facilitating its consumption. Thus, in addition to describing the physical environment of the nightclub, understanding the broader culture of the nightclub and how it influences young people's cultural practices is also crucial, and is discussed herein.

4.1.2 Club culture

As identified above, in the last few decades numerous cultural and youth studies have sought to gain understanding of the relationship between young people and night-time leisure activities, particularly in city spaces, to conceptualise contemporary

² In this research context, that the nightclub has been constructed as a central leisure space is significant in that the diversity of nightlife spaces in Adelaide is not as great as in other night-time economies both nationally and internationally. As identified in the introduction to this thesis South Australia and Adelaide, in particular, are relatively conservative both socially and geographically, which limits the range of experiences available to young people and strengthens the position and role of the nightclub as the primary site of leisure consumption. This is also likely a product of the dominance of methamphetamines within this jurisdiction that has shaped a drug use culture where, in contrast to places that experience greater use of other forms of drugs such as ecstasy (see Yacoubian et al., 2003; Lenton, Boys & Norcross, 1997), rave parties and other leisure spaces are far less common.

youth cultural identities (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003; 2002; Hollands, 2002; 1995; Miles, 2000; O'Connor & Wynne, 1998). This has created substantial debate regarding young people's use of night-time leisure spaces, in which many analyses of the nightclub in particular have noted that understanding how collective cultural meanings are inscribed in commodities – otherwise known as club culture – is important to exploring the significance and impact of the nightclub environment on young people's consumption practices (Bennett, 2002a; 2000; Rojek, 2000). Specifically, club culture provides a means by which social structure is defined for and by individuals (O'Connor & Wynne, 1996), whereby young people take the cultural resources provided by the nightclub and use them as frameworks on which to construct their own meaning within the night-time economy (Bennett, 2000; Wynne & O'Connor, 1998). As described above, a notable characteristic of the redevelopment of leisure spaces and the commodities they provide is their influence on how the spaces of nightclubs are used by young people (Roberts, 2004), which many suggest is governed by cultural capital (MacRae, 2004; Hollands, 2002; Crewe & Beaverstock, 1998; Miles, 1998). In the Adelaide nightclub scene a range of factors contribute to the development of cultural capital, namely image and style, the acts of 'happy-snapping'³ and 'tweeting',⁴ gendered identities and dance music culture, the purpose and meaning of which are discussed in part two of this chapter (sections 4.2.2, 4.2.3). First, however, this section examines the culture of Adelaide nightclubs to evaluate how forms of cultural capital are made available for consumption by the 'scene' itself and how they influence young people's leisure time.

4.1.2.1 *Constructing Image and Style in the Club*

One of the key features of the urbanisation of city spaces to form entertainment sites has been the creation of particular types of nightclubs, which seek to provide a range

³ 'Happy-snapping' is the social practice of taking a large number of photos when engaging in a leisure activity, such as nightclubbing (Brooker, 2007).

⁴ 'Tweeting' is the process of sending/reading short text-based posts, a feature of the social networking site Twitter, which provide a real-time information network that connects its users to the latest stories, ideas, opinions and news.

of experiences to patrons that match their cultural needs (Chatterton & Hollands, 2002). Many researchers have created various typologies of night-time spaces in a range of settings, using music, social practices and patterns of alcohol consumption and illicit drug use as dimensions to explain how certain groups of young people use them (see Purcell & Graham, 2005; Chatterton & Hollands, 2002; Cavan, 1966). However, many of these typologies have been limiting or narrow in nature, which is likely a reflection of the characteristics of the setting in which they have been applied. Thus, given the comparatively conservative nature and relative homogeneity of venues in the Adelaide nightclub scene, this study seeks to characterise Adelaide nightclubs using a more general typology created by Chatterton and Hollands in the UK, one category of which is described as ‘mainstream’ spaces, which are characterised by “a culture of smart attire, commercial chart music, and pleasure-seeking and hedonistic behaviour” (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003, p. 136). Despite wanting to avoid being limited by such a typology, given that a main argument of this research is that these young people appear to resist being placed in distinct categories, there is significant value in describing the Adelaide nightclub in terms of how it affects Adelaide club culture. Specifically, a notable product of describing Adelaide nightclubs in this way is that image and style become central features of young people’s nightclub experience, where nightclubs appear actively involved in facilitating this process in order to enhance their appeal to young people. Understanding how nightclubs contribute to the construction of image and style is thus important.

An example of how nightclubs contribute to the development of image and style is evident in club venues’ use of the ‘line-up’, which serves two key functions. Firstly, venues use line-ups to manage crowd sizes and control the number of patrons entering the club at a given time, which enhances the perceived popularity of a venue as lines are mostly located in front of venues and thus a longer line is perceived to portray greater popularity (Rigakos, 2008). Highlighting the significance of this function in the Adelaide context, what was observed was that many nightclubs often limit the number of patrons allowed to enter in order to create a long line and, in turn,

the perception that their venue is popular, despite sometimes only being at half-capacity. The second function of the line-up is that it is used to control which patrons can enter venues, hence preserving the integrity of the club as a site of up-market pleasure (Purcell & Graham, 2005). In their study of Toronto nightclubs, Purcell and Graham describe instances of door-staff allowing attractive females to enter the club ahead of others; a practice they claim transforms the nightclub into a “reified bubble of governance, an architectural representation of inclusivity and exclusivity in the urban night-time economy” (Purcell & Graham, 2005, p. 164). This practice was observed, and indeed experienced personally, in the fieldwork undertaken in the Adelaide nightclub scene. A key feature of this practice is that it acknowledges a wider understanding of the importance of the role of the nightclub for young people in that it demonstrates club owners’ awareness that they are responsible for the creation and management of a particular, and fundamentally popular, image or style of leisure sought by youth. Furthermore, the prevalence of these practices across the nightclub scene suggests that there is considerable value in outperforming the competition (Wynne & O’Connor, 1998) as the globalisation of the night-time economy has transformed nightclub industry which now focuses on consumption more broadly, where there is significant “value in competing on non-core service elements” (Moss, Parfitt & Skinner, 2009, p. 64). An example of this was found on the *Hq* page of the popular social networking site Facebook, on 23 August 2010, where discussion was started by the webpage’s administrators, seeking suggestions from patrons on how to enhance the nightclub experience at this particular venue. This received numerous ‘hits’ in only a few hours. Most ideas focused on the provision of particular goods and services that these youth perceived would enhance the overall atmosphere and style of the nightclub. Specifically, patrons sought:

“...flat shoes and then somewhere to put your shoes until you leave, like a cloak room with a shoe room in it” (female patron).

“Make-up (foundation), even just sachets of it, it doesn’t take long to sweat off when you’re having a big night. \$2 straightening irons would be good too, and I also agree with the need for flats” (female patron).

“A beauty room for the girls...like a full powder room” (female patron).

Interestingly, suggestions related to the need to maintain a particular ‘look’ or style (particularly for young women) were also conveyed by male patrons in this forum. The following comment⁵ was a common one among male patrons and, although the role and influence of gender is discussed later in this chapter, captures something of the meaning of gender relations in the creation of image and style within the club:

“Yeah definitely...providing the girls with something like that would be fantastic, especially for us guys...you know. It means that they can look good and be comfortable for longer, so at the end of the night they’ll look amazing when you take them home...I think it would make more people go out because they’d see how good it is and who you can be” (male patron).

Other suggestions included access to phone chargers and increased availability of leisure accessories (e.g. glow-sticks). These requests reflect this group’s desire to not only maximise the consumption of their leisure experience, but also ensure the consumption of a particular experience. Notably, most patrons’ responses were markedly similar, which is indicative of a level of social cohesion among young people that experts have previously believed was beyond their capabilities (Kelly, 2005; Shewan et al., 2000). It can be further drawn from this example that these venues are willing to engage in a dialogue with young people to enable this consumption, which demonstrates a general desire to maintain youth attendance at the club, and to make this experience as comfortable and enjoyable as possible while still maintaining particular trends and values. And while these actions are somewhat self-serving and aimed at increasing profits for nightclubs, they highlight that making the entertainment industry more entertaining and gentrified is an aim of club owners.

4.1.2.2 *Happy-snapping and Tweeting*

Recent advancements in digital and mobile phone technology⁶ have enabled the emergence of unique behaviours, such as ‘happy-snapping’ and ‘tweeting’, that emphasise the significance of image and style, and exemplify its ‘consumption’ by

⁵ This comment appeared in the same discussion thread as the comments made on the previous page, thus should be read within this context and, in a sense, as a response to them.

⁶ This provides context to the desire for mobile phone chargers, as identified above.

young nightclub attendees. The value of these behaviours lies in the immediate gratification that they provide as a form of cultural capital (Rigakos, 2008; MacRae, 2004), linked to image and style. One of the features of contemporary nightclubs, including Adelaide venues, is thus the sheer volume of posing and photographing, or ‘happy-snapping, that the young people who attend them engage in on a night out. As Brooker (2007, p. 2) states regarding his experiences of the club:

“...that’s all they seemed to be doing. Standing around in expensive clothes, snapping away with phones and cameras. One pose after another, as though they needed to prove their own existence, right there, in the moment. This seemed to be the reason they were there in the first place”.

This practice identifies a wide range of factors that combine to create and, crucially, enable the consumption of a particular image. An important aspect of this process is the role that nightclubs play in encouraging this practice, evident in the Adelaide nightclub scene where most nightclubs employ their own photographer to take countless photos of patrons on each club night. These photos are then uploaded to Twitter, Facebook and other social networking sites (typically within hours of their creation) where they not only serve to reinforce existing patrons’ consumption practices through the creation of competitions (e.g. ‘is this you?’) and prizes for attendance (e.g. free drinks), but also function to promote the image and style that nightclubs and their patrons portray to others. Indeed, the use of social networking sites, such as Twitter and Facebook has expanded the scope of consumption to not only include those present at the nightclub, but also people ‘logging on’ at home (Brooker, 2007, p. 1). Through ‘tweeting’ these young clubbers capture their use of the nightclub as a form of social capital and use it to seek additional gratification and acknowledgment from other young people external to the nightclub. What the frequency and volume of this behaviour thus demonstrates is the role that young people’s consumption of the aesthetic aspects of a night-out plays as a way of building forms of cultural capital. In addition, what this analysis suggests is that the meaning that development of cultural capital has for young people in the club, which as discussed below (section 4.2.3), is found in the consumption of leisure and creation of identity rather than the expression of deviance.

4.1.2.3 *Gender in the Club: The Role of Sex*

A number of studies (Moss et al., 2009; Barnett, 2006; Skinner et al., 2005; Jones et al., 2003) have identified that comparatively little research has focused on the influence of gender on young people's consumption practices in the night-time economy. This is despite recognition of the nightclub as a central feature of young people's leisure consumption (Brookman, 2001; Bennett, 2000; Malbon, 1998), and where gender represents an aesthetic product to be consumed (Sanders & Hardy, 2011; Moss et al., 2009). In examining the role of gender within the nightclub environment and its influence on consumption, it is necessary to acknowledge the differences between males' and females' needs, desires and values and examine how these factors drive their use of nightclubs. It is also crucial to identify how gender is influenced by the nature of the nightclub itself, as a site of consumption. For example, the popular website *Adelaide Clubber* describes *Red Square* as:

“...definitely the place to go if you are a guy who wants to be around attractive girls, but don't expect to get in unless you are with [girls], it's nearly impossible to get in if you don't have any girls in your group. Once inside you will find most of the girls are on the attractive end of the scale and are dressed to impress, while the guys are a mix of normal and more metro-sexual looking one love types” (Adelaide Clubber, 2009).

This description reveals that while the nightclub arguably caters to men, women play a vital role in creating the atmosphere that, in a sense, defines the nightclub (Rigakos, 2008). However, gender alone does not explain young people's desire for consumption within the night-time economy. As observed in the Adelaide nightclub scene, gender encompasses a variety of roles and expectations that reflect the many different goals of males and females, where the nightclub becomes a sexualised environment in which the role of sex works at many different levels, involving many different actors. How young men and women each characterise these roles is therefore important in understanding young people's consumption in the nightclub.

As identified in chapter 2 (section 2.3.3.3), the process of globalisation has had a significant cultural impact on youth practices, as consumption has become central to the development of identity. This is significant given that it is not merely consumer

products that are consumed, but young people become commodities themselves (Langman, 2003). Attractive women, for example, are often perceived as desirable objects of aesthetic consumption in the nightclub. As noted in the following interviewee comment, women become a central commodity of the nightclub whose mere presence ‘makes’ the nightclub, as without it Rigakos (2008, p. 242) suggests “there would be no heterosexed nightclub”:

“...whether or not you are [at the club] with mates or by yourself, it doesn’t matter, it’s about them [females]. I mean, you don’t see a big group of guys *just* at the bar or *just* dancing on the dance floor...sure they’ll be doing those things, but it’ll be ‘cause they’re buying a girl a drink or trying to take her home (Eddie, aged 23, non-user).

The nightclub thus becomes marketed on its ability to attract desirable women (Rigakos, 2008), which may also help to explain, at least in part, the gender bias observed in the sample (see methodology, section 3.4.3). This practice is evident in many Adelaide nightclubs, particularly the five research sites, where in addition to presenting numerous DJs, music festivals, and contemporary bands, a multitude of theme nights are also hosted that typically reflect and reinforce gender stereotypes. The most popular themes observed were ‘pyjama’, ‘beach’, ‘foam’ and ‘pimps and hoes’. The expectations inherent in these events, in terms of clothing, attitude and behaviour, highlight the significance of gender differences in creating a sexualised atmosphere saturated with desire and consumption. Perhaps the most significant example of this occurred in March 2011, and was the hosting of the ‘Ralph Model Search’ and associated ‘bikini competition’. These events not only highlight clubs’ recognition of the importance of young people’s pursuit of cultural capital and the role of gendered socialisation, but also the commodification of the body as a function of aesthetic consumption (Langman, 2003). Interestingly, however, this process of commodification was not gender-limited. During the course of the research many nightclubs also provided opportunities for females to share in the show of sexualised bodies, through events such as ‘Tradies for the Ladies’ and the ‘Most Eligible Bachelor’, where males become the commodity offered. What this study has therefore shown is that gender has a significant, yet complex affect on young people’s consumption, a feature that is embraced by nightclubs.

4.1.2.4 *Dance Music Culture*

Another key aspect of the nightclub that epitomises club culture and the nightclubs' production of a particular atmosphere for youth consumption is that of dance music. Dance music emerged in the mid-1980s, characterised by percussive, synthetic and fast sounds, and has since become a fundamental feature of the atmosphere of nightclubs. It has played a primary role in defining the cultural practice of 'clubbing' (Chinet et al., 2007; Purcell & Graham, 2005; Malbon, 1999). The role of music in 'clubbing' is important in understanding the nightclub as a site of consumption as music is the primary experience offered in the club that underlies many other social activities, such as those highlighted in the previous sections, which delineates the overall meaning of this environment. As noted in a number of studies, listening and dancing to contemporary music in the nightclub provides an environment in which young people socialise with friends, seek intimate relationships, drink alcohol and, for some, use drugs (see Purcell & Graham, 2005; Webster et al., 2002; Measham et al., 2001; Malbon, 1999). This was supported by the data where in many of the interviews participants identified that the type of music played influenced their overall experience of the nightclub and thus their motivation to attend or remain at particular venues:

“It’s about the music. I mean, when I go out and dance with my friends I want dance to good music and stuff that I like because it makes me happy. When I do, it makes everything else better because everyone is having a good time. That’s what I like about Adelaide, most of the big places play good stuff. I’ve been to clubs in Melbourne and they are just so different” (Emmy, aged 21, non-user).

This was also evident in a user’s account of club music culture, which demonstrated a link between the type of music played and their use of methamphetamines:

“...the use of [meth] depends on what club you go to and the type of atmosphere that is being created in terms of the music. What I’ve found is that in Adelaide it just matches well with the type of music and culture that is being encouraged. [Meth] just makes things more fun and more exciting and so you want to match that with a good atmosphere” (Susan, aged 23, user).

These comments reveal a substantial link between music and the meaning(s) young people attach to the nightclub, which is examined further later in this chapter (section 4.2.2.2). Importantly, what these comments also articulate is that, as has been observed in previous research (Bellis et al., 2002; Malbon, 1999) the use of dance music in the Adelaide nightclub scene appears to be a highly commercial strategy by an industry that actively seeks to provide this social atmosphere for young people. A key aspect of this industry is that nightclubs are not only able to create opportunities for leisure consumption through music, but also re-create them on a nightly or weekly basis (Hollands, 2002). This is significant in the Adelaide context as although ‘clubbing’ has often been associated with a diverse range of sounds (Malbon, 1999), there are only subtle variations in the styles of music played across the nightclubs examined in this research, which may reflect the conservative nature of the Adelaide nightclub scene. Specifically, Adelaide nightclubs can be described as playing more mainstream or contemporary music, which contributes to the identification of the Adelaide nightclub scene as a broad site of consumption and has broader implications for understanding how these young people use this leisure space.

4.1.3 Sharing the dance-floor: *The use of drugs in the club*

Significantly, these features characterise the nightclub as a site of broad youth consumption, and it is argued here that they also have significant implications for the use of illicit drugs by young people within these spaces. As noted above, the success of the nightclub as a site of consumption depends upon “constantly stimulating wants and needs, generating a constant search for sensation and excitement, and producing a proliferation of styles, fashions, and consumer identities” (Brain, 2000, p. 7). Therefore, as previous research has suggested, it is argued that in providing this atmosphere, whether consciously or not, nightclubs have influenced the emergence of illicit drug use as one of the many forms of consumption on offer (Kelly, 2005; Degenhardt et al., 2005d; Hunt et al., 2005). Illicit drugs have become a familiar feature of young people’s use of popular contemporary nightclubs (Kelly, 2005; Duff, 2005; Degenhardt & Topp, 2002). Recent studies have argued that the

availability and consumption of illicit drugs in nightclubs has increased markedly over the last 15 years to the extent that they have become a normal feature of the leisure landscape in many night-time settings (Duff, 2005; Measham, 2004; Parker et al., 1998). As examined earlier in this thesis (see chapter 2), increases in the availability and accessibility of a given substance affect the rates of use of that drug and the increased use can be used to indicate its normalisation in a particular space (Parker et al., 1998). The data presented in this study indicates that such an increase has occurred within Adelaide nightclubs, which not only suggests the normalisation of drug use within these spaces, but has a broader influence on how the nightclub is constructed as a site of consumption and therefore how it should be viewed in terms of young people's drug use. When asked about the availability and accessibility of methamphetamines within Adelaide nightclubs, interviewees stated:

“Yeah it is pretty easy. You wouldn't have to try too hard to find it...a lot of people would have some on them even if they weren't a dealer... It's more accepted these days and a lot more people are using it” (Todd, aged 24, user).

“Even if you don't know anyone, it's pretty easy. You'd just have to ask a few people. It wouldn't take long before you bumped into someone and started talking and be like 'hey, you got anything on ya?' You could also pick a few people that were having a good time - and ask them where they got it from” (Alex, aged 23, user).

“Yeah, it's normalised...I mean people seem quite open about it really...they consider [meth] like alcohol, in that it's easy to come by and is just another part of the scene” (Susan, aged 23, user).

The language these participants use to describe the availability of methamphetamines in the nightclub is important as it indicates the commonality of methamphetamine use and alludes to its role as a form of leisure consumption. For example, Alex's comment describes the 'search' for methamphetamines as a common and casually discussed feature of young people's nightclub discourse, which not only highlights the extent of methamphetamine use and its consistency across this youth sample, but also makes reference to the purpose of drug use as wanting to share in 'having a good time' (see below, section 4.2.1 for further discussion). In addition, the comparison of methamphetamine use with alcohol consumption by Susan, in particular, highlights

the perception that methamphetamine use is merely one of many consumer choices young people have in the nightclub setting that are used to gain pleasure (Hodkinson, 2005). Overall, these comments appear to place drug use within an everyday dialogue that not only normalises these drug use practices, but also influences young people's perceptions of consumption within the nightclub more broadly, and how drug use features as simply one aspect of it.

In addressing the latter of these two points, it is important to acknowledge that the participants suggested that drug use is a widely recognised form of leisure consumption, accepted not only by young people themselves but also by nightclub owners, evident in young people's perceptions of the extent to which it has been ignored by the industry generally. Specifically, participants implied that nightclubs are aware of the presence of drugs and acknowledge it as a familiar part of the nightlife landscape that has positive value for young people. Many respondents in the qualitative data, as well as nightclub patrons met throughout the fieldwork, articulated that nightclubs are actively engaged in the creation and maintenance of a particular atmosphere that, although does not openly support illicit drug use, is conducive to their consumption by young people. The following comment was common among these individuals and identifies how young people and nightclubs each perceive the consumption of illicit drugs within the nightclub:

“Young people associate substance use with the music, the people, the lights and stuff...and that's how [clubs] make their money. They know young people will come to dance and take drugs, and so they'll make lots of money at the bar 'cause everyone will be drinking heaps of water. That's why they sell it rather than just hand it out”
(Tess, aged 19, non-user).

It is recognised that this finding is somewhat controversial and raises many more questions, notably with regard to nightclubs' awareness of drug use and the culpability of governments in providing a broad consumption space (see Talbot, 2009), issues which were not within the scope of this research. However, this finding does suggest that the use of illicit drugs, such as methamphetamines, can be treated within a broader discussion of consumption in the nightclub, at least in the Adelaide

nightclub setting, which may influence how it is perceived by young people and, in turn, how it should be perceived by governments, policy-makers and researchers alike. The implications of this finding are discussed in part two of this chapter.

4.1.4 Conclusion

Changes in the design and nature of nightclubs and surrounding leisure spaces in Adelaide have mirrored broader global shifts in the desire for cities to become more appealing, safe and exciting spaces for leisure consumption (Roberts, 2006; 2004; Thomas & Bromley, 2000). The enhancement of the space of nightclubs and wider night-time economy has engendered a sense of urban revitalisation (Roberts, 2004; Thomas & Bromley, 2000), but more importantly has allowed the development of a new form of youth consumption. While the meaning of this consumption in the nightclub will be discussed in part two of this chapter, it is evident from this analysis that the revitalisation of the Adelaide night-time economy has had a considerable impact on its use by young people. Specifically, the Adelaide 'scene' is set up to commodify leisure and to bring levels of uniformity and homogeneity among consumers of these social environments. The club, in particular, is a crucial part of the process of homogeneity of how leisure is (should be) consumed and has great influence on the behaviour of consumers. Indeed, considering the details regarding style, design, music and availability it can be argued that although the 'scene' is conservative compared with other locations in Australia and beyond, it maintains an up-market image and aura of excitement, hedonism and consumption of leisure. Thus, rather than being considered as havens for the lower classes of society (Lees, 2008), these leisure spaces are now intentionally developed for the more urban, socially active and 'cashed-up' middle classes who are intent on consuming the goods and experiences produced by the night (Roberts, 2004; Chatterton & Hollands, 2002), which includes the use of illicit drugs. The nightclub, in particular, serves to provide the setting of a collective social experience, greater understanding of which is needed to fully explore the meaning of young people's use of the nightclub in their consumption of leisure, and ultimately how this influences their perception of risk.

4.2 THE ‘CLUBBER’ AS THE CONSUMER

As highlighted in part one, the night-time economy is constituted by numerous leisure sites which through vivid sights, sounds and experiences cultivate a culture of fun, social interaction and pleasure-seeking for young people, where increased importance has been given to the concept of consumption (Gershuny, 2000; Rojek, 2000; Brain, 2000; Miles, 1998). Clubbing thus represents an opportunity to provide young people with such a space as, particularly for a large number of Adelaide youth, nightclubs play a significant role in their pursuit of leisure where meaning and identity are formed by consumption (see Duff et al., 2011; Measham, 2004; Brain, 2000; Malbon, 1999). Consumption contributes to the development of meaning and identity in a number of key ways. Firstly, young people’s pursuit of leisure illustrates the main purpose of nightclubs, which is to have fun and to produce and consume the nightclub scene as a commodity that engenders stimulating pleasurable experiences (Measham, 2004). Secondly, the nightclub functions as a space that young people can not only identify as their own, but also one that allows them to escape the stresses and responsibilities of work and family life (Perrone, 2006). This is important in the context of young people’s transition into adulthood where the period in which some young people begin to attend nightclubs is also associated with finishing secondary education, gaining first significant employment, and starting professional and social relationships (Wilson & Wilson, 2010), which often creates anxiety. Thirdly, through the construction of a specific atmosphere, defined by image, dancing and music (Bennett, 2002b; 2000), the nightclub is able to foster youth consumption, and facilitate the setting of norms, values and expectations. These features demonstrate how young people extract meaning from the nightclub, where the pleasures of consumption are not just material, but also hold considerable symbolic value as a way of “marking out lifestyle, status, and identity” (Brain, 2000, p. 8; see also, Malbon, 1999). Therefore, it is crucial to explore the consumer ‘reality’ to determine who the ‘clubber’ is and how they use the space and elements of the nightclub, including the use of drugs, to create meaning and identity.

4.2.1 The meaning of ‘meth’ in the club

It is difficult to fully comprehend the numerous ways in which people produce and garner meaning from the nightclub, particularly when it is understood as a complex social space linked with the use of illicit drugs (Slavin, 2004). It is thus important to start the second part of this chapter at a discussion of the use of illicit drugs, particularly methamphetamines, in South Australian nightclubs and how this influences the use of the nightclub and the meanings that are drawn from it. The first point to make is that although illicit drugs have been identified as a common feature of the nightclub (Degenhardt et al., 2005d; Kelly, 2005; Duff, 2005), which has often been the foundation of studies into youth deviance (Gourley, 2004; Redhead, 1993; Becker, 1963), their use does not constitute the focus of the nightclub experience, but plays a role in contributing to it. In contrast to these studies, the qualitative data obtained in this research has identified that the use of methamphetamines is viewed as a personal experience through which an individual can maximise the amount of pleasure extracted from a night out, while remaining part of the broader community in which their nightclub experience is situated. Understanding the social context of the use of illicit drugs (see section 2.4) is thus central to understanding its meaning given that, as Moore and Miles (2004, p. 508) note, “the apparently mundane contexts in which young people consume drugs are particularly useful in understanding what drug consumption actually means”. Participants revealed that, similar to drug practices of young people observed in ecstasy studies (Degenhardt et al., 2006; Degenhardt, et al., 2005c) methamphetamines are mostly taken in the club environment where the stimulant effects are best appreciated:

“Most people I know don't use during the day. It's not like ‘hey let's watch TV and pop a few points....’ The effects [of meth] go well with going out, drinking, having fun, and dancing all night - the environment plays a big role” (Emmy, aged 21, non-user).

“There is a strong link between meth and clubs because of its effects on people. I think it goes hand-in-hand with that environment which is to ‘enjoy the moment’...so yeah, it would be odd for people to be taking them otherwise” (Nathan, aged 25, user).

Importantly though, the use of drugs in the nightclub appears to be related to more than the physical characteristics of these venues. In keeping with the perception that

drug use within nightclubs functions as a facilitator, it is the enhancement of social interaction with friends and members of the opposite sex⁷ that rationalises the drug use practices. And that they can continue the social interaction for longer appears to be of most importance to young people:

“...if you’re surrounded by alcohol, music that makes you want to dance, and like-minded people that want to have fun then you’re more likely to do [meth]” (Aimee, aged 18, non-user).

“It’s more than that...some people go out and want to last all night, and so using [methamphetamines] will help that – but it’s about wanting to socialise with people, have fun, enjoy the music and yeah stuff like that” (Simone, aged 18, non-user).

“Meth was considered good if you were going for a night out ‘cause you could drink more and stay sober. It’d keep you coherent and you could keep dancing and having fun without getting tired” (Ariel, aged 24, user).

Another feature of this context, which contrasts youth literature (Clarke et al., 1996), is that participants were aware of its meaning as merely one aspect of broader leisure consumption and thus did not judge those identified as non-drug users:

“It fits in so well with the music, the atmosphere – people just having a good time. The more people that are around and having fun the better it is. But it’s not expected. My mates will offer, ‘cause they know what it can do, but they’re not like ‘your loss’ or anything...and everyone has a good time anyway” (Eddie, aged 23, non-user).

In addition to enabling certain activities, a further feature of participants’ club drug use related to their awareness of the place of methamphetamine use in their broader social and professional lives. This was evident for Alex and Veronica, who viewed their use of club drugs as particularly functional, as a means of coping with the responsibilities and expectations of professional life:

“I think young people these days are really keen to have fun, but are definitely aware that they still need to be able to function and do other things, like uni and work. These things are important to young people these days because it’s what everyone’s

⁷ Although not within the scope of the present study, it is important to note that the use of drugs is also a prominent feature of social interactions between gay, lesbian and transgender communities within nightclub settings (Leonard et al., 2008; Degenhardt et al., 2005b).

about...you know...it's about getting a degree, getting a good job and being, what you might call, 'successful'" (Alex, aged 23, user).

"Most people that go to clubs work or go to uni from 9-5...or more, Monday to Friday and so when it comes to the weekend they just want to let go of all their stress, and forget about having to work and stuff. And I think that it's something that is unique to young people these days, 'cause I don't see my parents wanting to go out and get loose on a Saturday night...!" (Veronica, aged 18, user)

These comments illustrate that methamphetamines are inextricably linked to Adelaide nightclubs and, in contrast to associations with risk and deviance, that it is possible and useful in understanding young people's nightclub use to view their drug use as meaningful and not merely negative (Duff, 2008; Slavin, 2004; Duff, 2004; Lupton & Tulloch, 2002a). Through the matching of the pharmacological effects of methamphetamines with the physical features of the club and the social context of the relationships that exist in this space, it is clear that young people desire pleasure and celebrate the need to consume it. However, the young people who attend these nightclubs also acknowledge the broader purpose of drugs and nightclubs in their lives and consciously seek consumption within boundaries to achieve this. This a significant outcome of the research as it not only reinforces the role of consumption in young people's leisure activities but also suggests that in contrast to experts' claims, young people's drug use can be considered purposive and an important factor in the pursuit of pleasure, not merely as an expression of deviance (see Jackson, 2004). Furthermore, if young people's drug use can be structured and controlled through adherence to prescribed social norms and values (see chapter 7), they become important points of potentiality in the development of meaning and identity.

4.2.1.1 *Identifying the 'User'*

A valuable outcome of this identification of the meaning of club drug use is that it demonstrates the need for a new user profile that encompasses understanding of young people's use of nightclubs generally, incorporating non-users' perceptions and attitudes, and portrays nightclub leisure consumption as non-deviant and motivated by the consumption of pleasure. Many studies have found it difficult to define young

people who use methamphetamines in night-life spaces (Ross, 2007; Degenhardt & Topp, 2002). These studies have often used descriptions of the typical characteristics of methamphetamine users in the general population to capture young people's club drug use (McKetin et al., 2008; Baker et al., 2003; Baker, Boggs & Lewin, 2001). In particular, previous community surveys of methamphetamine users in the general population have found that the majority of users are young adults who are socially networked with other users of the drug (McKetin et al., 2006a; Lynch et al., 2003; Kaye & Darke, 2000) and tend to have a lower income than people of a similar age who do not use methamphetamines, often being dependent on government allowances, such as unemployment benefits (McKetin et al., 2006a; Lynch et al., 2003). These studies also indicate that those who are employed tend to work in a variety of non-skilled and semi-skilled occupations (Ross, 2007) and that less common are highly educated people employed in high-level management and professional occupations (McKetin et al., 2006a), although there are examples where this is the case (see Boulard, 2005).

These descriptions have produced a profile of the young methamphetamine user, often portrayed in popular media, that is deviant, unemployed and uneducated (Blood & McCallum, 2005), which has been used to rationalise punitive frameworks and the use of law enforcement measures (Bennett, 2010; Mazerolle et al., 2005; Edwards, 1999). In particular, this profile assumes that young people's use of illicit drugs in nightclubs can only produce antisocial effects on users and the broader communities in which they live (Slavin, 2004), which are consistent across social contexts. A key implication of this perspective is that the stereotypical profile of the user has been used by experts to construct a profile of the 'other', which is used as a justification for controlling them. Notably, there is anecdotal support, although limited, for this depiction of the user. Figure 4.4 interestingly represents the stereotypical profile of a drug user as recognised and accepted by one survey participant, as it was drawn on the back of their survey and titled 'Typical User'. From the meaning that this image evokes and the nature of their survey responses, it can be suggested that this participant perceives that the use of illicit drugs is taboo and something in which only

deviant, irresponsible and uneducated people would participate. However, what is important about this perception is that it demonstrates the strength of this stereotype given that this individual did not identify as a nightclub attendee, which suggests that their perception was most likely guided by media accounts or broader understandings of drug users in the general population and not informed by actual experience.

Figure 4.4 *Anonymous participant's (aged 20, non-user) impression of a stereotypical user*



The significance of this image and the rationale for its inclusion here, therefore, is that it significantly contrasts with what the majority of participants involved in this study identified with in relation to those people that use methamphetamines in Adelaide nightclubs. This was supported by the quantitative data (see chapter 5) where, occupationally four out of five of the users in the quantitative sample were employed in part-time/casual work across a range of areas, with the remainder, one in five, working full-time. Similarly, although a number of studies have identified a link between drug use and low educational attainment (Fitzgerald, 2009; Frisher et al., 2007; Galea, Nandi & Vlahov, 2004; Hallfors & Van, 2002) the sample in this research does not reflect this finding, with the majority also currently attending

university. Given the random sampling and larger sample used in this study, this identifies a new profile of a young drug user which more closely represents a general profile of a young leisure seeker. As such, at least within the South Australian context, this has a number of ramifications for how the clubber and their consumption can be viewed, which in turn colours our understanding of the broader meaning of the nightclub for young people.

4.2.1.2 *Defining the Youth Profile: Subculture or tribe?*

In returning to the concept of subculture, as discussed in chapter 2 (section 2.3.3.1), it can be identified that a number of sources claim that contemporary society has undergone a social transformation in which young people have been able to shed some of the negative stigma and perceptions of deviance that have often been linked to the use of illicit drugs (see Duff, 2005; 2003; Moore, 2004; Brookman, 2001). This shift has occurred within a broader discussion of subculture in which many academics have debated the application of the subcultural paradigm to contemporary social groups (Hesmondhalgh, 2005; Shildrick & MacDonald, 2006; Blackman, 2005; Bennett, 1999) such as young nightclubbers (Bennett, 2005). A criticism of 'subculture' that has emerged from this debate is that "...it imposes rigid lines of division over forms of sociation which may, in effect, be rather more fleeting, and in many cases arbitrary" (Bennett, 1999, p. 603). It has also been argued that many perspectives of subculture focus on social class and groups that are disadvantaged or marginalised (McCulloch et al., 2006; Martin, 2004; Gelder & Thornton, 1997) where the subject(s) in question hold(s) a deviant relationship with the dominant culture in which they are located (Bennett, 1999). This produces a narrow focus on the "symbolic aspects of subcultural consumption at the expense of the actual meanings that young consumers have for the goods that they consume" (Miles, 1998, p. 35), which a number of researchers contend is maintained by a lack of empirical research in youth studies (Martin, 2009; Greener & Hollands, 2006). Thus, although there is ongoing debate over the need for a new approach or at least a re-thinking of current perspectives to explain youth cultures (see Martin, 2009; Carrington & Wilson, 2004), this research argues that a subcultural framework is not the best way

to achieve this. As such, this thesis advocates an approach that is consistent with a broader shift in youth drug user profile that the findings in this study corroborate. As Bennett (2000) notes in *Popular Music and Youth Culture* a more appropriate means of understanding the nightclub as a site of meaning for young people, delineated by music, style and consumption, which for some includes the use of illicit drugs, may be Maffesoli's (1996) notion of *tribe*.

Maffesoli (1996) conceptualises the term *tribe*, often described as a 'neo-tribe', as a loosely defined means of common identification through a shared ethical consciousness, which many sources have suggested is expressed through the process of consumption (Brookman, 2001; Bennett, 2000; 1999). Although there has been criticism of the use of *tribe* to explain youth cultures (see Hesmondhalgh, 2005; Blackman, 2005) due to a perceived "abandonment of any consideration of the structural inequalities that continue to impact on the lives of young people" (Bennett, 2005, p. 255), it is argued here that such an approach remains relevant in delineating the nightclub scene in that it enables a wider focus on consumption, which broadens the scope of analysis to include other discourses or voices, such as non-drug users as in the case of this research setting. What is significant about Maffesoli's (1996) approach is that it examines the shifting and temporal nature of young people's collective associations and how these have become increasingly consumer orientated, to the extent that young people now experience 'consumer reflexivity' (Bennett & Kahn-Harris, 2004, p. 7). As Maffesoli (1996, p. 98) states, the tribe is "without the rigidity of the forms of organization [sic] with which we are familiar, it refers more to a certain ambience, a state of mind, and is preferably to be expressed through lifestyles that favour appearance and form". This is important in the Adelaide nightlife context where there has been a shift in the philosophy and 'lifestyle' (Chaney, 2004) of young Adelaide nightclubbers where meaning and identity are no longer bound to subcultural notions of resistance and 'othering', but can instead be expressed through a collective aesthetic experience and young people's consumption of it, which highlights the value in an examination of both users and non-users as an original feature of this study. As Hetherington (1992, p. 93) notes, tribalisation

involves “the deregulation through modernization and individualization [sic] of the modern forms of solidarity and identity based on class occupation, locality and gender and so on...and the recomposition into ‘tribal’ identities and forms of sociation”. The significance of viewing young Adelaide nightclubbers as a *tribe* rather than a subculture, therefore, is that it acknowledges these changes and underscores the need for dialogue between experts and young people to examine the shifting role of nightclubs and illicit drugs in the pursuit of leisure, which takes into account the homogeneity of young people’s development of identity and meaning and importantly their movement away from subcultural labels of deviance.

To provide context to this application of *tribe* it is important to identify that when participants were asked whether young people’s use of methamphetamines in Adelaide nightclubs represented a unique subculture, overwhelmingly, the response was that this was not the case:

“It’s not a distinct group; some people use meth but it’s not what defines them. It’s easy to try to group people and that’s what the government likes as it makes them look like they’re doing a good job...but that’s part of the problem with current campaigns – they don’t have good grasp of what it means to be a young person in Adelaide. To be honest, I’m not sure whether any current politician has been in an Adelaide club or spoken with young people about what they think” (William, aged 22, non-user).

“I think there are quite a number of people that use meth, but it’s not one specific group... And it is definitely not what the government says – like a group of deviant youths running around the streets...there’s not much difference between users and non-users” (Eddie, aged 23, non-user).

This perception was also evident in young people’s comparison of methamphetamine users with traditional stereotypes of illicit drug users. When asked whether they could identify a stereotypical methamphetamine user, the following response was common among participants:

“They are a part of normal youth culture, but they’ve identified this tool that gives them energy that allows them to go longer. It’s a way for them to access or enhance their leisure time. It’s not like heroin users though...there’s a difference...it’s more like a tool that some people use to have fun. Whereas you’ll get a specific group of people that just smoke dope, or drop pills, and who they are is completely

different...the drug becomes who they are and controls what they do. For young people, meth is just one way of enhancing their experience” (Michael, aged 25, user).

In embodying the transience and shared experience of the *tribe* a common sentiment among participants was that:

“...it’s more about the lifestyle that motivates people to use meth. You can’t stereotype the user, because what motivates them is similar to non-users. It’s about general behaviours that suit the club atmosphere that ensure they have as much fun as possible. Drugs are not the central feature; they are just one part of it” (Alex, aged 23, user).

What these comments reveal is that the use of methamphetamines in Adelaide nightclubs is linked to a shared understanding of the purpose and meaning of the nightclub for young people generally, which supports the incarnation of these young people as a *tribe* (see Bennett, 2005). Central to this concept is the idea of a shared social experience, which is born out of the sharing of the same space (physically and symbolically) (Brookman, 2001), as well as recognition of the existence of shared rituals, values and norms that regulate this space. These shared experiences not only support the strengthening of a sense of belonging expressed through peer group membership, but also through the adherence to social guidelines, the recognition of a shared purpose that is underpinned by non-deviant values and controlled leisure practices to ensure safe consumption. The use of Adelaide nightclubs should therefore be viewed through a framework that acknowledges this broader youth profile and discusses consumption as “an expression of this shared social consciousness” (Brookman, 2001, p. 26), specifically the way in which it explains how and why young people use nightclubs, as is discussed herein.

4.2.2 The purpose of the nightclub

As identified earlier in this chapter (section 4.1.2), young people’s use of the nightclub has often been associated with the development of cultural capital; the social assets that enable them to participate in cultural activities (Bourdieu, 1993). The above discussion detailed how nightclubs encourage young people’s development of capital through providing an atmosphere defined by image, style,

gendered interaction and dance music. Traditionally, young people's attempts to develop cultural capital through these practices has been associated with deviance (Miles, 2000; Crewe & Beaverstock, 1998), particularly given the link between nightclubs and illicit drugs, as they have been seen as efforts to resist broader cultural values and norms. Addressing a broader theme of this research, specifically the need for greater 'lay' knowledge of young people's use of the nightclub, what this study has identified is the need to examine the purpose of the nightclub for these young people from their perspective to identify how and why cultural capital is developed. Given the emergence of a new youth profile within the Adelaide nightclub scene, central to this task is the need to conceptualise young people's use of the nightclub as a way of developing cultural capital that is no longer about resistance and transgression, but is rather about engaging in the consumption of leisure to construct a more positive social identity (Miles, 2000). In order to understand this process, it is important to identify the nightclub as a site of production and consumption not only from a broad structural perspective influenced by the nightclub as discussed above, but also from the perspective of young people themselves (see Crewe & Beaverstock, 1998; Wynne & O'Connor, 1998), where young people establish identity through consumption of capital that is broadly understood as the product of any efforts to construct a particular style or image from which young people can draw social energy (Bourdieu, 1986). As a number of researchers have noted in relation to young people (see Rigakos, 2008; MacRae, 2004; see also, Morrow, 1999), this often incorporates use of forms of 'social capital', which is the combination of social networks, contacts and memberships that "provide actual or potential support and access to valued resources" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 143). As identified in the quantitative data (see section 5.2.3), the majority of nightclubbers were motivated to attend Adelaide nightclubs for the purpose of listening to music, dancing and socialising with friends, which it is argued constitute the 'valued resources', through which these young people are able to create identity and meaning. How this achieved through consumption of image and music, and the social interactions inherent in each activity, is discussed herein.

4.2.2.1 *Creating Image*

A feature of young people's use of the nightclub is the creation of identity through the aesthetic production and consumption of image, which many studies have identified is important to young people (see Ronen, 2010; Rigakos, 2008; Ferrell, 2004; Murphy, 2000). As Rigakos (2008, p. 40) notes, within nightclubs "visibility is the task, the game, the prize, the reward, and the risk", where being seen within the club holds boundless value as a form of social capital, which the data presented in this thesis indicates is a feature of the Adelaide nightclub scene. Specifically, motivated by image and the associated social status, young people attend Adelaide nightclubs to be seen and see others, to consume others as aesthetic objects of desire and to elicit desire in others (Rigakos, 2008). This is supported by Murphy (2000) who reveals that commercialised culture has stressed the importance of the material self to such an extent that young people often conceive of themselves as commodities (labelled a 'commodified self-concept'), and where success in the nightclub is thus judged in terms of an individual's image as a form of cultural or social capital. This is significant as it acknowledges that the formation of identity through consumption of image forms a substantial part of the motivation for young people's use of the nightclub, which was supported in the qualitative interviews:

"It is definitely about the look and wearing the right things. That's a big part of the reason why we go out...you can sit at home listening to your iPod and drink...but you won't be getting dressed up 'cause no one will see you" (Tess, aged 19, non-user).

"Going out and looking good is important, because it makes you feel good, it gives you confidence. Clubs are good for that because there are always lots of people, so you feel even better about yourself and get to be part of something. Everyone is doing it and so it's kind of what being a clubber is about" (Veronica, aged 18, user).

The desire to portray a trendy and popular image was also important to males, although it can be said that for some their motivation came from their desire to attract the opposite sex. Broadly though, what the following statements reveal is a collective desire to present a particular image that has a number of purposes:

"Yeah...my mates and I like to look good when we head out, 'cause you never know what's gonna happen. Like, if you see someone 'nice' you wanna be able to go up and

start a conversation [with a girl] without her thinking you look like shit” (Nathan, aged 25, user).

“Looking good is very important to me because it is just part of who I am, you know. And what I think is really important is that it is not just about looking good in the club, but also how it makes you feel in other parts of your life. If you look good or are around others that look good, it makes you feel good which goes a long way at work and at home” (Tim, aged 25, former user).

Significantly, these comments suggest, albeit subtly, a requirement to adhere to a range of social norms that reflect these young clubbers’ shared understanding that they should embody a popular and stylish image⁸ in order to develop an identity that is valuable to them personally and also fulfills the requirements of the broader nightclub scene, a process that has been observed in studies of other nightlife settings (see Ronen, 2010; Rigakos, 2008). Linking back to the previous section as well as the wider research themes, which describe the emergence of a less transgressive or deviant youth clubber profile, what is significant about the production of image in this context, is that its value is not limited to the nightclub setting. What the above interviewees’ comments reveal with regard to the role of image in building identity is that it is not merely about what image can provide for an individual in the nightclub, but also what it provides for them outside the club. Through building confidence, facilitating social interactions and shaping feelings of togetherness (what Veronica termed being “part of something”) the production and consumption of this popular and stylish image in the nightclub encapsulates the purpose of the nightclub as a vehicle through which young Adelaide clubbers can develop a positive social identity as a form of cultural capital that appears to have value in other social settings.

⁸ In practical terms, in Adelaide nightclubs males typically conveyed a masculine, clean and arguably simple image, wearing stylish but casual shoes, jeans and short-sleeved t-shirts adorned with contemporary designs, which was remarkably consistent across the research venues and ‘scene’ generally. In contrast, although maintaining an equally or perhaps even more stylish image, the female image observed appeared to be considerably more complex defined by a wider range of after-five’ styles and high-heels. Illustrating the significance of the production and consumption of this image was the strength of patrons’ adherence to it. Although the majority of this research study was conducted was from May to August, which in Adelaide are the coldest months of the year, patrons’ image did not differ significantly from that of the warmer months of summer in which some of the preliminary research was conducted.

4.2.2.2 *Dance Music*

As noted earlier in this chapter, dance music is a prominent feature of the nightclub that contributes to youth leisure consumption. In terms of its meaning for young people, however, there has been substantial concern since its emergence in nightclubs in the 1980s that dance music is strongly associated with increases in the level of availability and access to illicit drugs (see Chinet et al., 2007; McCambridge et al., 2005; Webster et al., 2002; Riley et al., 2001), which has influenced perceptions of the purpose of these spaces (Winstock et al., 2001). However, what the data obtained in the present study has identified is that while drugs are used in Adelaide nightclubs and their use is often linked with the type of music played, how dance music influences the nightclub experience does not support these traditional claims. Rather, as has been identified in previous studies, the nightclub has a positive role in young people's identity development where the processes of how young people interact in this space such as socialising and dancing are significant markers of self-identification primarily guided by the type of music played (Bennett, 2002b; Malbon, 1999; 1998; Crewe & Beaverstock, 1998). The nightclub thus serves as a valuable resource, from which many young people garner significant meaning used in their social and personal development (Bennett, 2002b; 2000; Malbon, 1998). Specifically, when asked about the music played in the nightclub and its meaning for them, interestingly all of the qualitative participants in the present study revealed that music is used by young people to convey a sense of ownership and individuality that provides an experience of difference from the wider community that identifies these young people as 'clubbers'. As Halfacree and Kitchin (1996, p. 51) note "popular music provides one of the key symbolic tags in contemporary society.... One's choice of music represents a cultural expression, and one's cultural expression is increasingly significant in defining who one is". The following comments espouse this, conveying perceptions of togetherness as well as individual meanings that were common among the sample:

"Music is really important to me - I listen to it when I am having fun or when I need a pick me up, you know, it defines my mood. Nightclubs are a big part of that 'cause that's where most of the good [music] is played, the stuff that I can associate with. And in terms of me and my friends, it's about what being in the club and listening to music

gives us, how it defines us – things like freedom, choice and the chance to relax” (Alex, aged 23, user).

“I’d be lost without music...I think the same goes for most nightclubbers because it is always there and is part of all the other experiences in the club. I guess you could say that it centres the club, if that makes sense, and makes it different from other experiences” (Sam, aged 19, non-user).

This was supported by the following statements that in addition to noting the value of music in bringing clubbers together identified its role in enhancing key life events, specific social practices and the social interactions they entail. Notably, despite the fact that these interviewees were identified either as a user or former user, the experiences they described were not motivated by the use of drugs:

“It is our music; it’s the stuff that we’ve grown up and are growing up with. Like, you can associate certain songs with certain times in your life, like finishing school or summer holidays or whatever, and so yeah it reminds you of who you are and what you mean” (Matthew, aged 25, former user).

“I think the biggest thing about the music is that it gives you the opportunity to dance...it makes you feel good so you want to dance, with friends, guys and even other girls... And that’s what makes me feel like me” (Ariel, aged 24, user).

These comments describe a complex relationship between music, the nightclub space in which it is consumed and these young people’s development of identity. Specifically, they articulate the importance of music in both promoting and facilitating valued social practices (e.g. dancing) that provide intimate interactions and experiences that are fundamental to how these young people perceive themselves. This is significant in the context of the present study and the identification of the Adelaide ‘clubber’, in particular, as it identifies the experience of listening and dancing to contemporary dance music in the nightclub as a form of social capital that can be consumed by young people as a way of creating a unique identity. Thus, what can be drawn from this analysis is that through the production and consumption of image, music and social interactions these young people use the nightclub to develop a positive social identity. This not only delineates the purpose of the nightclub for these young people, but in highlighting that this identity appears to

retain value in social settings outside the nightclub that it also has significant implications for the meaning of the nightclub for them and how their use of these spaces should be viewed, which is discussed in the remaining section of this chapter.

4.2.3 The meaning of the nightclub

Although there have been many attempts to examine the meaning of the nightclub for young people (Rief, 2009; Riley & Hayward, 2004; Bellis et al., 2002), much of this work has been underscored by perceptions of deviance associated with young people's use of illicit drugs (see Young, 1971). This perception has created a narrow picture of the nightclub and the young people that inhabit it, preventing a broader analysis of the meaning of the nightclub for young people. In contrast, this chapter has highlighted a broader 'reality' in terms of how young people use the social space of the nightclub, including the use of drugs, which not only contributes to their identification as a *tribe*, but also highlights the need to re-evaluate current perspectives of what the nightclub means for these young people and the identification of the contemporary 'clubber'.

4.2.3.1 Escaping the Mundane: Hitting the Club

As noted earlier in this thesis (see section 2.3.3.3), the emergence of drug use as a form of consumption occurred alongside broader cultural shifts associated with globalisation that saw an emphasis on the consumption of commodities generally (Seddon, 2006; see also Reith, 2004; Parker et al., 1998; Collison, 1996). Many studies have noted that a product of this was the creation of highly commercialised and commodified societies that place expectations and constraints on many groups, particularly youth (see Seddon, 2006; Measham, 2004; Young, 1999). For many young people this arguably creates a routine and mundane everyday life that contrasts with the desire for pleasure and excitement. What has been widely suggested is that because of the pressure of individual responsibility and expectation that this society creates, there is need for hedonistic escape (see Sanders, 2006; Perrone, 2006; Measham, 2004; Presdee, 2000). Highlighting the significance of the role of the

nightclub discussed in part one of this chapter, what many of these studies have identified is that in contemporary societies the nightclub provides this opportunity for escape from the pressures of the 'real' world (Perrone, 2006; Sanders, 2006), what some have labelled the "escape down the rabbit hole into Wonderland" (see Measham, 2004, p. 340; Garratt, 1998, p. 321). It is argued here that Adelaide nightclubs represent such a space for escape that allows the young people who attend them to "lift themselves and their daily life out of the ordinary" (Hetherington, 1996, p. 42). This was supported by the interviewees in this study many of whom (Todd, Frances, Aimee, Veronica and Tim) revealed that their use of nightclubs was motivated by the desire to reduce the stresses of the working week and the expectations placed on them by work or study:

"It was to have a good time, to relax and have fun. For me it was most enjoyable after a big week at work and uni, and I think that's what most people use it for. And if everyone [in the group] is doing it it feels even better because it's more accepted" (Daniela, aged 21, non-user).

"We go out because it's our free time and it's a great way to unwind after a big week. It's our way of relaxing – it's not about sticking it up anyone or going crazy – it's just about making sure that you balance the good with the bad" (Luke, aged 22, non-user).

This was further supported by the perception that the emergence of social networking sites (see above, section 4.1.2.2) has commercialised and 'immediatised' the flow of information so that certain nightclub events, such as the performances of specific DJs or special events (see above, page 126), can be easily assimilated and incorporated into young people's social schedules (see Fiske, 2004). This not only further defines the role of the nightclub, but importantly for these young people provides them with 'something to look forward to':

"When you know a big event is coming up people get really excited and get really pumped up. It's an exciting event, something different that you can look forward to during the week when life is getting you down, and that builds up the excitement" (Daniela, aged 21, non-user)

Two messages or themes can be drawn from these findings, which arguably contribute valuable knowledge to how young people's use of the nightclub space is understood. Firstly, these comments provide evidence that supports previous understandings of the nightclub that suggest that the broader pressures of society create anxiety and an environment where young people crave escape, and hence plan ways in which they can release these anxieties (Presdee, 2000). These comments identify, albeit subtly, an awareness of the need for balance in their lives and the desire for many opportunities for leisure. As other studies have noted (notably Measham (2004, p. 343) in her discussion of 'head space') this locates young people's consumption in and of the nightclub as a key counter-balance to the anxieties associated with work and study (see also, Sanders, 2006; Brain, 2000). Secondly, what this chapter thus argues is that the acknowledgment of the nightclub as a site of escape conceptualised in this way is useful in that it can be used to explain the wider meaning of the nightclub to young people that is encapsulated by the way in which leisure is consumed by these young people, which as discussed in the next section has broad implications for how young people's use of the nightclub and their identification as 'clubber' should be viewed.

4.2.3.2 *Escape: Resistance or Something More?*

A feature of young people's 'escape' is that it has often been viewed negatively, with many studies (Ferrell et al., 2004; Langman, 2003; Presdee, 2000; Malbon, 1999) proposing that young people seek marginal spaces in order to push against social boundaries and release their consumer anxieties in a time and space "outside the rigors and rules of the workplace and watchful eye of bosses or parents and teachers" (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003, p. 114). What has typically been thought about young people's desire for a space of their own is that it reflects a common desire to resist the values, norms and attitudes of the wider community (Langman, 2003; Chatterton & Hollands, 2003; Malbon, 1999). Consequently, nightclubs have often been seen as sites of transgression and 'otherness' in which young people collectively give meaning to deviant identities through a series of transgressive acts, such as drinking and drug use (Sanders, 2006; Measham, 2004; Hetherington, 1996). This perspective

has been used to inform and rationalise expert analyses of risk by suggesting a wide range of harms and dangers associated with youth deviance. However, in this study most participants indicated a strong interest in maintaining wider societal values and norms, such as adequate employment and enhancing education through academic study, and thus their use of nightclubs is a form of temporary escape. What can be drawn from this is that these young people seek to remain connected to society and therefore become ‘weekend warriors’ (Perrone, 2006; see also, Chatterton & Hollands 2003; Ter Bogt et al., 2002; Allaste & Lagerspetz, 2002), to ensure that ‘having a big night’ does not clash with or interrupt their daily commitments. This was evident in the qualitative data, where the attitudes conveyed in the following comments were common across the sample:

“I go out mainly on the weekends because of uni and work and stuff. You know, you can’t really be going out on a Tuesday or something ‘cause then you’d be tired for the whole week ‘cause you won’t catch up on the sleep” (Tess, aged 19, non-user).

“Each group is different, but I reckon most [young people] would know that while it’s great to go out and have fun, you can’t do it all the time and there are better times to do it. It’s about balance.... When I was using it was better when you could wait for a long weekend or time when you didn’t have uni or work, and then you could buzz through the experience...” (Michael, aged 25, user).

What is important about this aspect of young people’s search for meaning is that although such forms of consumption have been shown to be commonly associated with drug use (Perrone, 2006; Measham, 2002), the participants’ drug use did not dominate their nightclub experience. However, as revealed in the following statement, methamphetamine use does form a part of the nightclub experience:

“It takes away certain inhibitions...[drug use] lets us do the stuff we want to do. I can’t dance, but if I drop a pill then I’ll be up there like everyone else and I can’t stop...it helps complete the experience. When you’re young you try to chase that best night of euphoria and escape” (Michael, aged 25, user).

But, participants were keen to clarify the nature of methamphetamine use in the nightclub:

“I think that most people’s use of nightclubs is just to have fun rather than go crazy...it’s more controlled really... I mean there are certain places that people go to specifically to have drugs, but they’re not going to have a big dose ‘cause they want to let loose, but not get messy” (Susan, aged 23, user).

“It’s not about being a junkie or anything; it was more about keeping me going. It was more about ensuring a good night when I went out ‘cause I’d be a train wreck by Friday night and just needed to break out. I guess you could say that it was a tool or a technique for maintaining a particular lifestyle” (Matthew, aged 25, former user).

The language used by these interviewees and the attitudes and practices they describe emphasise the connections between the physical, cultural and social aspects of the leisure space and the implications of these features in terms of their meaning for young people. In this sense, the nightclub appears to act as a gateway through which young people can enhance and enjoy their leisure time and distinguish it from their daily life. And although a number of studies (see Moore & Miles, 2004; Measham, 2004; Malbon, 1999) have highlighted that drugs are a way to achieve the desired escape, the drugs do not feature significantly in the development of meaning for these young people. What this chapter has shown is that, within the five research sites illicit drug use is merely one aspect of the overall atmosphere, which is also influenced by the production and consumption of a wide range of other leisure activities. As such, these young people appeared motivated to use the nightclub space in a way that represents a “controlled loss of control” (Measham, 2004, p. 338), where through the bounded acts of alcohol consumption, drug use, dancing, and intimate social interactions they can achieve a state of escape. However, it is important to highlight that the findings obtained in this study describe situated youth practices that represent a small step away from Measham’s (2004, p. 338) original conceptualisation of the “controlled loss of control”. Rather than a symbol of resistance to wider societal values, these young people’s nightclub use not only represents a temporary escape from the mundane reality of work and study, but also a counter-balance to it through which, as noted in the previous section (4.2.2), more positive and responsible collective identities and meanings are constructed (Moore & Miles, 2004). This has arguably created a new type of clubber, whose understanding of the purpose and meaning of the nightclub in their lives influences their practices

within the nightclub, particularly in relation to their perceptions of risk as discussed later in this thesis (see chapter 7).

4.2.4 Duality of meaning: *Intimacy versus anonymity*

What has emerged from this discussion is an apparent juxtaposition in the purpose and meaning of nightclubs for young people. An important feature of the nightclub for young people has been the contrast between its “private accessibility and its public invisibility” (Hebdige, 1979, p. 84). While young people see the nightclub and the consumption associated with it as a valuable way to gain affection and intimacy from social and intimate relationships with other young people, for these young people clubs also offer an anonymity that cannot be found easily in other social spaces. Thus, while young people’s desires for intimacy and anonymity appear contradictory, they are inextricably linked and encapsulate the complexity of meaning that nightclubs hold for young people. As Malbon notes:

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

As identified above, governments have often misunderstood this juxtaposition perceiving it as an expression of resistance, which has negatively affected the quality and scope of the policies that relate to young people’s use of nightclub spaces (see chapter 6). What is argued here is that, instead, it represents a complex interplay that holds considerable value for these young people, which must be recognised if the link between young people and the nightclub is to be understood. The final section of this chapter thus unpacks and explains the duality evident in the meaning that nightclubs have for young people in the Adelaide night-time economy.

4.2.4.1 *Intimacy: Being 'Us'*

As the predominant source of leisure and social interaction, the nightclub is an appropriate site to examine the juxtaposition of values that young people and experts hold in relation to the meaning of the nightclub for youth. While experts often espouse that clubs are 'underground' dens of youth deviance often associated with substantial levels of drug use (Kerr, Kimber & Rhodes, 2007; Graham & Wells, 2003), young people view clubs as a social avenue, or facilitator, for constructing and maintaining social identities and intimate relationships. And, while drugs are a common component of the nightclub scene (Perrone, 2006; Hunt & Evans, 2003), they are not used by all patrons nor do they appear to be the focus of the scene for those that do (see Jackson, 2004; Gilbert & Pearson, 1999). Therefore understanding the broader meaning of the club is crucial. The data reveals that the consumption of pleasure is the goal of Adelaide nightclubbers and fundamental to defining the meaning of nightclubs. Specifically, the Adelaide nightclub has become the predominant nightlife space for 18-25 year-olds, where the consumption of contemporary music, image, alcohol, drugs, and, through the commodification of the self, each other is sought purposively for the pleasure they provide. To this extent, the nightclub has become a site of meaning and social development for youth and an accepted outlet for escape. The following comments reveal that in consuming pleasurable experiences, these young people seek to gain intimacy and meaningful social interaction with the many other young people that inhabit the nightclub:

"People are there for the same purpose – to have fun. And that encourages young people to let go, the idea of having fun with so many other people – everything becomes about feeling good and doing it together. The more people there are, the closer you feel. You become part of something and that feels amazing" (Becky, aged 18, non-user).

"It's obvious that the atmosphere created within clubs is targeted at a specific age group, some of whom will be tempted to use drugs. But I think the biggest influence on how people feel is the fact that, depending on the venue, there might be 300 or 400 people just letting loose, letting their hair down and having fun, and you can just let go and be a part of it too" (William, aged 22, non-user).

It was also noted that even if an individual did use drugs, many interviewees perceived that it was motivated by the desire to enhance the other aspects that constitute the nightclub, such as music, dancing, and social interactions with others. This is supported by Alex and Veronica who indicated that there are a range of other activities that drug use enhances that are equally vital to their enjoyment and the identification of who they are:

“Hq stays open heaps late, so it’s perfect ‘cause you can listen to good music and hang with the boys while getting a buzz on. I think using [meth] suits going out for most people, ‘cause when you take meth you want to be more social, you wanna dance and you don’t stop talking. Meth makes you more fun to be around. Some of the people I’ve met [at clubs] have become some of my best mates ‘cause they get to see you when you are relaxed and having a good time” (Alex, aged 23, user).

“It’s the people that you socialise with rather than the drug itself. People I go out with want to last all night, so meth will help that – but it’s more about wanting to socialise with people, get close to them... And if you’re single you can dance with guys, and stuff like that” (Veronica, aged 18, user).

Similar to previous cannabis research (Schaub et al., 2010), where it was found that the person(s) with whom leisure time was spent with influenced the decision to use drugs more so than the type of leisure activity itself, the current sample indicated that the use of methamphetamines facilitates the development of social identity and intimacy. This suggests a complex interplay between young people’s experiences of leisure and youth sociability, which in some cases is facilitated by drug use. However, this use serves only to augment their leisure experiences and social relationships (Jackson, 2004; South, 2004), which is relevant to the current study given that as these relationships hold significant meaning and are fundamental to the consumption of leisure and development of identity (see above, section 4.2.2), young people seek to avoid risk and engage in socially-bounded leisure activities within the nightclub. The interplay between leisure spaces and youth sociability is therefore significant as it demonstrates that young people seek to draw positive meaning from the nightclub, and have the capacity to do so through leisure consumption and the desire for intimacy, which in turn influences their perceptions of the risks associated with the nightclub.

4.2.4.2 *Anonymity: A Space of Our Own*

In the contemporary spaces of urban nightclubs, young people's leisure is increasingly organised around opportunities for pleasure, excitement and gratification (Measham, 2004, p. 343; Perrone, 2006; see also, Langman, 2003). In providing these opportunities, and in meeting their needs and expectations, the nightclub plays an important role in young people's overall leisure experience. The nightclub provides an environment which contrasts with and is completely removed from young people's work/study existence and that is separate from the view of the wider community (see Measham, 2004; Hobbs et al., 2000). What this study has identified is that the Adelaide nightclub achieves this by designing and providing a unique space that young people can 'own' and which is free from the societal constraints that exist outside this space. This separation serves to foster an important work/study-leisure balance. For example, being 'in' the club involves the development of friendships and relationships and engagement in social activities, such as drinking, listening and dancing to popular music which are central to a 'good night' but also provides an escape. As identified earlier in this chapter, in order to enter the nightclub, individuals require cultural and social capital (see Rigakos, 2008; Bourdieu, 1986), which is found in the development of a particular identity that nightclubs encourage. As such, identifying oneself as a 'clubber' not only reinforces the development of capital for these young people, but also confirms the existence of such a space for young people's cultural expression. How young people use this space to develop meaning is therefore important to understanding their perceptions of risk given the meanings that these young people place upon their leisure activities.

This research highlights the significance of the nightclub in the development of identity and meaning for young people, where Hetherington (1996, p. 43) states "identities are not innate, but rather derive from a play of difference...articulated through a dialogue between their constituent parts". In discussing the link between young people, drugs, and risk perception, what this study has shown is that the Adelaide nightclub scene has emerged as a primary site in which difference can be acknowledged and used to identify the meaning of the nightclub in identity-formation

for these young people. The qualitative data suggests that the nightclub is not only a site for the pursuit of pleasure or leisure in a consumerist society (see Perrone, 2006; Measham, 2004), but also a site that young people can use to establish a sense of belonging with their peer group:

“It’s a space where young people can relax and just hang out together. They identify with it as being somewhere fun to escape to that represents them. It’s not for older people, you know. It’s about the music, meeting people and having a good time” (Frances, aged 20, non-user).

“It’s about having something different – a place that is yours, where you and your friends can hang out. It’s the music, the people...you can let go and be swept away. It’s surreal in a way. It’s about being around people that are sharing the same sort of high...no matter what people are doing [drugs, alcohol, energy drinks], you can share the experience. It’s who you are” (Luke, aged 22, non-user).

The social interactions that these comments describe reveal the values and practices (e.g. drinking, drug use) through which these young people form identity and in doing so create a space of their own. The language used implies a distinction between young people and the wider community in the desired outcomes of nightclub attendance, which reinforces the meaning of the club for young people as a site of social centrality that is used to cope with the constraints and expectations of the wider community (Moore & Miles, 2004). Nightclubs provide young people with a recreational space different from other social spaces, in which they can openly express themselves and yet maintain a sense of belonging, thus developing both their individual and social or peer group identities (Malbon, 1999). In the nightclub this is possible because the separation from the wider community allows young people to take ownership of the nightclub as an intimate leisure space, and use it to form social identities organised around particular meanings of pleasure and its consumption, which importantly do not necessarily involve the use of illicit drugs.

4.2.5 Conclusion

Adelaide nightclub culture encapsulates a complex interplay between young people, music, drugs, styles and place (Brookman, 2001; Bennett, 2000). To examine this

interplay, this chapter focused on two key features of the night-time economy; the club, and the clubber. Part one characterised the Adelaide nightclub as a unique site of consumption, which through its physical and socio-cultural characteristics influences young people's social interactions and pursuit of leisure within the night-time economy. In Adelaide, this is most saliently demonstrated by the manner in which the commercialisation of the night-time economy has meant that nightclubs themselves have become primary actors in the production and maintenance of opportunities for a particular style of consumption for young people that contributes to their homogeneity and guides their behaviour in the club. Indeed, although music has been the feature considered most central to club culture since its emergence in the 1980s (Brookman, 2001; Bennett, 2000), due to the diverse styles, experiences and interactions desired by clubbers, club owners are increasingly aware of the need to give their patrons more. Through interior design, creation of a unique club culture and management of numerous events, nightclubs have constructed nightlife spaces that reflect a contemporary, and arguably homogenous, youth identity that desires exciting and gratifying leisure and social interactions, which sometimes includes the use of illicit drugs, this identifying the importance of consumption in this research.

Part two took the next step by identifying and examining this contemporary youth identity to uncover what consumption means for young people in the nightclub. In contrast to traditional descriptions of young people's nightclub attendance as a form of resistance to wider societal values, typically expressed through drug use, this study revealed that Adelaide club culture is not defined by the use of drugs and, rather, is more loosely defined as a group of consumers who develop meaning through broader consumer choices (Hodkinson, 2005; Bennett, 2005), where choices are dictated by nightclub managers/owners. Specifically, in challenging stereotypical depictions of users as the deviant, drug-addicted 'other', what can be drawn from the present study is that although illicit drugs hold significant value for some young people's consumption of the nightclub, they are not the focus of it. Rather, the use of drugs appears to be only one of many consumer options available in the nightclub as a 'facilitator' of leisure that are considered to have positive value and meaning for

some young people, hence a more varied perspective of this space is needed. In a movement away from subcultural theories of deviance, this chapter has proposed that Maffesoli's (1996) concept of *tribe* can be used to describe a new user profile that reflects the broader profile of young people who attend Adelaide nightclubs generally. Specifically, the plurality of styles and experiences within nightclub culture indicates that there is no fixed 'subculture' present in terms of drug use; rather, in Adelaide globalisation and consumer culture have moved the scene beyond subculture to where young people's use of nightclubs can be explained as a commodified expression of a communal desire for consumption of friends, intimate social interactions and leisure. This chapter has provided a nuanced understanding of the mechanisms of sociality and cultural meanings that exist in relation to the nightclub, which extends our understanding of the profile of Adelaide nightclub attendees and the role of the nightclub itself. Specifically, consumption can be identified as a universal feature that is seen to have an explicit and, notably, positive purpose and meaning within the broader lives of these young people. For some this includes the use of illicit drugs, but primarily such consumption serves to provide young people generally with an intimate space of their own within which they can escape the pressures of everyday life. These findings not only provide support for the perceived normalisation of methamphetamines in the Adelaide nightclub scene, but also highlight that shifts in the meaning of the nightclub and the use of drugs within it also influence young people's perceptions of risk, which will be discussed in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 5

A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF ADELAIDE CLUBBERS: CLUBS, DRUGS AND RISK

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the quantitative survey data and, where relevant, supplements it with interview data and insights gained from participant observation within the research sites. This analysis examines how young people use Adelaide nightclubs, including for some the use of drugs, and highlights the social strategies that are used to identify and manage the risks associated with their nightclub experience and behaviour. The chapter is thematically divided into four sections, which reflects the manner in which the survey was constructed: 1) attending the club, 2) nightclub risk, 3) drug risk and the club, and 4) nightclub drug use. To make sense of the data and provide a link with the Perception of Risk framework developed in chapter 2, the data was examined in terms of the participants' gender, age, drug use history,¹ motivations for nightclub attendance and frequency of nightclub attendance. Evaluating the data in this way was valuable in order to demonstrate the sometimes significant differences among these young nightclubbers, in terms of the extent of drug use (perceived and actual), the influence of youth culture and importantly how young people's perceptions, attitudes and behaviours shape their awareness and understanding of risk in the nightclub. In particular, this lens allowed greater understanding of how young people perceive risk in their social lives providing insight into the relationship between young people, nightclubs, drugs and risk, which it is hoped may be used to inform the development of more evidence-based policies and initiatives in relation to young people's club drug use. Specifically, the data identifies a complex interaction between participants' gender, age, drug use, patterns of attendance and motivations for attending Adelaide nightclubs and

¹ In this study, participants' drug use history was defined as whether or not participants had used methamphetamines, as assessed in the Perception of Risk questionnaire. This is an important distinction given that although other studies of club drug use report extensive polydrug use and their impacts on youth (see Measham & Moore, 2009) even in relation to methamphetamine use in other drug use settings (see Halkitis et al., 2008; Degenhardt & Topp, 2002), in the Adelaide nightclub setting methamphetamines were typically not used with other drugs (other than alcohol) (see section 5.5.1). The research was designed to reflect this characteristic.

participants' perceptions of a diverse range of forms of risk, which provides a valuable broader snapshot of this social environment to create a source of data otherwise not available in this jurisdiction. In doing so, this data highlights the need to expand governments' knowledge of this social setting to move away from perspectives that problematise these young people, particularly those that use drugs (see section 1.2), and instead develop greater understanding of the characteristics of young people who attend nightclubs generally and address the diverse motivations that they have for populating these nightlife venues.

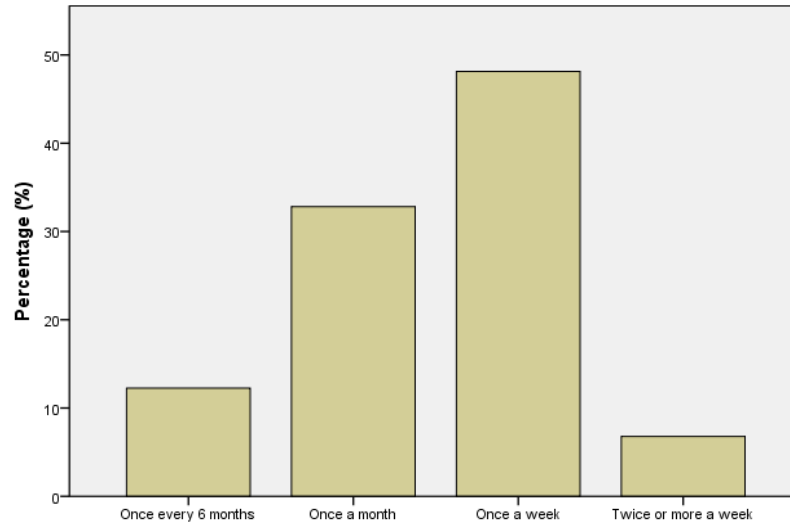
5.2 Attending the club

Much of the literature surrounding young people and their use of nightclubs, has often implied that the behaviour young people display in these spaces is chaotic and erratic (Shewan et al., 2000; Egginton & Parker, 2000; see also Duff, 2005). This view has been transposed onto the discussion of young people's club drug use due to the well-published association between nightclubs and drugs (Hutton, 2010; Hunt et al., 2005; Purcell & Graham, 2005), and this has a number of implications for how young people are viewed by the community (see chapter 6). Numerous advertising campaigns (see DHA, 2010) and government policies (see NDS, 2004) have emerged that characterise young people as often engaging in frenzied and unrestrained leisure pursuits, which are often associated with the use of illicit drugs. However, what the survey data reveals is that participants' attendance at and behaviour within Adelaide nightclubs appear to be contained in and constrained by routines and patterns of consistency. In addition, these young people have identified a number of factors (see page 166) other than the use of drugs that contribute to their reasons for consumption of leisure in the nightclub.

5.2.1 Frequency of Attendance

As noted in Figure 5.1, most participants attended Adelaide nightclubs at least once a month, with the majority attending once a week (48.1 percent). In the in-depth interviews, this routine was often held as a proud achievement for these participants, who perceived that it demonstrated good organisation and greater financial capacity.

Figure 5.1 *Frequency of nightclub attendance (n=457)*



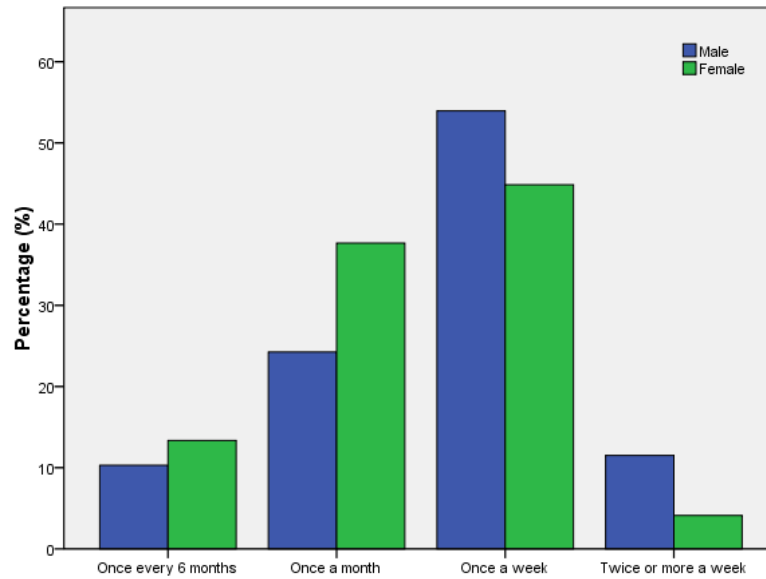
For example, having money to spend on a night out was perceived to be indicative of an individual’s social status, which not only allowed them to go out more often, but also substantially enhanced the quality of each night-out as it meant that they would be able to attend a greater number of clubs, and within each venue purchase greater quantities of alcohol and in some instances, illicit drugs.

“I know people who have spent \$150 on booze in a night. They do it because it looks good and it’s what makes them different from the other guys – more popular. I mean I’ve got a full-time job so I will spend a fair bit, but you can’t be doing that if you’re a student” (Eddie, aged 23, non-user).

“If you were using you could always drink more, so you’d always have a beer in hand, but it’s not about that. It’s more about image, about how much money you have to throw around – to show that you’re a man – so for other people it was like, ‘oh my god...check these guys out...’ because we’d be drinking and spending \$100 at a time” (Michael, aged 25, user).

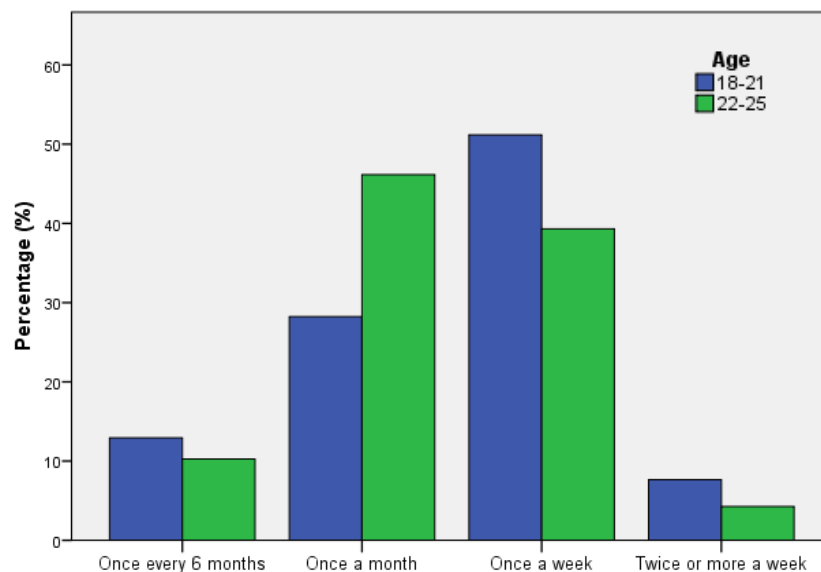
Participants’ gender explained some of the influence on the frequency of attendance at Adelaide nightclubs. As shown in Figure 5.2, a greater proportion of females attended nightclubs ‘once a month’ or ‘once every 6 months’ than males, who were more likely to attend ‘once a week’ or ‘twice or more a week’. This contrasts what was observed during the present study, however, where clubs were predominantly populated by young women. Although significant, the effect of gender was small and does not fully explain young people’s frequency of attendance.

Figure 5.2 Frequency of attendance by gender (n=457)



In contrast, Figure 5.3 shows that age had a moderate influence, with 18-21 year olds attending nightclubs more often, primarily once a week, than 22-25 year olds, who mostly attended once a month, although some also attended ‘once a week’. This result conveyed a common sentiment among participants that although the desire to go out remains, as they get older participants become increasingly more aware of the need for balance and the role of the nightclub in their lives generally, and attend nightclubs accordingly. Notably, participants’ drug use and motivations for attendance did not influence the frequency of their nightclub attendance.

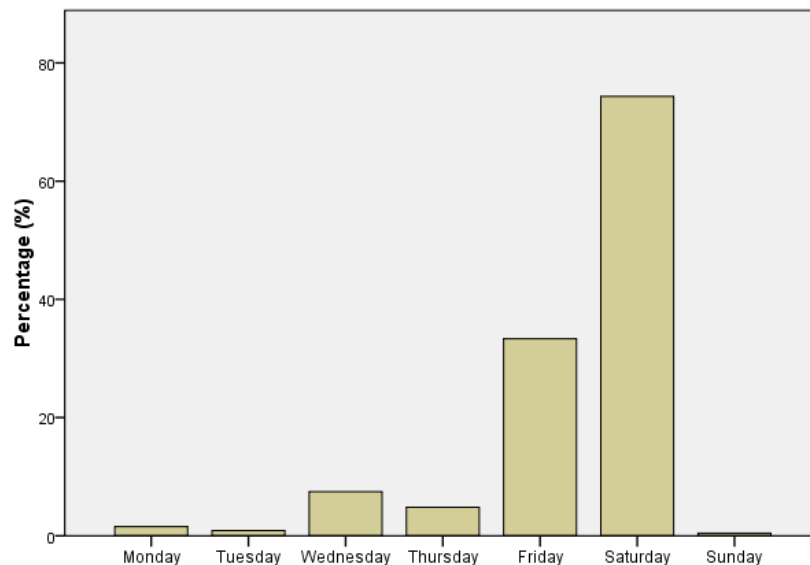
Figure 5.3 Frequency of attendance by age (n=457)



5.2.2 Choosing a Night Out

Although participants' frequency of attendance varied widely, participants reported that they usually restricted their attendance to specific nights, particularly the weekend. As noted in Figure 5.4, Saturday, Friday, and Wednesday nights were the most popular nights, which coincided with Adelaide nightclubs' marketing/promotion schedules with numerous events typically scheduled on these nights. Notably, nightclubs experienced minimal patronage on the remaining days of the week, although an exception to this was observed where Sundays became more popular when they were followed by a public holiday. As will be discussed further later (section 7.1), it is important to note that this has implications for drug use in terms of its frequency and extent.

Figure 5.4 Preferred nights of Adelaide nightclub attendance (n=457)



Participants were asked to describe the motivations for their attendance, which produced an extensive but precise list of responses (see Table 5.1). A major feature of this list is that it was created by open-ended questions that led to participant-driven responses, and thus it is important to understand the data in a lifestyle context. As identified in the demographic data (see Table 3.2), most participants had received a formal education, were seeking further qualifications, or were employed at the time of the study. As such, for most participants their nightclub attendance was largely driven by the need for a balance of work and play, and social interaction with friends.

Table 5.1 *Motivations for particular nights of nightclub attendance*

	Percent
No work/study commitments	60.6
It is the weekend	48.0
It is the most popular night(s)	45.2
It is when their friends go out	20.0
Does not matter if I am hungover	9.0
Matches particular nightclub events	8.6
Better transport	1.8
No response	9.5

n = 457 (total responses = 921)

It is acknowledged that a potential limitation of the question is that responses may appear too broad and fail to address behavioural issues, or identify an activity that may be considered unruly, such as the excessive consumption that is often associated with young people's activities on the weekend (Shewan et al., 2000). However, that these responses were participant-driven is crucial, particularly in the language used which indicated an awareness of balance and responsibility. This was supported by the majority of the interviewees, who revealed that their nightclub attendance was guided by social group norms, particularly an awareness of the place of leisure in their social lives and how this reconciled with other commitments:

“We go out most Friday and Saturday nights, because most people can't go out during the week due to work or uni. A couple of my friends also like going to Flashdance [Wednesday nights at *Hq*] because they don't work on Thursdays, but I have uni all day” (Daniela, aged 21, non-user).

“Most of my friends are at uni or working part-time, so they can't afford to go out every night. One of the main reasons we go out is to see each other and have fun, so it's not as enjoyable when everyone can't get out” (William, aged 22, non-user).

As reported above, a number of interviewees also reported that Sundays became popular when followed by a public holiday, illustrating an awareness of their commitments, but also a flexibility in maximising leisure opportunities:

“In summer it is especially good, as the weather's great and there's a couple of long weekends close together, which means you can party hard and recover on the Monday...it's just part of our social routine” (William, aged 22, non-user).

To determine what factors influenced these motivations, a series of chi-square tests² were conducted across each of the samples (e.g. users/non-users). However, no significant differences were found in terms of age, gender and motivation for attendance. Similarly, although users were more influenced to attend clubs on the most common nights because of the factors detailed in Table 5.1, this difference was not significant. The samples are thus comparable and, in turn, the participants share universal motivations for attending Adelaide nightclubs, which was supported by many of the interviewees (Emmy, Simone, Veronica and Nathan):

“You can’t stereotype all users, but most would know that while it’s great to go out and have fun, you can’t do it all the time and there are better times to do it. It’s about balance...” (Michael, aged 25, user).

It can therefore be argued that young people’s motivations for attending nightclub venues are shaped by a wide range of factors, and not merely the use of illicit drugs. They primarily focus on achieving a balance between work and leisure and, in doing so, challenge future policy-makers to address this issue.

5.2.3 *Motivations for Attendance*

Although many studies (Moss et al., 2009; Grazian, 2007) claim that young people possess sinister motives for their use of club drugs, including rebellion from societal values, loss of control, violence and participation in risky sexual activity, this was not the case in the present study. As noted in Table 5.2, the participants’ motivations for attending Adelaide nightclubs were primarily socialising, music, drinking, and dancing, with limited responses across the remaining categories, which is important given that these responses were again participant-driven, obtained from the pilot study. Furthermore, although drug use is perceived to be prevalent in Adelaide nightclubs, only 3.3 percent of participants were motivated to attend clubs because of drugs, which one participant perceived was, at least in part, because:

“People don’t go out to use drugs...I mean, why go to all that effort when you can just do it at home...? People go out to have fun” (Todd, aged 24, user).

² The chi-square test is commonly used for comparing frequencies or proportions (Pallant, 2001). It is a statistical test used to determine if observed data deviate from those expected under a particular hypothesis. Typically, the hypothesis tested is whether or not two samples are different enough in a particular characteristic to be considered different populations.

Table 5.2 Motivations for nightclub attendance

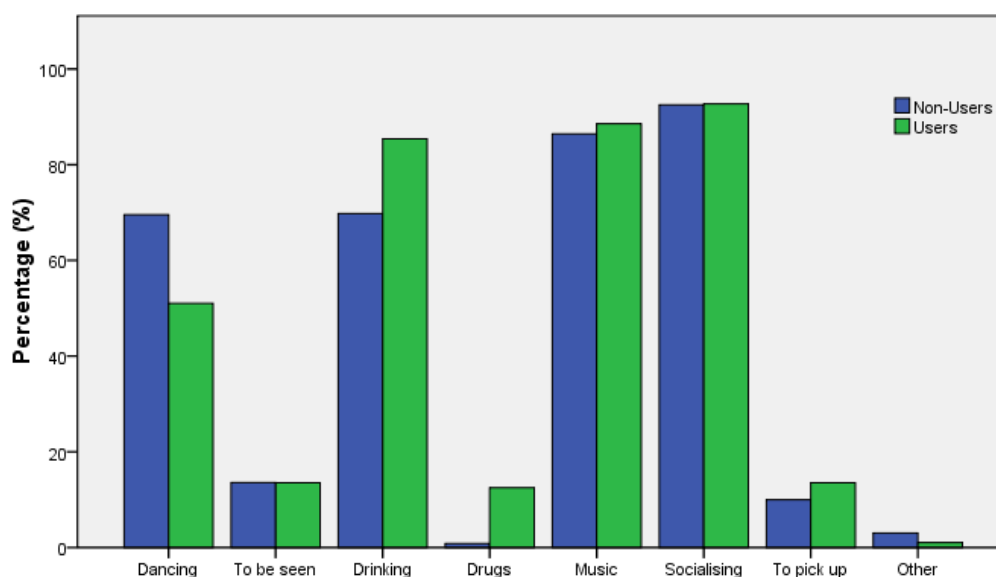
	Percent
Socialising	92.6
Music	86.9
Drinking	73.1
Dancing	65.6
To be seen	13.6
To pick up	10.7
Drugs/drug use	3.3
Other	2.6

n = 457

The following statement provides context to this finding, suggesting that rather than being based on sinister motives, the participants' drug use may instead be used to achieve other outcomes important to the overall experience of going out. In his interview, Eddie indicated that for many of his drug-using friends, their use:

“...makes them feel less nervous around chicks...it makes them easier to talk to. I've been around them with and without [meth] and it makes a big difference. It's not that they want to 'pick up' all the time, they just like socialising and talking to girls and having a chance” (Eddie, aged 23, non-user).

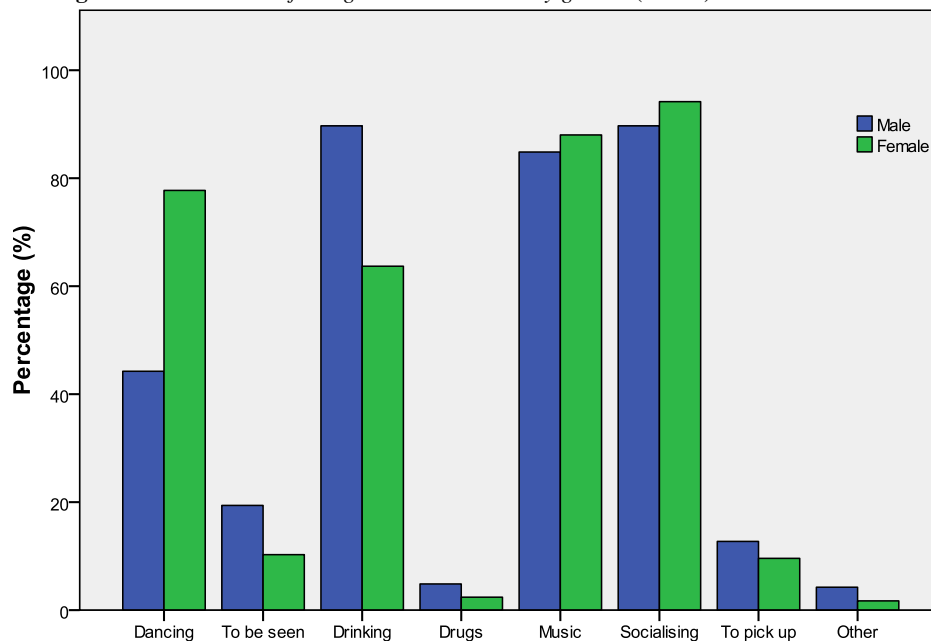
Figure 5.5 Motivations for nightclub attendance by drug use history (n=457)



As noted in Figure 5.5, users and non-users were equally motivated by dancing, being seen, music, and socialising, providing further support for the argument that these are universal motivations. Also, although it was found that a greater number of users were motivated by drinking and 'picking up', these differences were not

significant. Rather, these findings more likely reflect the gendered nature of the nightclub and the differences in males' and females' alcohol consumption. For example, although it was not within the scope of this study, many studies of similar nightlife settings have noted that excessive drinking may be the product of a socially-embedded test of masculinity or a sense of bravado among young male nightclub goers (Anderson, Daly & Rapp, 2009; Tomsen, 1997; Lemle & Mishkind, 1989). This is supported by the data presented in Figure 5.6, in which a higher percentage of men indicated wanting to drink at clubs than women, who were, in turn, more motivated by dancing than men.

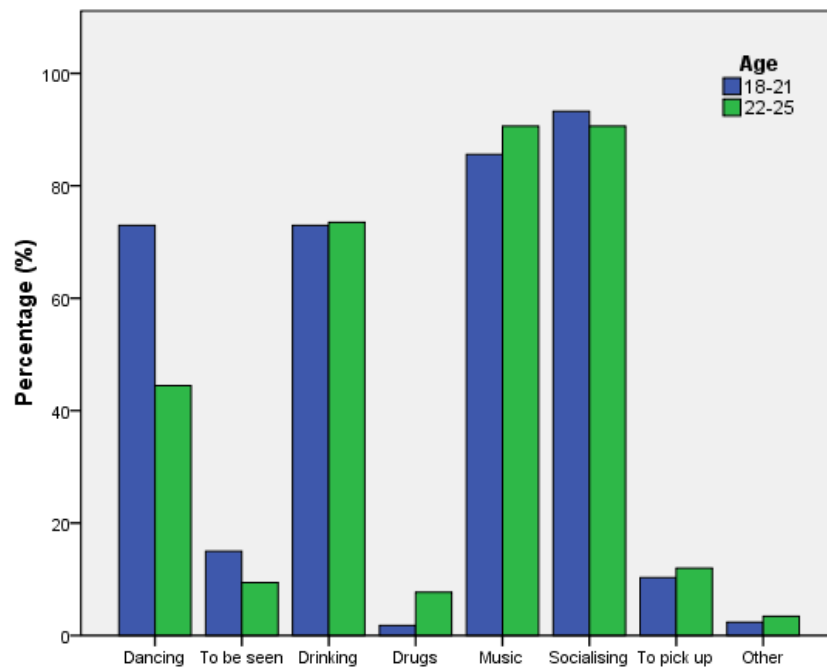
Figure 5.6 Motivations for nightclub attendance by gender (n=457)



Although these figures do not challenge traditional gender stereotypes (Moss, Parfitt & Skinner, 2009; Grazian, 2007; Hutton, 2006), this finding is significant within this research context, in that in highlighting the limited role of drugs in young people's motivations to attend Adelaide nightclubs, attention can be focused on evaluating what other factors may influence their decisions. In addition to the role of gender, participants' age appeared to influence their decision to attend nightclubs, although only minimally. As illustrated by Figure 5.7, a greater proportion of younger participants were motivated by dancing, being seen and drinking than older participants, a greater percentage of whom attended nightclubs to listen to music and socialise. Although younger

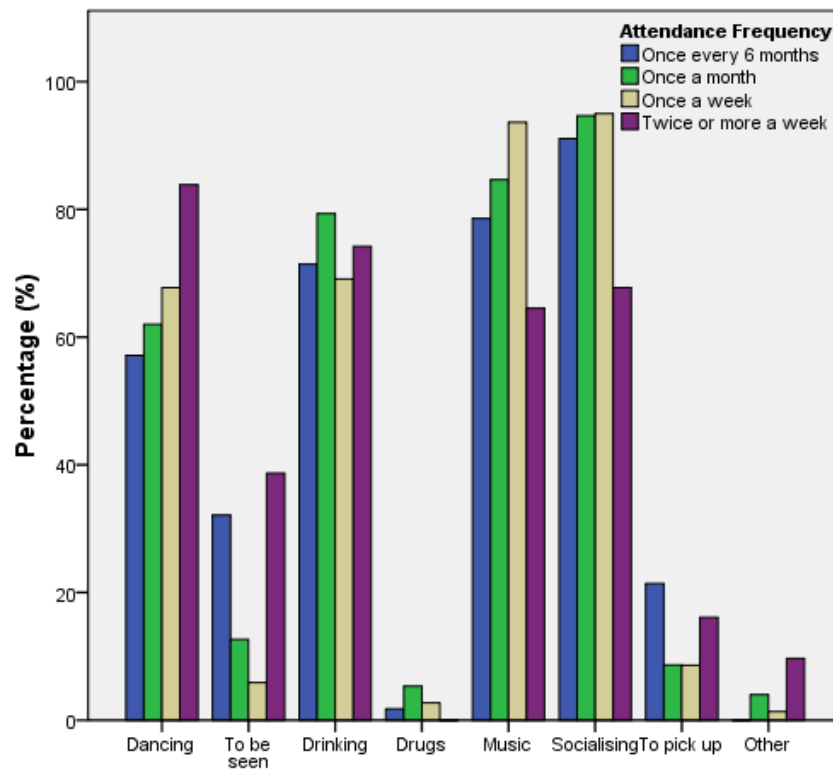
participants were also motivated by these factors, that fewer older participants wanted to dance, be seen, and to a lesser extent drink alcohol, emphasises an earlier comment (page 162) that these young people perceive that as they get older they become more aware of the function of leisure in their lives, as well as their capacity to consume it. What this identifies is that as the participants get older they seek to have more balance in their lives and this is reflected in the move from dancing to socialising.

Figure 5.7 Motivations for nightclub attendance by age (n=457)



Consistent with the results related to gender, age, and drug use history, the frequency with which participants' attended nightclubs had only limited influence on participants' motivations for attendance. As shown in Figure 5.8 (see next page), socialising, music, drinking and dancing were identified as the primary motivations for attending nightclubs irrespective of the frequency of attendance. The influence of the participants' frequency of attendance on motivation was only notable where a greater proportion of those who attend more frequently are more motivated by dancing and being seen than individuals who attend less often. Also, fewer regular attendees appeared motivated by music and socialising, which although not evaluated in this study, seems to reflect the change in pattern of attendance associated with getting older, discussed on the previous page.

Figure 5.8 Motivations for nightclub attendance by frequency of attendance



5.2.4 The Importance of Group Membership

Another feature of these young people’s patterns of nightclub attendance was that their motivations for going out were commonly linked to social group membership and what it meant to them. For example, many of the interviewees discussed their nightclub experience in terms of, or made reference to, their social group of friends and how much of their behaviour and decision-making was guided by this social network. In order to examine this, participants were asked whether when they attend Adelaide nightclubs they most often go with the same group, and also whether attending as part of this group is important.

Table 5.3 Attendance characteristics

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I often attend Adelaide nightclubs in the same group	0.2	2.6	10.1	18.9	68.5
Being part of this group is important	0.7	3.7	12.3	49.0	34.4

n = 457

As shown in Table 5.3, the vast majority of participants attended Adelaide nightclubs with the same group of friends, and identified that being a part of this group was important to their nightclub experience. The scale of these figures demonstrates the substantial role that social group membership plays within young people's nightclub experiences, at least within the Adelaide nightclub scene, as only 2.8 percent of participants indicated that they did not attend nightclubs in familiar groups, and only 4.4 percent perceived that membership of their particular social group was not important to their nightclub attendance. Also, no significant differences were found in relation to participants' gender, age, drug use, frequency of attendance or motivation for attendance, suggesting that these values are common or shared. This was supported in the interview data, where these values were perceived to have an essential safety function:

“Going out together [with friends] is really important ‘cause I know that if something goes wrong and my boyfriend is not around then they'll also be there to help. I mean we always go out in the same group and we're a really good bunch of friends” (Simone, aged 18, non-user).

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient³ was used to further investigate the relationship between the participants' group attendance and group importance. A small to medium, positive relationship was found, with greater group attendance associated with greater perceived importance [$r=.221$, $n=457$, $p=.000$]. This reveals that being part of a familiar social group is important to the overall experience of attending Adelaide nightclubs, is a shared value or norm, and is based on its perceived capacity to ensure a safe night out within the Adelaide nightclub scene. Therefore, that young people's attendance is not motivated by drugs but instead reflects a shift in young people's perception of its use, challenges many of the attitudes espoused by governments, and provides an important first step for further research across other jurisdictions.

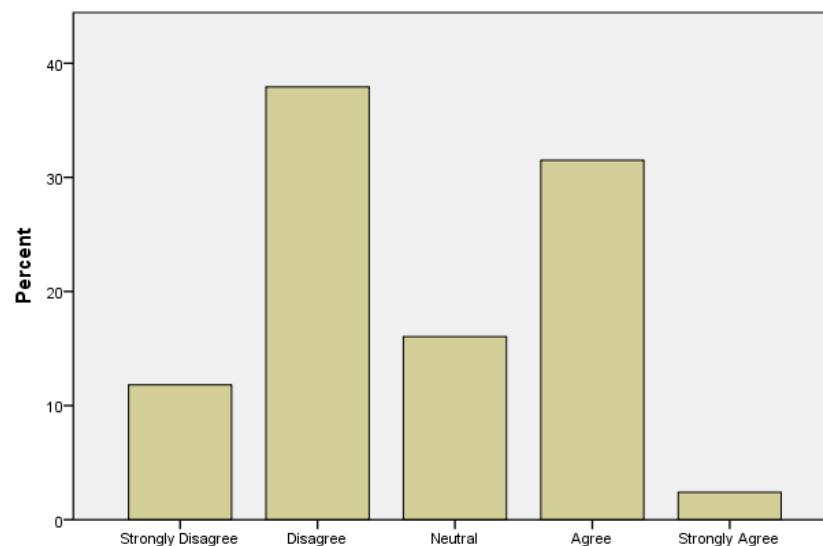
³ The Pearson correlation is a statistical analysis used to show whether and how strongly pairs of variables are related (Pallant, 2001). Preliminary analyses to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality and homoscedasticity were conducted for all Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient tests within this research.

5.3 Nightclub risk

5.3.1 Perceptions of Risk and Adelaide Nightclub Attendance

To place this research within a risk discourse and determine what factors influence young people's perceptions of risk, participants were asked to identify whether they perceived attending Adelaide nightclubs to be risky. Interestingly, as noted in Figure 5.9, although more participants indicated that they disagreed (37.9 percent) or strongly disagreed (11.8 percent) with this statement (49.7 percent in total), the responses were somewhat divided with many participants also agreeing that attending Adelaide nightclubs is risky (31.5 percent).

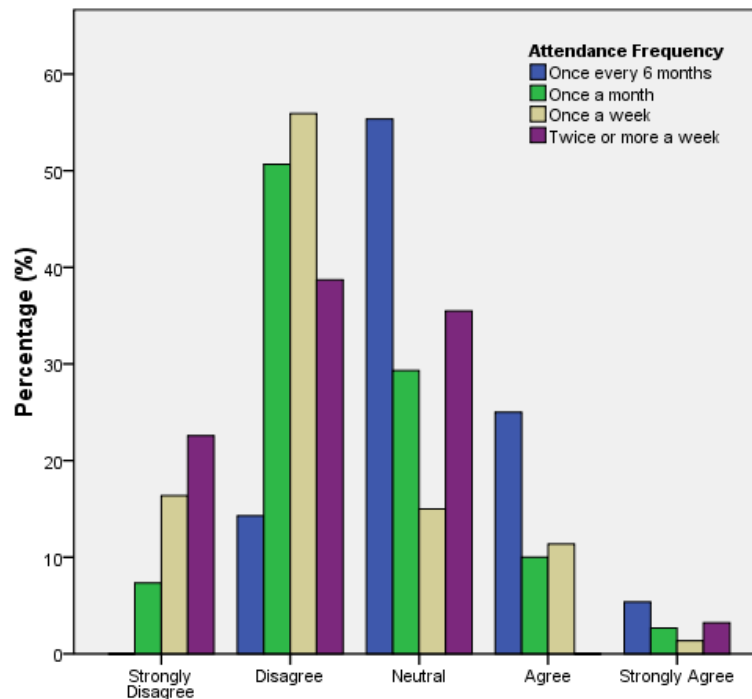
Figure 5.9 Attending Adelaide nightclubs is risky (n=457)



A series of chi-square tests were conducted to determine what factors contributed to this finding, the first of which found that gender had a moderate, positive influence on participants' perceptions of the risks associated with attending Adelaide nightclubs ($V=.210$) and that this relationship was significant ($\chi^2(1) = 20.208$, $p = .000$). Specifically, a greater proportion of females perceived Adelaide nightclubs to be risky than males, which is supported by previous empirical research that suggests females commonly experience far greater victimisation, typically as a result of drink spiking, alcohol-related violence and sexual assault (Moss, Parfitt & Skinner, 2009; Grazian, 2007; Taylor, Prichard & Charlton, 2004).

A further chi-square test found that the participants' drug use was also significantly related to perceptions of risk associated with attending Adelaide nightclubs ($\chi^2(1) = 40.549, p = .000$). However, the data highlighted an unexpected result, with a greater proportion of non-users indicating that attending Adelaide nightclubs is not risky. This reveals two important outcomes. Firstly, it suggests that for non-users, at least, drugs may not be the primary risk they are exposed to when they enter nightclubs and, as noted later in this chapter (see Table 5.4), that a variety of other factors may be of greater concern. Secondly, that a greater proportion of users perceive risk within the nightclub suggests a complex interplay between drug use and perceptions of risk, which as discussed below (section 3.2), appears to be concerned with participants' perceptions of controlled consumption.

Figure 5.10 Adelaide nightclub risk by frequency of attendance (n=457)



The participants' frequency of attendance also influenced the perceived levels of risk associated with Adelaide nightclubs. As noted in Figure 5.10, more frequent attendance was significantly associated with lower perceived risk [$r = -.296, n = 457, p = .000$]. In contrast, participants' age and motivations for attendance did not influence their perceptions of the level of risk associated with the nightclub.

As such, what this data reveals is that the risk associated with Adelaide nightclubs is perceived to be greater by those individuals who attend less frequently, perhaps because they are less familiar with this space, traditional gender-related concerns regarding safety, and a number of factors other than illicit drugs.

5.3.2 *The Risks of Attending Adelaide Nightclubs*

To further investigate these perceptions, participants were asked to identify what they perceived as risks within Adelaide nightclubs, which within the survey was examined using an open ended question. This was a useful feature of the survey as it not only provided the opportunity for more detailed and natural responses (not limited by external categories), but it also provided an insight into how these young people conceptualise risk in the nightclub, the importance of which will be discussed shortly (see page 179).

As shown in Table 5.4, participants identified violence, drink spiking, and alcohol-related negative outcomes as the primary risks of attending Adelaide nightclubs, while drug use was mostly considered unproblematic. A number of participants also perceived that ‘sexual assault/unwanted attention’ was a significant risk of a night out, although as identified in previous research (Moss, Parfitt & Skinner, 2009; Grazian, 2007; Taylor, Prichard & Charlton, 2004), this figure may reflect the gender bias within the sample. The data confirmed this bias, with a greater proportion of females than males perceiving sexual assault to be a risk of attending nightclubs. In fact, the influence of gender was consistent across the data with a significantly⁴ greater proportion of females identifying violence, drink spiking, alcohol-related negative outcomes, passing out, and getting in a bad situation to be risks of the nightclub. Notably gender did not influence participants’ perceptions of drug use as a risk of attending nightclubs.

⁴ Using a Mann Whitney test significant differences were found for females’ perception of violence ($U(1) = 20856.5$, $Z = -2.777$, $p = .005$), sexual assault ($U(1) = 20733.5$, $Z = -3.673$, $p = .000$), drink spiking ($U(1) = 18557.5$, $Z = -4.911$, $p = .000$), alcohol-related negative outcomes ($U(1) = 20487.0$, $Z = -3.216$, $p = .001$), passing out ($U(1) = 22605.0$, $Z = -3.250$, $p = .001$), and getting in a bad situation ($U(1) = 22225.0$, $Z = -2.111$, $p = .035$). A Mann Whitney test is used to test for differences between two independent samples (e.g. males and females) (Pallant, 2001).

Table 5.4 *Perceived risks of a night out*

	Total	Males	Females	Users	Non-users	18-21	22-25
Violence	56.5	47.9	61.3	57.9	51.0	56.2	57.3
Sexual assault	18.6	9.7	23.6	15.6	18.4	17.6	21.4
Drink spiking	35.9	21.2	44.2	32.3	36.8	38.5	28.2
Drug use	8.3	10.3	7.2	10.2	6.1	7.9	9.4
Alcohol-related problems	35.0	25.5	40.4	35.4	34.9	38.5	24.8
Theft/mugging	7.7	4.8	9.2	17.7	5.0	7.6	7.7
Passing out	3.9	0.0	6.2	3.1	4.2	5.0	0.9
Getting in a bad situation	17.1	12.1	19.9	10.4	15.8	19.7	9.4

n = 457

As illustrated in Table 5.4, the variance between users and non-users also had a limited impact on what participants perceived to be risks of a night out, with ‘theft/mugging’ the only category in which a difference was observed. A higher proportion of users indicated ‘theft/mugging’ as a risk of nightclub attendance than non-users, which was explained by many of the interviewees to be a product of users’ fear that their ‘gear’ would be stolen from them by other nightclub patrons or passers-by. Interestingly, this perception of risk was not associated with a fear of theft/mugging as a negative outcome *caused* by their drug use (i.e. being ‘high’).

By comparison, participants’ age was found to have a greater impact on their perceptions of risk, explaining a significant proportion of the differences found between the samples. In particular, fewer participants aged 22-25 years old identified drink spiking, alcohol-related negative outcomes and getting in a bad situation as risks of nightclub attendance than the members of the 18-21 years old sample. As noted above, this appears to reflect the shift in function of nightclubs for participants as they get older. The implications of this are that threats to their safe experience of pleasure are not tolerated, and also that they are likely to have gained experience in avoiding unsafe situations and/or practices.

Table 5.5 shows that the participants’ motivations for attending Adelaide nightclubs also partly explained these findings. For example, the participants who identified dancing, being seen, and using drugs as the motivation for their attendance produced the most significant differences. The perceptions of violence

and sexual assault as risks of the nightclub were perceived by a larger number of participants motivated by dancing, which as indicated above are predominantly female. In addition, the perceived risk associated with alcohol within the nightclub was found to be most strongly felt by participants who attended nightclubs to be seen and use drugs. Although passing out was not a significant concern overall, participants who wanted to be seen perceived passing out to be of concern, suggesting that appearance of the loss of control is a major risk in their nightclub experience due to the negative impact it would have on their image. The perceived loss of control associated with the misuse of alcohol was equally disliked by those participants motivated to attend by drug use (see section 7.8, for further discussion on users' perceptions of alcohol use), given the negative meanings that it implies (e.g. recklessness, irresponsibility).

This data suggests that the majority of the risks identified by participants are associated with being exposed to the nightclub scene generally, and not specifically the presence and use of illicit drugs. It is important to note, however, that these participants comprise only a sample of the general population and only those that attend nightclubs, which represents a limitation of the present study (see section 3.8). Nonetheless, the fact that many of the risks in Adelaide nightclubs are perceived to be gendered and related to perceptions of safety and control, rather than associated with illicit drug use, poses a number of challenges for drug policy that must be addressed if governments are to determine why young people continue to attend Adelaide nightclubs despite their exposure to illicit drugs.

Table 5.5 *Perceived risks of a night out by motivation for attendance*

	Dancing		To be seen		Drinking		Drugs		Music		Socialising		To pick up		Other	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Violence	42.7	63.7	55.4	62.9	59.3	55.4	56.8	46.7	66.7	53.4	61.8	56.0	55.4	65.3	56.2	66.7
Sexual assault	11.5	22.3	18.0	22.6	24.4	16.5	18.8	13.3	18.3	18.6	11.8	19.1	19.6	24.5	18.7	16.7
Drink spiking	31.2	38.3	36.7	30.6	37.4	35.3	36.2	26.7	38.3	35.5	23.5	36.9	37.0	40.9	35.7	41.7
Drug use	11.5	6.7	7.3	14.5	4.9	9.6	8.6	0.0	8.3	8.3	11.8	8.0	8.6	6.1	8.1	16.7
Alcohol-related problems	30.6	37.3	33.2	46.8	38.2	33.8	34.2	60.0	31.7	35.5	32.4	35.2	35.8	28.6	34.8	41.7
Theft/mugging	6.4	8.3	8.1	4.8	6.5	8.1	7.5	13.3	6.7	7.8	11.8	7.3	6.9	14.3	7.4	16.7
Passing out	3.8	4.0	3.0	9.7	3.3	4.2	4.1	0.0	6.7	3.5	0.0	4.3	3.4	8.2	4.0	0.0
Getting in a bad situation	17.2	17.0	16.7	19.4	17.9	16.8	17.6	0.0	13.3	17.6	14.7	17.3	18.9	12.0	16.4	41.7

n = 457

Please note that the 'no idea' and 'no response' categories have been omitted from this table as there were no significant differences observed.

5.3.3 Risk Knowledge and Adelaide Nightclub Attendance

Traditional conceptualisations of young illicit drug users have often labelled this group as ‘edgeworkers’, individuals who persistently push their limits and boundaries and are driven by risk-seeking behaviours (Ferrell, Milovanovic & Lyng, 2001; Lyng, 1990). These accounts have typically claimed that young people voluntarily engage in risk-taking behaviours, often as a form of resistance to authority or society’s norms and values (see Miller et al., 2005; Moore, 2004). However, Table 5.6 reveals that the majority of the sample in this study indicated that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed that knowing the risks of attending nightclubs made their experience of them more exciting. This was not influenced by the participants’ gender, age, drug use, frequency of attendance at nightclubs or their motivations for attending them, and thus represents a finding that was consistent across the sample.

Table 5.6 Risk in the nightclub

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Knowing these risks makes attending Adelaide nightclubs exciting	53.2	28.0	12.0	5.9	0.2
I, or someone I go with take steps to manage the risks	2.8	7.4	28.4	51.2	9.4

n = 457

5.3.4 Risk Management in the Nightclub

In understanding this result, it is important to identify the role that group attendance, and what it means to group members, plays in young people’s nightclub experience and whether it affects the use of risk management strategies. A series of Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to evaluate this relationship, which found that greater group attendance [$r=.102$, $n=457$, $p=.028$] and higher perceived group importance [$r=.198$, $n=457$, $p=.000$] were both associated with greater levels of risk management. As Table 5.6 indicates, the majority⁵ of participants identified that they or someone they go out

⁵ Although a portion of the sample indicated a ‘neutral’ response to this question (28.4 percent), their attendance at the nightclub is arguably indicative of a perception that the risks of attending are not significant, or of a perceived ability to manage them.

with take steps⁶ to manage risk, which many interviewees (Alex, Emmy, Tess and Tom) noted was a primary function of group attendance that also influenced their perceptions of risk. Hansen and colleagues (2001) found a similar result in their study, where participants identified the use of risk management strategies associated with their ecstasy use. However, the application of these strategies was found to be inconsistent and often participants would indulge in “occasional binges, spontaneous purchases, polydrug use and purchasing from unknown individuals in clubs/pubs” (Hansen et al., 2001, p. 197). Hence, they concluded that as the user becomes more experienced, their level of perception of risk diminishes and the frequency of risk-taking behaviour increases. In contrast, this research has revealed that, perhaps identifying a key difference between ecstasy and methamphetamine, rather than sporadic use of numerous strategies, the participants in this sample employed a constant number of precise risk management strategies formed by social group values and normative guidelines, in which recklessness was not tolerated. As noted by Hansen and colleagues (2001), this suggests the use of a rational cost-benefit analysis process that is used to guide group behaviours. However, rather than mirroring the escalation of risk-taking behaviour observed in their study, for these participants this process is anchored by the desire to maintain the integrity of the leisure experience and manage the risks to achieve their goal.

This argument is supported by the data, where the use of risk management strategies was consistent across the sample, with no differences observed in terms of participants’ drug use behaviour, frequency of attendance, age or gender. The only significant difference observed related to participants who identified that they were motivated to attend nightclubs because of drugs, the majority of whom (73.3 percent) identified that they or someone they know managed the risks during a night out. This finding is important in that it supports many users’ claim of agency, which has typically been ignored by experts (Shewan et al., 2000). However, as identified in the following statement, what is more significant to the

⁶ These practices included remaining in familiar groups (i.e. a ‘buddy system’), to ensure that group members maintained adequate hydration, ‘chilled out’ when necessary and did not get into trouble in terms of verbal or physical altercations (see section 7.6.1, for further examples and discussion).

wider research context is that these practices form part of a broader sociality that functions to maintain and enhance the leisure experience, in which the risk management strategies that are associated with attending nightclubs in social groups is of particular importance for young people generally:

“it’s just what you do.... Everyone does it because they wanna have a good time...and do it properly, and not end up having a bad night” (Alex, aged 23, user).

5.3.5 Identifying a Bad Night Out

Another key element of this participant’s statement is how it describes the value or purpose of risk management strategies in young people’s nightclub experience, in light of the results discussed above. For example, although participants’ perceptions of whether attending Adelaide nightclubs is risky were divided, the data revealed an important result. Specifically, participants were able to identify a number of potential greater risks associated with the nightclub (see section 7.3), which notably, were not related to the use of drugs, and instead were linked to other activities, such as the excessive consumption of alcohol. These findings highlight a major discord in how young people and experts define risk, which has significant implications for how these young people’s risk perceptions should be viewed and evaluated, particularly in terms of their meaning and function. Specifically, many of the interviewees noted that young nightclubbers’ perceptions of risk may not be framed by broad discourses of danger or harm, but that risk perceptions may be used to avoid situations that result in young people ‘having a bad night’. Therefore, in contrast to research that suggests that drug users, in particular, develop specific responses to dissatisfaction or ‘a bad night’ that typically involve denial or deferment of risk (see Perreti-Watel, 2003a; Fitchett & Smith, 2001), these findings articulate a response that is more proactive and cognisant of the role of risk in broader youth consumption practices to prevent negative experiences. To provide context to this finding, participants were asked to nominate what situations they would perceive as bad outcomes of a night out, to explore how they construct these perceptions, what purpose they serve, and how they relate to the risks identified in Table 5.4 (see page 174).

Table 5.7 *Situations that would be considered ‘bad outcomes’ of a night out*

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Falling out with friends	13.4	72.7	13.9
Getting drunk	23.7	10.9	65.4
Not ‘picking up’	60.2	14.0	25.8
Overdosing (on drugs)	2.4	0.4	97.2
Getting in a fight	2.0	12.4	85.6
Getting kicked out of the club	30.4	30.2	39.4
Spending too much money	25.7	21.7	32.6
Having unprotected sex	5.6	4.8	89.6
Getting injured	2.4	9.2	88.4

n = 457

Table 5.7 reveals that most participants perceived that getting drunk, overdosing, getting in a fight, having unprotected sex, and getting injured are bad outcomes of a night out. In contrast, fewer participants perceived spending too much money, not picking up or getting kicked out of the club negatively. Interestingly, most participants responded neutrally toward the prospect of ‘falling out with friends’. The significance of this finding is that it highlights an important caveat not applied to the other categories whereby, as identified by many of the interviewees, it was perceived that this concern was mitigated by group attendance. As such, for the majority of participants, they would not fall out with friends due to the strength of their peer network(s). That this caveat does not carry through to the other categories reflects the perception that the activities these categories describe have the potential to be influenced by individuals outside individual’s peer networks (e.g. the ‘other’).

Overall, no differences were found in terms of participants’ age, drug use and frequency of attendance. Gender was found to have only moderate influence, with females more concerned than males with getting drunk and having unprotected sex. This was supported by the interview data, in which the female interviewees described that they felt more vulnerable when they were drunk, and that this can lead to other negative outcomes, such as unprotected sex. Some observed differences were explained by participants’ motivations for attendance, but these were limited and somewhat expected: those motivated by dancing and socialising were more concerned about falling out with friends, those motivated by drinking were less worried about getting drunk; those who wanted to ‘pick up’ were more

concerned about not achieving this; and those who wanted to ‘be seen’ feared being kicked out of the club.

In contrast, how these results compare with the risks identified earlier (Table 5.4), and contribute to the perception that attending Adelaide nightclubs is risky is significant. The relationship between perceived Adelaide club risk and participants’ perceptions of bad outcomes was investigated using a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, which found that perceptions of Adelaide nightclub risk were not related to getting kicked out of the club, not picking up, overdosing, or spending too much money. Conversely, there were small, positive relationships found between perceptions of Adelaide nightclub risk and getting drunk [$r=.240$, $n=457$, $p=.000$], getting in a fight [$r=.115$, $n=457$, $p=.014$], getting injured [$r=.096$, $n=457$, $p=.040$], and having unprotected sex [$r=.103$, $n=457$, $p=.028$], which raises two key points. Firstly, these outcomes correspond with the risks identified in Table 5.4, and primarily relate to alcohol-related problems and violence. Indeed, a common sentiment in the interviews was that alcohol and violence are inextricably linked and likely explain participants’ concerns in relation to getting in a fight and getting injured. Participants also noted that alcohol negatively impacted females’ nightclub experience by increasing perceived vulnerability, which as examined above may also increase the risk of unprotected sex. Secondly, although overdosing was the most concerning outcome for participants (Table 5.7), drug use was not identified as a risk of attending nightclubs (Table 5.4), which not only suggests that a distinction can be made between levels of drug use, but also that other risks exist in the nightclub. These findings are significant in the context of this research, as well as Australian drug research generally, and are examined further later (sections 7.7 and 7.8).

5.4 Drug risk and the club

The relationship between risk and illicit drug use in nightclubs is not new and has engendered much debate in the last few decades (Wincup, 2005; Shiner & Newburn, 1997). This section focuses on young people’s perceptions of drug use in the Adelaide nightclub scene, and examines the data displayed in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8 *Participants' perceptions of illicit drug use in the nightclub*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
General drug use is risky	1.8	5.6	12.9	37.9	41.8
Drug use takes place in Adelaide nightclubs	0.2	0.7	2.8	33.9	62.4
Drug use is a common part of the nightclub	0.0	1.8	14.0	35.0	49.2
I feel at risk attending nightclubs because of drug use	29.5	45.1	16.8	6.8	1.8
The presence of illicit drugs negatively affects whether I Attend Adelaide nightclubs	24.3	20.1	43.5	4.4	7.4
Drug risks in nightclubs are often exaggerated	2.8	9.4	28.9	47.3	11.6
Increasing my knowledge about drugs/drug use reduces the risk	4.8	9.2	18.4	45.1	22.5
Individuals who become addicted are irresponsible	6.8	8.1	13.6	29.5	41.8

n = 457

5.4.1 *Perceptions of Risk and General Drug Use*

To provide a foundation of comparative data, participants were asked whether they perceived general drug use to be risky. Responses were quite narrow, with the majority either agreeing (37.9) or strongly agreeing (41.8 percent) with this statement. In addition, no significant differences were observed across the sample, suggesting that this data represents a common perception among these nightclub youth, which highlights a number of meaningful implications for this study. Firstly, this result contrasts the data examined above (section 5.3.2) that found that drug use was not perceived by most participants to be a primary risk in Adelaide nightclubs, which supports participants' claims that a distinction can be made between forms of illicit drug use. This is an important finding as it provides insight into these young people's understandings of illicit drug use and how it relates to their use of Adelaide nightclubs, particularly in that it demonstrates the value of social context in young people's drug use behaviour. Secondly, in identifying the distinction between general drug use and nightclub drug use, this finding challenges the effectiveness of current drug policy and highlights the need for further research given that experts' conceptualisations of risk, used to rationalise these policies, do not recognise this difference.

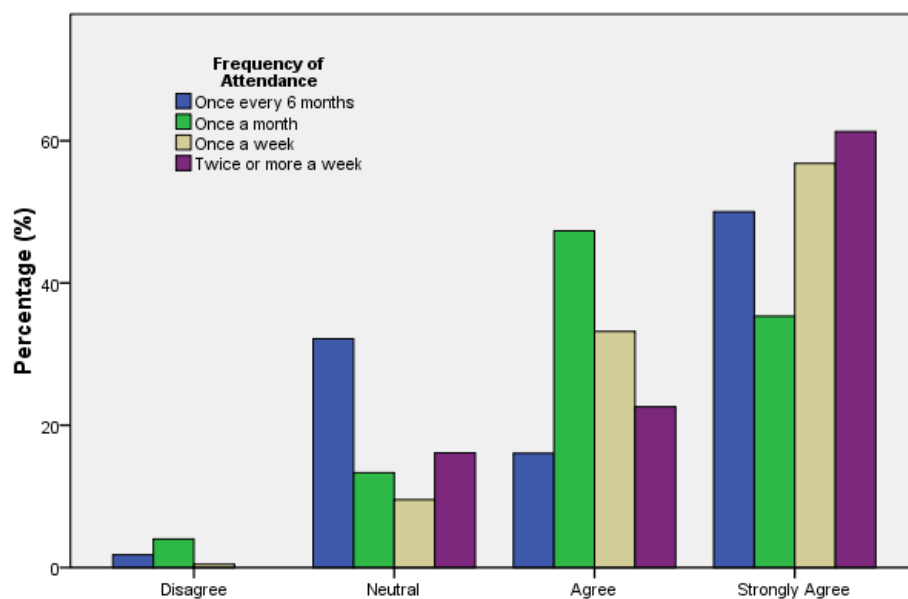
5.4.2 *The Perceived Commonality of Club Drug Use*

In addition to the comprehensive finding that all but four participants readily acknowledged that drug use does take place in Adelaide nightclubs, the majority of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that drugs are a common and

familiar feature of these venues (see Table 5.8). In corroborating this data, no significant differences were found in relation to participants' age, gender, drug use and motivation for attendance, with participants' responses reflecting the frequency data, which suggests that drug use may have become normalised within the Adelaide nightclub scene. In support of this, participants' frequency of attendance was found to be positively associated with their perception that drug use is common in Adelaide nightclubs [$r=.179$, $n=457$, $p=.000$], with more frequent attendance associated with a greater perception that drug use is common.

Notably, it was universally identified in the interviews that participants felt that they were more able to accurately identify the level of drug use the more that they attended these venues. Though this appears a bold statement, Figure 5.11 reveals that it is confirmed by the quantitative data, in which a greater proportion of the participants who attended at least once a week perceived that drugs were common than those that attended once a month or once every 6 months. In addition, a greater proportion of participants who attended only every 6 months provided a neutral response, suggesting a level of uncertainty regarding the perceived commonality of drugs in the club.

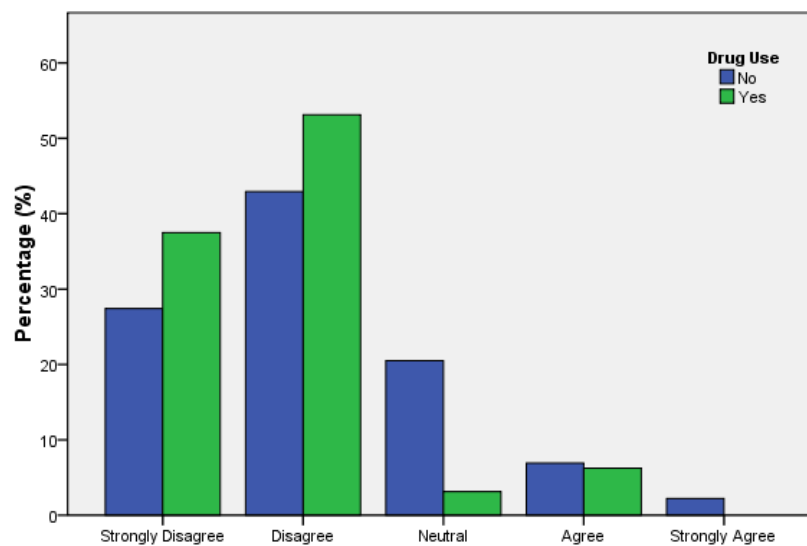
Figure 5.11 Commonality of drugs in Adelaide nightclubs by frequency of attendance (n=457)



5.4.3 *Feeling At Risk Because of Drugs*

Although most participants identified that drugs are a common and familiar feature of Adelaide nightclubs, the majority also did not feel at risk in nightclubs because of drug use (74.6 percent), or responded neutrally (16.8 percent) (see Table 5.8). This result was relatively consistent across the sample, with no significant differences found in relation to the participants' age and gender, and only limited differences explained by the remaining characteristics. For example, although a significant difference was observed in relation to the participants' frequency of attendance, it only had a small negative effect [$r = -.114$, $n = 457$, $p = .015$], with more frequent attendance associated with reduced feelings of risk associated with drug use. Similarly, using a Mann Whitney test it was noted that participants' drug use explained some of the difference observed, with non-users reporting feeling at greater risk in nightclubs because of drugs than users ($U(1) = 13699.5$, $Z = -3.368$, $p = .001$). However, in practice, the effect of participants' drug use was relatively small as most non-users also did not feel at risk because of drugs (see Figure 5.12).

Figure 5.12 *Feeling at risk because of drugs by drug use (n=457)*



In contrast, the participants' motivations for nightclub attendance had a moderate influence on their perceptions of risk associated with drug use, with the only difference observed in the group whose motivation was 'to pick up'. For these participants, feeling at risk in the nightclub because of drugs appeared to have a simple explanation:

“When you go out it is nice to hook up with someone, but you really don’t wanna bring home a meth troll” (Michael, aged 25, user).

This phrase conveys the desire of many of the, particularly male, participants’ to avoid engaging in intimate relations (‘hooking up’) with young women who are perceived to have consumed ‘too much’ methamphetamine. A key feature of this mind-set is how it highlights the importance of control within risk evaluations, particularly in relation to the use or misuse of drugs. Many of the interviewees identified that despite being motivated to ‘pick up’ and the perception that doing so would likely be successful, as female users are perceived as ‘easy’⁷, interaction with them was not desired due to the negative stigma associated with the perceived loss of control that their excessive drug use represents. Notably, this pattern was not observed with regard to individuals who were perceived to be ‘responsible’ users, a common perception across the sample regardless of gender, which provides further context to the importance of control in young people’s risk perceptions.

These results highlight that the majority of young people who attend Adelaide nightclubs do not feel at risk within these venues because of drugs and this is mostly consistent across the sample. Although a small number of participants have indicated that they feel at risk, their involvement in the research and, by implication, their attendance at at least one of the research venues⁸ suggests that it is not sufficient to prevent them from attending altogether, a factor that should be considered in the overall findings. It is acknowledged, however, that further empirical analyses of the general population may be useful and indeed necessary in order to identify whether feeling at risk because of drugs is a primary concern for young people generally, and whether it acts to prevent their attendance at Adelaide nightclubs.

⁷ This is a colloquial term that was used by many interviewees, including a number of females, to describe individuals, commonly women, who are perceived to be overtly sexually promiscuous as a result of excessive methamphetamine use, which was considered a negative attribute and the rationale for the additional label ‘meth troll’.

⁸ Attendance at Adelaide nightclubs was an inclusion criterion for this project, thus it can be established that all participants attended an Adelaide nightclub at least once.

5.4.4 *The Perceived Impact of Drugs on Club Attendance*

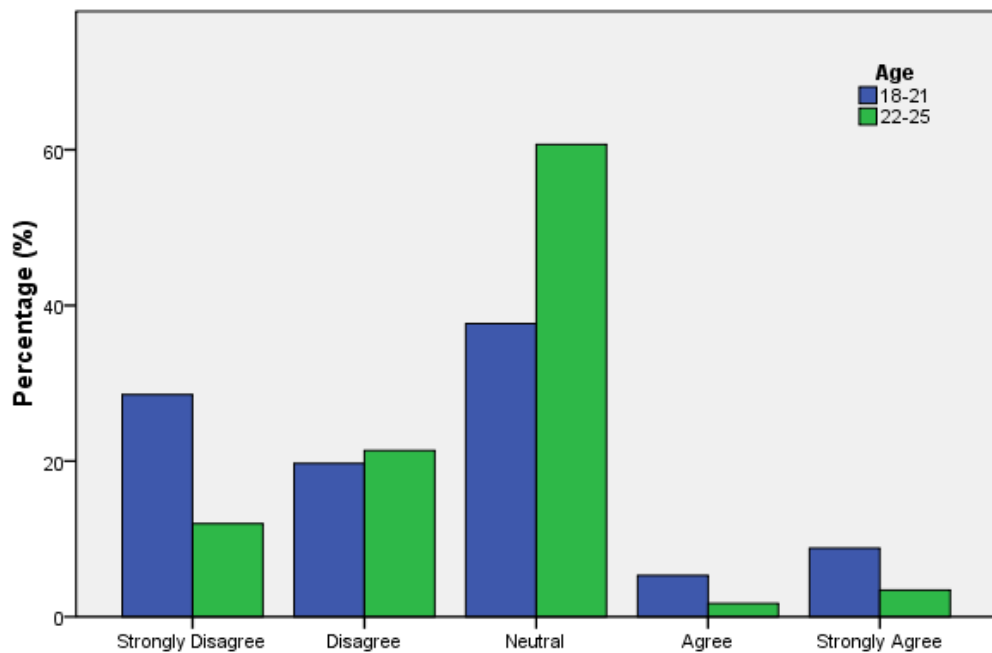
In further examining the influence of drugs on participants' use of Adelaide nightclubs, participants were asked whether the presence of illicit drugs negatively affected their decision to attend the key research venues. Table 5.8 identifies that the majority of the sample was not influenced (as indicated by the considerable 'neutral' response), or disagreed that the presence of drugs negatively impacted their nightclub attendance. In explaining this result, it was identified that no significant differences were found in terms of participants' gender, motivations for attendance and frequency of attendance. Table 5.8 also reveals that the participants' drug use was not a significant factor, a finding that was supported in the interview data, where it was noted that:

“Although a few people take it too far and get messy, people generally keep clear of them and they get kicked out by the bouncers anyway. And that kind of stuff doesn't happen very often, so yeah, it doesn't bother me that people use drugs in clubs, especially given that my friends do” (Eddie, aged 23, non-user).

Figure 5.13 (below) shows that age explains the difference observed in the frequency data, with a significantly greater proportion of participants aged 22-25 indicating a neutral response than participants aged 18-21, a greater proportion of whom strongly disagreed with the statement. The explanation of this finding, however, is not straight-forward. In the interview data it was identified that the difference observed between these samples reflected the older participants' perception that they have a greater awareness of the purpose of the nightclub in their lives. Specifically, it was identified that the implication of this perception was that the older participants perceived that drugs could become a problem if misused and were thus more influenced by the presence of drugs than younger club-goers, although only to the extent of indicating a neutral response. The following statement encapsulates this explanation, highlighting the perception that drug use should not be the focus of the nightclub experience, but contribute to its success:

“When you are a bit older there is a greater need to try to get something more out of your leisure time. There are more expectations and so for some people they feel like they need to do something to enhance their time and get the most out of it, but it isn't about the drugs, that's what I think some people don't get” (Eddie, aged 23, non-user).

Figure 5.13 *The presence of illicit drugs negatively affects my nightclub attendance, by age (n=457)*



These findings are an important research outcome in that, challenging experts' claims, illicit drug use does not appear to have a negative effect on the majority of young people's use of this social environment, does not prevent them from attending nightclubs and is acknowledged by many to contribute to their overall nightclub experience. However, this may reflect a limitation of this methodology (see section 3.8), given that the survey questionnaires were only completed by young people who attended Adelaide nightclubs. Consequently, the young people who do not attend nightclubs, and whose decision not to attend may be influenced by the presence of drugs, are absent from this sample. Further research that includes this group would likely benefit the overall study of young people's perceptions of club drug use.

5.4.5 *Perceptions of Exaggeration and Club Drug Risks*

Experts have often assumed that young people are unaware of or underestimate the risks associated with drug use (see Kelly, 2007; 2005; Leshner, 2005; Peretti-Watel, 2003a). However, much of the data obtained in this study challenges this perception, suggesting that these young people are cognisant of the risks identified by experts and, in fact, have the capacity to engage in critical evaluation of the type and level of risk (in other words 'how much') present in the Adelaide

nightclub scene. As a result, the participants were asked whether they believe that the risks associated with nightclubs are exaggerated.

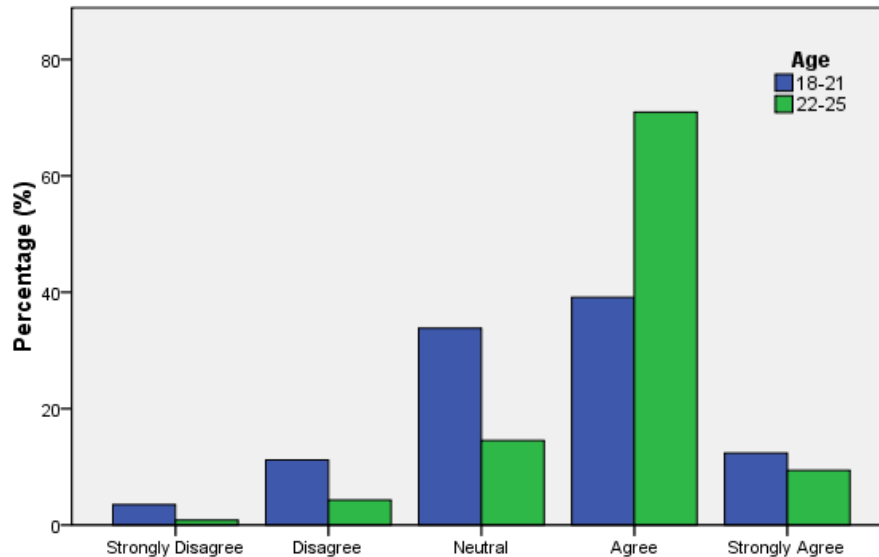
Similar to data observed in a study of the Montana Meth Project (Erceg-Hurn, 2008), the majority of this sample believed that the risks of nightclubs, often portrayed in graphic advertising, are overestimated or exaggerated (Table 5.8), which reduces their acceptance of any related message or campaign. Many interviewees supported this claim, stating that governments were out of touch with young people's nightclub experiences. Specifically, the majority of the interviewees claimed that this perception was attributed to the fact that the vast majority of the risks described by experts had not been experienced by most of the young people who attend Adelaide nightclubs. This was captured in the following statement:

“Experts don't go into clubs and check it out – they rely on police statistics, so I think that the information can get distorted. That's why most people feel that the government always exaggerates and why they think that 'it won't happen to me'. It comes from the fact that young people haven't experienced many of the risks that the government shows, so even though they are aware of them [the risks], they feel that they are exaggerated” (Becky, aged 18, non-user).

The quantitative data supports this belief, with age significantly related to young people's perceptions that risks are exaggerated. Figure 5.14 shows that a significantly greater proportion of participants aged 22-25 perceived that nightclub risks were exaggerated than did participants aged 18-21. Participants' frequency of attendance was also found to significantly influence their perceptions [$r=.252$, $n=457$, $p=.000$], with more frequent attendance associated with higher levels of perceived exaggeration of club risks. These findings support the participants' claims that perceptions of the risks associated with drug use in Adelaide nightclubs are strongly related to the amount of time spent in and experience gained from these venues. Furthermore, as no other significant differences were observed in relation to participants' gender, drug use and motivations for attendance these perceptions can be considered consistent across the sample, suggesting that a gap exists between young people and experts in their

respective perceptions of the risks associated with drug use in Adelaide nightclubs.

Figure 5.14 *Perceived exaggeration of risks by age (n=457)*



5.4.6 *The Role of Drug Knowledge in Reducing Risk*

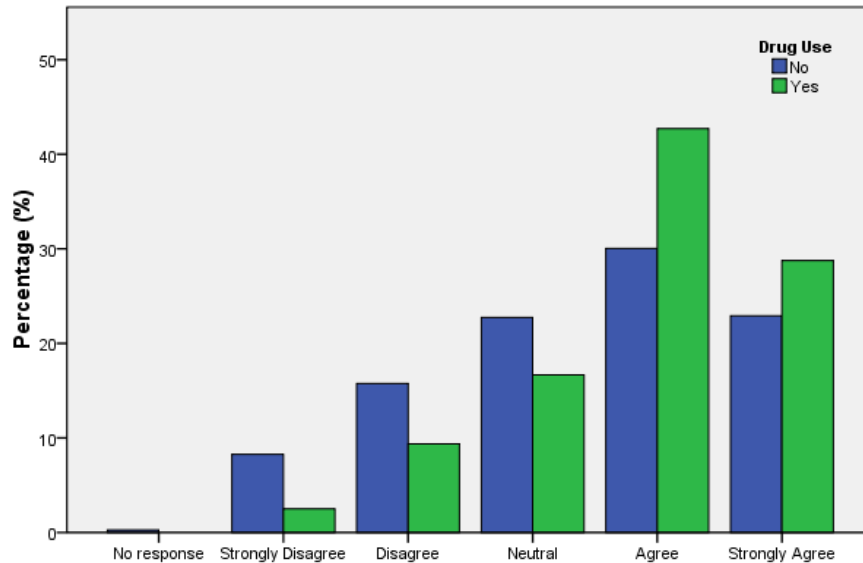
Acknowledgement of this gap is crucial in the discussion of drug knowledge as experts often claim that young people are not capable of developing the requisite knowledge to manage drug use (Shewan et al., 2000), or that drugs cannot be managed at all. As such, young people have often been described as “ignorant or suffering from a weakness of understanding” (Douglas, 1992, p.103; see also Kelly, 2005; Leshner, 2005). However, in keeping with the earlier analyses of control in young people’s perceptions of risk, knowledge appears to be an important factor central to their nightclub experience, particularly in relation to the use and ‘management’ of drugs. As reported by all of the interviewees, not only is knowledge sought and shared within social peer groups in the nightclub, but it also has a protective function that, as identified earlier, ensures that young people do not have ‘a bad night out’. This is most evident in these young nightclub attendees’ accounts of the process of ‘teaching’ (see section 7.6.1.3 for further description), which although is a practice more commonly associated with the use of drugs, was also embraced by non-users, the majority of whom (64.1 percent) appeared to value the acquisition and application of knowledge, with many interviewees also noting its protective function.

This function was further evident in the quantitative data, where the majority of participants either agreed (45.1 percent) or strongly agreed (22.5 percent) that increasing their drug knowledge had a meaningful impact in reducing the associated risks. A series of Pearson product-moment correlations also revealed that increased drug knowledge is associated with reduced feelings of being at risk in nightclubs because of drugs [$r = -.153$, $n = 457$, $p = .000$] and greater perceptions that drug risks are exaggerated [$r = .274$, $n = 457$, $p = .000$]. As such, knowledge appears to play a crucial role in influencing young people's perceptions of risk and, arguably, contributes to the decision to attend nightclub venues. In addition, no significant differences were found across the sample, which suggests a shared acknowledgement of the importance of knowledge in young people's experience of drugs in the nightclub.

5.4.7 *Perceptions of Addiction*

This acknowledgement has a number of implications for young people's attitudes towards the presence and use of club drugs. In reemphasising the importance of control within the nightclub, the majority of participants (71.3 percent) perceived that individuals who become addicted to drugs are irresponsible. A key feature that articulates the significance of this finding within the overall research, is that not only did the majority of participants strongly agree that individuals who become addicted are irresponsible, but it was found that this perception was linked to participants' level of drug knowledge, with greater perceptions of addicts' irresponsibility associated with greater drug knowledge [$r = .472$, $n = 457$, $p = .000$]. In addition, no significant differences were observed across the sample in terms of participants' age, gender, frequency of attendance and motivations for attendance. And although a significant relationship was found between participants' drug use and their perceptions of addicts' irresponsibility ($\chi^2(1) = 29.802$, $p = .000$), the result was somewhat unexpected. A greater proportion of users perceived that addicts were irresponsible than non-users (see Figure 5.15), which challenges claims that users lack the capacity for self-reflection and control (Shewan et al., 2000).

Figure 5.15 Addicts are irresponsible by drug use (n=457)



The interview data provides some context to the intolerance of addiction within young people’s understanding of the purpose of drugs in the nightclub and whether a particular individual has the ability to control their drug use:

“You can get through life without it. I think that people who are using too regularly – like daily – don’t understand that. They don’t remember how they [managed without it] and so then it becomes a vicious cycle” (Sam, aged 19, non-user).

“In clubs you need to stay away from the people that are dirty...like the intravenous users...the ones who are addicted and just spiraling out of control because they’ve forgotten what it should be about” (Michael, aged 25, user).

“From what I’ve seen, when someone becomes addicted it just ruins their life – their relationships with their parents and families, as well as their friends. Losing control changes everything – it destroys them in the end” (Simone, aged 18, non-user).

Interestingly, although users were more critical of addicts, non-users also felt addiction was a breach of social values and should not be tolerated (see Figure 5.15). This produces a set of common values based on notions of individual and social responsibility, which influence young people’s use of the nightclub scene, and ultimately colour their perceptions of risk. In particular, it suggests that particular forms or levels of illicit drug use are accepted by the majority of this youth cohort and are based on perceptions of control and understanding of the purpose drugs. This provides a new perspective relevant to future discussions of Australian drug policy.

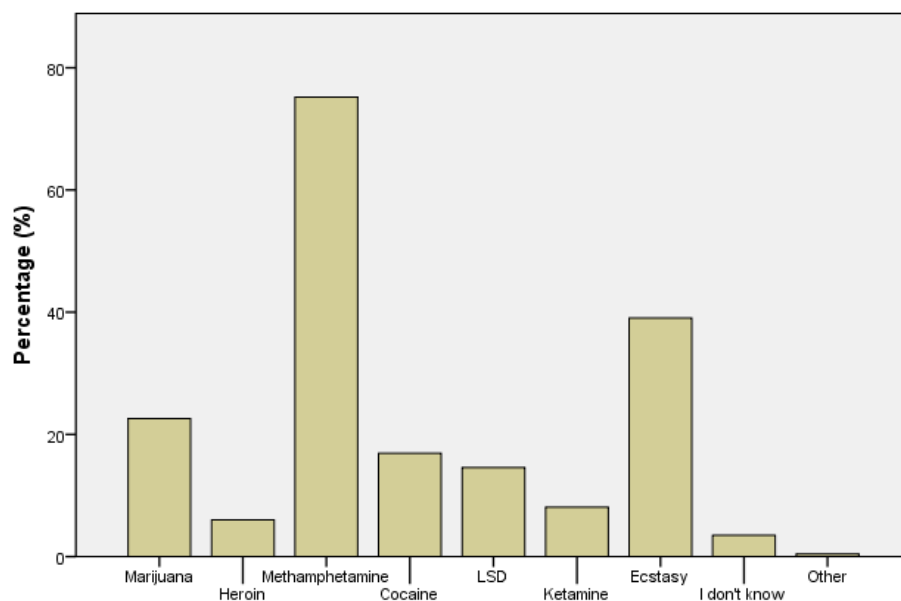
5.5 Nightclub drug use

5.5.1 Perceptions of Adelaide Nightclub Drug Use

As a prelude to questions concerning participants' personal use of methamphetamine, participants were asked about what drugs they perceived were consumed in Adelaide nightclubs. Methamphetamine was identified as the drug most commonly used, although ecstasy was also identified by a large percentage of participants (Figure 5.16). This matches previous data that highlighted that the pharmacological and euphoric effects of both drugs suit the atmosphere and activities commonly experienced in nightclubs (Ross, 2007). However, despite these perceptions and in contrast to previous literature (Measham & Moore, 2009; Degenhardt & Topp, 2002; Milne, 2002), in practice polydrug use was not common in the Adelaide nightclub scene, which many interviewees (Michael, Daniela, Todd, Emmy and Nathan) stated was attributed to the adequacy of the stimulant effects of methamphetamines, the more conservative nature of Adelaide (where there are fewer drug choices compared with other states, see Weekley et al., 2004) and a desire to engage in safe consumption practices. In discussing these results in her interview, Emmy (aged 21, non-user) stated that:

“Most people know not to use more than one [drug] at a time...there's no need and so it's just too risky. In terms of the other drugs, I think it's mostly the media that makes people think that. I mean, it would be obvious if someone was injecting heroin or tripping out on LSD – it's just not something that is done in Adelaide”.

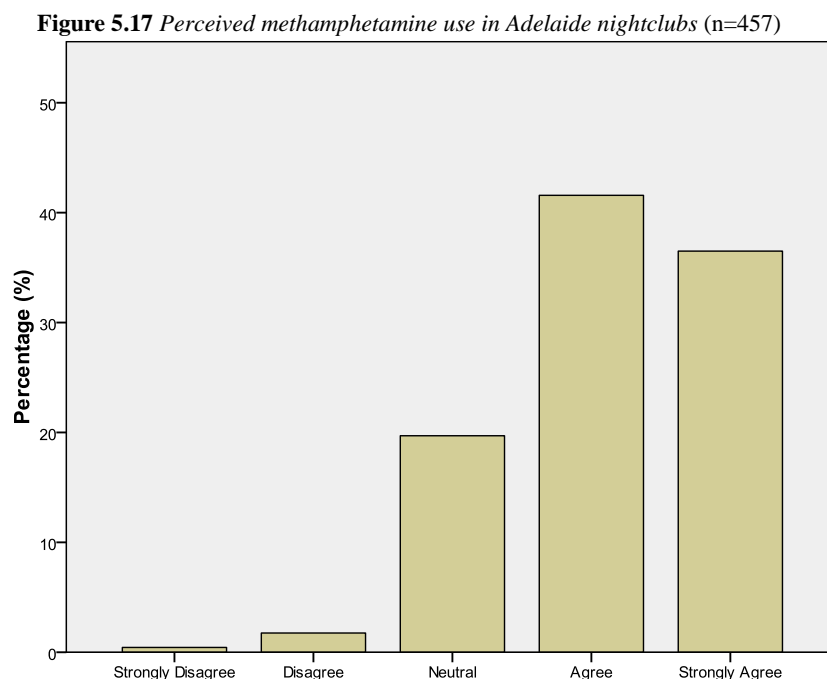
Figure 5.16 Perceived drug use in Adelaide nightclubs, by drug type (n=457)



Although considerable caution was taken in the creation of the survey instrument and its dissemination to participants in the field, it is recognised that the perceived prevalence of methamphetamines reported in Figure 5.16 was quite high, perhaps indicating the influence of response bias. Also, given that no significant differences were observed across the sample, suggesting that these figures are representative of young nightclub attendees in Adelaide, further analysis was needed to determine whether this was an accurate reflection of current levels of usage and awareness of methamphetamine use in Adelaide nightclubs.

5.5.2 Perceptions of Adelaide Nightclub Methamphetamine Use

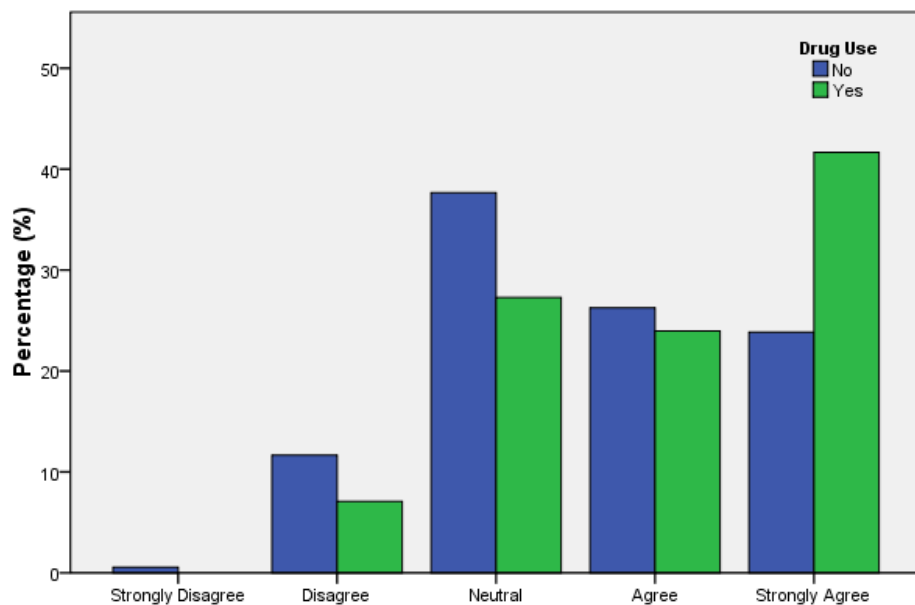
Consequently, participants were asked whether they perceived that the use of methamphetamines occurs in Adelaide nightclubs and also to identify what percentage of young people they perceived used methamphetamines. As shown in Figure 5.17, the majority of the sample either agreed or strongly agreed that methamphetamine use occurs in Adelaide nightclubs, with very few participants disagreeing with this statement.



No significant differences were found in terms of participants' gender, age and motivations for attendance. Similarly, the participants' frequency of attendance

did not affect their perceptions of methamphetamine use, which suggests that the perceived prevalence is consistent across the sample. In contrast, the participants' drug use was found to influence their perceptions of the incidence of nightclub methamphetamine use, with a greater proportion of users more likely to strongly agree with this question than non-users, more of whom provided a neutral response (see Figure 5.18). In practical terms, however, it is important to acknowledge that the majority of non-users also agreed or strongly agreed that methamphetamines are used in nightclubs, with only 14.1 percent indicating otherwise.

Figure 5.18 *Perceived level of methamphetamine use in Adelaide nightclubs, by drug use (n=457)*



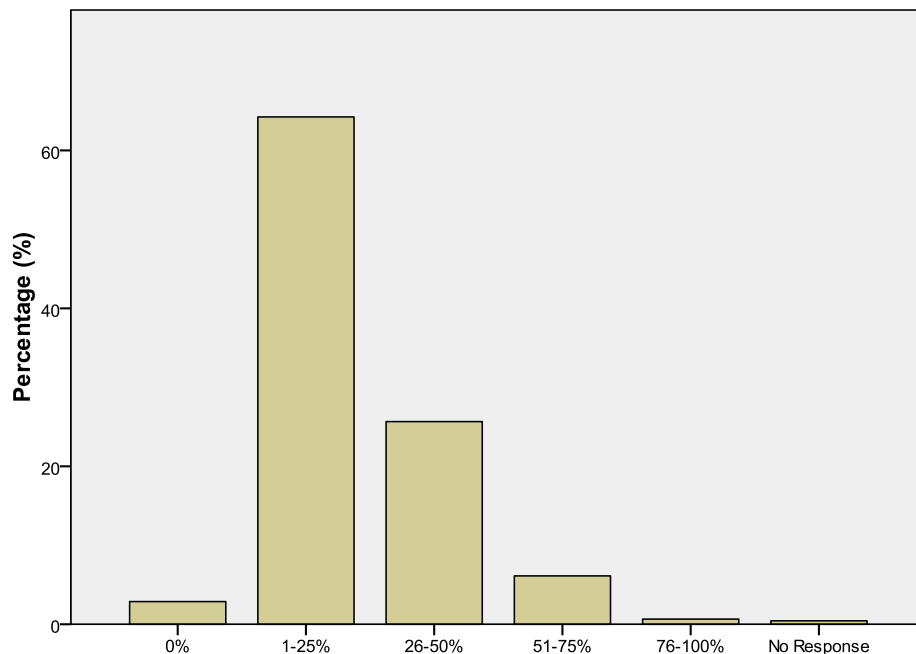
5.5.3 Perceived Percentage of Use

When participants were asked to identify what percentage of nightclub attendees they perceived used methamphetamines on any given night, almost three quarters of participants (70.2) reported that methamphetamines were used by between 1 percent and 25 percent of nightclub attendees, with a quarter of the sample also suggesting that this figure could be as high as 50 percent of all nightclub users (see next page, Figure 5.19). Notably, only 3.2 percent of the sample suggested that methamphetamines were not used in Adelaide nightclubs, which corroborates the data examined in this section. These figures also broadly support the demographic characteristics of this sample (see Table 3.2, page 70), in which 21

percent of participants identified that they currently used, or had previously used methamphetamines. Despite these relatively large figures, many interviewees (Tess, Carly, Tom and Susan) were also keen to point out that although methamphetamine use was prevalent it did not seem overwhelming in the Adelaide nightclub scene where one interviewee noted:

“I know a few people who [use methamphetamines]. I've never thought it was such a big thing, until lately and now I think a lot of people are doing it. Definitely around 25 percent of people would use when they go out. I know that sounds like a lot but when you're there it's not like it's really obvious or anything. You just know that many people are using because they're having a lot of fun, and they are lasting all-night” (Daniela, aged 21, non-user).

Figure 5.19 Perceived percentage of methamphetamine users in Adelaide nightclubs (n=457)



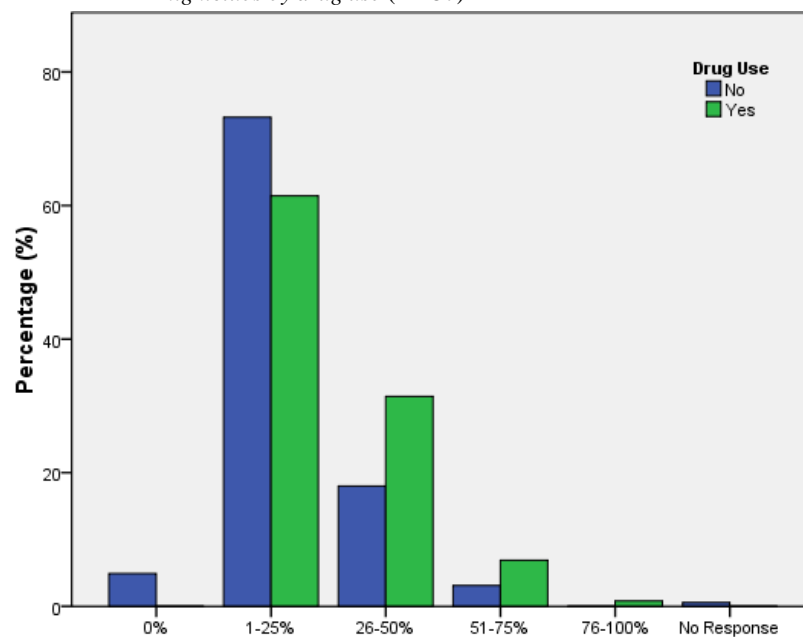
The participants' age, gender, frequency of attendance and motivations for attendance did not have an influence on the perceived prevalence of methamphetamine use in nightclubs. However, it was again observed that the perceived level of methamphetamine use in Adelaide nightclubs was influenced, in part, by the participants' own drug use ($U(1)=13617.5$, $Z=-3.456$, $p=.001$). A greater number of users perceived that there was a higher percentage of methamphetamine use among nightclub attendees than non-users (see Figure 5.20). Many of the interviewees stated that this was most likely as a result of the

users' involvement in the wider drug scene, which the interviewees perceived would better place users to estimate the overall level of use in particular venues:

“I guess you learn that if you've been out and clubbing for a long time – you get to know what's happening around you or what to expect from the other clubber. And I think users have a better understanding of what's happening in terms of drug use because they can see the signs, you know, and because many would know some of the other people who are using” (Susan, aged 23, user).

It can also be drawn from this data that, although a greater number of users' perceived a higher use of methamphetamines, the majority of non-users perceived that methamphetamines were consumed in Adelaide nightclubs by up to 25 percent of attendees, which strongly indicates that methamphetamine use is prevalent in Adelaide nightclubs.

Figure 5.20 *Perceived percentage of methamphetamine users in Adelaide nightclubs by drug use (n=457)*



5.5.4 Identifying the Risks of Methamphetamine Use

To gain an understanding of what factors influence young people's overall perceptions of methamphetamine use and to establish a data source of these lay perspectives, participants were asked to indicate what they perceived to be the risks associated with methamphetamine use. Addiction, vulnerability, loss of control, and not knowing the ingredients were the risks most identified by the

participants (see Table 5.9). By comparison, fewer participants perceived more traditional outcomes (mental illness, death and so on), which are often described by experts, to be predominant risks of the Adelaide nightclub scene.

Table 5.9 *Perceived risks of using methamphetamine**

	Total	Males	Females	Users	Non-users
Addiction	30.0	28.0	32.0	40.3	19.7
Vulnerability	24.7	16.1	33.3	28.1	21.3
Loss of control	24.5	21.4	27.7	22.9	25.2
Ingredients Unknown	23.9	22.8	25.0	34.2	16.6
Physical injury	21.4	20.0	22.3	20.8	23.0
Overdose	20.8	23.3	28.1	22.9	22.7
No response	11.4	10.4	12.5	11.1	11.7
Death	9.7	10.9	8.5	9.3	10.0
Mental illness	9.3	8.5	9.8	9.5	9.1
No idea	6.1	6.7	5.5	4.2	6.4
Arrest	5.5	4.2	6.8	6.0	5.0

n = 457

* This table represents the percentage of participants who positively identified these factors as risks of using methamphetamines (by marking 'yes').

No significant differences were found in terms of participants' age, frequency of attendance or motivations for attendance. However, gender was found to have a significant influence on the participants' perceptions of the risks inherent in methamphetamine use, with the greatest disparity in the ranking of the risks occurring in 'loss of control' and 'vulnerability' (see Table 5.9). Generally the difference was minimal however, and as noted earlier in this chapter (section 5.3.1), it most likely reflects the females' concerns regarding their safety in the nightclub, which was a commonly perceived risk of attending Adelaide nightclubs and related more so to their own and others' misuse of alcohol.

The participants' drug use also influenced their perceptions, with addiction ($\chi^2(1) = 22.017, p = .000$) and unknown ingredients ($\chi^2(1) = 55.770, p = .000$) identified by users as significant risks of methamphetamine use. However, although twice as many users were concerned about addiction and unknown ingredients than non-users, the practical significance of these results was perceived by many interviewees to be limited. For example, the following statement was perceived as characteristic of the users' identification of addiction

as a risk of methamphetamine use, in which risk was typically associated with others' use rather than their own drug use behaviour:

“We are always careful to buzz within our limits, but there are definitely some [users] that don't seem to care. I mean, my friends and I definitely know when to stop...and I guess most of the other [users] that I am familiar with do too as I haven't seen anyone lose it. But I've heard stories of people that lose everything...it's just sad” (Veronica, aged 18, user).

In addition, although users were significantly more concerned about the risks of unknown ingredients than non-users, many interviewees (Alex, Matthew and Todd) indicated that this is not surprising given that, by definition, these young people's non-use would limit their exposure to the negative effects of unknown drug compositions. Consequently, what these findings suggest is that the risks of methamphetamine use in Adelaide nightclubs perceived by this sample of youth do not match those described by experts, which typically relate to harms broadly linked to the use/misuse of these social spaces. Instead, these participants highlight other concerns (e.g. alcohol misuse), and identify specific populations that require targeted assistance (e.g. addicts), which requires revision of current drug policies given that they are unable to make such distinctions.

5.5.5 Risk Knowledge and Methamphetamine Use

To provide further comparative data in terms of the value of drug knowledge, and highlight the limitations of current drug initiatives, the participants were asked whether knowing the risks of methamphetamine use would affect the participants' use or potential use of them. Responses varied widely, with a third of the participants responding neutrally (34.1 percent), and the majority either agreeing (24.5 percent) or strongly agreeing (34.8 percent) with the statement.

Table 5.10 *The impact of risk knowledge on methamphetamine use*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Knowing the risks would affect my use of methamphetamines	2.0	4.6	34.1	24.5	34.8

n = 457

In explaining these results, no differences were observed in relation to participants' age, gender, motivations for attendance or frequency of attendance, suggesting that knowledge of the risks of methamphetamine use is consistent across the time spent within nightclub venues and does not influence the participants' overall attendance. In contrast, the participants' drug use was found to significantly influence their perceptions of the effect of risk knowledge ($\chi^2(1) = 45.806, p = .000$), with a greater proportion of users indicating that this knowledge would affect their use of methamphetamines than non-users. This represents a significant departure from previous drug studies, in particular ecstasy research, in which users' perceptions of the risks associated with their drug use did not appear to significantly influence drug use behaviour. For example, although Murphy, Wareing and Fisk (2006) found that respondents who were concerned with the risks associated with ecstasy use claimed that they were more likely to limit their consumption, the number of tablets consumed in a session did not significantly differ from those who were only 'slightly concerned' or 'not at all concerned'.

In contrast, highlighting a limitation of current drug initiatives which purport to reduce users' drug consumption and prevent the uptake of drugs by individuals who have previously not consumed them, the data in the present study provided an interesting result. Even though a greater proportion of users perceived that their risk knowledge would affect their drug use, the majority of non-users (57.1) also perceived that knowing the risks would influence their potential or future methamphetamine use. Importantly, however, rather than this knowledge functioning to reinforce participants' existing behaviour (i.e. use or non-use), the qualitative data reveals that risk knowledge also has a positive role in non-users' potential drug use. In again emphasising the broader theme of control within young people's nightclub experience, what many interviewees noted was that, even if they had no immediate desire to engage in drug use, this risk knowledge would be an essential part of the decision if they changed their mind:

"I'm aware of the risks, like addiction, overdosing and dehydration. I don't claim that I'd be able to just go out and drop a few points and be fine, but I know that I would be able to learn how to use [meth] properly and so knowing these risks

wouldn't stop me taking it. It's about knowing what your limits are, and what is sensible and what isn't..." (Tess, aged 19, non-user).

This poses a number of challenges for Australian drug policy, particularly in the application of harm-minimisation approaches, the implications of which are discussed further in the concluding chapter of this thesis (see chapter 8).

5.5.6 Perceived Motivations for Nightclub Methamphetamine Use

In further establishing the foundation of a data source of young people's experiences of the Adelaide nightclub scene, participants were asked to identify what they perceived were the main motivations for the use of methamphetamines within Adelaide nightclubs. Fun, socialising, 'to increase stamina' and 'to enhance music' were identified as the primary motivations (see below, Table 5.11), which were strongly supported and clearly distinguishable from the remaining options. The strength of this support is also evident in that these responses were consistent across the sample with no significant differences observed in relation to the participants' age, gender, and frequency of, and motivations for attendance. Furthermore, although the participants' drug use influenced their perceptions, with a greater percentage of users identifying fun ($\chi^2(1) = 5.264, p = .022$), to increase stamina ($\chi^2(1) = 7.886, p = .005$), to enhance music ($\chi^2(1) = 12.284, p = .000$), and socialising ($\chi^2(1) = 12.006, p = .001$) to be the primary motivations for methamphetamine use, these differences were small. Specifically, a large percentage of non-users also identified the same motivations, and there were no differences observed between users' and non-users' responses in terms of peer pressure, 'to try something new', whether a 'partner used', or to 'pick up', suggesting the existence of common perceptions shared across the sample. These perceptions were also evident in the qualitative data, where users and non-users appeared equally aware of the purpose of methamphetamines within Adelaide nightclubs and identified a number of common motivations, sentiments that are captured in the following statements:

"Young people use meth to have fun, relax, interact with people, catch up with friends and just have a good night. Using [meth] gives you energy that red bull just cannot compare with. I mean, it's the weekend, you're free and so you wanna make the most of it and stay out as long as possible. Young people don't use meth just for the sake of it – it has a purpose" (William, aged 22, non-user).

“We use meth in the same way that others use alcohol, to unwind and have a good night. It makes everything feel that little bit better, plus you can stay out later, dance for longer, and spend more time with friends. Most of all it’s a personal thing – it’s not about showing off or being cool – I just like how it makes me feel” (Todd, aged 24, user).

While the question appears simplistic initially, it represents an attempt to provide these young people with the opportunity to express their lay perceptions of the motivations for methamphetamine use and also, importantly, it gives an insight into the broader cultural accommodation by young nightclub attendees who although do not use drugs, are exposed to them within Adelaide nightclubs.

Table 5.11 *Perceived motivations for the use of methamphetamines in nightclubs*

	Percent
Fun	90.2
To increase stamina	63.2
To enhance the music	39.2
Peer pressure	10.7
To lose control	7.3
Socialising	69.4
To try something new	5.6
Partner uses	14.0
To ‘pick up’	7.2
I don’t know	3.7
Other	4.2

n = 457

Table 5.12 *Perceived motivations for the general use of methamphetamines*

	Percent
Fun	56.0
To increase stamina	23.3
To enhance music	9.2
Peer pressure	28.3
To lose control	34.4
Socialising	51.6
To try something new	61.1
Partner uses	24.4
To enhance sex	22.0
I don’t know	3.7
Other	0.0

n = 457

5.5.7 *Perceived Motivations for General Methamphetamine Use*

To provide further context to these perceptions and evaluate the influence of setting on young people’s perceptions of methamphetamine use, participants were asked to identify what they perceived to be the primary motivations for young people’s methamphetamine use generally, not related to the use of the nightclub. As noted in Table 5.12, similar to use in the nightclub context, fun and socialising were given as prominent motivations for the use of methamphetamines generally. However, significantly fewer participants shared this view, with a greater variation in responses across the sample. In contrast to perceptions of use in the nightclub, the participants perceived that general methamphetamine use was primarily motivated by a desire to try something new (61.1 percent) and to lose

control (34.4 percent), as well as peer pressure (28.3 percent), partner's use (24.4 percent), and the desire to enhance sexual interactions (22.0 percent). In addition, no significant differences were found across any of the participant characteristics, providing further support for the participants' claims that a distinction can be made between forms or levels of drug use (see section 7.7) and that methamphetamine use in the nightclub differs from its use in the general population, which highlights the need for policies that reflect this difference.

5.6 Conclusion

Although the participants' frequency of attendance varied widely in the present study, the overall pattern of these young people's nightclub experience was consistent and based on a broad understanding of the role of the nightclub experience in their social lives. In this sense, these nightclubbers' attendance was consistent with the notion of the 'big night out' noted in previous studies (see Duff, 2005; Johnston et al., 2004; Riley & Hayward, 2004; Measham et al., 2001), in which 'going out' was commonly restricted to the weekend, or nights that coincided with downtime from busy work and study schedules. However, in contrast to the high levels of consumption observed in such studies this sample demonstrated more conservative levels of consumption. Notably, the rationale for this consumption appeared to be linked to shared motivations for nightclub attendance that were guided by social group membership, which do not prioritise drug use, but instead are based on a range of other factors such as listening to music, dancing and socialising with friends. The importance of group membership played an influential role in the identification of the need for risk management strategies to ensure the safe consumption of these factors within the nightclub, which suggests that a cultural shift has occurred in how young people view the nightclub experience and the associated risks.

Specifically, while the sample was divided in its perception of whether Adelaide nightclubs are risky, the reason for this finding was not straightforward and instead highlighted a complex and interesting interplay between a number of key factors. An important product of this interplay was that the majority of

participants were able to identify that risk is present within the nightclub environment. Indeed, most participants were able to identify a number of specific risks within the Adelaide nightclub scene that rationalised the use of risk management strategies and reinforced the importance of group membership in reducing the effects of the risks. However, in highlighting a significant outcome of this research, these risks were not associated with the use of drugs, but were instead related to gendered concerns linked to safety and the prevalence of alcohol misuse, with violence, drink spiking, physical injury and sexual assault identified as most concerning. This risk managed approach is evidence of a shift in youth nightclub culture, in which these perceptions of risk represent a means by which these young people identify the potential for bad outcomes of their nightclub experience. Consequently, in addition to identifying a number of risks that actually concern young people, which has further implications for regulation of the nightclub industry generally, the fact that these young people can distinguish between forms of risk and demonstrate that their social experience is not defined by or for the purpose of seeking risk, particularly through drug use, challenges traditional conceptualisations of youth as deviant. As such, it can be identified that these behaviours instead reflect young people's broader desire for the safe consumption of leisure (see chapter 4, part 2).

In addition, although drug use was identified as a common and familiar feature of the Adelaide nightclub scene, most participants, both users and non-users, did not feel at risk in Adelaide nightclubs. To understand this result, it is necessary to acknowledge that these participants perceived themselves to be 'drug wise', which was demonstrated through the application of knowledge of safe levels and methods of drug use, and as a result, they were also aware of the associated risks. The participants also perceived that increasing this level of knowledge had tangible effects in reducing the risks of their nightclub experience, irrespective of actual drug use, thus enabling safe consumption. The development and sharing of drug knowledge among these young people is significant in the Adelaide nightclub context, as it highlights that different forms and/or levels of drug use can be identified, which challenges current thinking on youth drug use by suggesting that their drug use behaviour can be found in explanations of their

perceptions of control and in an understanding of the purpose of the nightclub in their lives.

Another key feature of the empirical approach undertaken in the present study is that it goes some way to addressing the paucity of data on young people's perceptions of risk associated with the use of methamphetamines in nightclubs in South Australia and takes the first step, albeit cautiously, towards the establishment of a national data source. The value of this quantitative analysis, in particular, has been that it has revealed young people's perceptions of the prevalence of, motivations for, and risks associated with nightclub methamphetamine use, and how they compare with use in the general population, which provides an alternative source of data. The participants have confirmed that the use of methamphetamines in Adelaide nightclubs is prevalent, but in contrast to experts' claims, forms only part of a complex environment, and is predominantly motivated by young people's desire to dance, socialise with friends, relax and escape from the pressures associated with work and study commitments. This has uncovered a discord between young people's and experts' perceptions of the motivations for and risks of methamphetamine use within the nightclub, which as examined further in chapter 7, suggests that a different perspective is needed on how young people's nightclub drug use should be viewed. This is also likely to present a number of challenges for Australian drug policy, particularly in terms of drug education and harm minimisation, which are discussed in the conclusion to this thesis (see section 8.5).

CHAPTER 6

UNDERSTANDING RISK IN THE ADELAIDE NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY: AN EXPERT PERSPECTIVE

6.1 Introduction: *The identification of risk in the nightclub*

Nightclubs have often been portrayed by governments as ‘dangerous’ places (Hunt, Evans & Kares, 2006), with venues and patrons regularly associated with the lower classes of society (Lees, 2008; Kerr, Kimber & Rhodes, 2007; Rhodes et al., 2006). The use of illicit drugs by young nightclubbers has been a central theme in this perception of dangerousness, as experts claim that more than other recreational sites nightclubs facilitate the availability of and access to illicit drugs (Hunt et al., 2006; Perrone, 2006; Parker et al., 1998), producing two major concerns. Firstly, experts purport that sudden increases in the prevalence of illicit drugs within nightclubs will create a chaotic, unregulated and deviant atmosphere that disregards the values, norms and attitudes of the broader community (McKetin, 2007a; 2007b; Shewan et al., 2000). Secondly, experts also claim that significant increases in the availability of and access to illicit drugs may cause young people to become dangerously complacent (Hunt et al., 2006; Perrone, 2006), and make their use not only commonplace among defined user groups (Cheung & Cheung, 2006; Duff, 2005) but also among broader sections of the youth population (Parker et al., 2002). Consequently, young people’s use of drugs within the nightclub has received substantial policy attention, evident in recent government campaigns in which illicit drug use has been placed within a broader discourse of risk and young people’s drug use practices have been associated with a multitude of dangers to short-term and long-term health, or in extreme cases, loss of life (Ali et al., 2006; ANCD, 2006; Battjes et al., 2003; Bush, 2002).

An important product of this attention, and the strong message that it has conveyed is that, in Australia, efforts to control young people’s illicit drug use have involved an ‘expertisation of risk’, particularly in South Australia, evident in the nature and scope of recent policies and legislative reforms (see Ransley et al., 2011). As identified in the introduction to this thesis (section 1.1), numerous

strategies have been implemented under the National Drug Strategy that, together with the implementation of a range of legislative reforms,¹ have sought to minimise the harm associated with drug use in the nightclub setting (Ransley et al., 2011; NDS, 2004; Duff, 2004; Rohl, 2000). However, the effectiveness of these policies has been limited, given that the use of illicit drugs, particularly methamphetamines, by young people remains prevalent in nightclubs in Australia (see section 1.4). This drug use should concern policy-makers because it suggests that although experts delineate what are considered ‘safe’ and ‘appropriate’ leisure activities, these messages do not appear to be accepted by some individuals, which not only highlights a limitation of the current approach, but also that future policies and initiatives are also likely to fail unless this apparent miscommunication is addressed.

An important feature of the present study is the identification that this miscommunication is caused, to a large extent, by the differences between experts’ and young people’s perceptions of risk and the impact that this has on how they each view the use of methamphetamines within the nightclub. Within the context of this research it has been identified that this disconnect has occurred in the context of a nightlife space that is symbolised by inconsistency and competing understandings of risk and control. This not only undermines the effectiveness of current policies, but also significantly affects the young nightclubbers, some of whom use drugs, which these policies seek to regulate. However, before analysing young people’s perceptions of risk within this complex atmosphere (see chapter 7) this chapter focuses on risk from an expert perspective to highlight the gap between top-down (chapter 6) and bottom-up approaches (chapter 7) to understanding young people’s drug use. This chapter thus aims to examine the nightclub as a site of risk and control, how experts define risk, the implications of expert risk on crime control approaches in the nightclub and how this affects the young people who attend Adelaide nightclubs.

¹ For examples see the *Controlled Substances (Drug Detection Powers) Amendment Bill (2008)* (SA) and *Serious and Organised Crime (Control) Act 2008* (SA) in South Australia, and more broadly, the *Law and Justice Legislation Amendment (Serious Drug Offences and Other Measures) Bill 2005* (Cth).

6.2 Understanding the ‘club’ as a site of risk and control

That risk and control are significant, interrelated factors in the night-time economy is not new, having engendered substantial recent debate (see Pennay & Moore, 2010; Rigakos, 2008; Smith, 2007; Measham, 2004). The risks associated with the nightclub have typically focused on the use of illicit drugs, which have rationalised the use of prohibitive or ‘zero tolerance’ policies enforced by the police (Newburn & Jones, 2007; Mazerolle et al., 2005; MacCoun & Reuter, 2001). The significance of this punitive approach is that, providing support for the findings of previous research (Crawford, 2006; Black, 2001), this study has revealed that what plagues many (if not most) forms of regulation and governance is the problem of control. Recent changes in the role of consumption in the nightclub for young people (as noted in chapter 4) have highlighted a paradox between how the forms of control in the night-time economy seek to regulate young people in nightclubs and the reality of such experiences for these young people. This affects how risk and control should be understood in this space.

In the last decade, nightclubs have experienced a considerable resurgence as a popular site of youth leisure (Roberts, 2006; Slavin, 2004; Moore & Miles, 2004). As explored in chapter 4, this has occurred as part of a wider revitalisation of the urban space of cities, particularly their nightlife spaces, in which governments’ have recognised the role of consumption in this urban growth (Roberts, 2006; Crewe & Beaverstock, 1998; Lovatt, 1996) and the need to provide a cultural spaces for young people to pursue consumption (Smith, 2007; Rojek, 2000). However, what has been evident in this resurgence is that consumption is expected to occur within a socially acceptable environment, where the values of the wider community are strictly enforced. Within the Adelaide night-time economy this has produced an ambiguous nightclub space that is simultaneously composed of regulatory control strategies and deregulatory liberalisation policies (Talbot, 2009; Smith, 2007). So, on one hand governments use the nightclub to revitalise certain social spaces, through fulfilling young people’s need for leisure, which includes the consumption of licit substances, primarily alcohol (Talbot, 2009), and on the other hand, governments seek to control young peoples’

behaviour in the nightclub (Smith, 2007; Hunt et al., 2006) through restrictive illicit drug policies which promote risk avoidance. A key feature of the resurgence, therefore, has been that the nightclub, as well as the night-time economy generally, has become embroiled in a discourse of risk where, as Aitchison (2004, p. 97) states “...leisure sites and activities have become the focus of a society pre-occupied with minimising risk”. A further consequence of this resurgence, as has been observed in studies of other night-time economies (Miller et al., 2011; Sanders & Hardy, 2011; MCC, 2010; Rowe et al., 2008), is that the nightclub appears to be constrained by the often conflicting agendas of a number of competing interests and this may diminish the government’s effectiveness to manage young people’s use of these nightlife venues. Thus, it becomes necessary to determine who these interests are and how they function to control the nightlife spaces in which young people seek leisure within the broader constraints of risk.

Three key actors/interests can be identified within the Adelaide night-time economy: the government (which includes the police), nightclubs and associated nightlife venues and, crucially, the young people who attend them. This creates a dynamic relationship that, as Measham and Moore (2005, p. 274) note in relation to ecstasy use in the UK, “reflects tensions between leisure-time pursuits in a consumption and profit-oriented society on the one hand, and the criminal justice-driven ‘law and order’ agenda of the government on the other”. A similar tension exists in relation to young people’s use of Adelaide nightclubs as evidenced in this research context. Firstly, while these young people desire the opportunity to seek pleasure within a hedonistic environment provided for them by government policies of urbanisation and revitalisation (Lees, 2008; Smith, 2007; Lovatt, 1996) and supported by commercial interests, they are at the same time restrained by the processes of ‘othering’ and criminalisation inherent in government anti-drug policies (Jones & Foust, 2008; Buchanan & Young, 2000). Secondly, while governments are keen to provide a revitalised and urban nightlife space, which captures a wide range of social, political and economic benefits, they are also tied to broader law and order objectives that seek to limit the risks for the community generally. This is particularly pertinent given the broader political context in

which this research is placed, in which the former Rann government² in South Australia avocated a “rack ‘em, stack ‘em and pack ‘em” tough law and order stance (Ridgway, 2011; Sarre, 2009; Wheatley, 2008). Governments also appear limited by the apparent contradiction of the sale of licit, but potentially harmful, substances (e.g. alcohol) alongside the criminalisation of illicit substances (Buchanan, 2011, Smith, 2007; Measham & Moore, 2005), which is discussed in greater depth later in this chapter (section 6.5.1). Thirdly, the numerous nightlife venues, predominantly nightclubs that comprise the night-time economy are of necessity forced to find the delicate balance between government regulation, their own commercial interests and the clubbers’ needs and desires. This is a complex dynamic given that, while nightclubs seek to profit from the consumption practices of young people in regards to the use of alcohol, a practice that is supported by governments (Lees, 2008; Smith, 2007), they are also conscious of the role that illicit drugs play in the nightclub as a site of youth leisure consumption. As discussed later in this chapter (section 6.5.2), this has a substantial impact on how the nightclub is viewed as a site of risk and control, highlighted by a shift in how it is regulated from strict policing and zero tolerance policies towards an approach characterised by the safe management of populations and the tolerance of particular activities (such as drug use) that enhance consumers’ experiences in nightclubs.

More broadly, these competing interests are important to this research in that their conflicting roles in the night-time economy reflect the gap that exists between experts and young people. The gap is portrayed as a dichotomy of control (or authority), which young people struggle to overcome and experts seek to maintain. Although it can be identified that there are two main perspectives apparent in the nightclub, which contrast ‘expert’ risks and modes of control with the lay knowledge and risk management practices of young nightclubbers, it is evident that the experts hold greater influence in current dialogues. Understanding the expert-youth dichotomy in terms of the forms of control employed in the nightclub is thus crucial, as how each group applies these forms influences their

² The Rann Government spanned from March 2002 to October 2011 (Parliament of South Australia, 2012).

attitudes and behaviour in the nightclub, which ultimately affects their overall perception of risk. As such, the next section examines the concept of expert risk to provide a starting point in understanding the expert-youth dichotomy.

6.3 Conceptualising ‘expert risk’ in the club drug landscape

There is a wealth of literature on risk and risk-thinking (Rigakos, 2008; Hunt et al., 2006; Valverde, 2003; Lupton, 1999a, 1999b; Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1990), which reveals that risks are often used to demonstrate what is considered acceptable behaviour and hence used to responsabilise populations of people, particularly youth. For many of these sources, risk is accepted as a phenomenon in its own right, and examined as a tangible object that must be understood in order to be controlled (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002b; Beck, 1992). From this perspective risks are viewed as potentialities that produce negative consequences such as harm or loss, are real in their consequences and exist whether they are perceived or not (Rigakos, 2008; Hunt et al., 2006; Valverde, 2003). What is necessarily present in this form of analysis, therefore, is an ontological assumption about risk; that it is real (Rigakos, 2008, p. 24). In particular, studies across numerous disciplines have considered risk as objective and uncontested; the identification and assessment of potential hazards and dangers which will occur with a nominated frequency if certain activities are undertaken (Savadori et al., 2004; Schoon & Bynner, 2003; Gregory & Satterfield, 2002). The perceived benefit of conceptualising risk in this way is that it can be scientifically measured, and the results then used to control, minimise and prevent potential risks. This scientific or ‘expert’ assessment is viewed as ‘objective’ and is compared with the ‘subjective’ approach used by the lay public, and in particular the young people that engage in so-called ‘deviant’ behaviours (Douglas, 1992). Consequently, expert analyses dominate risk discourses due to their perceived authenticity and hence work against young people’s lay perceptions of risk to create ‘expert risk’.

With regards to the present research, many studies have identified that analyses and descriptions of risk pervade much of Australia’s policy debate surrounding illicit drugs (Degenhardt et al., 2007; Fitzgerald, 2005; Baker & Lee, 2003;

Wellbourne-Wood, 1999), particularly in South Australia (Roche et al., 2008; DASSA, 2006b; DASSA, 2003). As noted previously in this thesis (see chapters 2 and 4), the emergence of illicit drug use within nightclubs has focused the attention of expert risk on this social space and the young people that represent the predominant consumer. Thus, although a wide range of different forms of expert risk have been identified (see section 2.2.1), understanding how expert risk portrays club drug use and what it means for young people in the Adelaide nightclub setting is important, particularly in terms of how they are controlled by this portrayal.

In the nightclub risk is omnipresent and wide ranging in its potential effects (Rigakos, 2008; Hunt et al., 2006). There are risks to bouncers, bar staff, owners and patrons arising from the activities and decision-making processes that characterise the nightclub setting. Traditionally, nightclubs have been associated with alcohol-related risks, including excessive intoxication, violence, aggression (Burgess & Moffatt, 2011; Hobbs et al., 2003; Graham & West, 2001), and driving under the influence (Homel, 1988). More recently a number of risks have emerged that relate to drug use and concern more extreme outcomes, such as dehydration, hyperthermia, overdosing and addiction resulting from excessive use (Buxton & Dove, 2008; Werb et al., 2008; Ali et al., 2006; Barr et al., 2006). That these risks have been identified is because experts claim that drug use can only be considered in terms of a dichotomy of risk and risk-free. Thus, ignoring the possibility of heterogeneous forms of drug use, drug policy (notably in South Australia) has been formulated on the basis of a conceptualisation of expert risk based on pharmacological and technical assessments of drug use that typically views all forms of use as dangerous and something to be avoided (Darke et al., 2008a; Kelly, 2005; Gregory & Satterfield, 2002), with such use often associated with psychosis and other mental impairments (McKetin et al., 2006d). As such, many expert reports on illicit drug use, primarily methamphetamine use, have claimed that the nightclub is unpredictable, volatile, and often extremely dangerous (Eckersley & Reeder, 2008; Darke et al., 2008b; McKetin et al., 2006c; Sommers & Baskin, 2006). Of concern is that these expert risks and perceptions

of danger have often been used to underpin most of the anti-drug campaigns observed in popular media in South Australia, and Australia generally, as evident in slogans such as ‘ice destroys lives’ and ‘Speed. You don’t know what it’ll do to you’ (DHA, 2010). These campaigns have had negative consequences for young drug users through their portrayal as addicted, criminal and deviant (Blood & McCallum, 2005; see also Reith, 2004). What this thesis argues is that expert conceptualisations of risk are nonetheless important because they provide insight into the ways that societies seek to control individuals who involve themselves in risky activities (Hunt et al., 2006; Reith, 2004), such as drug use. As noted by Lupton (1999b, p. 49), once certain groups have been identified as being at risk “...their state of being ‘at risk’ justifies...being singled out for expert advice, surveillance and control”. This strategy assumes that risks are ubiquitous and known and thus bounded by objective definitions of what is considered relevant appropriate behaviour. Therefore, if ‘high risk’ populations, such as young drug users continue to engage in risky behaviours when the risks are known, then they are deemed solely responsible for their actions (Hunt et al., 2006), which through the need to control them justifies the ‘expertisation’ of risk.

What this chapter also argues is that such expert responses to young people’s risk-taking, particularly in regards to illicit drug use, are often misconceived as they politicise the risk debate in a way that is both unhelpful to understanding young people’s drug practices and disadvantageous to the youth in question (Aldridge, Parker & Measham, 1998). It has been observed in much of the drug policy in South Australia that the classification of the dangers associated with nightclub drug use has acted more as a way of distinguishing between normal and deviant behaviour, rather than identification that these young people are at risk and require help (Hunt et al., 2006), which closely reflects what Valverde (2003) terms ‘targeted governance’. This has resulted in the implementation of a wide range of policies, as well as numerous advertising campaigns and scare tactics, motivated by zero tolerance and supply reduction discourses, which have in turn rationalised drug law enforcement approaches (Newburn & Jones, 2007; Homel & Willis, 2007; Cherney et al., 2005; Caulkins, 2002). There are several reasons

why a zero tolerance perspective is often prioritised by governments, summarised by Nabben (2010, p. 19) who notes that “‘zero tolerance’ is a popular, catchy notion that leaves no room for doubt and can be flexibly applied in many different situations without having to be clearly defined. It has a strong symbolic potential and it resonates well with the current problems and ... solutions as articulated by politicians, populists and police”. Within the broader context of the global ‘war on drugs’, zero tolerance approaches have thus become inextricably linked with governments’ desire to control certain groups and have been perceived by experts as an effective way to control the club (GCDP, 2011; Buchanan, 2010; Gray, 2001; Jensen et al., 2004; Oscapella, 2002). The notion of expert risk is therefore a useful lens through which to examine the nightclub as a location of risk and control for the purpose of this study, as it provides a platform which demonstrates the contrast with young people’s risk perceptions of club drug use, as discussed later in this thesis (chapter 7).

6.4 Regulating the club: *A culture of control*

To understand the domination of expert models of risk in analyses of the night-time economy, it is important to recognise the environment that has contributed to it. The nightclub has traditionally been an object of regulation, and today remains subject to numerous forms of legislation and policy (Rigakos, 2008; Valverde, 2003). As identified earlier in this thesis (see section 1.3.3), Adelaide nightclubs have received significant media (Anderson, 2011; Churchman, 2011) and policy attention (SAPOL, 2010; Prenzler, Sarre & Earle, 2008; DASSA, 2003), much of which has been attributed to young people and their use of illicit drugs within nightclub venues (Katz, 2011; DASSA, 2006a; 2006b). In setting this research within the Adelaide nightclub scene, therefore, it is necessary to examine the Adelaide night-time economy as a ‘culture of control’ (Garland, 2001) in which broader changes in the regulation of drug use and the overall political environment significantly affect how risk and control are considered in this social space. These regulatory changes are significant in that they prioritise expert forms of risk which shifts the focus of crime control from social welfare to social control and a ‘tough on crime’ approach (Beckett & Western, 2000).

6.4.1 *The Rise of Punitiveness*

The over-use of punitive measures in South Australia (see above, section 6.3, and below, section 6.4.2) has played an important role in the understanding of risk and control, and is evident in its potential to greatly influence law enforcement and policy responses (Garland, 2001). Illicit drug regulation in South Australia exemplifies this heavy approach where drug policies and attitudes toward drugs, particularly methamphetamines, have been shaped by increases in broader community support for more punitive criminal justice policies (Nicholas, 2009; Atkinson, 2005; 2003; Briton, 2003). This increased punitiveness has emerged as a response to rising community concern regarding the use of illicit drugs broadly caused by an over-reliance on expert assessments of risk (DASSA, 2006a; 2006b; Richards et al., 2002). It has also brought about a number of changes in how young people's club drug use is regulated (prohibited) by governments.

As has been observed in other jurisdictions nationally (see Duff, 2005) and also, most notably in the UK (Buchanan, 2010; Measham & Moore, 2008; Buchanan & Young, 2000), these changes are accompanied by a regulatory environment characterised by limited proactive policy measures and coordination between policy, treatment and health care agencies, as well as a saturation of policy with supply-reduction initiatives and zero tolerance principles. This reflects the broader impact of a culture of control; as Garland (2001, p. 12) states "today there is a new and urgent emphasis upon the need for security, the containment of danger, the identification and management of any kind of risk". This has been evident in South Australia, where within the last 20 years policy development has included the reappearance of 'just deserts' policies, which have largely ignored drug users except in recognising the need to punish them (May, 2012; Briton, 2003; Nicholas, 2001). The desire to control appears to have overwhelmed the need to rehabilitate users and educate individuals to reduce further drug use, or prevent the uptake of drug use in the first place. This demonstrates the effect of a culture of control on the expertisation of risk, where governments assume the responsibility for the identification, classification and governing of risks (O'Malley, 2004; Rose, 2000; Beckett & Western, 2000), particularly in relation to vulnerable groups. This means that risk is defined

narrowly and objectively, which in terms of illicit drug policy in South Australia has significant implications for those involved – notably young people – as it reinforces the existent power imbalances inherent in policy creation and law enforcement, criminalises certain behaviours and hence stigmatises specific groups within the community (Room, 2005; Gregory & Satterfield, 2002).

In addition, a top-down approach not only shifts the perception of responsibility and capacity away from young people, but it is also often used to justify a tough law and order stance and zero tolerance policing strategies. For example, the most common cause for increased public concern is not rising crime statistics, rather, it is the media and politicians' influence on the public agenda that appears to significantly sway the community and drive the 'tough on crime' agenda that is prevalent in most Australian jurisdictions (Hughes et al., 2010b; McKetin, 2008; Horin, 2002). Through provocative media reporting (see Carney, 2006) and extensive political campaigning based on 'expert data' (see Trifonoff & Nicholas, 2008; Soldo, 2007), the politicisation of the drug debate appears to have overtaken crime control discourse to advocate punitive policies. This has created an atmosphere in which many people view the criminal justice system as excessively lenient and focused on protecting the offender at the expense of the rights of the individual victim, or society in general, and hence negatively distorts perceptions of the illicit drug landscape and the young people in it. In addition, this punitive attitude has subsequently disenfranchised treatment, education, and health care agencies preventing their effective cooperation and damaging the overall quality of illicit drug policy. As Garland (2001, p. 13) emphasises:

“A highly charged political discourse now surrounds crime control issues so that every decision is taken in the glare of publicity and political contention and every mistake becomes a scandal. The policy-making process has become profoundly politicised and populist”.

Understanding the political context in which these changes have occurred is therefore a logical next step in evaluating the impact of a culture of control on the regulation of illicit drugs in South Australia.

6.4.2 *The Politicisation of the Club Drug Landscape*

To provide further context to the culture of control observed in Adelaide and its impact on the regulation of young people's use of drugs in nightclubs, it is necessary to return to a broader discussion of risk. As noted in chapter 2 (section 2.2), how risk is conceptualised and by whom are key factors that significantly impinge on the development of policy and, in turn, how it regulates or 'controls' certain groups. As noted above (section 6.2), the South Australian Government's conceptualisation of risk has been typically narrow and built on expert forms of risk. Because of this narrow conceptualisation, where risks are considered 'bad' and to be avoided at all times, the initial focus of drug policy in South Australia mirrored national policy perspectives, focusing on the reduction of the manufacture and supply of methamphetamines through tougher supply reduction and drug law enforcement measures (Cherney, O'Reilly & Graborsky, 2005; Caulkins, 2002). This is where the South Australian context becomes important as many studies have noted that the nightclub industry, particularly in South Australia, is strongly linked with members of outlaw motorcycle gangs (OMCGs) (Veno & van den Eynde, 2008; Hunt, 2006; Merola, 2004; Sproull, 2003). While this is not a new phenomenon, with long-standing links between OMCGs and the night-time economy in Australia (Robertson, 2011; Robinson, 2007), in South Australia this association has formed part of a greater, more extensive law and order debate.

Recently, South Australia implemented the toughest anti-OMCG laws in the world (Bartels, 2010; 2009; Rann, 2008; AAP, 2008). In May 2008, the South Australian Rann Government passed the *Serious and Organised Crime (Control) Act 2008* (SA), which created new offences related to violent behaviour and drug distribution, enhanced police powers, prohibited the movement of particular individuals and purported to reduce the risk to public safety and order posed by OMCGs (Bartels, 2009). This legislation followed the *Statutes Amendment (Anti-Fortification) Act 2003*, which sought to prevent the further fortification of OMCG headquarters in South Australia and also to allow police to demolish existing fortifications when they are deemed to be excessive (Atkinson, 2003, p. 3,557). The nature and extent of these legislative amendments highlights the

significance of this issue for governments and law enforcement agencies as well as the need to reduce or prevent the involvement of OMCGs in the manufacture and distribution of illicit drugs through limiting the opportunities for particular activities.

This significance is also evident in relation to the involvement of OMCGs in the management of nightclubs, where it has been identified that many OMCGs use nightclubs as a front for criminal activity, such as drug distribution (Robertson, 2011; Robinson, 2007), and in order to achieve this, use gang members or associates to provide security for venues through work as bouncers or door staff (Veno & van den Eynde, 2008; Robinson, 2007). Consequently, on May 23 2005, the South Australian Parliament passed amendments to the *Security and Investigation Agents Act 1995* (SA) that now allow the government security licensing agency (Office of Consumer and Business Affairs) to regulate, and, in certain instances, deny a security license to an applicant without having to give reasons to that applicant (Prenzler, Sarre & Earle, 2008; Atkinson, 2005). The amendments went further to also include a number of specific requirements such as compulsory fingerprinting of applicants for a license and compulsory psychological testing and random drug testing of any applicant (Prenzler, Sarre & Earle, 2008; Atkinson 2005). These substantial amendments were supported by The Liquor and Gaming Commissioner who emphasised that the Act aims to protect consumers and commented this was achieved by ensuring that:

“...only fit and proper persons should be able to hold a license issued under the Security and Investigation Agents Act 1995, persons licensed under the Act should be adequately and appropriately trained, and regular checks should be made to ensure compliance” (OCBA, 2003, p. 17).

While these amendments appear to have considerable benefit for venue patrons, they are only part of a series of broader law and order goals that many sources claim are being sought by an allegedly overzealous government fixated on removing OMCGs from South Australia (Ayling, 2011; Berkovic & Massola,

2010; Fewster, 2009).³ Furthermore, despite the considerable debate and policy reform associated with the amended *Security and Investigation Agents Act 1995* (SA) which has seen the reduction of OMCGs involved in nightclub management (see OCBA, 2003), young people continue to use drugs within Adelaide nightclubs, suggesting that the original problem remains.

This examination of the Adelaide night-time economy as a culture of control has demonstrated that the debate surrounding risk in Australia remains largely guided by expert conceptualisations of risk, which seek to address young people's club drug use from a zero-tolerance crime control perspective that has been translated from other broader community concerns. However, such a culture does little more than rationalise government responses to the use of illicit drugs that stigmatise and exclude young people because expert risk is embedded in discourses of objectivity that do not take into account alternative perspectives. In relation to the regulation of drug use, punitive policies based on such objective risks ignore young people's lay perceptions of risk, and will inevitably fail to elicit any observable change in youth drug use behaviour. A culture of control therefore brings the concepts of risk and control back into focus, particularly within this research context, as it highlights a number of potential paradoxes in how the nightclub is used, and by whom, particularly when young people's use of the nightclub space is both simultaneously fostered and restricted by experts who assert that young people are not able to control themselves, the ramifications of which are discussed herein.

6.5 The limitations of 'expert' risk and control: A *discussion of paradoxes*

As noted in chapter 4 (part 1), the desire to create leisure 'escapes' for young people has emerged from the wider social focus of governments to revitalise and urbanise social spaces to appeal to commercial and retail interests, and foster

³ While amendments to the *Security and Investigation Agents Act 1995* (SA) have had some success in limiting the involvement of OMCGs in Adelaide nightclubs (OCBA, 2003), anti-OMCG laws have been unsuccessful in South Australia in terms of the broader law and order goals (Berkovic & Massola, 2010; Fewster, 2009).

broader social and economic growth within their cities (Lees, 2008; Smith, 2007; Thomas & Bromley, 2000), and this has been experienced in South Australia (Adelaide City Council, 2011). However, as noted earlier in this chapter (section 6.2), the nightclub and the broader night-time economy that surrounds it is a complex environment that is influenced by a number of actors that each shape how the space is used. As such, in their attempt to revitalise and urbanise city nightlife spaces governments have become trapped between the needs and expectations of these actors and the pressures and values of lobby groups, health care experts and the wider community, and this affects the policies created to regulate this space and those that inhabit it. The policies therefore often appear contradictory. For example, while the government regulates certain forms of behaviour through restrictive policies, notably those that relate to illicit drugs, they also seek to provide spaces for young people's hedonistic escape. This complex interplay has significantly affected the scope of expert control in that it has meant that the regeneration of the city as an urban leisure space has occurred within a discourse of 'management' and 'safe consumption' (see Measham, 2004 for similar experiences in the UK), influenced by commercial and retail interests as well as crime control policy.

A key product of the regeneration of city and nightlife spaces is that, in the desire to effectively control this environment in light of these competing aims, much of the responsibility of crime control and security has been decentralised and removed from the scope of government agencies, such as the police. Such responsibility has increasingly been placed in the hands of private security companies and the individual (Prenzler, Sarre & Earle, 2008; Smith, 2007; Lister et al., 2001; Garland, 1996). This shift seeks to achieve two key outcomes. Firstly, through this devolution governments seek to responsabilise young people to take control of their own leisure-time activities within the boundaries of the broader social norms and values of society. In doing so, governments allow young people to pursue leisure in the nightclub, but only in approved ways that recognise the objective 'expert' risks of such an environment (e.g. alcohol poisoning, drug overdose, violence and so on) (Smith, 2007). Secondly, in trying to expand the

scope of crime control, experts responsabilise other agencies, such as nightclubs, the bouncers that ‘manage’ them, as well as other actors within the broader night-time economy (e.g. shop owners) to control the youth population that is attracted to these spaces. This produces an environment in which the police have limited presence inside nightclub venues which blurs the message of crime control and in doing so undermines its effectiveness. Specifically, the expansion of control to private security and the individual has transformed the meaning and function of crime control in the nightclub, now interpreted as the desire for ‘safe’ consumption (Rigakos, 2008; Smith, 2007; Lister et al., 2001), and highlights a number of limitations of expert forms of risk and control, discussed herein.

6.5.1 *Responsibilising the Youth: Sending Mixed Messages*

Illicit drugs and their use have been the focus of and dominated much of government policy in South Australia in relation to young people’s use of nightclubs. Much of the literature supports ‘experts’ claims that urban forms of consumption commonly associated with nightclubs involve young consumers who simultaneously take this consumption for granted, in other words, young people who just do not understand (Shewan et al., 2000; Miles, 1998). Governments have therefore sought to responsabilise young people and engage them in the management of their own consumption through numerous campaigns that discuss the risks of drug use. A common problem associated with the desire to recruit young people in the control of crime is that they may not agree with the definition of a particular activity as ‘deviant’ or that it needs to be controlled (Garland, 2001). In particular, it is evident from both the quantitative and qualitative data examined in this research that while illicit drugs are present within the nightclub, the majority of the participants believe that they are not a significant concern (see sections 5.3.2 and 7.8).

The South Australian Government’s active encouragement of the night-time economy and the alcohol industry has facilitated urban regeneration within Adelaide and has been beneficial to local employers, employees and consumers, particularly nightclubs (ACC_a, 2011). The late-night leisure and entertainment

industry is now responsible for enabling and encouraging young nightclubbers to eat, drink, and socialise until the early hours on most days of the week, particularly on the weekend (Hobbs et al., 2003; Chatterton, 2002). However, urban revitalisation brings with it a range of social concerns, which include an increase in late-night, alcohol-related violence, rowdiness, noise, vandalism, drug dealing, and drug use (Burgess & Moffatt, 2011; Eckersley & Reeder, 2008; Roberts, 2004), all of which are increasingly viewed by the government, media, and the wider community as vexatious social problems (Talbot, 2009; Smith, 2007). A paradox is therefore evident in the fact that in attempting to expand and enhance young people's leisure-time activities (see chapter 4, part 1) there is need to simultaneously control them. Therefore, as has been observed in other areas of illicit drug policy (Cherney, O'Reilly & Graborsky, 2005), governments seek to broaden the scope of state agencies by delegating some crime control tasks to the private sector and the community (Garland, 2001), thus reducing their overall load and the burden on recurrent budgets.

In doing so, governments appear to engage in an approach similar to what Foucault (1991) describes as governmentality. Governmentality can be broadly understood as the techniques and processes for directing or guiding human behaviour, where it is "necessary to know that which was to be governed, and to govern in the light of that knowledge" (Rose, O'Malley & Valverde, 2006, p. 87). This is supported by Garland (2001), who suggests that the product of a governmentality-style approach is an expanded informal network that extends the responsibility for crime control onto agencies, organisations and ultimately the individual in order to persuade them to act appropriately. Consequently, what has been observed in Australia and South Australia, in particular, has been the creation of a number of targeted advertising campaigns aimed at the community that focus on the behaviour of young people within the night-time economy (Balogh, 2009; Hamilton, 2007; NDS, 2004). Displayed through television advertising as well as targeted print media (displayed in youth magazines, at nightlife venues and in educational material and so on), these campaigns have sought to raise public awareness, engender a sense of duty, and help transform the

thought-processes and practices of those involved in drug use (Balogh, 2009; Hamilton, 2007). The underlying message of these campaigns is thus one of governmentality, where governments and experts seek to demonstrate that they are not solely responsible for controlling crime; rather, the most effective method of control is through understanding its sociality, in order “to persuade and align, to organise, [and] ensure that other actors play their part” (Garland, 2001, p. 125).

However, this approach reveals a discord in Australia’s crime control policy in regards to the use of drugs, as although the Government has sought with responsabilise young people and reduce drug-related harm, the control of the nightclub remains bound by repressive zero-tolerance and ‘tough on crime’ law enforcement policies (Mazerolle et al., 2005; Caulkins & MacCoun, 2003). In addition, until recently (see Jory, 2011; Anderson, 2011; Churchman, 2011), there has been limited discussion of other factors that contribute to this environment, such as young people’s use of alcohol in the nightclub. This is despite the fact that the development of most of South Australia’s illicit drug policy in relation to the night-time economy has occurred at the same time as a greater liberalisation of alcohol and entertainment licensing laws that allow flexible and more extensive opening hours for entertainment premises during which alcohol can be sold (Anderson, 2011; Talbot, 2009; Smith, 2007). Consequently, there appears to be an inconsistency in the Adelaide night-time economy, as has been observed in other jurisdictions, such as the UK (Buchanan, 2011; Smith, 2007; Measham, 2004), where young people’s nightclub drug use is considered dangerous, while the marketing and sale of alcohol within the same environment is considered acceptable and essential to the success of the industry, and is encouraged by governments. As Measham (2004, p. 337) states, “the criminalisation of the most disreputable, disruptive and potentially threatening leisure time activities ... has occurred alongside the development of socially sanctioned and commercially exploited leisure”.

This has particular implications for our understanding of the concept of risk and how it is used by experts to control young people’s behaviour within the

nightclub scene. Specifically, if experts attach negative labels to certain drugs but not others, they reinforce expert conceptualisations of risk and forms of control by creating a hierarchy of substances, which in the present case ‘objectively’ identifies methamphetamines as dangerous. This hierarchy is then used to rationalise attempts to responsabilise young people, which are achieved through advertising campaigns and illicit drug policies that classify these substances as ‘risks’ associated with nightclub attendance. However, in again highlighting a limitation of expert forms of control, if these risks are not acknowledged by the individual at whom they are targeted, then the individual is unlikely to identify that their behaviour is in some way deviant, and hence will be unlikely to change (Smith, 2007). As the following interviewee statement reveals, when asked whether government campaigns are effective in responsabilising youth and eliciting change, many participants noted that the expertisation of risk is not a helpful way of distinguishing between forms of risk and does nothing for reducing harm within the nightclub or educating young people about these substances to responsabilise them:

“No. I don’t think that the ads are very effective at all. There’s only so much you can educate people about. I have a big problem with public health messages and policies about this: you can’t force people to change if they don’t see themselves as the problem” (Ariel, aged 24, user).

Consequently, if young people’s perceptions of risk differ from that of governments or experts, this will produce a mismatch that will likely reduce the effectiveness of any drug policy related to the nightclub scene. The ‘responsibilising’ task will therefore be more challenging given that it is difficult to persuade individuals to take responsibility for what they continue to see as not relevant or applicable to them (Garland, 2001). As Engstad and Evans (1980, p. 6-7) illustrate:

“It is most unlikely that the group...to whom responsibility is being shifted will immediately acknowledge that their property or operations are generating a substantial strain in police resources, accept that they have a duty, up to their competence, for the control of crime, and take appropriate action. In our view, the failure of many...crime control efforts can be attributed to the absence of some means of ensuring that members of the community accept and effectively discharge their responsibilities”.

In essence this statement implies that risks cannot be viewed as uncontested facts removed from the contexts in which they are experienced or observed. As noted by Hunt, Evans and Kares (2006, p. 4), risks associated with illicit drugs have to be “socially and culturally contextualised, in order to understand why the use of certain ingested substances is permissible and for others not”. That the government appears to be sending mixed messages questions the legitimacy of expert risk and illuminates the importance of socio-cultural values and meaning within risk discourses, highlighting the influence of the social context of the nightclub and youth culture in young people’s perceptions of risk.

6.5.2 Delegated Control: Security versus Crime Control

A further consequence of governments’ attempts to responsabilise others for the control of crime, which expounds the dynamic relationship between risk and control, has been the apparent commercialisation of crime control (Garland, 2001), where the task of crime control has been delegated to sources other than the police. Within the nightclub, control and risk are inextricably linked to consumption, and safe consumption is of paramount concern for young people (Rigakos, 2008). At the same time, for governments and criminal justice agencies, primarily the police, recent changes in their objectives, priorities and practices have placed an emphasis upon the cost-effective management of the risks associated with consumption and the resources needed to enable this, which has produced a security industry that is increasingly selective in its responses to crime and offending (Garland, 2001). This questions the types of control that are present within the night-time economy, and how these influence young people’s behaviour and perceptions of risk within the nightclub. As clarified above, the resurgence of the nightclub industry has caused governments to engage in a governmentality style approach, in which the responsibility for controlling nightclub populations has been expanded to include private security. This expansion has blurred the lines between public and private resources with regard to the provision of security (Garland, 1990), which significantly affects the application of control and how this influences young people’s perceptions of risk. This approach has two implications for crime control within the night-time economy; firstly, the shift in control from police to private security (section

6.5.2.1) and, secondly, the impact that this has on young people's consumption (section 6.5.2.2), both of which are discussed herein.

6.5.2.1 The shift from police to private security

In examining the significance of security within the context of Adelaide nightclubs, it is important to identify that all of the research venues attended were licensed for at least 350 patrons, with two (*Hq*, and *Red Square*) having capacities well in excess of this (OLGC, 2011). Consequently, similar to many other venues in the Adelaide night-time economy, all of the research venues were well-maintained and had strong security presence, which included the use of bouncers (or 'doormen') and technologies such as metal-detectors, ID scanners and CCTV surveillance. As identified in chapter 4 (section 4.1.1.1), these venues also form part of a broader night-time economy, encompassing numerous entertainment, leisure and restaurant venues, all of which are regulated by the police. As such, it could be argued that the Adelaide nightclub scene is a leisure environment that is saturated with forms of security and control. However, the constitution of this security and how it used to control this urban leisure space has been the focus of rigorous debate and examination in Adelaide recently (SAPOL, 2010; Nicholas, 2009; Atkinson, 2005), which has revealed a significant level of concern not only within the wider community, but also among a number of the owners of nightclubs and other leisure-related venues within the Adelaide night-time economy.⁴ This concern has been predominantly linked to the effect of an expanded or governmentality-style approach on the level of police presence observed within the night-time economy. A number of sources have noted the limited presence of police within specific areas of the night-time economy, particularly nightclubs (Anderson, 2011; Churchman, 2011; Jory, 2011), which they perceive has a considerable impact on the scope and effectiveness of crime control measures in this space. This observation was supported by a number of interviewees who stated that:

⁴ It is important to note that the concern conveyed by these groups does not relate solely to the use of illicit drugs, but is also shaped, to a large extent, by a broader discussion of the prevalence of alcohol-related violence in Adelaide, which has placed increased pressure on nightclub and other leisure-venue owners to review current practices regarding the sale of alcohol (see Anderson, 2011; Churchman, 2011 in particular).

“The cops are never around, and especially not in clubs...the only time cops were around was at events like the Big Day Out or raves...it was very rare that they rocked up to clubs though...” (Sam, aged 19, non-user).

“Yeah, there are some undercover cops, but they’re mostly pretty obvious so it’s rare for people to be just handing stuff out or doing silly things in front of them. And most of the time they’re looking for big time dealers so they leave [users] alone” (Nathan, aged 25, user).

In particular, one interviewee indicated that this form of crime control may be limited by practical and ideological constraints:

“I’m not sure [the police] have the resources to focus on everything and so while looking at one thing everyone is starting to do something else. So yeah, I’m not saying they don’t care about what’s going on inside the clubs, but I think that they focus on violence and drunks in the street because it’s more noticeable and what the public want” (Daniela, aged 21, non-user).

This is supported by the following statement, which captures the change in level of control, and its implications for how the night-time economy is regulated:

“Experts don’t go into clubs and check it out you know? They rely on police statistics and even [police] don’t go into clubs unless something major happens, like a shooting or something. They mostly patrol the street ‘cause they’re more worried about drunk people” (Carly, aged 19, non-user).

This comment strongly indicates a shift in the type of behaviour that delegated forms of control seek to regulate, which as discussed further below (see section 6.5.2.2) appears to have moved away from traditional expressions of deviance thus also reflecting a shift in the meaning of the nightclub for these young people.

The absence of police in urban leisure zones has also served to expand the role and responsibilities of private security in ‘managing’ this nightlife space. As such, in the nightclub scene, private security becomes the ‘gatekeeper’ and, in some cases, represents the only form of control visible inside venues (Rigakos, 2008). Many studies have thus outlined the value of the role bouncers play in policing the night-time economy (Rigakos, 2008; Hobbs et al., 2003; Monaghan, 2002), highlighting the “various formal and informal rules and strategies they employ to

regulate, order, exclude, and discipline a mix of celebratory, inebriated, gendered, decorative, corporeally polluted and stigmatised bodies” (Smith, 2007, p. 127). For example, bouncers are responsible for maintaining the ‘quality’ of the crowd in the venue through choosing which patrons can enter, creating a sense of security through a strong and visible presence inside the venue and demonstrating that the club is actively involved in ensuring the safety and security of patrons by conducting bag searches, body ‘pat-downs’ (Rigakos, 2008) and through using technologies such as metal detectors and ID scanners.⁵ Importantly, these actions not only define the nature of the nightclub as a site of control and delineate the roles, responsibilities and influence of the bouncer, but also identify their broader impact on the overall meaning of the nightclub and its use by young people.

6.5.2.2 Encouraging ‘safe consumption’

A second implication of the shift from institutionalised crime control to delegated forms of control is that the increased role of private security has significantly influenced the way in which the nightclub is shaped and made available for consumption (Rigakos, 2008). The influence of private security also appears to affect *how* the nightclub is consumed, where young people’s nightclub experience becomes about the consumption of leisure and their attempts to construct and maintain particular images and identities (see chapter 4, part 2). This section describes what the delegation of control to private security has meant for the overall control of the nightclub, as well as its affect on the use of illicit drugs by some young people in these venues.

As identified earlier in this chapter (section 6.2), a number of competing interests have been prominent in shaping and structuring the revitalisation of the

⁵ Although ID scanners have emerged in many nightclubs in the last few years, agreement in the debate surrounding their benefit or appropriateness as a form of control has not been reached (Palmer, Warren & Miller, 2010; Flynn & Russell, 2006). Although many nightclub attendees have welcomed the additional security measure, some of the perceived benefit of ID scanners has been lost in discussions regarding invasion of privacy and the association of nightclub management with outlaw motor-cycle gangs (Palmer, Warren & Miller, 2010), particularly in the South Australian context. The concern associated with ID scanners is that many nightclubs automatically store the information obtained, often in insecure on-site databases, potentially providing any employee access to a list of all patrons’ home addresses, information that could easily be misused (Mulligan, 2008).

city of Adelaide as a nightlife space. A key feature of this process has been the significant although indirect role that commercial interests have played in the implementation of crime control policies. To provide context to this point and address the paradoxical nature of expert forms of control, it is necessary to examine the debate surrounding the nature of public/private partnerships, like the coexistent alternative forms of control found here. An issue that has been neglected in debates surrounding public/private partnerships, particularly in Australia, is that the two components of the partnership operate on fundamentally opposing principles (Prenzler et al., 2008). In performing their public role the police have a duty to serve the community equally and prioritise assistance on the basis of the gravity of threat (Prenzler et al., 2008). In contrast, private security, such as nightclub bouncers, are primarily obligated to their employer (the nightclub) with a secondary obligation to the patrons who populate these venues, but only to the extent that it is compatible with their primary obligations. They may also give priority to commercially oriented goals, such as ensuring crowd quality⁶ and promoting the popularity of the nightclub,⁷ over other public welfare goals such as ensuring public safety in the areas around the nightclub. Of concern is the fact that, given the growth of and demand for public/private partnerships that afford private security greater responsibility, as noted by Prenzler, Sarre and Earle (2008, p. 414) it is feared that “such conflicts of loyalty (at least in the eyes of some) will increase, with possible consequences for public safety”. Specifically, by affording bouncers greater responsibility for controlling youth populations, nightclubs will be not only influenced by the principles of broader crime control policies, but also the profit and image-based demands of the commercial side of the management of nightlife spaces (Lister et al., 2001).

In addressing the paradoxical nature of the delegation of control what has been identified by a number of the interviewees (Veronica, Simone, Tim, Alex and

⁶ This refers to the gender ratio observed inside most venues, in which there is most often a greater proportion of females, particularly those who are considered stereotypically fashionable and attractive.

⁷ Often this is achieved through sustaining a set crowd level within a venue (often much less than its designated capacity), which portrays an image of popularity as a greater crowd can be observed waiting to enter the venue.

Aimee) is that rather than the maintenance of crime control, nightclubs and specifically the bouncers that manage them increasingly desire the maintenance of an environment that is free of violence and disorderly behaviour to allow consumers' 'safe consumption'. This has a particular effect on the use of illicit drugs within the nightclub where, as identified in the following interviewees' statements, the focus of security appears to have shifted to concerns regarding social disruption and violence, rather than the use of drugs:

"Clubs aren't worried about drug use – they're focused on violence, and that's more common with alcohol. If you drink too much...they'll kick you out straight away, you know. And it's the same with drugs; they're not too worried about [drugs] unless you're causing trouble" (Veronica, aged 18, user).

"I am friends with the police who work on Hindley Street, and they say that there are always fights - that's the main reason they get called out. They're always responding to stuff that happens outside places like Red Square and Hq that has been pushed outside by the bouncers...but he said that he's never been in those clubs, which is a bit odd" (Simone, aged 18, non-user).

These statements reveal that, other than extreme or 'messy' cases of drunkenness or illicit drug use, which draw attention due to their common association with displays of violence, nightclubs do not consider that patrons need to be controlled as long as they stay 'tidy' within the nightclub, which contrasts with the majority, if not all, of expert literature. Veronica's statement, in particular, illustrates the impact of this shift in control in that young nightclub attendees who are perceived to be in control are left alone, even if they are using drugs. This has a number of implications for young people's use of the nightclub and the consumption of illicit drugs within this space. In particular, it has a considerable influence on individuals' drug use practices as the perceived lack of formal modes of regulation normalises the behaviour that they seek to engage in, and for them reduces the level of its perceived 'deviance'. As revealed by a number of interviewees:

"Within my social group, some were openly passing it around...some of it was quite discreet but some of it was just open hand stuff. Security at venues don't really give a shit...they're just there just in case any fights break out...and some of them are probably dealers or take meth themselves to stay awake during late nights. So they really don't care" (Susan, aged 23, user).

“I’m not a fan of places like Hq and Reds [Red Square]...but a few have said that they go there ‘cause of the lack of police and the fact that they are bigger places...so there’s bound to be a fair few people using stuff when they’re there, and fairly openly too” (Luke, aged 22, non-user).

As noted above, it has been observed in crime control discourses that the underlying principles of providing security have transformed from the prevention and reduction of illegal activities, to instead focus on ensuring safe consumption (Rigakos, 2008; Smith, 2007; Measham, 2004). As Becky supports,

“somewhere along the line I think that the message has changed, it has become about making sure people don’t get into fights and that they get home safely” (Becky, aged 18, non-user).

This has significant repercussions for how the nightclub space is controlled, as well as how young people use the nightclub and perceive the risks associated with it, which are discussed further in chapter 7.

6.6 Conclusion

From this analysis we see that experts view risk objectively; as potential hazards and dangers that will occur as a result of the engagement in certain activities, particularly illicit drug use. This conceptualisation of risk has formed the foundation for many of the policies and initiatives that surround young people’s use of nightclubs and how they are controlled. This approach has also been influenced by the broader context of the Adelaide night-time economy, in which the authorities’ desire to reduce the prevalence of methamphetamines in nightclubs has been part of a wider law and order focus targeted at outlaw motorcycle gangs. A key finding of this research, however, is that despite a culture of control guided by expert notions of risk, recent changes in the function of the nightclub, evoked by wider transformations associated with globalisation (chapter 4), have meant that it has become a complex environment composed of and defined by a range of interests. These interests and factors sometimes contradict each other and ultimately combine to undermine the effectiveness of policies aimed at reducing the use of drugs in nightclubs.

Foremost of these factors is the fact that while governments seek to regulate this youth cohort through expert forms of control, they simultaneously seek to provide a space in which young people are encouraged to pursue hedonistic, but ‘appropriate’ pleasures, such as the responsible consumption of alcohol. To achieve this while also ensuring cost-effective management of the night-time economy, governments have delegated control to private security entities and the individual. However, this delegation of control not only sends young people mixed messages, but also has transformed the focus of crime control from risk to safe consumption. The implications of these shifts are significant. For example, although government policies and campaigns seek to responsabilise young people, the constraints of expert risk that deem certain behaviours appropriate (alcohol use) and others not (drug use) only confuse, exclude and alienate these young people, particularly when their lay experiences and knowledge challenge these conceptualisations (see chapter 7) (Jackson, 2004). Further attempts need to be made to understand this night-time economy which, paradoxically, is both enabling and constraining (Smith, 2007; see also, Measham, 2006).

This shift in crime control not only brings into question the binary nature of experts’ assessment of risk (risky or risk-free), but also has implications for young people’s perceptions of risk and control. In particular, if young people perceive that they are able to control their pleasure-seeking behaviours (see chapter 7), which may include drug and alcohol use, and they are able to do so in the nightclub where such pursuit is not only celebrated but encouraged, then young people can and will hold a perception of risk which is divergent from that of experts. Although much of how experts define risk is detailed in Australian drug policy, contemporary research has not yet investigated what young people think about risk, how they perceive risk and the extent to which these risk perceptions influence their lives, in particular in relation to the use of methamphetamines in nightclub spaces. Addressing this gap has formed the basis for this research, examination of which is discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

A QUESTION OF PERCEPTION: EXAMINING YOUTH PERSPECTIVES OF RISK IN THE NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY

7.1 Introduction: *The identification of another 'voice'*

The behaviour of young people has long been of concern to governments, with research conducted across numerous fields (Dew, Elifson & Sterk, 2007; Hunt, Evans & Kares, 2006; Dalgarno & Shewan, 2005; Moore & Miles 2004). As noted in the previous chapter, the focus of much of this research has been on behaviours characterised as disruptive or deviant, with the aim of reinforcing attempts to control and regulate young people, especially those identified as 'at risk'. Young people's nightclub drug use has been a primary example of this, with these young people often perceived as vulnerable (Ettorre & Miles, 2002) and as having a disordered relationship with consumption (Hunt, Evans & Kares, 2006; Griffin, 1997). They have been identified as 'risky consumers' involved in 'risky consumption' (Bunton, Green, & Mitchell, 2004). This has had a substantial impact on governments' responses to club drug use, which have favoured zero tolerance and law enforcement approaches (Katz, 2011; Homel & Willis, 2007; Cherney et al., 2005; Caulkins, 2002), and have typically ignored the role of young people other than as users.

As argued earlier in this thesis (chapter 4), however, young people are not passive actors or victims of their drug use. Rather, they seek the freedoms and meanings that consumption offers them, including drug use, and recognise that in doing so they can structure and control their social lives (Hunt, Evans & Kares, 2006). As such, the nightclub has become a primary youth site where consumption is central to the pursuit of leisure, construction of identity and development of social relationships for young people generally, not merely drug users (Measham, 2004; Gershuny, 2000; Rojek, 2000; Brain, 2000). Consequently, the data in this research has illustrated the

emergence of a new profile of young people who use the nightclub space in different ways from what experts believe, and in doing so create an environment that challenges the notions of 'dangerousness' and 'risk' that are often used to describe it. A problem with contemporary drug research in Australia, however, is that despite the increasing prevalence of club drug use in Australia (Degenhardt et al., 2005d), particularly in South Australia (DASSA, 2006b), little is being done to understand young people's drug use, how young people perceive it, and its broader role within their use of the nightclub.

In this chapter data and observations compiled from fieldwork are used to explore the context of young people's use of the Adelaide nightclub scene, including the use of methamphetamines, and to examine how the various factors interact to influence young people's perceptions of risk. As outlined in the previous chapter, the nightclub is a site of risk and control, thus this exploration is at the centre of the risk imbalance between experts and young people. This exploration not only demonstrates the importance of, but also young people's unique approach to risk and control which is a significant finding relevant to governments in the regulation of the night-time economy. Specifically, the following analysis challenges the notion of expert risk by concluding that these young people have the capacity to identify, distinguish and define risk, which is focused on perceptions of safety. The chapter explores how this knowledge is used to guide how young people negotiate the nightclub space, specifically outlining a number of the key risk management strategies employed by this unique youth cohort. By distinguishing the nightclub from this perspective, this chapter will not only address the recreational versus problematic drug use debate (see section 1.2), but also identify a number of risks that these young people perceive are of greater concern within the Adelaide nightclub scene. Overall, the understanding young people's perceptions of risk and how these guide leisure-time behaviour will thus provide new knowledge valuable to the development of more effective evidence-based policy for the management of illicit drug use in the Adelaide nightclub scene, which is a significant outcome of this study.

7.2 Challenging ‘expert’ risk

Nightclubs have a prominent place in popular culture for youth populations, particularly with regard to the use of drugs, and yet research that specifically addresses young people’s use of such leisure spaces is relatively sparse (although there are exceptions, see Duff, 2005; Measham, 2004). Similarly, although a number of studies (Kerr et al., 2007; Perrone, 2006; Dalgarno & Shewan, 2005) have attempted to explain the meaning of the nightclub in young people’s drug use from a youth perspective, their success has been limited. As identified in chapter 6, expert models of risk have therefore been privileged within current illicit drug policies and regulatory frameworks (Fitzgerald, 2005; Duff, 2004; Buchanan & Young, 2000), often portraying nightclubs to be a source of substantial community concern and general public nuisance (Kerr et al., 2007). Particularly notable in these accounts has been experts’ concerns regarding dependent and high-problem drug users (South, 2004), which has reinforced the general perception that despite the presence of a number of risks in the nightclub, drug use is considered the most dangerous.

Of concern, however, is that whenever these accounts prompt intervention by governments and relevant agencies, as has been experienced in South Australia (ABC, 2008; Roche et al., 2007), it is common that responses employ an approach that seeks to ‘clean up’ the areas affected by drug use (see Kerr et al., 2007), without considering what meaning such areas may hold for young people, how this directs their use, and ultimately how this influences young people’s perceptions of risk. This limits the acknowledgement of any alternative perspectives within the night-time economy and therefore produces narrow and conservative zero-tolerance policies that disregard “the social and cultural contexts in which risk is understood and negotiated” (Lupton, 1999b, p. 24). This is supported by the qualitative data from this research, where when asked about whether they believe the government understands how young people use Adelaide nightclubs, which sometimes includes the use of illicit drugs, participants revealed two notable concerns.

Firstly, the following comments illustrate that participants question whether experts and governments have the capacity to determine the extent and purpose of drug use within Adelaide nightclubs:

“[Governments] base their information on expert analyses, which is a bit narrow and restricted. Somewhere in that I think that the meaning can get lost. I’m not sure of how accurate [experts’] view of it is. That is how [young people] see the government; [young people] feel that the government just exaggerates and doesn’t give an accurate idea of what’s going on” (William, aged 22, non-user).

“I’m not sure how the government could be aware of a lot of the stuff that goes on. They always talk about drink-driving, drug use, binge drinking and stuff – but how can they police all of it. They need to focus more on what’s happening on the ground and actually try to understand how young people view the use of illicit drugs” (Daniela, aged 21, non-user).

Secondly, because experts are currently unable to accurately assess the extent and purpose of individuals’ drug use, these participants perceive that experts are also unable to evaluate what illicit drug use means for young people, which reduces the perceived efficacy of expert conceptualisations of risk. A commonly stated perception was that such approaches are destined to fail because:

“...you can’t have a blanket approach to something that is very subjective – young people are different, they are diverse, so I think it would almost be impossible to do something that would apply to everyone in the same way. I think the government needs to work out why people do certain things, like on an individual level rather than just putting us all in one box” (Todd, aged 24, user).

“...experts base their ideas and campaigns on statistics, which don’t...explain why young people used the drug in the first place, or what it does for them, what it means. Every person is different and so it is unlikely that one campaign can be right for everyone” (Tim, aged 25, former user).

From this data, it is evident that young people perceive that their consumption practices, pursuit of leisure and general behaviour within nightclubs are not aligned with expert structures and models of risk (Rigakos, 2008), and rather, that there are numerous narratives within the night-time economy that suggest the existence of alternative forms of risk in the nightclub, understanding of which is central to this

thesis. In challenging expert risk to identify alternative perspectives, this chapter examines four factors: 1) how young people identify risk, 2) how they distinguish risk in terms of illicit drug use and other dangers, 3) how they define risk within the club, and 4) how they employ behavioural strategies in order to manage risk.

7.3 Identifying risk: *Awareness and knowledge of drug risks*

In examining young people's lay perceptions of risk it is important to acknowledge that risk is present in the nightclub. This thesis by no means claims that risk should, or can be ignored in the context of the nightclub. Yet, in contrast to the models of risk traditionally used to explain young people's drug practices (see section 2.2), this does not assume that young people are unaware of the risks or choose to ignore them, even if they frequently attend nightclubs (sometimes more than twice a week) and/or sometime use drugs. Although traditional models have conceptualised risk perception as a "relatively straight-forward rational process of translating objective risk information into appropriately guided behaviour" (Gamma et al., 2005, p. 186), in contemporary society the claim that all risks are 'objective' is less defensible and the traditional narrow view needs to be expanded to encompass a wider range of social and cultural influences. Indeed, there is substantial literature that suggests that we now live in a 'risk society' that is more risk conscious (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1990), where risks are treated as "negotiable, malleable and open to...contestation, while at the same time real insofar as their effects on the social world are concrete and observable" (Rigakos, 2008, p. 26). What can be drawn from this perspective is that while risks are real, meaningful and complex, particularly in their effects on individuals and the community, they are also subjective suggesting that different viewpoints are possible (Hunt, Evans & Kares, 2006). Furthermore, as identified by a number of studies (Jones, 2004; Mitchell et al., 2001; Green et al., 2000) it might be the case that the perception or identification of risk may serve as an important element of young people's decision-making practices, central to the development of identity, social relationships or perceptions of safety. A risk society perspective is

therefore useful in that it can be used to acknowledge that although these young people are living in a risky world, they may also be capable of negotiating and managing their own risk profiles to achieve a range of positive outcomes (Hunt, Evans & Kares, 2006).

In contrast to experts' claims, it is therefore important to acknowledge that young people are able to identify risk; in other words, actually perceive that there are activities that are harmful and that can have negative consequences. Furthermore, it should be noted that this process of identification does not merely occur reactively as young people engage in leisure activities. As a number of empirical studies suggest, young people actively engage in the process of knowledge-seeking to gain information about risks, specifically in relation to the use of illicit drugs (McIntosh, O'Brien & McKeganey, 2008; Degenhardt et al., 2006; Moore & Miles, 2004), in order to reduce the likelihood of experiencing negative outcomes from these risks. Consequently, as identified in previous discussions of the normalisation thesis (Parker et al., 1998, p. 155; see also, Shildrick, 2002), these young people can be considered 'drug wise' and as having considerable knowledge of the drug scene. Central to understanding the relationship between young people and drug risks, therefore, is whether this knowledge is operationalised¹ by young people in order to manage their use of the nightclub. This was evident in the survey data, where it was found that young people are able to identify risk, seek knowledge regarding their leisure activities, and use this information to guide their behaviour. A notable feature of this practice was that it was observed consistently across the sample, regardless of whether or not participants used drugs. This practice was also found among the interviewees, many of whom (Sam, Aimee, Luke, Michael and Nathan) stated that,

“There are ads on TV that you can watch, as well as drug websites – if people want to find out about drugs they can just Google it and there is plenty of information. I guess that's one of the benefits of growing up in this era, there is always plenty of

¹ What Slovic (2001) described as 'affective processing', defined as the impact that information (e.g. drug knowledge) has in determining subsequent risk behaviour (Gamma et al., 2005).

information on how to use drugs properly and reduce the risks that way. I think most people would do that – I would” (Emmy, aged 21, non-user).

It was also notable in participants’ responses, however, that the source of the information was evaluated as to its perceived authenticity and the likelihood that it would be integrated by individuals. When asked where participants’ sought their information, the following responses were common across the sample:

“Young people rely more on their friends to get their information. I know that if I was going to take meth, I’d definitely want to seek as much information as possible but I’d get it from my friends and people I know that have done it. I don’t think the government is as effective in that area as they could be” (Sam, aged 19, non-user).

“It was mostly from my mates...they’d started using before me so they knew a fair bit about it. They’d been using for one or two years before I started, so I felt they knew what they were doing. None of them had experienced anything bad from the [meth] they were using...I trusted what they had to say” (Todd, aged 24, user).

Participants were also able to, in a sense, rank the forms of information received which provided an unusual outcome. Similar to what has been noted in a recent Australian report (Douglas & McDonald, 2012, p. 18), the data revealed that although some participants are exposed to drug education in school, they perceive that it is often “trivial and unconvincing and demonstrably ineffective in dissuading large numbers...from experimenting with drugs”:

“I remember the drug bus that came to our school, it gave us some general knowledge about drugs...but it was all about zero tolerance. In terms of my use, most of the information I get is from friends and people that are using themselves, it’s more valuable – they know what they’re doing” (Tom, aged 21, user).

The process of identifying risk and seeking specific knowledge within the nightclub thus appears valuable for young people in mitigating club risks, which was supported in the quantitative data (section 5.4.6). This process also suggests that the normalisation of drug use has occurred in this social space given that, as has been experienced in other research studies (Slavin, 2004), participants were relatively open

in discussing drugs, their effects, and the interactions within the nightclub that their use facilitated. A notable characteristic of the participants' descriptions of drug use practices, even from non-users, was the detailed nature of their drug narratives, which highlighted a finely nuanced everyday knowledge that experts claim young people do not possess (see Kelly, 2007; 2005; Leshner, 2005). In contrast to previous ecstasy studies where many participants were found to be ignorant and/or confused about the potential consequences of drug use (Bahora et al., 2009; Shildrick, 2002), the majority of this sample were aware of the consequences and used this knowledge to develop and employ numerous risk management strategies, which confirms the value of knowledge in this social setting.

7.4 Distinguishing risk: *Danger versus risk*

This research has shown that young people are not only able to identify risk within the nightclub, but also have the capacity to distinguish between different categories of risks and in doing so develop a hierarchy of danger by which risks can be ranked. When asked to compare illicit drug use with other activities in order to rank its perceived level of risk, a number of participants were able to identify and importantly quantify a difference between their drug use behaviour and other activities that have commonly been acknowledged as high-risk (such as sky-diving and base-jumping) (Lyng, 2004; Milovanovic, 2003; Ferrell, Milovanovic & Lyng, 2001). Several participants commented that they view risk as subjective, where it is “the product of a way of seeing rather than an objective fact” (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002b, p. 324). For example, one interviewee noted:

“Yeah I’ve done meth...but I wouldn’t jump out of a plane or bungy-jump, you know. I think there are certain risks that are more controllable and some that are more dangerous” (Alex, aged 23, user).

The perception that some risks are more dangerous than others was also observed with regard to the use of different illicit substances:

“I don’t think many people use [meth] too often...that may sound a bit naïve, but I think that people can contain themselves and only use it when they need it. I mean, it’s not as mind-blowing or dangerous as say heroin or cocaine, and so I think most people can handle it” (Susan, aged 23, user).

These comments reveal that although the majority of this sample perceive that many youth leisure activities and behaviours are dangerous, including other forms of drug use, the use of methamphetamines within nightclubs is considered to be less so. This distinction is important as how these participants compare risk and danger provides valuable insight into their decision-making processes and how they evaluate risk, particularly highlighting that perceived control plays a significant role in this process.

In further assessing young people’s risk perceptions to examine how they compare with those of the experts’, participants were asked whether they considered danger and risk to be analogous concepts that could be used to explain their risk perceptions associated with drug use. It was found that, although risk commonly connotes danger (Giddens, 1990), participants considered risk and danger to be dissimilar concepts. Furthermore, contrasting Giddens’ (1990) perspective, which implied that although young people believe they know the risks associated with drug use they may not understand what produces them, the participants highlighted that they were aware of the role that knowledge and control play in their risk perceptions:

“Risk is something that may happen...but a danger is something that will definitely happen. Most young people see using meth in terms of risk, not danger because they perceive that they are in control” (Simone, aged 18, non-user).

“For most [young people] risk is something that may happen but most likely won’t because they know what they’re doing. So they perceive that there are dangers associated with drugs – like overdosing and becoming addicted – but they’re not risks because they can control them” (Daniela, aged 21, non-user).

The notion of control was also specifically identified among users, who often stated:

“I think risk is something that could happen to you, but you can influence it with the choices you make, whereas danger is something that will happen. If you do

something stupid then you put yourself in danger. That's why users – including me – think that what the government talks about won't happen to them. They consider them as risks as they are in control, so they will be OK" (Todd, aged 24, user).

"Those dangers won't happen because we're careful" (Alex, aged 23, user).

These comments highlight the significance of identifying the nightclub as a site of risk and control as, by making such a distinction between risk and danger young people claim that it is possible to categorise different forms of risk and demonstrate that they have the capacity to control their leisure activities. This view, when combined with the practice of seeking knowledge regarding drug risks, produces a perception of risk that challenges traditional expert conceptualisations. Whereas experts claim that risks are dangers that are objective, real and inevitable, through risk management strategies young people perceive the same activities as risks that *may* occur if individuals are not careful or act irresponsibly, that is, may occur if they breach the social norms of their peer group. This is a significant finding of this research as it not only challenges the objectivity of expert risk, but also demonstrates young people's perceptions that they have control over their leisure activities, including drug use, and can thus manage risk. The implications of this finding are examined later in this chapter (section 7.7).

7.5 Defining risk: *Feeling safe in the club*

Another factor vital to the understanding of how young people perceive risk is how young people define risk in the nightclub. A central feature of their definition of risk is that it is bound to the meaning and purpose of the nightclub. In contrast to the binary nature of expert risks (either risky or risk-free), young people's definitions are innately social and discuss risk in the context of this sociality. Thus, while much of the drug literature has focused on the pharmacological qualities and negative effects of illicit substances and the need for treatment (Buxton & Dove, 2008; Sommers & Baskin, 2006; Baker & Dawe, 2005; Baker et al., 2005), these participants described the use and effects of methamphetamines within a positive social context (Hunt,

Evans & Kares, 2006). The participants challenged experts' claim that drugs destroy all individuals who use them, and instead suggested that drugs "produce a range of possibilities" (Slavin, 2004, p. 291) that are otherwise not available in the nightclub:

"I know that when I was using I was happy...able to just have fun and be more social. [Meth] makes everything a bit better, it makes you feel good, it allows you to last longer, keeps you awake and it makes you confident, which is important when you're out with friends and having fun. And in terms of the risks, being out with friends, being social was important because we could look after each other and wouldn't have any bad experiences" (Veronica, aged 18, user).

"People who go to clubs and use meth use it to have fun and be social. When you go out it's exciting, there are heaps of people having a good time, dancing or whatever and it makes you feel good. It's about enhancing these experiences and allowing you to stay for longer. It's a high, but not in a drug sense, which allows you to share experiences and have fun" (Luke, aged 22, non-user).

These discussions highlight young people's awareness of the meaning and purpose of methamphetamine use within the nightclub, as well as its role within this unique social context (Taylor-Gooby & Zinn, 2005). Specifically, what these comments demonstrate is that the meanings that these young people appear to give drug use and the potential associated risks are socially embedded, recognised by users and non-users, and determined by what their use can provide for the user. This illustrates the extent to which, as Appadurai (1986, p. 31) has noted, "consumption is eminently social, relational, and active rather than...passive". Therefore, similar to what Duff (2003, p. 293) has remarked "it is not the drug itself which is risky, rather it is the way in which the drug is used, ...[and] the context in which it is used" that is important. This is a meaningful outcome of the present study that not only recognises the role of social context in young people's perceptions of risk but also that different levels of drug use may be possible, the implications of which are discussed further later in this chapter (section 7.7).

This research has also shown that young people are able to identify and distinguish between different forms of risk, which is also a significant result in that it

provides context to the role of drugs in the nightclub. For example, as identified in the quantitative data (chapter 5), although the sample was divided with regard to whether attending Adelaide nightclubs is risky, the participants identified that they do not feel at risk in Adelaide nightclubs because of drugs, nor does the presence of drugs negatively affect whether or not they attended these venues. Therefore, as identified earlier in this thesis (chapter 4, part 2), for many young people there are significant and positive meanings attached to the presence and use of illicit drugs in the nightclub scene. This not only illuminates the purpose of nightclubs for young people generally but also the normalisation of illicit drug use within these spaces. As noted by many of the interviewees (Emmy, Carly, Alex and Susan), for example:

“Drugs, particularly meth, have become more available and common within the Adelaide clubs – it’s important to know what they mean to young people. Young people use them for different reasons – but mostly to have fun. They are not the problem in clubs. People need to understand that; only then will they will be able to do something about it” (William, aged 22, non-user).

“No one really seems to mind these days...people are more willing to accept it. The big factor is that everyone just wants to have a good time, and as long as your [drug use] doesn’t put anyone else out, then no one cares. Plus it is quite easy to get so it’s not such a big deal. It’s just like drinking...except you don’t go up to the bar to get it...” (Tom, aged 21, user).

In further highlighting the discord between expert and lay risk perceptions, these statements reveal that young people’s definition of club risk is not consistent with the objective dangers experts claim are associated with leisure activities, such as drug use, but arise from the purpose and meaning of their activities in nightclubs. The implication of this distinction is that, for this sample, risk does not appear to take an institutionalised form; rather it becomes a potential hazard that can potentially take many forms.

An important product of this risk perspective is that it moulds how young people define and use risk, where the perception of risk becomes about safety and the maintenance of an environment that enables the safe consumption of leisure. As

noted by a number of studies, in a globalised society increasingly sensitised to risk and the desire to consume, security, the feeling of being safe, becomes the “cornerstone of young people’s desire to consume in that it comes to be identified with the freedom and liberty to pursue one’s individual self-interests” (Rigakos, 2008, p. 31; Bromley et al., 2000; Neocleous, 2000). This is no more evident than in young people’s use of nightclubs, where feeling safe holds considerable value as it symbolises the preservation of personal space dedicated to the consumption of leisure. This has a substantive impact on young people’s definition of risk where, as the following interviewee statement identifies, the risks of the nightclub become viewed in terms of events or situations that result in a ‘bad night’, rather than the experience of expert risks, such as dehydration, intoxication and overdosing:

“No one wants to see someone get hurt or have a bad night, we all do what we can to make sure that doesn't happen” (Simone, aged 18, non-user).

Similar to the findings outlined in chapter 5, what can be drawn from this statement is that young people perceive of the risks in nightclubs in terms of safety and a good night out. This diverges from expert conceptualisations of risk, and highlights the subjective and contextual nature of risk, and how risk perception guides young people’s leisure-time activities. The pleasure space of Adelaide nightclubs therefore brings the notions of risk and control into complex and dynamic relations through the need for risk management strategies to ensure the safe consumption of pleasure in the nightclub, which will be discussed herein.

7.6 Risk management: *The boundaries of hedonistic consumption*

As highlighted in chapter 4 (section 4.2.3.1), the pursuit of the “controlled loss of control” is an increasingly desired aspect of the leisure experience (Measham, 2004, p. 338), which allows modern young consumers the indulgence of consuming but in planned, bounded ways (Brain, 2000). The assumption inherent in this pursuit is that there are boundaries and guidelines that limit young people’s behaviour within

leisure spaces, that ensure leisure activities are conducted in an appropriate manner. How young people define risk is therefore important in that it positions risk in the context of bounded consumption and is used to rationalise and delineate the risk management strategies employed by young people within the nightclub. The significance of young people's definition of risk and the development of drug and risk knowledge is that in contrast to expert risk, young people's use of nightclubs can no longer be viewed simply as a dichotomy of risky or risk-free consumption. Indeed, participants identified that control was central to modifying this dichotomy to include alternative perceptions of risk. Through the seeking of information and development of risk management strategies young people perceive that they are able to control their consumption within the nightclub space. In contrast to popular media images of young nightclubbers as being 'out of control' (Anderson, 2011; Jory, 2011; Brooker, 2007), the participants in this study carefully managed their bodies, behaviour and consumption for the purposes of pleasure, social interaction, and consumption of leisure. In making reference to the importance of social context within the theoretical framework developed earlier in this thesis (chapter 2), these young people endeavoured to control their pleasure-seeking through the use of rules and rituals to maximise enjoyment as well as reduce or remove the potential risks associated with such activities (Hunt, Evans & Kares, 2006). Significantly, these practices were consistent across the sample, regardless of whether or not participants used illicit drugs, thus it can be cautiously inferred that such practices are representative of young people who attend Adelaide nightclubs.

In addition, young people's perceived control over their leisure activities within the nightclub appears to hold substantial social value. In particular, controlled escapes appear to serve a specific purpose within the broader social lives of young people, by allowing young people to pursue pleasure through the consumption of leisure activities but importantly not rendering them as 'outsiders' (Perrone, 2006; Measham, 2004). More simply, this control is manifested in the management of consumption within the clubbing space through the use of rules and rituals to regulate

what is consumed, how much is consumed, and how often (Moore & Miles 2004). This is essential within the nightclub context, where consumption is central to the leisure experience and where leisure is central to the production and development of meaning and identity (see chapter 4, part 2). As such, there are expectations and practices to be upheld by young people within this social space to facilitate this (Measham, 2004). As Brain (2000) emphasises, such practices relate to the in-group cultural control norms and values that surround the clubbing space, where the success of members' use of the club rest on the nuances of behaviours which are deemed socially, culturally and contextually acceptable or unacceptable.

In again linking back to the theoretical foundations of this research (see chapter 2) it should also be recognised that pleasure can be considered a primary motivation for engaging in risky activities, such as illicit drug use, which challenges traditional conceptualisations of risk-taking that characterise risk as chaotic and deviant. Importantly, however, as also observed by O'Malley and Valverde (2004), a key finding of this research is that pleasure is not desired in isolation or at the cost of rational or controlled enjoyment. Rather, pleasure is experienced when drugs are consumed responsibly and in accordance with group norms hence rationalising the use of risk management strategies. In essence, this idea advocates an ethic of moderation, a concept that has been widely supported across a number of fields related to substance use (Room, 2005; Duff, 2004). For example, Duff (2004) focused on Foucault's (1985) examination of the Greek principle *askesis*, the principle of 'self-fashioning', in which behaviour was moulded by a set of cultural and social norms pertaining to pleasure and the practice of moderation. The moderation of pleasure was, in this context, extremely valuable as it not only provided a framework for the setting of both personal and group limits, norms and values as means of avoiding excess in the experience of pleasure, but in doing so also provided the capacity to enhance or intensify the experience of pleasure gained from a particular activity (Duff, 2004; see also, Foucault, 1985). Therefore, in response to the argument inherent in many government policies where pleasure is characterised

as problematic when its pursuit conflicts with other aspects of an individual's life or the views and expectations of the broader community, it can be argued here that young people are cognisant of the need to maintain a balance between all aspects of their lives and seek pleasure in the night-time economy accordingly. Through the setting and regulation of particular behavioural practices, group membership provides distinct boundaries for its members and guides the development of norms, values and attitudes that ensure the maximisation of *safe* and *pleasurable* consumption.

7.6.1 *Risk Management Strategies in Practice*

How young people apply this control through the use of risk management strategies, rules and rituals to reduce the opportunities for potential negative outcomes of a night out is therefore an important outcome identified by this research. Using data obtained from the qualitative interviews and participation observation, a number of the primary risk management strategies² employed by young people within Adelaide nightclubs have been identified. In doing so, this section explores how young people manage risk, what meaning is attached to the management of risk in the nightclub and ultimately how these practices challenge expert risk.

7.6.1.1 “Going out together”

From discussions with nightclub patrons throughout the ethnographical phase of the research it is evident that young people's risk management begins as they leave their homes and ‘head out’ for a big night. An important feature of this practice that the patrons identified themselves was that young people commonly ‘go out’ in their

² While this section focuses on the key strategies relevant to the use of methamphetamines within this particular social context, it is acknowledged that other strategies were also employed that were similar to other drug use practices. For example, as observed in a number of studies of ecstasy use (Panagopoulos & Ricciardelli, 2005; Larkin & Griffiths, 2004; Hansen et al., 2001), participants engaged in certain practices before, during and after their drug use in terms of the actual ingestion of the drug (smoking, ‘dropping’ pills and so on), as well as in the purchase of their drugs, which were perceived to mitigate the harms associated with use typically described by experts.

social groups, which was also found in other studies (Parker, 2005), with groups often comprised of anywhere up to 15 people. The process typically involves friends meeting at one person's house and engaging in social activities, often including listening to music and drinking, before travelling to the nightclub.

As Bunton, Crawshaw and Green (2004, p. 170) identify, young people often "handle risks by sticking together"; going out in familiar social groups is thus perceived as a protective mechanism that provides young people with a trusted source of assistance should a bad outcome be experienced. As was found in the quantitative data (chapter 5), being part of a group when going out is important for most nightclubbers and is a feature of young people's nightlife risk management strategies. In discussing the motivations for group attendance when going out distinct and rational reasons were given for why these young people perceived risk management to be important in the experience of a good night out. Predominantly, these rationalities were founded in descriptions of the social nature of the nightclub and the meaning/purpose participants ascribed to going out. However, the following comments also articulate that these strategies addressed young people's desire for safety, which as identified above (section 7.5) underpinned their definition of risk:

"Going out together [with friends] is really important 'cause I know that if something goes wrong and my boyfriend is not around then they'll also be there to help. I mean we always go out in the same group and we're a really good bunch of friends" (Simone, aged 18, non-user).

"We always go out together. It's not rocket science that you are going to have more fun if you're out with friends. And I think being in a group has lots of benefits, such as being safer, having someone to look after your stuff when on the dance floor and you are less likely to be approached by other people...so yeah, I'm glad that we go out as a group. Everyone just looks out for each other more, and that means you can focus on just having a good time" (William, aged 22, non-user).

This was supported by the quantitative data (section 5.2.4), which revealed that the desire for safety was not influenced by participants' gender, age or motivation for attendance, suggesting that it is a common characteristic of this youth sample. It was

also found that participants' drug use did not negatively influence the perceived importance of group attendance, with users identifying group attendance as a key factor in the mitigation of harm within the nightclub. However, as the following interviewees' responses identify, these perceptions again did not associate the potential harms with their own drug use behaviour; rather, it was concerned with other actors within the nightclub, particularly those who had been drinking:

“Well we go out in groups mostly, which always makes you feel a bit safer. Because there's certainly some groups that go out just looking for trouble, which after a few drinks generally finds them...so yeah, I'm pretty sure everyone feels better having more of us around” (Tim, aged 25, former user).

“I think it's just commonsense when you're out just to make sure that you don't end up in the hospital...I mean there are lots of drunk people around...I know I'd want to be around other friends who I trusted, and maybe if they weren't using, or not drinking or whatever that'd be good 'cause I'd know that if something went wrong they'd be there to help” (Veronica, aged 18, user).

In again challenging experts' understanding of the drug/club nexus, these statements reveal that users and non-users employ risk management strategies in the nightclub that are largely the same and guided by similar motivations, providing further support for the normalisation of methamphetamine use in Adelaide nightclubs. Consequently, what this shows is that not only do these young people engage in risk management strategies, even before they enter nightclubs, but also that in describing their reasons for these practices it became evident that there are other risks in the nightclub that should concern experts, which will be discussed later in this chapter (section 7.7).

7.6.1.2 “Looking out for each other”

Another risk management strategy observed in each of the research sites was the practice in which participants 'looked out for each other'. Although this may appear somewhat banal and not culturally unique, what this strategy highlights is that the importance of safety in the consumption of pleasure within the nightclub is continued inside nightclub venues, where arguably it is most needed. Specifically, the following interviewees' responses describe the link between the presence of a trusted social

network of friends or peers and the perceived safety or success of a good night out, which was sought equally by both users and non-users:

“Within our group – I’ll either have my boyfriend, my best friend, or someone that will be looking out for us. It’s not like a formal buddy system or anything; it’s just about looking out for each other” (Emmy, aged 21, non-user).

“We always keep an eye on each other. Even if you’re out with a big group, and even if one of us is with a guy or whatever then we’ll make sure that we can see them – to make sure that they are ok. I think as a group we engage in a lot more risk management than most. Even in looking out for other girls that aren’t in our group – if someone’s being sick or isn’t looking good then people will ask if they are ok and stuff” (Tess, aged 19, non-user).

“People surround themselves with friends they trust, so if something happens they know they’ll be ok, that somebody’s looking after them” (Susan, aged 23, user).

These remarks are important as they further illustrate the discord between expert and lay perceptions of nightclub risks, in particular the use of drugs. Experts claim that individuals who use drugs do not consider those around them and hence engage in chaotic or excessive drug use (Roche et al., 2008; Shewan et al., 2000). In essence, expert models of risk portray young people who use drugs as selfish and blindly focused on obtaining drugs and getting the ‘high’. What a number of the interviewees suggested (Tim, Ariel, Simone and Daniela), however, is that while young people’s use of drugs can be considered somewhat selfish to the extent that it is centred on personal pleasure, their mode of use paradoxically also underpins the social values and norms that guide young people’s drug use behaviour to ensure their safe consumption; in other words, an individual’s drug use should not negatively affect on anyone else. In particular, one interviewee identified that experts need to explore

“...why young people used the drug in the first place, or what it does for them, and what it means. Like I said before it’s a personal thing – it’s not about anyone else. You take the drugs, and it’s about you” (Tim, aged 25, former user).

A common perception among the participants, as well as individuals met in the field, was that excessive or ‘messy’ use of illicit drugs or alcohol that negatively affects

their, or others' use of the nightclub was viewed as a breach of group values and norms and was not tolerated. As such, looking out for each other within the nightclub appears to have a dual function for young people in the management of risk. Firstly, a key implication of this practice is that it reinforces young peoples' perception of control when in nightclubs, as many participants described the same process of looking out for each other to ensure that everyone in their social group was safe and having a good time. The purpose of this practice appeared to be to set out and reinforce key social values, norms and expectations and to ensure that they are upheld by all group members. This is supported in the following interviewee's statement, which recalled a particular experience where an individual appeared to have attended *Hq* by himself and engaged in excessive use of drugs, behaviour which was viewed negatively by the other patrons sharing the dance-floor:

"I was at one event [Rap City at Hq] where there was this one guy who was on the dance floor dancing really fast, bumping into people and spilling his drink, and he was really sweaty – it was disgusting. He was alone and was out of control...there were people around him but he wasn't really dancing with them if you know what I mean. It wasn't good and everyone could see it" (Frances, aged 20, non-user).

What is important about this example is that, although the patron's behaviour was not considered dangerous, it was clearly disruptive and in breach of the boundaries of acceptable behaviour within the club. This comment therefore underlines that looking out for each other is acknowledged as a key feature of the support network provided by social group membership, which in contrast this individual was not able to access.

Secondly, an important manifestation of this risk management strategy was that it is beneficial, and in some cases necessary, to avoid certain other people in the nightclub to ensure a safe night out. The majority of interviewees' responses revealed that their attempts to avoid particular clubbers were expressions of intolerance of excessive intoxication related to alcohol and illicit drug misuse. And although exceptions are sometimes made within the nightclub (e.g. as someone merely 'letting off steam'), it was mostly the case that by engaging in behaviour perceived to be

outside the understood norms and conventions, an individual could break the ‘rules’ and be ostracised by their peers. As noted in the following interviewee’s response:

“You are there to have a good time, so you don’t want people around who have had way too much and are just getting messy. They’re the ones you notice ‘cause everyone’s aware of them and keeping their distance. The ones being responsible don’t get noticed. So staying away from the dodgy people – the ones who are drunk or off their faces – is important” (Michael, aged 25, user).

This response indicates that the need to avoid ‘dodgy people’ is largely underpinned by the fact that they may affect other patrons and prevent them from having a good time. This reiterates the purpose and meaning of nightclubs for young people in that it is not individuals’ drug use *per se* that rationalises the use of a risk management strategy, but the excessive nature of drug or alcohol (mis)use and the impact that it has on others’ leisure. Moreover, this finding challenges experts’ conceptualisations of illicit drug use where individuals are considered dichotomously, as either non-users or problematic users (see Buchanan, 2011; McMillan et al., 2003; Buchanan & Young, 2000), which as discussed later in this chapter (section 7.7) does not address the subjective and meaningful nature of some forms of drug use.

In further challenging experts’ conceptualisation of drug users as being unaware of risks, the practice of looking for each other also demonstrates that the avoidance of certain individuals is not only about ensuring that you have a good time, but it is also motivated by the need to prevent the experience of actual forms of danger. In contextualising the above discussion of how young people conceptualise risk (section 7.4), the following interviewee’s comment demonstrates young people’s capacity to identify risk within the nightclub, distinguish forms of appropriate behaviour and, as a result, set out and enforce strict consequences for individuals who engage in activities that are deemed inappropriate or outside of the group’s values and norms:

“We look out for each other and you know... And yeah, we make sure we have a designated driver ‘cause it’s just not worth getting pulled over – one of my mates got busted and he lost his license for 12 months, which wasn’t good for him and in

the end he stopped coming out 'cause he felt bad. He's back now though because he doesn't [drug drive] anymore" (Eddie, aged 23, non-user).

Again it was not the use of drugs that caused this individual to be viewed negatively; rather it was their decision to 'drug drive', which in this social context was considered a form of drug misuse that was deemed inappropriate. In demonstrating that the intolerance and stigmatisation of this peer was rooted in the desire for safety and maintenance of social values, the response also reveals that the individual was allowed to return to the group when it was perceived that he had 'learned his lesson' and amended his consumption practices. Irrespective of the form of consumption, contravention of the values and norms held by a social group is associated with a level of stigmatisation and intolerance by its members, which rationalises the use of risk management strategies.

7.6.1.3 "Teaching"

Although many experts claim that young people often choose to experiment with new substances within nightclubs, thus rationalising the description of their behaviour as dangerous and chaotic (Roche et al., 2008; Shewan et al., 2000), the participants involved in this study revealed that this is generally not the case in Adelaide nightclubs. In challenging these claims, a common perception among the interviewees was that the knowledge sought by and shared among nightclub attendees has a protective function, ensuring that young people maximise their leisure activities but do not have 'a bad night out' (Michael, Carly, William and Eddie). A central feature of this function is that it is embedded within social group membership. As observed in research studies into other 'party drugs' such as GHB and ketamine (Wood, Nicolaou & Dargan, 2009), the majority of the participants who indicated that they used drugs in the nightclub environment engaged in forms of supervision or 'teaching', which were associated with social group membership and that allowed leisure practices to occur safely. 'Teaching' refers to the assistance provided to friends and peers with regard to a specific leisure activity, such as drug use, which functions to ensure that not only are the norms and values of a particular

in-group maintained, but also that the particular practice engaged in is successful, safe and provides a positive and pleasurable experience. The following interviewee's comment highlights the significance of this function:

“I think it's very important to be aware of what's going on when you're using meth. Control is so important. Otherwise you can look at it as a slow suicide”
(Ariel, aged 24, user).

This comment also highlights that the process of 'looking out for each other' extends to the development and implementation of other practices employed by these young people to guide group members in their use of the nightclub, and the consumption practices associated with it, which is an important finding of this study.

Throughout the qualitative phase of this research, participants emphasised the importance of friends, and in particular the role they play in teaching or providing supervision within the nightclub. The importance of friendship networks was manifest in users' descriptions of using drugs with friends that they trust, a characteristic found in similar research on other drugs (Wood, Nicolaou & Dargan, 2009; Hunt, Evans & Kares, 2006). This process highlights the relationship between trust and risk management, in that “trust serves to minimize [sic] the dangers to which particular types of activities are subjected” (Lupton & Tulloch, 1998, p. 28). As such, teaching is important for young people's club drug use, especially if they are new to the drug scene (Hunt, Evans & Kares, 2006). What most commonly occurs is that a new user is guided in their use and supervised by an older, more experienced user to ensure that they have a pleasurable, and importantly safe experience. This was supported by a number of interviewees who indicated that they had received such 'teaching' from a member of their social group, and that it had been valuable in guiding how they used methamphetamines within the nightclub. The majority of participants' accounts of 'teaching' describe the control of key factors such as dosage, polydrug use (only alcohol), and safe administration/use:

“When we were using, one person would always make sure that it was good quality gear...not taking too much and stuff like that. I’m pretty sure that everyone thought of it as a self-protection mechanism” (Matthew, aged 25, former user).

“I was always very careful about dosage...in terms of what I was taking, how much and when. And that’s something that [our group] felt was really important; when we went out we were always careful about what each other was doing. I was never one of those people that would just be like ‘let’s see what happens’... And if it was new gear then I was always very careful about testing it, so one of us would have a night off the gear and watch the others” (Ariel, aged 24, user).

“[My friends] would always make sure I had lots of water and that the dose was right...spread out over an evening. I never liked the idea of something hitting me really hard and suddenly – it needed to be gradual and so they made sure that’s how it happened. I always had a firm appreciation that if I wasn’t cautious then something bad might happen, although I was never afraid of turning out to be that person whose teeth fall out or gets scabs all over their face – my friends would never let that happen” (Nathan, aged 25, user).

What emerged from the participants’ accounts was an insight into how the use of risk management strategies shape how young people identify and define risk, and how this reflects the overall purpose of the nightclub. In particular, what the following comments illustrate is that young people perceive that they have the capacity to develop and increase their level of drug and risk knowledge, which can be used to employ risk management strategies to control their drug use practices. This again brings risk and control together in a complex relationship. In further examining the danger-risk nexus explored above (section 7.3), the rationale for teaching is that it appears to reduce the likelihood of adverse outcomes occurring as a result of drug use. Put more simply, participants perceive that ‘teaching’ enables them to consume drugs safely so that they do not end up “in the back of an ambulance after a night out” (Susan, aged 23, user).

From the interviewee data it was evident that the use and value of teaching as a risk management strategy was not limited to the use of illicit drugs. Rather, it was also observed across the sample that bounded consumption was valued across many areas of the club, including the consumption of alcohol:

“We generally look out for each other and you know, one person in the group will make sure everyone’s drinking water ‘cause between the heat, dancing and booze you can get pretty dehydrated” (Eddie, aged 23, non-user).

“I think the most common thing that our group would do was make sure that everyone had some water between drinks if they were having a big night. I really hate having hangovers, but it’s also the fact that none of us wanted to get in a bad situation which can happen really easily if you’re not careful and if you don’t have someone keeping an eye on you to make sure you manage what you’re doing properly” (Daniela, aged 21, non-user).

The following comment provides further evidence of the value of teaching for these young people, highlighting that it is fundamentally social in nature, which not only influences the strength of social interactions but also young people’s individual risk management practices:

“Yeah definitely, we’d always eat dinner before we go out, to make sure that we don’t over do it. And yeah, Tess just knows when I need to stop. I don’t know how, but she’ll just come over and say that I need to sit down or have some water or whatever...and after that I’ll be fine and can keep going. What I think is hugely important about this, is that even if [Tess] doesn’t come out with me, I am able to work out when I should have a break or whatever” (Sam, aged 19, non-user).

The importance of teaching as a risk management strategy employed by young people in the nightclub, therefore, lies in that it enhances young people’s capacity for the development and sharing of information and knowledge, which is used to guide the safe and successful consumption of pleasure within Adelaide nightclubs.

7.6.1.4 “Chilling out”

The most frequently used and acknowledged form of risk management for these young people was that of ‘chilling out’, the process by which nightclub patrons actively take breaks to ensure that they do not overdo their night out. Specifically, ‘chilling out’ involves the taking of regular breaks from dancing, drinking, and use of drugs to reduce the risks associated with overheating, dehydration, muscle cramps and other associated concerns (Kelly, 2005). It is important to note however, that

these breaks are not simply related to fatigue; rather, they are structured breaks that demonstrate social group values and norms strategically employed to reduce the potential negative consequences associated with activities such as drug and alcohol use (Kelly, 2007). This process was observed regularly in the research venues, where young patrons would take a break from dancing, often for the duration of one song, or until they heard a particular song that encouraged them to resume their position on the dance-floor. However, the process was most frequently observed when standing outside each of the venues across the course of any given night. This process was more noticeable in that individuals and sometimes whole groups would exit the venue simultaneously (ensuring that they had a 'pass-out'³). These patrons would then 'hang around' outside, sometimes have a cigarette and generally socialise and relax within their friends or peer group for 5-10 minutes or, similar to the behaviour observed inside the nightclub, until they heard a certain song begin playing inside the club. What was significant about this risk management practice was the frequency of its use. Across any given night it was observed that young patrons would 'chill out' anywhere up to 15 times, a pattern that was consistent across the research period and often irrespective of adverse weather conditions. In fact, as much of the research was conducted from May to August, which in Adelaide include the winter months, many participants indicated that they exited venues for the process of 'chilling out' *because* it was cold.

During the fieldwork this process was discussed with a number of nightclubbers to develop a greater understanding of its purpose and value. Many of these discussions took place while they were actually engaging in the practice of 'chilling out', and thus greater detailed and extensive information was able to be collected regarding this practice without appearing to be too interested and compromising the research. When patrons were asked, often in passing, why they were hanging around outside

³ A 'pass-out' is a ticket that patrons receive when leaving venues temporarily, which ensures their immediate re-entry so that they do not have to line up. This was a common feature of all of the research venues, which suggests that nightclubs are aware of the chilling out process and appear motivated to facilitate it, although the motivations for this were not within the scope of the research and therefore cannot be known.

the research venues, specifically given that it was cold and had been raining intermittently, the following responses were given:

“Yeah we’re just chilling out...you know, ‘cause it gets a bit much in there – you need to get out every so often so you can get through the night” (*Savvy* patron).

“...it is way too hot in there if you stay all night, and you’ll overheat if you’re not careful” (*Electric Circus* patron).

Another interviewee provided a more in-depth description of this process, suggesting that the process holds similar significance for drug users:

“I always made sure that I took the time to just chill out. I tried to encourage the others to do it as well – it was a personal quirk of mine, and I think that is one of the reasons why I never had a bad experience. Just taking time out always made me feel a lot better the next day as well as on the night itself. I’d try to drink water as much as possible, and avoid beer as it just dehydrates you too much. I mean, if we’re at home then we’d drink like fish...you’d just drink whatever and if you crash then you can just go to bed – there’s no real risk involved. So it’s just about being careful when you go out ‘cause of what can happen because there are other people and situations involved” (Tim, aged 25, former user).

These responses suggest that young people perceive that they are capable of control, are risk conscious, and that the use of risk management strategies has considerable social value, particularly in the development of strong social ties, which are grounded in distinct social values, attitudes and norms and used to ensure safe consumption in the nightclub. The key features that can be drawn from these comments are that these young nightclubbers are not only able to identify risk within the nightclub context, but are also cognisant of different forms of risk, which includes expert risks (e.g. dehydration). In addition, through the development and sharing of information within social group membership, these participants are able to identify the role of control in the management of the night out to ensure that it is successful. As such, the process of chilling out appears to hold considerable value within the nightclub, irrespective of whether these young people engage in the consumption of alcohol or illicit drugs.

When asked whether the use of risk management strategies within the nightclub was important, the following responses were common across the sample:

“Definitely – I think they are the reason that we all get home safely” (Tess, aged 19, non-user).

“It keeps us sensible. Even though we’re having fun and being carefree, those strategies are like a little red flag that comes up if there is a potential problem. It just gives you the feeling that you’re in control” (Sam, aged 19, non-user).

These findings show that participants’ consider risk positively, and as distinct from conceptualisations of fear and danger. For these young people, the nightclub produces positive possibilities that are pleasurable, manageable, and negotiable and that make their consumption practices safe. Moreover, through application of risk management strategies these young people not only appear to perceive that they have the ability to control their leisure time to ensure the maximisation of pleasure, but also the capacity to adhere to the prescribed values, norms and expectations of the community in which their nightclubbing occurs. The use of risk management strategies therefore enables these young people to consume alcohol, drugs, music and each other in relatively unproblematic ways (Slavin, 2004), which highlights the emergent dichotomy between recreational drug use and problematic drug use, discussed in the next section.

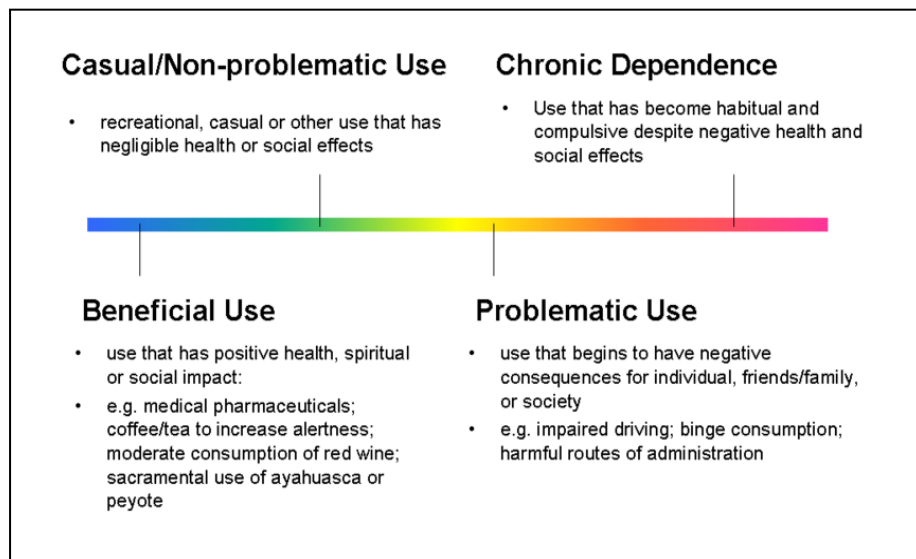
7.7 Recreational use versus problematic use: *Is it possible to have both?*

As Duff (2004, p. 388) has identified, a considerable gap exists in relation to Australian drug policy, because most strategies address drug use “at the two extreme ends of the drug use spectrum”, prevention and treatment. What this gap means for the practical understanding of young people’s nightclub illicit drug use is that as many experts assume that all forms of illicit drug use are chaotic, young people’s drug use is viewed dichotomously; either as non-use or problematic use (McMillan & Conner, 2003; McMillan et al., 2003; Orbell et al., 2001; Buchanan & Young, 2000).

7.7.1 Identifying the Difference

In their study examining heroin users, Dalgarno and Shewan (2005) provide context to this dichotomy, suggesting that the notion of recreational drug use is not considered by experts as it is interpreted as a carefree form of drug use. The principal concern is that recreational drug use implies a consumerist model of drug use (Dalgarno & Shewan 2005; Moore & Miles, 2004), where behaviour is primarily driven by the desire for pleasure, which experts assume means that young people perceive that the consumption of drugs is not cannot be considered problematic. As a result, unlike the scale represented in Figure 7.1 that examines the use of psychoactive substances in Canada, the recreational use of methamphetamines is not perceived to be a possibility by experts, which only reinforces experts' risk assessments: that anyone who consumes methamphetamines for long enough will become addicted. However, similar to the youth in Britain in the late-1990s, what many young Australians have experienced is a high level of confusion in relation to the gap between "official rhetoric concerning the dangerousness of all illicit drugs, and their own reality of a largely pleasurable and relatively trouble-free experience using recreational drugs" (Buchanan, 2010, p. 252; see also Measham et al., 2001).

Figure 7.1 *Spectrum of psychoactive substance use*



Source: Health Officers Council of British Columbia (2005)

In fact, the data obtained in this study indicates that the young people perceive that it is possible to use certain illicit drugs, such as methamphetamines, in a controlled fashion. Although this is a bold statement, and there has been little empirical evidence to date to support this as it applies to other drug use, such as heroin use (Dalgarno & Shewan, 2005), the analysis of young people's experiences with methamphetamine use in this study has revealed that control is central to young people's methamphetamine use and that the effects of its use are more predictable and can thus be controlled. Young people's perceived control demonstrates that they are not passive or careless actors and instead have the capacity to perceive risk, develop risk knowledge and use this to effectively manage their illicit drug use. An important implication of this finding, therefore, is that young people perceive that not only have methamphetamines become a normalised feature of the nightclub scene, but also that they can be used sensibly and for particular, controlled and non-deviant purposes.

As noted in chapter 5, although young people acknowledge the prevalence of drugs in the club, they do not perceive that the presence or use of drugs represents a risk, nor do they feel at risk in nightclubs because of drugs. They perceive it is only when illicit drugs are used excessively or in a chaotic manner that it becomes risky. This perception was also observed in relation to young people's alcohol consumption where, despite the fact that many young people admit to drinking when they attend nightclubs, consumption seen as excessive or identified as 'binge-drinking' was viewed negatively. For the majority of participants risk appears to be sited in the purpose of leisure for young people and the perceived control required to facilitate its consumption. Also, risk is only perceived negatively when individuals breach social values and norms through excessive consumption, as it is seen to contradict the notion of safe consumption of pleasure for the purpose of a good night out, hence demonstrating a lack of control. Consequently, at the very least, a scale of use similar to Figure 7.1 that recognises the different levels of consumption could be applied to the use of methamphetamines in the Adelaide nightclub scene. Discussion of three of

the elements represented in Figure 7.1 emerged within the qualitative data that support the application of such a scale: the existence of problematic use; the recreational use of methamphetamines and the notion of drug use as a choice.

7.7.1.1 Problematic Use: ‘Messy users’

The data presented in this thesis and chapter, in particular, identifies control as an intrinsic feature of young people’s risk perception. When participants were asked whether individuals who are perceived to be addicted or engaged in excessive drug use are viewed negatively, the following responses were common among the sample:

“It’s common these days for people to use meth in clubs – it’s only a problem when you get home and you drop another 5 or 6 points, that’s serious, it’s not something most users would agree with. I mean, if you take a couple of points then you’re up all night – you don’t need to be popping or smoking anything more when you get home, that’s when it becomes a problem” (Alex, aged 23, user).

“Addiction and dependence are a big problem...it’s hard-core and no longer about having fun and being with your friends. When you get to that stage it’s only about the habit and where and when you can get more” (Matthew, aged 25, former user).

These participants acknowledge that although problematic use can occur, it is not common in the Adelaide nightclub context because of the social values and norms inherent in the nightclub space and the role that they have in guiding drug practices, which are described further in the following statement:

“It’s about knowing your limits – what is sensible and what isn’t... Like, my mum works in healthcare and deals with users, and...you see that most people get better, so I guess that makes me feel like if something bad happened it can be fixed. It’s a process that can be reversed, as long as you don’t become addicted. Most of the people I know that use only do it to have fun and enhance their night, so they are not like that and have specific rules to ensure that it doesn’t happen. Even though I don’t use [drugs], I know I’d be the same” (Tess, aged 19, non-user).

As has been identified in other studies of drug use, considerable value is attached to the development of practices that guide controlled drug use (Duff, 2004; Slavin, 2004;

see also Measham, Aldridge, & Parker, 2001), which provides further support for the risk management strategies described above.

7.7.1.2 Recreational Use: 'It's not everything'

Evident in the participants' accounts of club drug use is the importance of its purpose in their broader lives, which provides support for the argument that methamphetamines can be used recreationally. The place of drugs in young people's lives is described in the following interviewee's comment, and for a number of the participants their use is not 'everything' and forms only part of a broader sociality:

"Drugs aren't the main focus. Like, they want the high, and the confidence that comes with it, but it's not everything. They know that drugs have a place in their lives, but they don't let it become more than that. I know that a lot of people use [drugs] 'cause it makes them feel confident, happy and just really social which within clubs is really useful. It just facilitates it" (Alex, aged 23, user).

Furthermore, while many of these young people actively seek the elusive 'big night', they do so knowing the place of such a pursuit within the wider aspects of their lives. As noted in this research, as in other empirical work in the field (Slavin, 2004), young people tend to restrict the more substantial pursuits of pleasure to the weekend or special occasions, such as birthdays or as a reward for the completion of a given task. An important observation made in the interview process was that this feature was equally identified by non-users, suggesting the existence of common and widely known values and practices:

"It's about having fun and making sure that you have a good night. That's what my friends have said. So after a long week or two, they'll save up their gear and have a 'long weekend' and just let their hair down a bit" (Eddie, aged 23, non-user).

"Definitely. It's not like you'd be going out all the time and just getting off your face at the drop of a hat. We'd mostly save our big nights for the weekend, or for when there was a special occasion or something. I know that there were a whole bunch of birthdays late last year so we had a couple of big nights in a row, which was great but you wouldn't wanna be doing it all the time" (Alex, aged 23, user).

These statements confirm that drugs are not the primary motivation for attending nightclubs; rather their use facilitates the enjoyment of specific leisure activities, placing it at the left-hand end of the scale in Figure 7.1 (see above, page 260). Specifically, on that scale this form of use represents beneficial use, or what some have identified as ‘instrumental drug use’ (Boys, Marsden & Strang, 2001; see also, WHO, 1997) that is a form of use that is motivated by the effects of a particular drug that has positive benefits for its user, which the data presented in this study suggests is perceived to be the case by many of this sample of young people with regard to the use of methamphetamines in Adelaide nightclubs.

7.7.1.3 Letting go: Drug use as a choice

Another feature that emerged from this analysis was that all of the users within the sample identified their use of illicit drugs as a ‘lifestyle choice’ (Taylor, 2000). Although the use of methamphetamines provided opportunities for the enjoyment of many leisure activities, these participants identified that their use was discretionary and indeed some had even stopped using. Moreover, participants revealed that as they got older or as their circumstances changed, they were able to stop their drug use without negative implications. For these individuals, their use was seen as a part of their lives at a particular time, representing a form of ‘beneficial use’, and thus was not viewed negatively. This challenges previous understandings of drug use that suggest that they cannot be used recreationally (see McMillan & Conner, 2003; Shildrick, 2002; Orbell et al., 2001). The following responses support this, suggesting that methamphetamine use is a choice based on lifestyle factors, rather than a product of its addictive pharmacological properties:

“It was fun, I won’t deny that. It made going out enjoyable, and I didn’t have any side-effects the next day. I mean it was never like alcohol when you wake up with a hangover and tell yourself that you’re never going to do it again...yeah, I was never like that. And yeah, the social group that I’m still a part of – they still do it on those special occasions, but I don’t anymore. I just decided one day that I didn’t want to do it anymore; I didn’t feel like I needed it” (Tim, aged 25, former user).

“I don’t regret that I took meth ‘cause I learned a lot from the experience, and it’s not that I would like to be in the same situation as I was when I was regularly taking meth and stuff, it’s just that I am no longer part of that scene. I am not going out as much, I don’t see the same people anymore, and I’ve got other things that are more important to me; uni, my fiancée and family” (Nathan, aged 25, user).

“It is more of a choice really; some people when they go out drink alcohol, and some take meth...” (Veronica, aged 18, user).

This series of comments identifies that there appear to be strict rules that govern the method, quantity and frequency of consumption of illicit drugs, such as methamphetamines, which illustrate two key findings: 1) that it is possible to use illicit drugs sensibly, which includes the capacity to stop using, and that because of this, 2) individuals who are not able to do so, and become addicted, are viewed negatively and are not tolerated within social networks. This is an important outcome for this research as it suggests that a distinction can be made between the forms or levels of drug use in nightclubs and that young people have the capacity to develop drug knowledge to guide and control their drug use within the night-time economy. This not only challenges the problematisation of all methamphetamine use within Australian drug policy, but also provides direction for future drug policies (see section 8.5.2), indicating that government attention should be re-focused to recognise that young people can use drugs recreationally and, in fact, moderate their drug use in order to reinforce social values and norms, maximise the nightclub experience and importantly, ensure that such consumption of leisure occurs safely.

7.8 Identifying the gap: *The real risks of the club*

As identified earlier in this thesis (section 3.3.1), this research was not undertaken with the intention of entering the nightclub to discover ‘truths’, but to gain understanding of young people’s perspectives of their experiences of Adelaide nightclubs and the risks associated with this space. Young people’s understanding of and attitudes towards the presence and use of illicit drugs, specifically methamphetamines, within the Adelaide nightclub scene have therefore been useful

in appraising their perceptions of risk and evaluating how young people engage with and manage risk in their social lives. This analysis has revealed that although risk is pervasive within the nightclub and the surrounding nightlife spaces, young people perceive that the recreational use of methamphetamines does not create or perpetuate this risk. Rather, the quantitative and qualitative data have illustrated that although methamphetamines are a familiar feature of Adelaide nightclubs, they are not the primary concern for attendees, their presence does not make patrons feel at risk and, for this sample,⁴ does not prevent them from attending Adelaide nightclubs. The use of methamphetamines in Adelaide nightclubs only becomes risky when its use becomes excessive or disordered, which does not reflect the pattern of use of the majority of this population. A major implication of this finding is that although recreational methamphetamine use is not perceived to be a concern in this social context, through increased risk awareness these young people perceive a number of other concerns relevant to the night-time economy. Whereas experts claim that illicit drugs are the primary source of concern for the community, these young people perceived a number of greater risks in the nightclub, such as alcohol misuse use and the issue of alcohol-related violence, which have been identified in other studies of licensed venues (Burgess & Moffatt, 2011; Eckersley & Reeder, 2008).

7.8.1 *Alcohol*

There is a substantial body of literature that has examined the impact of alcohol consumption within the night-time economy (Miller et al., 2011; Burgess & Moffatt, 2011; Measham, 2006; Brain, 2000). The use and misuse of alcohol has also received substantial attention in South Australia in the past few years (DASSA, 2011; Jory, 2011; Churchman, 2011; Anderson, 2011), identifying alcohol as a concern in Adelaide nightclubs, in particular. However, discussion of alcohol use and misuse in this complex social and political climate has been constrained by a divergent focus on

⁴ It is further acknowledged that this sample is not representative of the general population as it does not encompass participants who do not attend Adelaide nightclubs, who therefore may have an alternative perspective of the risks associated with nightclub attendance that may function to prevent them from attending (see conclusion, section 5.1).

the regulation (in real terms, prohibition) of illicit drugs such as methamphetamines as well as a commercial focus on an emergent culture of urban revitalisation in which alcohol-based leisure is promoted in the night-time economy (see conclusion, section 8.5.5). Despite these constraints, much of the survey and interview data found that alcohol consumption, rather than illicit drug use, is the most significant risk associated with Adelaide nightclubs and should be considered when discussing perceptions of risk. Many interviewees highlighted that the consumption of alcohol not only contributed to a greater number of risks and problems experienced in the nightclub, but also that they were more serious in nature (Emmy, Tess, Veronica, Matthew and Frances). When asked to identify the risks of attending Adelaide nightclubs, the following responses were common across the sample:

“The risks I felt were alcohol poisoning, getting drunk...drink spiking, and guys trying to grab you and stuff – especially being female” (Aimee, aged 18, non-user).

“Passing out and losing control; if you’re out in town then it’s not good to be dropping on the ground unconscious. Excessive drinking is also bad because some people get very aggressive, with, like you see a lot of Neanderthals when you go out who are out looking for trouble. They just wanna go out on a Saturday night and get into a fight ‘cause they’re meatheads, and they ruin it for everyone. A little thing like someone pushes them, or looks at their girlfriend a bit too long, or whatever and they think they’re Hercules” (Tim, aged 25, former user).

Excessive alcohol use and the issue of alcohol-related violence emerged as predominant concerns for these participants. In addition, the participants were able to identify particular adverse outcomes attributable to the misuse of alcohol, such as drink spiking and sexual assault. As was reported in the analysis of the quantitative data (chapter 5), the risks of drink spiking and sexual assault may arise from gendered concerns that influence young females’ perceptions of the risks associated with Adelaide nightclubs. Nonetheless, given the gender bias observed in this sample and the Adelaide nightclub scene, this cannot be considered a trivial concern. In a similar way, the risks associated with alcohol-related violence were predominantly perceived by males who paradoxically are commonly the perpetrators of the majority of this violence (Graham & Wells, 2003; Graham & West, 2001).

In isolation these findings do not reveal new research, as these gendered and alcohol-based concerns are widely acknowledged (Sweeney & Payne, 2011; Moss et al., 2009; Parker & Egginton, 2002). However, these findings do demonstrate that the risks inherent in the nightclub for these participants are mainly attributable to the misuse of alcohol and not the recreational use of illicit drugs. In both the quantitative and qualitative data, the participants demonstrated the ability to compare the risks of illicit drugs and alcohol consumption, and distinguish that although excessive drug use would be most concerning, it is however not common and, therefore, in reality the misuse of alcohol was a more serious concern for young people in the nightclub context. Central to the following interviewees' responses was the claim that the attention of policy-makers and experts is perhaps misplaced, and should instead be focusing on young people's alcohol use:

“Alcohol is more of a problem, as it's mainly drunks that start fights and get picked up by the police. Alcohol has a much more negative effect on the brain and people's behaviour than meth does, which is why I don't drink a lot when I go out. Even though you can drink a lot when using, I don't see the need to spend the money as I will be having a good time anyway. But yeah, the government needs to do a lot more about young people and drinking 'cause it's a messy problem” (Tom, aged 21, user).

“It's not illicit drugs that are the problem, but binge-drinkers – they're the ones to worry about. Some of my friends who use [meth] have said that they feel more in control when they use but when they drink they lose the plot and don't know what to do. That's why binge drinking is such a problem” (William, aged 22, non-user).

The concern surrounding alcohol use was also linked to the use of drugs, with excessive drinking perceived to have a direct impact on the levels of consumption of illicit drugs. For example, the following interviewee's account outlines the potential consequences of alcohol misuse, revealing that the dulling effects of alcohol can negatively influence individuals to engage in dangerous forms of drug consumption:

“Two of my friends, they don't take drugs but I got a phone call one night when I was out and they were on meth...and that was scary, not because they were using but because of how it happened. They didn't go out in order to take drugs, it was something that happened once they had way too many drinks; it was available so they did it. I have other friends that use [meth] and they don't ever do that, especially

if it's someone's first time. I think it just shows what alcohol can do as I know that those girls wouldn't have done that if they were sober" (Emmy, aged 21, non-user).

This was supported by another interviewee who, as a drug user, provided support for the intentional limited role of alcohol in their drug use practices:

"When you go out, if you're buzzing [using drugs] there's not much need to drink heaps, that's one of the benefits of meth. You'd drink a bit so you didn't look too out of place...but there's no need to end up off your face. That's when it gets messy and violent and no one wants that...especially me" (Todd, aged 24, user).

This comment provides context to the broader social environment of the nightclub, making reference to the social values and boundaries that shape it and the forms of consumption that occur within it. Specifically, the comment identifies a distinct boundary between drug users and those that consume alcohol, as well as between the notion of responsible consumption and that of excessive or 'messy' use. It describes an environment that challenges stereotypical depictions of the club drug use, an environment in which there is minimal polydrug use, reasoned moderation in drug consumption and identifiable social group regulation of shared values and norms. Significantly, it also delineates the harms associated with alcohol consumption.

7.8.2 Alcohol-related Violence

A further harm associated with the use of Adelaide nightclubs was alcohol-related violence. Participants in both the quantitative and qualitative samples, considered violence as a serious risk related to the misuse of alcohol. As reported in the quantitative data (section 5.3.5), getting drunk was associated with getting in a fight, getting kicked out of the club, and getting injured as negative outcomes of a night out, which also supports interviewees' claims. For example, when asked to identify the risks of Adelaide nightclubs, some participants noted that:

"Drunkenness and violence are the main concern. People who are drunk cause problems...they get violent and aggressive, and you have to be careful about what you do and say when you're out, 'cause you don't know how they are gonna react.

Like, some people if you say anything to them when they're drunk, then they'll just punch you in the face and you'll end up having a bad night" (Alex, aged 23, user).

"People who drink a lot cause the most problems...they can be violent and unpredictable. Plus they often don't know what they're doing or saying, whereas meth makes people more alert" (Tess, aged 19, non-user).

"Violence and brawling are the big ones – which is a danger for everyone, 'cause once a fight starts then anyone is a potential victim. It's a big issue for clubs, and it's more commonly associated with alcohol" (Becky, aged 18, non-user).

These findings support participants' claims that most young people who use drugs do not attend nightclubs for the purpose of being deviant, violent or disruptive. Rather, many of the interviewees and clubbers encountered⁵ in the field suggested that drinking has a far greater impact on an individual's behaviour. This was especially concerning for participants, evident in the following statements, in that excessive alcohol use appeared inconsistent with the overall purpose of the club.

"I think people should be more worried about the alcohol use in clubs. The more violent people in nightclubs are the ones that are drinking too much. I'm not talking about the ones that are having a few drinks, but the binge-drinkers...the ones that are just there to get smashed and try to outdo each other" (Todd, aged 24, user).

"It's because everyone's been drinking – because of the alcohol...binge drinking has become a real problem for young people and doesn't interest me because it's not what I go to the club for" (Simone, aged 18, non-user).

As noted throughout this chapter, for these participants the perception of risk appears causally linked to the purpose of the nightclub in enabling young people's leisure consumption. Risk is perceived when individuals breach social values and norms through excessive consumption, as breaches are seen to contradict the purpose of a good night out (i.e. safe consumption) and display a lack of control. This analysis has thus demonstrated that young people do not perceive the recreational use of

⁵ Although an evaluation of young people's perceptions of alcohol use was not an aim of the fieldwork, and information was not sought regarding this, a number of individuals identified the misuse of alcohol as a substantial concern for young people. This has particular ramifications for the future development of drug policy in Australia, which is discussed further in the conclusion to this thesis (chapter 8, section 5.5).

illicit drugs as a significant concern for club patrons or the community generally. Rather, the excessive use of illicit drugs, as well as problems associated with alcohol misuse and alcohol-related violence within the night-time economy are the primary risks that young people perceive should concern experts and most influence developments in drug and alcohol policy in the night-time economy (see section 8.5.5). This has particular relevance given the recent establishment of the *South Australian Alcohol and Other Drug Strategy 2011-2016* (DASSA, 2011), which extends the scope of the broader National Drug Strategy. However, while this appears to demonstrate an awareness of the role of social context, it is evident that its actual impact on the use of illicit drugs, and by implication young people's perceptions of risk, is minimal and does not contribute to a greater insight or understanding of the situation espoused in this study. Rather, although the Strategy recognises the need to evaluate the use of alcohol, particularly in recreational settings (DASSA, 2011), the problem is conceptualised separately from illicit drug use reinforcing existent attitudes that reflect the traditional licit/illicit dichotomy. In turn, this affects how each 'problem' is approached where alcohol misuse is primarily addressed as a health concern where the harms are to be minimised, whereas illicit drug use remains a law enforcement issue that is to be prevented or penalised. As is discussed further in the conclusion (section 8.5.5), this demonstrates that greater research is needed that takes into account lay experiences of the nightclub and perspectives of risk to properly identify risk in this social setting.

7.9 Conclusion

In this chapter it has been argued that the attempt by governments to categorise the various aspects of young people's use of the nightclub through a lens of expert risk has been limited, and produced a narrow view of this unique social milieu. Extending the theoretical argument put forward in chapter 6, this chapter has identified a major discord between experts' and young people's perceptions of risk, which does not necessarily invalidate expert risk but reveals a more diverse engagement with risk,

thus highlighting the need to conceptualise this discord as a question of perception. As a result, there is a need for Australian drug policy to move away from a sole reliance on expert models of risk that categorise behaviour as risky or risk-free, where activities that fall outside of the prescribed 'objective' norms are considered deviant acts, to instead include alternative or lay perspectives of risk.

A key feature of this chapter, therefore, is that it highlights the existence of alternate forms of risk knowledge within the Adelaide nightclub scene that significantly influence young people's leisure-time activities within this social space and contribute to their perceptions of risk. Particularly, this research found that these young people are not only aware of risk within Adelaide nightclubs, but are also able to identify and categorise different forms and levels of risk, and this is a significant outcome of this study as it challenges experts' claim that risk is objective. This research provides context to how young people perceive risk and how this perception is guided by their nightclub use. In addressing the research questions and objectives, this chapter highlights the emergence of a new profile of young people who use the nightclub in ways that are different from what experts have typically understood. How people perceive risk in the nightclub has now become tied to the meaning and purpose of leisure for these individuals. In contrast to traditional expert accounts of youth deviance, for many young people there are significant and positive attributes to be found in the nightclub, such as the development of identity, work/life balance and meaningful social relationships (see chapter 4, part 2), and this has affected young people's leisure activities, including the use of drugs such as methamphetamines. In particular, young people's perceptions of risk are sited within a broader discussion of the need to ensure the safe consumption of leisure within the nightclub. This is evident in the fact that, regardless of whether they use drugs, these young people seek and share risk knowledge within their social groups and use this knowledge to underpin a multitude of socially embedded risk management strategies designed to help them negotiate the nightclub to ensure not only an enjoyable but also safe 'night out' within the Adelaide night-time economy.

What these findings highlight is that there is a significant relationship between young peoples' perceived control over their leisure activities in the nightclub and their perceptions of risk, and this is not possible in expert risk models. This is particularly evident in terms of how the use of illicit drugs in the nightclub is rationalised by young people. In stark contrast to expert models of risk, this chapter has identified that the majority of participants do not perceive the sensible use of illicit drugs to be dangerous, which is evident in their continued drug use, or continued exposure to others' use in the nightclub. Interestingly, it is only excessive or 'messy' use that engenders concern for these young people as it indicates a breach of social values and norms. This has a number of ramifications for how young people's use of the nightclub should be understood and thus addressed by future drug policy. Firstly, the identification of control as a central factor in young people's perceptions of risk provides support for the argument that illicit drugs can be used recreationally and that such use is fundamentally different from problematic drug use. Secondly, although the majority of drug use in Adelaide nightclub venues was not considered problematic participants did not consider these spaces as risk-free, identifying a number of other risks, notably alcohol misuse and related violence, pertinent to young people's use of the nightclub. By engaging young people within the nightclub, this research has obtained greater understanding of young people's perspectives of their experiences of Adelaide nightclubs and the risks associated with this space. In doing so, this analysis of young people's perceptions of risk and how these guide leisure-time behaviour has provided new knowledge invaluable to the development of an innovative approach to illicit drug use in the Adelaide nightclub scene, which is a significant outcome of this research. It is important to note, however, that in light of these findings it is not suggested that drug use should be allowed to proliferate and occur in an unregulated manner. Instead, there is a considerable need for the development of evidence-based policy that takes into account lay perceptions of risk in order to address the diversity inherent in young people's illicit drug use and engage more effective harm-reduction and harm-minimisation approaches.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this final chapter, I draw out some of the themes that have carried through this thesis to identify its contribution to understanding young people's perceptions of risk in this research context. The thesis concludes by posing recommendations for further research and policy development in the drug field.

8.1 Alternative perspectives of risk

Previous drug research has claimed that the risks associated with the use of illicit drugs, including methamphetamines, are objective, wide-ranging, and negative in their impact on the user and the community (Degenhardt et al., 2008; Darke et al., 2008a; McKetin et al., 2006c; McKetin et al., 2005; Breen et al., 2004). This perspective has resulted in the production of a series of 'expert' risks, which have been used to rationalise the implementation of a range of drug policies in Australia that are primarily based on a framework of zero tolerance and prohibition. However in contrast, a key outcome of the empirical analysis in this study has been the identification of an alternative youth perspective of risk informed by a bottom-up approach in which young people have been given a voice to describe their perceptions of risk within the Adelaide night-time economy. What this approach has shown is that these young people develop and employ a process of risk 'knowledge acquisition' within the nightclub, which is not only homogenous across the sample (drug users and non-drug users) but also provides insight into how these young people typically use the nightclub, which is guided by their perceptions of risk. An important feature of this process of knowledge acquisition is that, in contrast to experts' claims that young people are ignorant or in denial of expert risks (see Kelly, 2005; Peretti-Watel, 2003a; Lupton, 1999b) as discussed in chapter 2 (section 2.2), these young people's perceptions of risk do not invalidate experts' application of risk (Duff, 2004; France, 2000). Rather, how young people build risk knowledge incorporates expert risk models within a broader perceptual framework that is expanded and

enhanced by personal experiences, shared risk knowledge within social group membership and an understanding of the broader meaning of the nightclub.

A meaningful implication of young people's development of risk knowledge is that it indicates an awareness of risk within the nightclub, which influences their behavioural practices and experiences within it. The present study reveals that these young people do not consider the Adelaide nightclub scene to be a risk-free environment, and this knowledge is used to develop and implement a series of risk management strategies (see section 7.6.1), through which they perceive that they are able to control their leisure behaviour and limit the experience of negative consequences in the nightclub. That risk is linked to young people's perceptions of control also has a number of implications in the Adelaide nightclub context, particularly with regard to the use of methamphetamines and how their use relates to the overall use of the nightclub. The data obtained in both the quantitative and qualitative phases of this research provides context to this, revealing that the overwhelming majority of participants do not perceive Adelaide nightclubs to be risky because of drugs despite being prevalent, that social group membership has numerous protective functions and that, in fact, there are greater risks within the nightclub (e.g. alcohol misuse and violence). Most participants thus did not feel at risk because of the presence of drugs and attended nightclubs nonetheless, predominantly in large, familiar groups of friends who guided the overall experience through the prescription of socially appropriate leisure activities, which for some included the use of drugs. What the participants' responses connote, therefore, is a "subtle and complex framing of risk taking" (Bunton et al., 2004, p. 9), which links notions of risk to perceptions of control as well as the social context of the nightclub, the people within it, and the meaning(s) that drug use can provide for young people, rather than the use of drugs themselves. This is further evident in the fact that these perceptions were consistent across the sample regardless of whether or not participants used drugs, which not only implies that this sample is very 'drug experienced' (Duff, 2005) suggesting a normalised drug use environment, but also highlights an acknowledgement of the particular role of illicit drug use in the nightclub for young people.

8.2 Risk perceptions and the use of drugs

The development of risk knowledge and risk management strategies by this group of young people and the contribution to their perceptions of control highlights an important theme in this research with regard to club drug use. As identified earlier in this thesis (see chapters 5 and 7), the data obtained from this empirical study has revealed a pattern of drug use and a typical use environment, which evince how illicit drugs are used by this sample of young people. Specifically, although these young people are aware of risk in the nightclub they continue to use illicit drugs or associate with others who do so guided by risk management practices, which is a strong indication that they perceive that illicit drugs can be used ‘sensibly’ (see Parker et al., 2002) and that this is an essential element of the nightclub experience. It can also be identified that these risk management practices are not only important in practical terms for the health and safety of young people, but also in a theoretical sense as they reveal a distinction between recreational drug use and problematic drug *misuse* (see section 7.7). The data supports this, as the majority of participants in the present study did not agree with the suggestion that most drug users ‘cause problems’ or adversely affect other patrons within the nightclub because of their drug use. Rather, it is only dependent or chaotic use that engenders concern, as it seen as a breach of social values and norms and a lack of appreciation of the wider meaning of the nightclub for young people, and this has two implications for understanding club drug use.

Firstly, that different forms or levels of drug use can be identified represents a substantial challenge to expert forms of risk as what these young people’s perceptions and behavioural practices reveal is a significant practical and moral difference between recreational drug use and problematic drug use, which is not recognised and thus addressed by the prohibitionist or zero tolerance approaches often espoused in Australian drug policy. Consequently, there is need for drug policy to at least acknowledge the existence of an alternative perspective as otherwise the messages of harm reduction implicit in such policies, while fundamentally positive, will continue to be presented in a way that is inconsistent with the experiences of the young people they seek to engage. The second and

more significant implication of the identification of recreational forms of methamphetamine use is that these young people's efforts to control their drug use suggest a cultural shift in how they view the nightclub experience generally and the role of drugs in facilitating it (see chapter 4, part 2 and chapter 7). What has emerged in Adelaide is a new profile of user that, through greater awareness, knowledge and understanding of risk engages in a form of drug use that is more controlled than the experts' have previously acknowledged (see Shewan et al., 2000; Kelly, 2000) and that is consistent with the purpose and meaning of the nightclub for them. The data obtained in the present study has identified that non-drug users' attitudes towards illicit drugs also appear to have changed, reflecting this shift in the meaning of drug use in the leisure space of the nightclub. Therefore, a key contribution of this thesis is the identification that young people's use of drugs in the nightclub and associated risk perceptions need to be considered within an acknowledgement of the nightclub as a site of broad leisure consumption, and an understanding of how young people's use of these commercialised spaces to acquire meaning affects levels of drug use. This identifies the place of this research in the wider normalisation literature and adds to recent debate (see Pennay & Moore, 2010; Measham & Shiner, 2009). Specifically, linking with the theoretical framework put forward in chapter 2 (section 2.3.3) this research suggests that the use of methamphetamines in Adelaide nightclubs has become normalised to the extent that it is a familiar and largely accepted feature of the Adelaide nightclub scene for the young people that occupy it. This highlights that attempts to understand youth drug use need to consider the social context of use and, thus, think about young people's methamphetamine use, in particular, in the terms of 'structured action' or 'situated choice' that Measham and Shiner (2009) suggest (see section 2.4.1).

8.3 The meaning of club drugs: The emergence of a new youth profile

Consistent with international trends, the Adelaide night-time economy has experienced significant change in the last decade that has transformed the city into an urban nightlife space dominated by leisure venues that actively promote youth consumption. In particular, the nightclub has emerged as a key space in

which young people have the opportunity to engage each other in social interactions, motivated by a shared goal of gaining meaning from the consumption of leisure. Traditionally, experts have viewed young people's pursuit of leisure activities in the nightclub as a symbol of rebellion against the norms, values and attitudes of the wider community (Hunt et al., 2006; Kerr et al., 2007). However, this data has demonstrated (see section 4.2.3) that most of the young people that comprised this sample do not see their nightclubbing, or their club drug use, in this way, but as a counterbalance to the pressures and expectations of society, typically associated with work and study. These young people gain meaning through consumption in the nightclub, which functions as an escape from their 'real world', but not at the expense of it. Notably, this appears consistent for nightclubbers generally, even if they use drugs, as implicit in the discussion of sensible drug use noted above is that not only are young people increasingly influenced by the desire to consume leisure activities but that they should be consumed responsibly, and this highlights the importance of the use of risk management strategies. As such, drug use no longer appears to be the focus of the nightclub, rather it is how such use enhances other aspects of this setting such as dancing, drinking, socialising, and listening to popular music. Understanding that nightclubs perform an alternative function for young people as sites of broader identity, meaning and safe leisure consumption is crucial to examining young people's perceptions of risk associated with the use of methamphetamines in the nightclub. Specifically, changes in the meaning and social context of club drug use suggest the development of a new club youth profile in Adelaide in recent years that has moved away from subcultural notions of deviance and delinquency often associated with the use of drugs. This new profile encompasses a more tribal youth cohort guided by broader consumption ideals (section 4.2.1.2), where there is little difference between the values, attitudes and behaviours of users and non-users, suggesting a more homogenous youth group and the normalisation of methamphetamine use in this social setting.

The demographic characteristics of the sample in the present study support this and highlight the importance of social context, as the reality of the South Australian youth club group is that it is homogenous and largely conservative,

which arguably affects how drugs and risk are perceived within the nightclub. In the Adelaide nightclub scene it can be identified that the young people who attend nightclubs are predominantly white and, by comparison with other populations such as in the UK and the US, can be considered less ethnically diverse leading to a greater number of common traits and interests that, in turn, contribute to common cultural and behavioural practices. Within the broader Australian context it is also important to note that none of the participants identified themselves as indigenous or of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin, which further demonstrates the limited influence of ethnicity in this drug use setting. Another significant characteristic of this context is that these young people do not appear to come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds but, as noted in chapter 3 (section 3.4.3), reside in more affluent areas of the city and identify engagement in a higher level of education, employment and achievement than previous accounts of youth have typically described (Foster, 2000; Lloyd, 1998; Becker, 1963). The geography of Adelaide is also significant to understanding the profile of youth nightclubbers as it is distinctly urban, given the almost-exclusive concentration of nightclubs in the city and the limitations associated with the friction of distance with more rural areas (see section 1.3.3). Given these characteristics, there is little evidence to support the notion of this sample of young people being described as deviant. Rather, on the basis of the data presented in this thesis and the homogeneity of the sample, it can be suggested that although some young Adelaide nightclubbers use methamphetamines, they are integrated in a range of mainstream social and cultural networks and appear to have adapted their drug use to fit in with these networks and the meaning of the nightclub. Thus, what this research argues is that methamphetamine users are, in most respects, difficult to distinguish from non-users in the nightclub setting, which highlights the need for a different approach to young people's drug use within the night-time economy.

8.4 The need for a new policy dialogue in South Australia

Examining the space of the nightclub as a broad site of leisure consumption, meaning, risk and control has been an effective lens through which to view young

people's drug use behaviours and practices, and how they relate to young people's perceptions of risk within the Adelaide night-time economy. Through this lens it has been revealed that young nightclubbers are nuanced social beings that use the nightclub for a range of social and cultural purposes, which sometimes include the use of illicit drugs. By utilising a bottom-up approach what this thesis has demonstrated is a mismatch between experts' perceptions of risk and the 'lived' reality or lay experiences that form young people's perceptions of risk in the nightclub, which has significant implications for the effectiveness of drug policies in this setting. It is this gap that the present study has examined and sought to address, the data from which has highlighted a need to engage in a new policy dialogue in South Australia in relation to the use of methamphetamines by young people. The need for such a dialogue is particularly important given that as noted throughout this thesis (chapters 2, 6 and 7) expert conceptualisations of risk have been privileged, almost exclusively, in much of the drug policy that is aimed at the regulation of the use of drugs, particularly by young people. In a global sense this has produced a policy environment in that is saturated with zero tolerance and prohibitionist policies that have fostered a strict law enforcement approach to youth illicit drug use (Douglas & MacDonald, 2012; MacCoun & Reuter, 2001). Of concern in South Australia is that the continued use of methamphetamines, in particular, by young people in nightclubs, or their continued exposure to others' drug use in the nightclub, indicates that such an approach is not working and suggests the normalised use of methamphetamines in this setting. What this research suggests, however, is not that methamphetamine use has become normal for all young people in South Australia, but that its use within the nightclub context in which specific meanings can be created and used for particular purposes, has become accepted by many young people. The argument that has been put throughout this thesis, therefore, is that any analysis of young people's illicit drug use behaviour, including young people's desire to engage in a space where others' use drugs, and the development of policy in response, must take into account the social context in which drugs are used and the perspectives of both drug users and non-drug users.

What this means for policy dialogue in South Australia is that the Government need to be cautious in relying on policy transfer from other countries and even other national jurisdictions (see Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000), and instead needs to consider the development of drug policy in terms of what works here in South Australia. What has been argued in this thesis is that there is considerable need for the development of evidence-based policy that takes into account lay perceptions of risk and young people's experiences associated with illicit drug use (the 'new data' identified in chapter 1 (section 1.4.2)) to enable more effective approaches to drug use. It is important to note that such an approach does not necessarily seek to shift policy development to the other extreme in terms of the decriminalisation of methamphetamine use, as some have advocated (see Beck, 2011), or at least not yet as the political climate may not be favourable to this suggestion. Rather it maintains the emphasis on harm-minimisation, noting that future approaches must consider alternative perspectives of risk, an appreciation of the changing meanings of drug use and an understanding of the specific contexts in which drugs are used, discussion of which will at least open the debate for change. While this may be a difficult task, it is possible to open a new policy dialogue in the South Australian context given the smaller, networked nature of the community. This may not only enable a better understanding of the use of methamphetamines among young people in the Adelaide nightclub setting but may also serve as a catalyst for broader drug policy change in other jurisdictions that would be valuable in developing a more effective and appropriate approach to youth nightclub drug use.

8.5 Recommendations for further research and future drug policy

During this research a number of themes emerged that not only reflect the findings obtained but were also directly articulated by participants', and thus have been used to draft a series of recommendations for future research pertinent to the development of Australian drug policy. In considering these recommendations it should be emphasised that this thesis does not propose a set of specific policy changes but advocates the need for a substantive shift in governments'

understanding of young people and their experience of the nightclub (which for some includes the use of drugs) and its implications on drug policy.

8.5.1 *Expanding the Sample*

A limitation of the present study was that while it provided insight into the experiences of risk associated with methamphetamines of young Adelaide nightclubbers, it was not able to capture a wider sample of Adelaide youth including those who do not attend nightclubs. It is important to acknowledge that, at least for some young people, the decision not to attend nightclubs may be influenced by their perceptions of the use or presence of illicit drugs, including methamphetamines. Therefore, although this does not detract from the findings obtained in this study, future studies would not only benefit from expansion of the relevant sample through greater participation, but also the widening of the sample to incorporate a greater number of variables, such as young people who do not attend nightclubs. A larger and more diverse sample would provide a greater picture of young people's experiences of risk associated with drug use generally and examine the role of context in this dynamic relationship, which may assist policy-makers in the development of more effective harm-minimisation strategies that can take into account the potential differences, if any, between these samples. This forms the background to further research that I am keen to undertake.

8.5.2 *The Need for a New Drug Policy Perspective*

This thesis has identified that many young people in the Adelaide nightclub scene perceive and experience methamphetamine use in a very different way from how it is conveyed in government policy and anti-drug campaigns. Current drug policies do not acknowledge these differences or that young people have the capacity to be rational, responsible and self-aware, thus divesting them of the capacity for the identification and understanding of risk and, by implication, controlled consumption. This lack of understanding has rationalised the use of zero tolerance drug policies that have been largely unchanged over the last decade. The principal arguments used against changing current policies have tended to be morally founded (Douglas & McDonald, 2012; Duff, 2004),

concerned that alternative, less punitive approaches may send the wrong message to young people and the community, and that such changes could cause an increase in the prevalence of drug use and their associated harms. However, zero tolerance is an unrealistic target as although supply reduction measures and a tough on crime stance are politically useful, such responses are overly punitive in their effects on the individual and fail to take into account the social context and meaning of consumption in the nightclub for young people, in which the use of drugs plays a limited role and then only for some young people. As such, while Australian drug policy is seemingly committed to harm-minimisation policies, in practice because government efforts to reduce the harms associated with illicit drugs are often embedded within law enforcement approaches, their value is misplaced. This is evidenced by the proliferation of drug use in Australia and the wider acknowledgement by a number of prominent sources that the war on drugs has failed (Douglas & McDonald, 2012; GCDP, 2011; Jensen et al., 2004; Gray, 2001; Buchanan & Young, 2000). From both a theoretical and practical viewpoint, these outcomes highlight the need for a different approach. The findings presented in this thesis support this, highlighting the need to reopen debate to discuss the full range of options that are available to governments within a harm-minimisation approach and to take Australian drug policy in a new direction. In particular, there is a need to challenge current policies of prohibition and criminalisation, and to instead consider forms of control that mirror those used in relation to licit substances (e.g. alcohol), such as changes to the classification of certain substances (see Winstock, 2012; Buchanan, 2009; Wilkins, 2002) to reflect new patterns of use. Although they may be considered radical in the current political environment, these suggestions highlight the need to move towards a bottom-up approach that embraces meaningful harm-minimisation principles that examine ‘what works’ for young people and that make the primary aim of drug control the protection of both individual and community well-being, regardless of the form that this approach takes.

8.5.3 *Education and Drugs: Using lay knowledge*

Central to the discussion of what works is the need for a comprehensive knowledge base that incorporates alternative perspectives or forms of knowledge,

which can be used to guide and develop informed policy that educates young people, as well as the wider community. This thesis argues that drug education initiatives need to provide accurate and detailed information regarding the risks of drug use not only from the perspective of experts¹ but also one that recognises the ‘lay’ knowledge that these young people acquire in the nightclub and that they perceive underpins efforts to reduce the negative experiences associated with drug use. As this research has revealed, it is crucial to an understanding of young people’s behaviour to note that through risk management strategies this knowledge is translated into perceived control over leisure practices, which is particularly pertinent for activities such as illicit drug use. Knowledge of both drugs and their risks was perceived as a fundamental feature of young people’s drug use practices within the nightclub that enabled them to be, in a sense, ‘managed’ for the safe consumption of other leisure activities in this social space (see chapters 4 and 7). This rationalises consideration of alternative strategies that target specific drug use settings, thereby acknowledging the importance of social context in terms of both the nightclub setting and the young people that populate it and how these elements influence drug use practices. For example, in this study friends were commonly identified as a valuable source of information about methamphetamines for participants guiding much of their behaviour, regardless of whether they used drugs. This demonstrates the need for policy initiatives that encourage and facilitate the development of socially embedded, or what others have labelled as ‘peer to peer’ (Duff, 2004) education strategies that are able to communicate appropriate forms of knowledge in a way that matches the reality of young people’s experiences of the nightclub. Given the lack of research regarding such strategies (Lee et al., 2007), what must first be done is to undertake greater analysis of these practices and interactions in relevant settings.

¹ One example has been the website ‘meth.org.au’ run by the Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre, which seeks to provide information to young people regarding methamphetamine use (see Hughes, 2012). The concern with this site and the information that it provides, however, is that it remains centred on expert assessments of use, which as noted in chapter 7 (section 3) many young people are already aware of and take into consideration when they use drugs themselves. It does not address the social context of drug use or provide young people with an opportunity to be involved in the process, factors that must be addressed.

Another aspect that may benefit policy development in terms of harm-minimisation education is an examination on the risk management strategies that young people employed to guide their leisure consumption, including the use of drugs. While this is dependent on experts' acceptance that other forms of knowledge exist, it is clear that such practices are already embraced by young people in the Adelaide nightclub setting. Drug policy in this jurisdiction, and arguably others, would thus greatly benefit from efforts to understand and support the use of these risk management practices as doing so would suggest a stronger adherence to a harm-minimisation approach. Also, it suggests that while we need to be careful about saying that methamphetamine use is 'OK', we also need to be more rational about how we view the use of illicit drugs and the young people that use them given that drug use appears to have become a normal feature for a greater number of young people in certain settings, such as the Adelaide nightclub scene. In practical terms, this understanding encourages a movement away from policies and campaigns that employ scare tactics and that assume a linear relationship between drug use and serious risks. The more rational view would also support strategies that incorporate lay perspectives of drug use and risk. This should help to provide an environment in which treatment could still be provided to the more serious cases of drug abuse, but would also allow the development of 'intermediate' strategies, such as on-site drug testing, greater collaboration between nightclub venues and health care workers and more accurate education of effective drug use practices that encourage moderation. These initiatives have been discussed in relation to the use of ecstasy (see Duff et al., 2007) and would thus be an important step forward for Australian drug policy in regards to methamphetamine use.

8.5.4 *A Grounded Approach*

The findings obtained in this thesis also highlight not only the need for greater understanding of how young people's perceptions and experiences can be used to contribute to policy debates on drug use, but also that this will require the use of a broad range of approaches. Many sources have identified the need for a comprehensive review of drug policies involving greater collaborations between a variety of actors, such as health care experts, development practitioners,

educational institutions, families and community leaders in partnership with law enforcement agencies (Douglas & McDonald, 2012; NDS, 2011; Caulkins, 2007; Homel & Willis, 2007; Moore, 2005). However, one of the most significant findings of the present study, also articulated by a large number of participants, is that in addition to these community collaborations, the (re)examination of current drug policies should involve young people in an active role in the implementation and development of research and policy. Although while young people who use drugs, or those that engage with others who do, are frequently the target of efforts to regulate their leisure-time activities, particularly in the nightclub, they remain largely marginalised and ignored within policy debates. Thus, as has been identified recently (Hughes et al., 2010a, p. 2), in order to create principles of ‘good governance’ in Australian drug policy what is needed is “consultation, trust and negotiation, rather than top down decision-making”.

By engaging a bottom-up approach, policy-makers may acquire valuable insight into the dynamic atmosphere of young people’s use of drugs in social settings in order to develop more effective, evidence-based policy. It provides these young people with a voice through which to share their own accounts of the culture and experience of drug use within the nightclub that not only contributes to policy development, but also seeks to (re)integrate them into the community, which is a wider social benefit for young people and the community. A bottom-up approach may also assist in the transition from zero tolerance policies to strategies that instead engender a collective attitude focused on minimising the harms of young people’s illicit drug use. Involvement of young people in policy discussions will provide knowledge for governments which is useful in identifying how to better responsabilise them in their own efforts to moderate consumption and to perhaps make better choices, which for some may still lead to illicit drug use, but at least these will be more informed choices. There has been some effort to bridge this gap in relation to young people’s use of cannabis in Australia, with an online awareness campaign launched in October 2012 (see Australian Drug Foundation, 2012). In discussing the risks of cannabis, the campaign focused on involving young people (through a range of interactive media such as Facebook) in a community-wide approach in the process of

increasing awareness and strengthening the evidence-base to build knowledge and foster debate. However, despite this example, Australian governments remain far from providing a similar approach in response to methamphetamine use. This is most evident in the NDS 2010-2015 (MCDS, 2011) where the focus of ATS prevention and reduction strategies remain centred on what knowledge can be provided by experts to take the next step, highlighting that much more work is needed to build a diverse knowledge and evidence-base.

8.5.5 Alcohol versus Illicit Drugs: Widening the focus

A final recommendation relevant to Australian illicit drug policy relates to the argument that there needs to be internal consistency in how drugs – both licit and illicit – are considered and thus managed (promoted/prevented) in the night-time economy. As discussed in chapter 6 (section 6.5.1) there is a substantive discord in how the nightclub, in particular, is viewed by young people and governments, which has emerged from a broader discussion of the differences between the regulation of illicit drugs and the sale of alcohol in this social environment. Similar to what has been identified in other night-time economies, notably in the UK (Buchanan, 2011; Measham, 2006), the findings presented in this thesis suggest that the focus of Australian drug policies on reducing illicit drug use is likely to be constrained by what Measham (2006, p. 258) labels as “neglect of the broader socio-economic, cultural, and political contexts surrounding changing patterns of consumption”. Although this statement considers the contradictions inherent in alcohol regulation in the context of binge-drinking in Britain, it has significant implications for Australian drug policy in that it highlights the need to be aware of broader contradictions in messages about the consumption of leisure in the nightclub setting. On one hand alcohol consumption is encouraged and supported by government policies of economic development. While on the other hand, illicit drug use is regulated by zero tolerance policies and law enforcement practices. If the development of more effective policies to reduce the harms associated with the nightclub is a priority for governments and the community, then it is vital to initiate critical discussion encompassing a broad range of concerns that includes alcohol and not merely the use of illicit drugs (see Buchanan, 2009). This is especially pertinent given that the majority of

participants in this sample identified that illicit drugs are not a prominent concern with Adelaide nightclubs; rather, it is alcohol misuse and alcohol-related violence that causes greater anxiety among young nightclubbers (see sections 5.3.2, 5.5.4, and 7.8).

Therefore, what this thesis argues is that, returning to the view of the nightclub as a broad site of youth leisure consumption, policy-makers' current practice of addressing licit drugs such as alcohol separately from illicit drugs is largely confusing and prevents effective discussion. The findings of this study demonstrate that current policies of criminalization, that create the licit/illicit dichotomy, should be replaced by a discursive approach that focuses on the *misuse* of drugs, regardless of their legal status. This may require a full scale review of the current drug classification system, which is a step that has been proposed in other jurisdictions (see Buchanan, 2011; 2009; New Zealand Law Commission, 2011). The problem is that it is a substantial and politically-sensitive task given that policy-makers, as well as the lobby groups that underlie the push for alcohol to remain as a mainstream commodity, are unlikely to be motivated to even locate alcohol and illicit drugs such as methamphetamines within the same discussion for a number of reasons (or interests), both economic and political. As noted in the previous chapter, this is evident in recent efforts to regulate the use of alcohol and other drugs in South Australia (most notably the *South Australian Alcohol and Other Drug Strategy 2011-2016* (DASSA, 2011)), where alcohol consumption and illicit drug use are approached separately. Furthermore, although alcohol misuse is identified as a challenge facing future policy, which supports the data presented in this thesis, as identified in the previous chapter (section 7.8) the differences in attitudes and efforts towards alcohol consumption and illicit drug use highlight the continued reluctance of governments to engage processes of harm-minimisation broadly or equally. This is an obstacle that must be overcome if an effective, evidence-based and, importantly, realistic harm-minimisation approach to illicit drug use by young people is to be achieved.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1



Flinders
UNIVERSITY

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION *Survey*

Dear Participant,

Education, Humanities, Theology and Law
School of Law
Flinders University
GPO Box 2100
Adelaide SA 5001
Tel: 08 8201 2861
Fax: 08 8201 3630 (Law)
marinella.marmo@flinders.edu.au
www.flinders.edu.au
CRICOS Provider No. 00114A

This letter is to introduce Andrew Groves who is a Postgraduate student in the School of Law at Flinders University. Andrew will produce his student card, which carries a photograph, as proof of identity. Andrew is undertaking research leading to the production of a thesis or other publications entitled:

“Risk on the dance-floor”: An empirical analysis of young people’s perceptions of risk associated with nightclubs, methamphetamine use and young people in the Adelaide night-time economy”.

Andrew would be most grateful if you would volunteer to assist in this project, by completing a questionnaire regarding aspects of youth culture and illicit drug use. The survey questionnaire is anonymous, and will take no more than 5 minutes to complete. However, if you require further opportunity to discuss experiences within this field there is the potential for further discussion in a semi-structured interview. On the completion and return of the survey questionnaire, please indicate whether you are willing and able to participate in an interview. The interview will be available to any individual who is between 18-25 years old, and who engages with others within Adelaide nightclubs on a regular basis. The interview will take no more than 2 hours to complete at a time and location convenient for you.

Be assured that any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence, stored securely and anonymously, and thus your name will not be identifiable in the resulting thesis, report or other publications. However, disclosure of information related to illegal activities cannot be secure from lawful search and seizure from law enforcement agencies. In addition you are, of course, entirely free to discontinue your participation and withdraw from the study at any time or to decline to answer particular questions, and from this time your responses will also be excluded from the research. Participants will also be provided with feedback regarding their responses in context of the aims of the study, and will be encouraged to seek appropriate professional counselling or treatment as necessary (see attached list of counselling and treatment services).

Any enquiries you may have concerning this project should be directed to Andrew at the address given above or by telephone on 8201 3706, fax 8201 3630 (Law School) or e-mail at andrew.groves@flinders.edu.au. At the conclusion of your questionnaire, please return it in person to Andrew, or contact him to arrange an alternative method.

Thank you for your attention and assistance.

Yours sincerely,
Dr Marinella Marmo
Senior Lecturer / PhD Supervisor
School of Law

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee. For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Secretary of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 5962, by fax on 8201 2035, or by email sandy.huxtable@flinders.edu.au.

APPENDIX 2

<p>Instructions:</p> <p>Please read the following questions carefully and answer them as accurately as possible. Please take note of any further instructions throughout the questionnaire, and ensure that you answer Q. 28.</p> <p>Age: under 18 18-21 22-24 over 25 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Gender: MALE FEMALE <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Suburb:</p> <p>Highest education level attained: (please circle) Secondary Currently at university Tertiary Post-graduate Other</p> <p>Current employment: Full-time Part-time Unemployed Other</p> <p>Occupation:</p> <p>1. How often do you attend nightclubs in Adelaide? (please circle) Twice or more a week Once a week Once a month Once every 6 months</p> <p>2. Which days of the week do you most often attend nightclubs? (Please rank days from 1 – most often to 7 – least often)</p> <table style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Monday</td> <td>Tuesday</td> <td>Wednesday</td> <td>Thursday</td> <td>Friday</td> <td>Saturday</td> <td>Sunday</td> </tr> </table> <p>3. Can you please explain why? </p> <p>4. What are your motivations for attending nightclubs in Adelaide? (Please rank these from 1 – most important to 8 – least important)</p> <table style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dancing</td> <td>To be seen/</td> <td>Drinking</td> <td>Drugs</td> <td>Music</td> <td>Socialising</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td colspan="4">.....</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>To 'pick up'</td> <td>Other</td> <td colspan="4">.....</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>5. When attending Adelaide nightclubs I most often go with the same group. Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 Strongly Agree 5</p> <p>6. When attending Adelaide nightclubs being part of the group is important. Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 Strongly Agree 5</p> <hr/> <p>7. Attending Adelaide nightclubs is risky. Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 Strongly Agree 5</p> <p>8. What are the risks of attending Adelaide nightclubs? </p> <p>9. I, or someone I go to nightclubs with, take steps to manage these risks. Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 Strongly Agree 5</p> <p>10. Knowing these risks makes attending Adelaide nightclubs exciting. Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 Strongly Agree 5</p> <p>11. The following would be/are a bad outcome when 'going out' to nightclubs. (Please circle response from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree)</p> <table style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td></td> <td>Strongly Disagree</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>Strongly Agree</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Falling out with friends</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Getting drunk</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not 'picking up'</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Overdosing</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Getting in a fight</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Getting kicked out of the club</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Spending too much money</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Having unprotected sex</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Getting injured</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </table> <p>12. Drug use is risky. Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 Strongly Agree 5</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dancing	To be seen/	Drinking	Drugs	Music	Socialising		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					To 'pick up'	Other						Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree	Falling out with friends	1	2	3	4	5	Getting drunk	1	2	3	4	5	Not 'picking up'	1	2	3	4	5	Overdosing	1	2	3	4	5	Getting in a fight	1	2	3	4	5	Getting kicked out of the club	1	2	3	4	5	Spending too much money	1	2	3	4	5	Having unprotected sex	1	2	3	4	5	Getting injured	1	2	3	4	5	<p>13. Drug use takes place in Adelaide nightclubs. Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 Strongly Agree 5</p> <p>14. Drug use is a common part of the nightclub atmosphere. Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 Strongly Agree 5</p> <p>15. I feel at risk when attending Adelaide nightclubs because of drug use. Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 Strongly Agree 5</p> <p>16. The presence of drugs affects whether or not I attend Adelaide nightclubs. Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 Strongly Agree 5</p> <p>17. Risks associated with drug use in nightclubs are often exaggerated. Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 Strongly Agree 5</p> <p>18. Increasing my knowledge about drugs/drug use reduces the level of risk. Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 Strongly Agree 5</p> <p>19. Individuals who become addicted to drugs are irresponsible. Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 Strongly Agree 5</p> <p>20. In your opinion, which drugs are being consumed in Adelaide nightclubs? (Please tick as many as necessary)</p> <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Marijuana</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Heroin</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Methamphetamine</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Cocaine</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> LSD</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Ketamine</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Ecstasy</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> I don't know</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Other.....</td> <td colspan="3"></td> </tr> </table> <hr/> <p>21. Methamphetamine use occurs in Adelaide nightclubs. Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 Strongly Agree 5</p> <p>22. What percentage of young people do you believe use methamphetamine when 'going out' to Adelaide nightclubs? (please mark on scale)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> 0% 25% 50% 75% 100% </p> <p>23. What do you perceive are the reasons for using methamphetamines when attending Adelaide nightclubs? (Please tick as many as necessary)</p> <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Fun</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> To increase stamina</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> To enhance the music</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Peer pressure</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Socialising</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Partner uses</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> To 'pick up'</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> I don't know</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Other.....</td> <td colspan="3"></td> </tr> </table> <p>24. What do you perceive are the reasons for using methamphetamines? (Please tick as many as necessary)</p> <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Fun</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Want to try something new</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Partner uses</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Peer pressure</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Socialising</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> To lose control</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> To enhance sex</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> I don't know</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Other.....</td> <td colspan="3"></td> </tr> </table> <p>25. What are the risks of using methamphetamines? </p> <p>26. Knowing these risks would/does affect my use of methamphetamines. Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 Strongly Agree 5</p> <p>27. Have you ever used methamphetamines? No Yes</p> <p>28. Would you be willing to participate in an informal interview regarding information you have provided in this questionnaire? No Yes Contact number.....</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Thank you for your participation, this concludes your survey.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; font-size: small;"> This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee. For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Secretary of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 5962, by fax on 8201 2035, or by email sandy.huxtable@flinders.edu.au </div>	<input type="checkbox"/> Marijuana	<input type="checkbox"/> Heroin	<input type="checkbox"/> Methamphetamine	<input type="checkbox"/> Cocaine	<input type="checkbox"/> LSD	<input type="checkbox"/> Ketamine	<input type="checkbox"/> Ecstasy	<input type="checkbox"/> I don't know	<input type="checkbox"/> Other.....				<input type="checkbox"/> Fun	<input type="checkbox"/> To increase stamina	<input type="checkbox"/> To enhance the music	<input type="checkbox"/> Peer pressure	<input type="checkbox"/> Socialising	<input type="checkbox"/> Partner uses	<input type="checkbox"/> To 'pick up'	<input type="checkbox"/> I don't know	<input type="checkbox"/> Other.....				<input type="checkbox"/> Fun	<input type="checkbox"/> Want to try something new	<input type="checkbox"/> Partner uses	<input type="checkbox"/> Peer pressure	<input type="checkbox"/> Socialising	<input type="checkbox"/> To lose control	<input type="checkbox"/> To enhance sex	<input type="checkbox"/> I don't know	<input type="checkbox"/> Other.....			
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APPENDIX 3



LETTER OF INTRODUCTION *Interview*

Education, Humanities, Theology and Law
School of Law
Flinders University
GPO Box 2100
Adelaide SA 5001
Tel: 08 8201 2861
Fax: 08 8201 3630 (Law)
marinella.marmo@flinders.edu.au
www.flinders.edu.au
CRICOS Provider No. 00114A

Dear Participant,

This letter is to introduce Andrew Groves who is a Postgraduate student in the School of Law at Flinders University. Andrew will produce his student card, which carries a photograph, as proof of identity. Andrew is undertaking research leading to the production of a thesis or other publications entitled:

“Risk on the dance-floor”: An empirical analysis of young people’s perceptions of risk associated with nightclubs, methamphetamine use and young people in the Adelaide night-time economy”.

Andrew would be most grateful if you would volunteer to assist in this project, by participating in a semi-structured interview, which will support the data provided in the survey questionnaire already completed and contribute further information regarding certain aspects of your individual experiences. The interview will be available to any individual who is between 18-25 years old, and who engages with others within Adelaide nightclubs on a regular basis. The interview will take no longer than 2 hours to complete, and you may have a short break at any time if necessary. Be assured that any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence, stored securely and anonymously, and your name will not be identifiable in the resulting thesis, report or other publications. However, disclosure of information related to illegal activities cannot be secure from lawful search and seizure from law enforcement agencies.

Once completed you will not have access to the survey material or interview transcriptions, however you are, of course, entirely free to discontinue your participation and withdraw from the study at any time, or to decline to answer particular questions, and from this time your responses will also be excluded from the research. You will also be provided with feedback regarding your responses in context of the aims of the study, and will be encouraged to seek appropriate professional counselling or treatment as necessary (see attached list of counselling and treatment services). As Andrew intends to make an audio recording of the interview, he will seek your consent on the attached form, to record the interview, to use the recording or a transcription in preparing the thesis, report or other publications, and only on the condition that your name or identity is not revealed. Andrew is the only person with access to this material.

Any enquiries you may have concerning this project should be directed to Andrew at the address given above or by telephone on 8201 3706, fax 8201 3630 (Law School) or e-mail at andrew.groves@flinders.edu.au.

Thank you for your attention and assistance.

Yours sincerely,
Dr Marinella Marmo
Senior Lecturer / PhD Supervisor
School of Law

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee. For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Secretary of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 5962, by fax on 8201 2035, or by email sandy.huxtable@flinders.edu.au.

APPENDIX 4



CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

Semi-structured Interview

I.....

being over the age of 18 years hereby consent to participate as requested in the semi-structure interview for the research project examining trends and individual experiences related to youth culture, specifically the nightclub scene, and the level of methamphetamine use among young people within South Australia.

1. I have read the information provided.
2. Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.
3. I agree to audio recording of my information and participation.
4. I am aware that I should retain a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for future reference.
5. I understand that:
 - I may not directly benefit from taking part in this research.
 - I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and am free to decline to answer particular questions.
 - While the information gained in this study will be published as explained, I will not be identified, and individual information will remain confidential.
 - Whether I participate or not, or withdraw after participating, will have no effect on any service that is being provided to me.
 - Whether I participate or not, or withdraw after participating, will have no effect on my progress in my course of study, or results gained.
 - I may ask that the recording/observation be stopped at any time, and that I may withdraw at any time from the session or the research without disadvantage.
6. I have had the opportunity to discuss taking part in this research with a family member or friend.

Participant's signature.....Date.....

I certify that I have explained the study to the volunteer and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher's name: Andrew Groves

Researcher's signature

Date

APPENDIX 5

Perception of Risk Research Project

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Given that you have already completed the survey and have indicated your interest in discussing some aspects further, is there anything that you would like to talk about?

Normalisation/Personal Use

If non-user or user...

What are your perceptions of Adelaide nightclubs and illicit drug use?

How often do you go to nightclubs? When do you most often attend?

Would you say that your use of nightclubs is just one part of your leisure experiences, one part of your life – or is it something that you try to do all the time?

Do you feel that illicit drugs such as methamphetamine are a significant and consistent concern within Adelaide nightclubs?

So in terms of your use of nightclubs, how prevalent would you say young people's use of methamphetamine is?

How would you describe the types of people that you see/think use methamphetamines in Adelaide nightclubs? How do you relate to them (i.e. do you avoid them)?

Do you think that young people feel that methamphetamine use is just one part of the many leisure experiences that are on offer within this globalised, consumer-based world?

Do you think that young people see methamphetamine use as a deviant activity, or just a part of everyday life? Do they gain pleasure from the risk-taking, or just the drug itself?

If user (only)...

Can you tell me about the first time you became involved with methamphetamine?

Can you tell me the kind of feeling you experience when you take methamphetamine?

What were some of reasons you decided to continue taking methamphetamine?

How available is methamphetamine within Adelaide nightclubs?

How often do you use methamphetamines?

Do you think that methamphetamine use is dangerous? Why / why not?

Do you consider your drug use as risky, or is it something that 'won't happen to you'?

Can you tell me about some of the risks/dangers, if any?

Do you think the risks are understood by non-users, or the community?

Do you think that methamphetamine use is harmful to yourself or others in the community?

What kind of, or how much information did you have before engaging in methamphetamine use?

Is methamphetamine something that dominates your life, or could you live without it?

Is the idea of risk-taking something that is pleasurable for you?

Sub-Culture

Would you say there is a 'youth subculture' in regards to methamphetamine use?

Why do young people use illicit drugs within this atmosphere?

Why do young people use methamphetamines specifically?

Does methamphetamine use take a significant role within the nightclub, or is it just one aspect of this environment and its use by young people?

What are the characteristics that make this subculture unique in regards to the environment of nightclubs, the people who use them and the overall scene?

If surrounded by drug-using peers would people be more likely to use?

Are there risk management strategies that you are aware of that are used within Adelaide nightclubs to reduce the risks associated with methamphetamine use?

Do you engage in any risk management strategies when you go out, related to your behaviour? If so, could you please describe them and their effectiveness?

Does other people's drug use affect whether you attend nightclubs or not? Why?

Does your participation within the Adelaide nightclub scene influence you to take up methamphetamine use, or alter your perception of the risks involved with use?

Risk

Do feel that there are any risks/dangers inherent in attending Adelaide nightclubs?
If so, what are they? Could you explain them in more detail?

Do feel that there are any risks/dangers involved with using methamphetamines?

Are risk and danger the same thing?

Do you believe that there are any significant risks in respect to addiction and dependence with how young people use methamphetamines?

Do you believe that young people are being educated sufficiently about the harms associated with methamphetamine?

Are you aware of the Government's advertising campaigns (e.g. 'don't turn a night out into a nightmare!'), and how do you rate its effectiveness?

Do you believe that the Government's understanding of what occurs in Adelaide nightclubs, i.e. their understanding of risk, is the same as that of young people?

If you were given the task of stopping all methamphetamine use within South Australia, what would you do? Is this an important goal?

Conclusion

Do you feel there are any topics that we have not covered today that you think are relevant to this social atmosphere, my understanding of it or this research generally, that you would like to discuss now?

Thank you very much for your participation – it is greatly appreciated.

Finally, is there anyone whom you feel might also be comfortable discussing similar issues as we have today that you know of? If you do have someone in mind, please make them aware that it is completely voluntary, and that the ethical guidelines relating to anonymity and confidentiality similarly apply as they have here today.

APPENDIX 6

List of Treatment Services for South Australia

Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council (SA)

Address: 53 King William Street,
Kent Town, South Australia, 5067
Telephone: (08) 8362 0395

Addiction Counseling Services

Address: Horace Lamb Building,
North Terrace Campus
The University of Adelaide
Telephone: (08) 8303 5663

Adolescent Withdrawal Service, Women's and Children's Hospital

Address: Adolescent Ward Women's and Children's Hospital
72 King William Road
North Adelaide, South Australia, 5006
Telephone: (08) 8161 7378
(08) 8161 6297

Anglicare residential and counselling services

Recovery:
24 Hour, Monday-Friday Service
Telephone: (08) 8305 9650

The Archway Foundation
Non-profit organisation for funding and awareness
Telephone: (08) 8305 9650

Police Drug Diversion Initiative
Free and confidential service to provide education and support for early treatment.
Telephone: South (08) 8329 0802
North (08) 8256 2177

Baptist Community Services Westcare

Address: 212 Wright St, Adelaide SA 5000
Telephone: (08) 8231 2850

Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia

24 Hour Confidential Counselling and Information
Telephone: 1300 13 1340

Drug ARM

Address: 38 Unley Road, Unley, 5061
Telephone: (08) 8373 5364

Family Drug Support - HELP LINE 1300 368 186

Family Drug Support	(08) 8384 4314 OR 0401 732 129
ADIS (Alcohol & Drug Info Service)	1300 131 340
Grow (Mental Health Service)	(08) 8321 4233
Hepatitis C Council of SA	(08) 8362 8443
Legal Aid	1300 366 424
NarAnon	(08) 8272 8228

Hindmarsh Centre, Mission Australia

South Australia State Office

Address: 60 Halifax Street, Adelaide, SA 5000
Telephone: (08) 8218 2800

Nunkuwarrin Yunti of SA Inc

Address: 182-190 Wakefield Street, Adelaide, SA 5000
Postal: PO Box 7202 Hutt Street, Adelaide, SA
Telephone: (08) 8223 5217

Offenders Aid and Rehabilitation Services of SA (OARS)

Illicit Drug Intervention Program

Address: 234 Sturt Street, Adelaide, SA 5000
Telephone: (08) 8210 0811

Salvation Army Addiction Services

Bridge Program

Address: 62 Whitmore Square, Adelaide SA 5000
Telephone: (08) 8110 8546

Sobering Up Unit

Address: 62A Whitmore Square, Adelaide SA 5000
Telephone: (08) 8212 2855

Towards Independence

Address: 62 Whitmore Square, Adelaide SA 5000
Telephone: (08) 8110 8500

Streetlink Youth Health Service

Address: 1st Floor, 27 Gresham Street, Adelaide 5000
Telephone: (08) 8231 4844
Email: streetlink@ucwesleyadelaide.org.au

APPENDIX 7

Qualitative Study Participants

Name	Age	Drug History
<i>Pilot Study</i>		
Sarah	24	Former user
<i>Main Study</i>		
Aimee	18	Non-user
Emmy	21	Non-user
Simone	18	Non-user
Daniela	21	Non-user
Michael	25	User
Todd	24	User
Susan	23	User
Frances	20	Non-user
Alex	23	User
Luke	22	Non-user
Becky	18	Non-user
William	22	Non-user
Carly	19	Non-user
Sam	19	Non-user
Veronica	18	User
Tom	21	User
Nathan	25	User
Matthew	25	Former user
Tim	25	Former user
Tess	19	Non-user
Ariel	24	User
Eddie	23	Non-user

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