

**What Moves You?
Raving at the Confluence of Musical Space, Headspace, Temporal Space, and Cultural
Space**

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ABSTRACT

This study is an ethnographic investigation of rave and its culture, focusing on the motivational structures of individuals within the community. The aim of the study is to better understand the nature and form of raves as event, in terms of art-form/genre, and as a subculture (*and* as subcultural phenomenon) by a deeper understanding of what it means to and for the individuals who choose to participate and often make it a large component of their lives and identity. Relying heavily on primary observation and interview data, the study questions the interactivity of how ravers construct their experiences raving as desirable and significantly meaningful, how the processes of performance and reception/interpretation collaborate in creation of the “artistic content” of a rave, and how the prevalent interactions entangle emergent shifts in cognition, social formation, and behaviours within and extending beyond the primary rave environment.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Characterizing the “escapist” impulse in contemporary popular culture as simple escapism *qua* escape – escape into a negative space, obeying an entropic urge: a drive that impels one to dissipate their energies of attention through inert distractions as a means to a supposed respite from the worldly pressures of “reality” – is a still-common and dismissive, sometimes alarmist, castigation; however, this reductionism makes for weak theory. It is true, the totalitarian conception of popular culture as conceived by Theodor Adorno as pure form, as a mere standardized consumption model limited to meaningless entertainment “product,” a hegemonic enforcer with the function of a conformist release valve for the tensions of industrialized living, ultimately fanatical and dissociative from one’s personal reality,¹ has been quite extensively challenged. The problem of escapism remains still: once escapism is invoked, the tendency is to defer to something very akin to the Adornian model – whether one considers this escapism a negative thing or a useful thing. It is necessary to problematize our understanding of escapism when we talk about popular culture.

Adorno was correct about quite a lot. But, despite how penetrating his arguments could be, when it came to observing popular culture dispassionately and in its entirety, his acuity was forever in want of recognizing one core axis of nuance: while Adorno was deftly skilled at identifying oppression – particularly that oppression of the intellect and of the spirit of the autonomous individual, something that it has been suggested makes him a product of his times – in his ostensibly justifiable concern and fear over populist, even fascist strains in pop-culture and especially the pop-culture industry, he habitually failed to recognize subversion and innovation

¹ The thrust of his much reprinted 1941 essay “On Popular Music.” A view he elaborated but never modified in any noteworthy way thenceforth.

within the popular domain. These noble things he reserved for “serious” art forms (like a symphony or a string quartet). There was, for him, nothing radical about radical pop-culture, just a bunch of alienated slaves, forgetting themselves in pointless pleasure.

One of the concepts central to Adornian escapism through popular culture is a process adapted from Freud known as *identification*. On the surface it may sound similar to *integration*, something I will discuss later, but the implications and end-results could not be more antithetical. While integration leads to a more complex personhood, healthy and robust, Adorno argues that what pop culture offers is an opportunity for identification that simplifies, dumbs-down, or otherwise reduces or impoverishes the individual. To paraphrase the concept: identification is a subhuman process of surface-level aping.² The identifying person replicates gestures and recognizes simulations or “allegorical representations” of modes of genuine behaviors – such as the real sensual pleasure of dancing.³ He invokes the image of donning magic culture-masks to don and disappear into the personae of some archetype or idol in a ritual performance, a practice encouraged so that disenfranchised subjects form an “identification with the aggressor”⁴ – a sort of Stockholm syndrome; a vicarious illusion of sharing powers of authorship and agency commanded by those who dictate and distribute cultural product and ideology.⁵ Identification hypostatizes the collective order with near-cosmic authority.⁶ This identification further perverts the idea of individual potency – be it genius or force of will or what-have-you – for a dependency on social homogeneity; the ability to conform, adapt, hold one’s own amidst a group’s standards, to be *liked* sublimates the drive towards being a force of truly independent

² Robert W. Witkin, *Adorno On Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 19.

³ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 54. Or *actual* cosmic authority such as Adorno discussed in his highly critical analysis of the astrological column in the LA Times: “The Stars Down To Earth: Los Angeles Times Astrology Column.”

individualism, autonomously defined, functioning, and gratified according to some higher moral truth.⁷ Even if he overlooked potential sources of it, Adorno certainly did not overlook feints of subversion: he called out the open subversion and substitution of individualism, justifiable to the self, by groupthink; the legerdemain exchanging popularity in place of quality. But what happens when a popular music and (sub)culture arise out of some of the same criticisms of mainstream pop and culture that Adorno had and is able to propagate without the machinery of production that was so centrally in the crosshairs of the cultural Marxist criticisms leveled by Adorno and the Frankfurt school?

Rave culture is an interesting amalgam of ideas; part hippie-commune ideology, part nostalgic tribalism, part shamanism, part techno-futurism, part entrepreneurial, part French salon, part revolutionary, part neo-family values, and all party. Raves themselves are essentially nocturnal dance parties set to EDM (a blanket term for the plethora of subgenres comprising Electronic Dance Music), featuring performances by multiple live DJs, extravagant lighting effects, themes, costume dress, the use of designer/party drugs like MDMA, and very, very loud sound systems with ample sub-bass. A rave venue will usually be set up to include three main areas: the most important is the dance floor (this includes the DJ's stage), there is some sort of bar, and there is a very necessary "chill-out zone" where participants can withdraw from the frantic energy of an electric dance floor to catch their breath, calm down if they are "freaking out" from drugs, over-stimulation, or any other reason, or just take a quiet moment or actually talk with some of their peers (something next to impossible on the deafening dance floor). Events will not start until late evening and carry through until three, four, five o'clock in the morning; sometimes ravers emerge to find themselves greeting the dawn or going for breakfast after. Even

⁷ Ibid.,78.

at such hours, often there are smaller, more intimate afterparties where people can “debrief,” socialize more intimately, talk, share music and ideas – or continue the party!

The community at large is of a big-tent philosophy and within rave subculture are innumerable smaller scenes tied to aesthetic variations, geography, and the interpersonal connections of the set of people who actually populate the raves of any given scene. The aesthetic determinates of a scene are usually defined by the group’s preference in EDM subgenre (not to say that a rave will be exclusively set to music in that genre, by any means) but also sometimes by exceptional event theming, idiosyncratic party execution, style-of-venue preference, or a particularly unique community dynamic. All ravers share a common code known as P.L.U.R. (Peace, Love, Unity, and Respect) intended to enforce safety and encourage social harmony, individual-expression, and an experience of self-worth through mutual recognition (an important dynamic of engaged respect).

While some of the constituent elements, features, and activities of raving may experience overlap with other pass-times, social groups, or experiences, it is nonetheless possible to draw clear boundaries around the uniqueness of raving. This is because a certain style of execution prevails, a clear and culturally defined value-set shapes the intentions and assumptions underpinning everything and everyone present, and the proportions and method of combining the admixture of ingredients that make a rave – as will be explored in the pages to come – is distinct from that of even its closest cousin activities. There is a field of complex psycho-social-aesthetic interactions at work informing the uniqueness of what is truly a phenomenon in the proper meaning of the term.

To advance the study of this subculture and crack its ebullient surface for a look at the inner-workings beneath, the project was designed and executed as follows:

1) Preliminary research and study design: a grounding in the methods and research philosophy of ethnography; a grounding in the philosophy and methodologies of phenomenology; grounding in motivational psychology; a sampling of the literature on altered states of consciousness in music; neurological studies on physiological brain-states in altered states of consciousness, and on the relationship of brain activity in different states to stimuli; academic and insider texts on rave and club cultures.

2) Field work: Observational and participant observational research in clubs and at raves in the Tri-Cities and GTA regions; semi-structured interviews with eight individuals gathered through random sampling based on response to flyers posted at the raves and clubs visited and through the snowball technique; informal discussion with clubbers and ravers at nightlife events.

3) Interpretation: Transcription and coding of interview texts according in order to identify “clusters of meaning” and transcendent themes in participant responses; comparison of coded interviews with my own observational notes and preliminary research in generating “textural” and “structural” descriptions⁸ of participants’ experiences and a full structural description of a first-hand rave experience.

4) Follow-up Research: Reassessment of the pertinent questions of this study, followed by further scholarly research enlightened by prevalent themes identified within interviews and field-notes and the appearance of certain patterns of phenomena; additional observational research and informal dialogue.

5) Conclusions: Further analysis of individual phenomenological and cultural patterns in accordance with the lens of my thesis.

⁸ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (3rd edition) (Los Angeles: Sage, 2013), 82.

In the field of motivational psychology, Dmitry Leontiev asserts that, within the different schools of thought and their own specific theories of motivation, there are four pillars which define the aspects of human motivation: relational, teleological, culture-bound, and personal.⁹

- Concerning the relational: it will be shown how the rave provides a nexus point for individuals to define relationships of both internal and external natures, between subjective and objective forces and agencies;
- Concerning the teleological: it will be demonstrated how rave is at once teleologically constructed through its aesthetic experience and paradoxically autotelic in its execution;
- Concerning the culture-bound: a description will be provided of the cultural values, aesthetics, and behavioural constructs that rave provides as informative measures with the intention of supporting the *press*¹⁰ of the rave as a social environment;
- Concerning the personal: it will be explained how the individual meets the four other pillars in a unique equation, structuring data that is phenomenological, learned, proscriptive, and interpretive in a meaningful way;

Likewise, it is ultimately the structure of this motivational data that will define its personal meaning and therefore provide insight as to the “motivation,” “meaning,” and “purpose” of raving.

Therefore, instead of an entropic “escapist” phenomenon, the rave context allows its participants an opportunity to engage creatively – that is, *productively* – in both an alternative

⁹ Dmitry A. Leontiev, “Reemerging Perspective For the Psychology Of Motivation,” in *Motivation, Consciousness and Self-Regulation*, ed. Dmitry A. Leontiev (New York: Nova Science, 2012), 6.

¹⁰ Press is to the object/world as need is to the individual (Leontiev, “From Drive To Need & Further,” 13). It will become readily apparent as this study unfolds how the rave is an environment that places dynamic needs upon its human and non-human constituents in order to function properly and at its utmost: as a social space, as an art space, and as a work of installation/performance art itself. The bilateral relationship is in this way much like the integration of habitat and inhabitant in forming an ecosystem or, perhaps in this situation, a biome of sorts.

social-aesthetic model and a related alternate state of consciousness, facilitating dialogue and eventual dialectic with their lives and selves as lived within mainstream culture. The rave is a “multi-plane,” collaborative space that facilitates the restructuring of phenomenological data and experience (originating from both within and outside the rave) into meaningful structures for the participants; it is an interactive “field environment” informed by a predominantly Eudaimonic impulse.

The major questions at play in this study are:

- 1) What is the motivation behind participation for the individual?
- 2) How does the nature of the altered states of consciousness (ASC) experienced (shared and individual) interact with the social organization/interaction between cultural participants (ravers), particularly the themes of individualism and personal fulfilment beside those of collective consciousness and social collectivism, within the hyperaesthetically rendered environment?

CHAPTER TWO: OVERVIEW OF CONTENT

2.1. PHENOMENOLOGY

Phenomenological investigation is qualitative and focuses on lived human experience through a philosophical lens.¹¹ Its objective is to reduce the description of these experiences to the description of a “universal essence,”¹² that will “grasp the very nature of the thing.”¹³ The “essence” of the subject of a phenomenological study exists within that which is “shared between individual’s experiences” as phenomenology asserts “the reality of an object is only perceived within the meaning of the experience of an individual.”¹⁴ The idea of a subject-object dichotomy is thus rejected.¹⁵

The philosophy of phenomenology is wonderfully sensitive to the concerns of ethnographic and to ethnomusicological research, as Harris Berger propounds: “any given collection of sounds can be grasped in more than one way, and the job of ethnomusicological ethnography is to understand how music sound emerges in the experience of those who make it and listen to it.”¹⁶ A phenomenological consideration allows one to examine how musical experience is “embedded with affect, style, value – meaning in the broadest sense of the word.”¹⁷ The interpretation of experience is, for the individual, the expression of a process rather than an *ipso facto* conclusion. An ethnomusicologist may already discard concerns of judging musical

¹¹ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*, 11.

¹² *Ibid.*, 76.

¹³ Max Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience* (New York: State University Of New York Press), 90. Quoted in Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry...*, 76.

¹⁴ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry...*, 77.

¹⁵ “Thus, reality...is divided not into subjects and objects, but into the dual Cartesian nature of both subjects and objects as they appear in consciousness.” *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁶ Harris M. Berger, “Phenomenology and the Ethnography of Popular Music: Ethnomusicology at the juncture of Cultural Studies and Folklore,” in *Shadows In The Field: New Perspectives For Fieldwork In Ethnomusicology* (2nd edition), ed. Gregory F. Barz and Timothy J. Cooley (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 70.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.

“quality” or of accommodating for prestige hierarchies. Instead, they may employ the wisdom of phenomenology to consider how the interpretation of experience exists as a social/socialized/socializing practice,¹⁸ as a concept (however intangible the *essence* may be) that exists in both individual subjectivity *and* the objective, tangible world.

2.2. FIELDWORK

The primary data for this study comes from fieldwork consisting of one-on-one interviews and participant observation, with a clear emphasis on the information gathered through interviews. Observation sessions consisted of attending rave events at different venues scattered throughout The Greater Toronto Area and the Tri-Cities area of Kitchener, Waterloo, and Cambridge; most of these events were affiliated with the “Happy Hardcore” rave subculture, or “scene.” I held semi-structured interview sessions with seven participants, each lasting from around thirty-minutes to about an hour with fifteen scripted questions and opportunity for elaboration, subject-led digression, follow-up questions, and critical dialogue. One participant chose to withdraw. The primary data in my analysis comes from the six remaining interviews held with the Happy Hardcore ravers Tal, Emile, both of whom are also DJs and organizers within the community, and veteran raver Emily; Gaston, owner-operator of a gallery/venue space in downtown Kitchener; Laura, clubber and sometimes raver; and Marika, clubber and friend of Laura. I considered it essential to include interviews with subjects outside the rave scene in order to provide context and counterpoint to the rave experience as compared to its more civilian

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 73.

cousin-activity: clubbing.¹⁹ The data from non-raver subjects provides a powerful tool towards distilling what within the ravers' reported experiences is uniquely of the *essence* of raving.

2.3. RAVE VALUES

Raving is unique intentional experience attained through a collective expression of values shared amongst the community when they congregate for a rave. Not surprisingly then, one of the essential values to raving is *an emphasis on the new and the novel*. Within the culture, an impression of “uniqueness” is a key measure of the quality or success of an event. Organizers are at pains to devise clever event themes, venue décor, and interactive gimmicks for their guests to engage with and to book exciting combinations of DJs that will not only satisfy the anticipations of those attending, but fulfil the expectation of something added: the offer of an unrepeatabe and unsimulatable experience.

A collaborative approach to creating is rave's *sine qua non* in executing its novelty objective. The musical performances of DJs are fluid, quasi-structured sequences, responsive in turn to the crowd's initial and subsequent responses to the DJ's. Reception and creative action blur into a single feedback process as the crowd interprets the music, primarily through dance, and the DJ interprets the crowd and directs their set according to this interpretation. Both are also responding to the locale and internal environment designed by the organizers, decorators, and tech crew (or, if not a formal crew, at least the individual(s) responsible for lighting, atmospheric effects, and the all-important sound-system itself). The result is a synergistic field of expressive

¹⁹ For the purposes of this study, “raving” will apply only to activities and events operating/hosted by/within/for the raving community in the style, ethos, and *élan* of the subculture and “clubbing” will refer to any activity of going out to a bar or club for the purposes of socializing and dancing, etc. that is *not* administrated or otherwise operating within the rave subculture. Regardless of any superficial similarities, the cultural differentiation is operative (and, indeed it seems, perhaps even *operant*).

action and reception, a horizontal collaboration effort towards the true art object on exhibition: the rave itself.

When it comes to the infamous relationship of rave culture to drugs, the realities of drug-taking are surprisingly utilitarian. The role of drug-use is first and foremost as a tool towards reordering social and behavioral norms. The most popular drugs in rave culture (the top two being ecstasy and alcohol) are ones that have the typical effect of opening one up emotionally. Ravers' praise the use of psychotropics for their capacity to foster feelings of empathy between strangers rather than for their habit of lighting up the brain's pleasure centers. In addition to the "tribe" mentality shared by the rave community, using illicit drugs in a group can further the tribal bonding experience of sharing an exclusive experience and knowledge. The morality of drug use is pragmatic in the culture based on how a drug is used once taken, rather than what that drug is. In general, drugs are not seen as a viable surrogate for genuine quality experience, however, they can be used in order to augment one's personal sensory and emotional toolkit in order to open them up to new experiences and new social modes of behavior. For experienced ravers or those already ready to be emotionally and socially open, who feel safe enough and familiar enough in the rave environment to allow themselves that vulnerability in a sober state, the use of drugs can become optional, even redundant for some. Drugs provide a fast lane to reaching a sense of familiarity.

P.L.U.R. is the unifying credo of the culture. It stands for Peace, Love, Unity, and Respect. It is deeply tied to the role of drug-taking in rave culture as, essentially, the socio-behavioral goal of the community. The endgame of including empathy stimulating drugs in the social fabric is to foster a norm of giving and receiving P.L.U.R. on an unconditional, uniform basis, amongst a room, sometimes entire building, full of people who may or may not even know

one another's names. It is a model state that provides an emotional modality for ravers to mediate their perceptions and actions in a conscious manner. To be one who exhibits (and reciprocally inspires) P.L.U.R. is considered a virtue and provides the impetus for each individual to cooperate as a harmonious module of the social environment, thus gaining the acceptance and praise of their peer group by being accepting of their peer group. It is another type of creative feedback loop, this one a harmonizer to smooth out the solipsistic differences (differences that can, ironically, be hazardously exacerbated by the present intoxication) that might otherwise clash in the complex web of individuals' interactions – this loop cycling from a core-emotional level.

While central, instead of a defined feature, music is an integrated aspect of environment at raves. It is primarily this aural environment that ravers respond to and interact within, an engagement with the environment as re-defined by musical sound that grounds ravers' active sense of being in the world. The full *presence* or essence of electronic dance music (EDM) does not fully exist in separation from its reception by an audience in a rave context and the unfolding bilateral compositional-performance practice that defines a live DJ set (as outlined above).²⁰ In addition to saturating the audio environment, thereby defining the scope of possible communication/interaction between individuals as a choice of primarily non-verbal methods, it also establishes the body in a coded cultural environment. Ideal behavior in relationship to the music parallels ideals about behavior in relationship to the social order and its members (P.L.U.R., cooperation, self-expression, etc.). The rave becomes an aesthetic environment with

²⁰ In reference Husserl's views on the "dual Cartesian nature" of subject-object relations, it is always interesting to consider the interstice that is quintessential "musical sound," located in the intangible zone where physical sound waves and conscious interpretation meet – a no-man's-land of enframement. Although that constitutes another debate altogether than what can be addressed here, it is useful to be, at least tangentially, open to that realm of questioning, whichever view one holds.

all the relevant values inherent in defining desirable characteristics in aesthetic properties (in this case in music and dancing); these values then blend the social and aesthetic structures into a single, real, inhabitable space. Mores, art, and morality/moral behavior become inextricable this way. Music integrates and synergizes the individuals' subjective environment of cognition with the objective physical environment of embodiment.

The entire social structure of a rave would fall apart if it were not so that the primary concern of ravers is for the health of the social body. The nature of the music aims toward this end through its cooperative practice of collective voice and the paradigm of positive social engagement through dance. Rave culture espouses the link between individual and social health, healing, and improvement. From its "check-in" culture of ravers monitoring each other's state for signs of distress to the onus on responsible organizers to ensure proper access to water, fresh air, a place to "chill-out," emergency services, and sometimes even some kind of food, there is a deep sense of mutual support and responsibility shared among community members. There is a call to care for self and others. The idea behind raving's "tribal" identity is to provide an explicit sense of access to the benefits of community and family and presents itself as an alternative to facing alone what it recognizes as the social ills afflicting mainstream culture (such as poverty, discrimination, isolation, crime, etc.) or for those otherwise ostracized. Or, it can be a supplementary source of belonging for those who, while not facing outright adversity, seek to find a social context to which they can belong and among whom they can build important relationships whilst they contribute to a social image that reflects their own values and ideas of what it means to have a meaningful life. Sometimes this comes to neophytes in the form of an unexpected revelatory experience.

Through the experimental social, emotional, aesthetic, and drug-induced experiences gathered across the sum of their raving career, ravers learn to develop what can be considered a state of “raver’s consciousness” that persists beyond the realm of the party. If we understand what Ruth Herbert’s critique is at pains to emphasize when she says that when we discuss altered cognitive states we must learn to conceptualize the less theatrically dramatic shifts – we must not fail to recognize “changes of awareness”²¹ – then it is possible to grasp a model of *perception as a way of being*. Consciousness being *eo ipso* the “consciousness of” – i.e. an “awareness of” – something, including of whatever is perceived, the reception²² and organization of information, against a back-drop of self-awareness; it is continual *process*. This special “raver’s” conscious state is not a type of outwardly-manifesting trance, psychosis, nor some secondary after-effect of what goes on at raves. It is an adaptable and robust cognitive model that, once mastered can be applied to order the content of consciousness (all that one is conscious of) in a meaningful way, to intentionally perceive the world and future experiences to meaningful ends. This awareness includes a heightened motivation competence, where the possessor of this skill²³ is able to recognize what they wish to attain or achieve and how they will navigate attaining their goals. The raver’s consciousness opens a doorway to self-integration of one’s values and practice into daily reality.

Raving is energized by a uniquely functioning value-set, socially and artistically. As such, I have tuned my study to be sensitive to analysing raving’s particular solution towards the gratification of specific essential human drives. Rave events are optimized towards a particular

²¹ Ruth Herbert, “Reconsidering Music and Trance: Cross-cultural Differences and Cross-disciplinary Perspectives,” *Ethnomusicology Forum* vol. 20 no. 2 (2011): 206.

²² *Reception* in the full implicature of the term as employed in reception theory, for instance.

²³ Referring to the nature of this state of consciousness as also a skill is appropriate in the same way that that it is appropriate to refer to the altered state of consciousness accessed by “enlightened” experts in meditation as *learned* and maintained through their meditation practices – i.e. these powers of perception are specialized manifestation of practiced skill.

type of experience and so it is necessary to address the subject, so to speak, on its own terms - recognizing the moral and philosophical assumptions that formulate the basis of the subculture. This is, in part, why I chose to include non-raver “clubber” participants in my interviews, to aid the differentiation between two activities that appear very similar from a distance. A prominent example will be the distinction between raving’s P.L.U.R. informed interactions and some of those reported by the participants in clubs whose patrons operate without P.L.U.R.’s guiding force. There are no attempts to hierarchize the relationship between cultures – only to emphasize rave’s distinct ontology, that there is enough that sets it apart that if I were to perform the same study on even rave cultures’ closest relative (club culture), I would have to change approach at the level of my basic informative, structuring assumptions. Therefore, just as it is not possible to accurately judge club culture by rave culture’s standards, it is equally unfair and inaccurate to assume to judge, analyse, or otherwise study rave without understanding and responding to what its values and priorities. It is essential to recognize rave on its own terms in order to critique with any authority.

2.4. PROVISIONAL CONCLUSIONS

Perceiving meaning is an intentional act of consciousness, not a passive impression. Rather than a passive relief, raving offers an environment of deep engagement where ravers can practice motivational self-determination, design and act on their goals. They receive real-time feedback in their interactions on individual and larger social/community scales that positively reinforce their sense of agency. At the same time ravers embark on a long-term process of learning healthy skills towards maintaining an outlook that is ultimately positive and empowering. All-in-all, rave provides an avenue for a project of Eudaimonic living, striving

towards personal growth and the growth and management of a P.L.U.R.-value based community. At its essence, raving is not an exercise in “pure escapism,” which is entropic, or a way to merely “blow off steam.” The sense of “escape” it offers is rather an attempt at actively defining and creating a new situation of reality, an ambition to establish a “new normal” as a possible alternative to the status quo. At least, it is the opportunity to do so for those who wish.

2.5. CHOICES AND THE QUESTION OF MOTIVATION

In this sense, the following argument is not so concerned to reject defining raving as escapism – indeed, the interview subjects featured use the words “escapism” and “escapist” freely – and there certainly is a feature of escape from the conventions of everyday pragmatic reality. Rather, the task required is to reconstitute (rather than yet another “deconstruction”) an understanding of a new and profound paradigm of constructive escapism in contradistinction to the traditional definition²⁴ and the classic associations with the term as employed by thinkers like Adorno and the innumerable other critics of popular culture.

This is no truer than in the context of discussing the culture of electronic dance music (EDM) and rave events; nocturnal dance parties set to EDM, often featuring performances by multiple DJs, extravagant lighting effects, themes, costume dress, the use of designer drugs like MDMA, and very, very loud sound systems with ample sub-bass. These subcultural events temporarily transform the space they occupy into a closed microcosm. The rave old-school came to refer to these environments as a “T.A.Z.” or “Temporary Autonomous Zone.” As one research participant in this study, Emile,²⁵ explains:

²⁴ What I implied above to be “pure escapism.”

²⁵ The names of all participants in this study have been changed to retain participant anonymity and protect personal privacy.

The idea is when you step into this environment, you are... basically leaving the world around you, you are leaving its laws, its conventions, and you are stepping into an entirely new set of ones that is based around personal expression... dependent on... how people design... the environment that overall sets the emotional timbre of the evening and of what people want out of it... that's going to attract certain kinds of participants.

Though the term itself is not in as common use today as it would have been in the 1990s, the concept has become tacitly embedded in the culture and informs the construction of rave events in a very prominent way.

An emphasis on “free” self-expression facilitates the embodiment of liminal “autonomous identities” within the T.A.Z., where the hierarchies of the outside world become fluid and one’s roles or persona outside the event – even one’s given name – become secondary, even optional.²⁶ A person’s lived identity within this narrow social and temporal context, as expressed through the nature of their engagement with the rave and other participants, temporarily overrides the understanding of who they are understood to be, and their available schema for behaving “like themselves,” that instructs operations in the outside world in that person’s professional and personal life.

We will return to these ideas in greater detail later to break down (and eliminate the need for) the use of so many quotation marks, but, for the meantime, this basic framing is enough to demonstrate how raving might easily be construed as an exercise in escapist fantasy, where a person dons a make-believe persona for a brief spell of *play* in fantasy-land, secluded, perhaps indeed sheltered, from “reality.”

But why on earth raving then? If the core motivation is to duck the hum-drum banality or the stress of daily life, there are many familiar and far easier, more readily accessible, and less taxing, ways to do so. Reading, watching TV or films, recreational sports or exercise, arts, video

²⁶ Phil Jackson, *Inside Clubbing: Sensual Experiments in the Art of Being Human* (New York: Berg, 2004), 100.

games, hobbyist pastimes, conventional dance clubs, and religious or spiritual activities are far more familiar means to accomplish this.... But these are all activities that ravers are as likely to engage in as non-ravers. Yet, for those so-inclined towards raving – for whatever period of their life that includes – the above are not sufficient to sublimate or satisfy their drive to rave.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to understand my subject and address my research questions to their full complexity it was necessary to investigate existing the literature on five major topics: on raving itself, the philosophy of phenomenology, motivational psychology, music and altered states of consciousness, and music and the brain. A surprising hurdle facing this study (though it amounts to a great opportunity to fill a knowledge gap) is that there is very little published musicology on rave; most of the work has been by sociologists and the scant ethnomusicological essays dealing with the subject have tended to not get far past rave's mythic/ritual trappings, trying to situate them by comparison with traditional shamanic cultures and practices. There is an apparent shyness in the literature from identifying and analysing in any depth unique aspects of rave's music and musical-social practices. Musical and performance analysis is totally absent. In all my necessary avenues of inquiry, it was difficult to find much published scholarly work dealing directly with raving – especially in a musical context – and many of the published materials that do exist on rave amounted to non-scholarly emic descriptions with all commentary being apologetic rather than analytical. These have their uses too, but certainly do not compensate for the lack of academic resources. That said, by drawing from research outside the immediate boundaries of my subject and applying a cross-disciplinary approach, it was very easy to discover connections across ideas and theories that can be applied to the serious study of raving.

3.1. ON RAVE

Despite my complaints of sparsity in the field, what scholarly research has been done on the rave phenomenon is enlightening and rich within the purview of each study's focus. The sociological descriptions of the culture and style are particularly full and accurate. It is possible

to read the works below and emerge with a reasonable expectation of what one would encounter should one become so compelled as to attend a rave for their first time. A foregrounding, then, in some of what has been written on raving already will establish a little background knowledge to situate the present investigation. Jimi Fritz's *Rave Culture: An Insider's Overview* is an attempt to provide just that for the lay-person unfamiliar with the culture and the aesthetic. A thoroughly biased account of rave culture, he nonetheless does not pretend to a scholarly perspective but writes as a community member informed by that community's experiences and ideologies. Therein lies his value as a resource, in addition to his heavy inclusion of quotes taken from other ravers on a range of topics about raving. Fritz characterizes rave as a culture of "tribal" music, or a "neo-tribal" ritual community.²⁷ He breaks down an etymology of the term "Rave" as connoting a "cultural phenomenon...involv[ing] a new electronic musical form, and the ritualistic, neo-tribalistic gathering of people who dance all night to achieve a collective trance state"²⁸ in a hyperaesthetic environment of light and sound.²⁹ He gives an essentialist perspective of rave's lineage in Western European and North American subcultures as being a continuation of a pattern of "fascination with the subconscious and dream worlds, the rejection and transformation of political ideas, experimentation with mind-expanding drugs, the creation of new technologies, new directions in music and art, a change in attitude towards sexuality, issues around personal freedom and the creation of new tribalistic rituals."³⁰ All this with the trajectory of "cultural revolution" light by the fuel of artwork created in the attempts of artists to expand their consciousness into new realms." The music is synchronic and synaesthetic in style,

²⁷ Jimi Fritz, *Rave Culture: An Insider's Overview* (Victoria: SmallFry Press, 1999), 5, 7.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 24. Oddly he forgets to include the tactile sensuality in his characterization of the environment, though he does include this facet when later discussing the relationship of sensuality and sexuality in rave – though what he writes on that subject is only tangentially related to the materiel of this study though the topic of social behavioral norms.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 20

blending old and new works and styles, internal and external references. The music becomes “a three-dimensional sound environment that we both react and interact with,” an environment requiring new modes of perception (“listening skills”) to navigate intelligibly. One is given the opportunity to “participate in the meaning and intention of the music”³¹ as a part of this internal and external relationship the music has, with itself, and with each listener.

He illustrates an anti-ego culture and describes the apothecotic rave experience as when a party “goes off,” which he characterizes as a “transcendental group-mind experience” that is a meditative experience of “life itself.”³² It is towards this primary cognitive event he asserts that all raves are *driven*, however it is not a guaranteed event or “outcome” and not a necessary condition to fulfill for a successful rave experience.³³ The spiritual/psychical aspect of raving is not fulfilled by such a specific goal, but the total process; the end is the means. Fritz asserts ravers’ shift in consciousness is far more the product of musical stimuli than of pharmacological ones.³⁴ Regardless of the state of the shamanistically driven “journey” towards meeting in the place of this “group mind,” if the DJs possess the “skills and sensitivity”³⁵ “at some point the personal experience of the individual dancer then becomes a collective one.”³⁶ According to Fritz, and this is echoed in other authors, like Sarah Thornton, social differences disintegrate in the rave community and empathy becomes the only relevant expression of subject to subject relationship.³⁷ He promotes raving as a healthy and social response to stress, disintegration, and lack of fulfillment that many struggle with in the modern world.

³¹ Ibid., 77.

³² Ibid., 40.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 41.

³⁵ Ibid., 40.

³⁶ Ibid., 44.

³⁷ Ibid., 40.

“Drugs, Music, and Ideology: a Social Pharmacological Interpretation of the Acid House Movement” is an article by Thomas Lyttle and Michael Montagne that looks at the relationship between those three factors in the Acid House (an EDM subgenre) scene. They found that, despite the allusion of its moniker, Acid House was physiologically more reliant on musical aspects (especially repetitive drum sounds and tempi) as well as set and setting (social, interpersonal contexts) than it was on the actual use of pharmacological agents to affect its listeners.³⁸ “Acid House music, environmental designs, and other paraphernalia....are intended to create or enhance a psychedelic experience.”³⁹

While the primary action belonged to the aesthetic agents, they concluded that drugs do not create any new sounds (or other types of sensual stimuli) but do expand the possibilities of experience or reception⁴⁰ – rendered in the more phenomenological language of this thesis: expand the available potential configurations of perception and possibilities of intention. However, they found culture was mainly about “contradistinction to normative values in society” and that the emergent feeling among some members that, as a means to exist in a way that expresses these alternative values “the music provides a positive alternative experience or state-of-consciousness to that provided by drug taking or sexual behaviour.”⁴¹ Lyttle and Montagne describe, effectively, a social movement about movement through movement; an individualist, hedonistic entertainment over the mainstream’s preeminent conventions of work ethic and morality, an outlet for the frustrations and futility encompassed in their subjects experiences of mainstream culture as they reject it as incongruous to their ideals, or indeed a paradoxical, ironic

³⁸ Thomas Lyttle and Michael Montagne, “Drugs, Music, and Ideology: A Social Pharmacological Interpretation of the Acid House Movement,” *The International Journal of the Addictions* vol. 27, no. 10 (1992), 1669.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 11702.

⁴¹ Ibid., 1665.

subversion of them, summarized as a “product of...an effective loss of life...distanced idealism...If Rap is about asserting your ego to master a hostile world, then House is about surrendering control to attain a fragile, fleeting state of grace.”⁴² This state of grace, the duo conclude, is a state of temporary escapism⁴³ – though they assume escapism and meaningful experience not to be preclusive of one another.

Phil Jackson’s *Inside Clubbing: Sensual Experiments in the Art of Being Human*, is a socio-cultural journey into the heart of darkness. He focuses on the “embodied” nature of what he broadly defines as clubbing. Jackson writes from a distinctly UK perspective where the club culture has far more thoroughly coopted rave culture, allowing him to use “clubbing” as a catch-all in a way that does not translate its integrity in a North American context; his set includes regular clubs, underground events, private house parties, illegal raves...the gamut. He defines his focus of embodied knowledge as social and sensual knowledge that becomes a part of an individual’s integral physical existence in the world – thus taking the position axiomatically that what becomes embodied in the club is not autonomous from that person’s daily life, and therefore rejects the notion of clubbing (in his use of the word) as a dissimulated or dissimulating activity/event.⁴⁴

To define the process of embodiment, he adopts Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*⁴⁵ and retains it as a key construct throughout the study. Jackson writes, “the sensual intensity of clubbing generates an alternative body in which the structuring framework of the habitus is temporarily erased...this erasure underpins the modified social world you encounter through

⁴² J. Savage, “Let’s play House,” *London Observer*, October 23, 1988, 41. Quoted in Lyttle and Montagne, “Drugs, Music, and Ideology,” 1668.

⁴³ An interpretation my own findings do not wholly agree with. In this thesis, it will be shown that Lyttle and Montagne’s observation is not incorrect, per say, but fails to look sharply enough to uncover the deeper machinery of [what they call] grace.

⁴⁴ Jackson, *Inside Clubbing*, 1.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

clubbing.”⁴⁶ The habitus is shaped in its most embodied sense as the body in which one experiences consciousness is shaped in both work and, in this case, by pleasure.⁴⁷ “our bodies are always immersed in the world.... [T]his point of immersion is structured culturally, ideologically and emotionally so that it orders and even controls our capacity to perceive and experience the world.”⁴⁸ He supplements his model of differentiation and individuation with a second through-line theory: the role of a Foucaultian “club gaze.”⁴⁹ However, Jackson subverts the power-notions of both of these constructs and reconfigures them to demonstrate the horizontal social structure of the club/rave. In the case of gaze, he claims its oppressive nature to be subverted by parity among all classes, genders, sexualities, etc. so that it becomes as a multilateral communal activity;⁵⁰ now gaze and habitus interact as a communicative medium charged by notions of performance and audience, agent and voyeur, disintegrating and reordering the structures in which “our social encounters arise out of the body through which we live them.”⁵¹ He argues through this “socio-sensual” dynamic that “sensual states possess local power”⁵² in somewhat a reversal of Foucault’s writings on the body as a locus of Power.

Jackson’s book embodies the hypothesis that raving, as a subjective phenomenon, is quintessentially defined by the sensation of a transcendent collective experience of the kind Sigmund Freud recounts his friend Romain Rolland explaining to him in correspondences as the source of all religious energies as “a sensation of ‘eternity,’ a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded – as it were, ‘oceanic.’”⁵³ Jackson admits the transcending rave experience may be a

⁴⁶ Ibid., 5.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 1.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 9.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 1.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization And Its Discontents* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), 24.

“sensual trick” (or, what he really implies: an action of what he calls “socio-sensual power”) as all the senses are blurred in the rave environment,⁵⁴ providing what I would qualify: the opportunity of disorientation. He attempts to pitch between phenomenal reality and objectivity as benchmarks of significance but ultimately appears to have settled beforehand to agree with the validity of experiences Freud and Rolland concurred were “pure subjective fact,”⁵⁵ and that this liminal “subjective objectivity” is the true state of transcendent rave experience – and that it is indeed “true” rather than pure illusion, whatever its origins. As a buttress, he prefers to stress the quasi-transcendent attributes inherent to intense “Dionysian sociality,” as a source of the necessary gestalt for a prototypical rave experience.⁵⁶ At the same time, he extolls the embodiedness of rave’s ASC: “it is a physicality that takes you so far beyond the everyday experience of your own social body that it feels like a sublime manifestation of self-in-world,” furthering his intentional conflation of physical and social bodies. Either way, he makes the point that the overall experience, and the special ASC experiences, are qualified by their totality as an experience of gestalt; a rave is not all about the singular moments of intensity, but the overall structural experiences unravelling across the entire time-span of the rave event, between multiple events or other engagements with the subculture, and these experiences and relationships’ context within the broader field of life circumstances of the participant.⁵⁷ Jackson’s book is frank in its imbedded pro-rave argument but, for the most part, every one of his proselytizing statements are subsequently supported with a thorough anthropological breaking down, referring consistently to habitus and gaze, while comfortably and steadily weaving the work of an accumulation of authors as their findings and theories become relevant to explaining the “socio-

⁵⁴ Jackson, *Inside Clubbing*, 22.

⁵⁵ Freud, *Civilization And Its Discontents*, 24.

⁵⁶ Jackson, *Inside Clubbing*, 22.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

sensual” scenarios he moves between. The one uncomfortable aspect of the book is that one is never sure with Jackson’s voice if he is writing with objectivity for all his enthusiasm. However, this does not detract from the sense of acuity in his analysis, though he does perhaps seem to brush off potential weaknesses of his position in certain circumstances he writes about with trite psychedelic saccharinity.

Sarah Thornton’s *Club Cultures: Music, Media, & Subcultural Capital* holds a place as a seminal work on the subject. Her influence is openly cited in Jackson’s book, including full quotations, and clearly his use of Bourdieu comes from her. Thornton’s work is a shade more dispassionate and counterbalanced than Jackson’s. Her reference to Bourdieu’s work is to acknowledge that social groups exist in complex multi-dimensional space that is decidedly non-linear. She further moves to demonstrate with examples from the field the ways Bourdieu’s concept of “subcultural capital” – the social weight one hefts in their bearing in society or that they may exert upon others – is something that can both be *embodied* and/or *objectified*.⁵⁸ This is an important recognition of the fact that P.L.U.R. (Peace Love Unity and Respect, the raver credo) does not mean a true horizontal society of peers, but that, among equals, some are more equal than others. Hierarchy is intrinsic to values and Thornton argues throughout the “new authenticities” of “disk culture” and that authenticity is the quintessential mode of subcultural capital in that it asserts the validation and realization of the shared cultural values and their subsequent implementation in practice. That a subculture stands distinct on the margins of the center culture implies value hierarchy and Thornton explains how accruing and displaying subcultural capital communicates *the authentic* and how this degree of authenticity, along with more explicit forms of social clout determines how close to the center-mass of this subcultural

⁵⁸ Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995), 10-11.

system an individual is and what kind of gravitational strength their position exerts. These lived proximal relations are key according to Thornton because even cultures and practices that are at once global – like rave culture – are embodied according to *local* practice.⁵⁹

In practice, Thornton makes clear that media consumption itself matters in all of the acts qualities.⁶⁰ In the circumstance of music, she elaborates at length how music consumption involves the creation of place; fills a space, claims it, delineates it with “walls of sound” to create an alternate space. This space can be simultaneously an inner subjective experience of “head space” or of a highly personal, individualized (*intentional*) space within any *place* (illustrating the metamorphic powers of the multi-dimensional or, as defined earlier, multi-plane, spanning musical consciousness or musical space). The result of the system she traces is a genuinely artist-defined embodiment, in this case, paired with the physical reality of clubs and venues, “interior havens... [where] dancers forget local time and place and sometimes even participate in an imaginary global village of dance sounds” in places of loud music, distracting interior design and lighting effects, no windows to see in or out of, a (metaphorically endowed) corridor or threshold separating worlds – public/private, club [T.A.Z. – though she does not use the term]/outside street, etc.⁶¹

Her analysis continues to explore topics of an oft-contradictory nature like life-style class vs. job class,⁶² progressive sexual politics vs. “sexless” or desexualized space (touching on sensuality vs. erotica, which Jackson takes up at greater length), “micro-structures of power” rather than direct cultural resistance,⁶³ “economy of the hip and happening,”⁶⁴ “Collective

⁵⁹ Ibid., 3.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 13.

⁶¹ Ibid., 19-21.

⁶² Ibid., 55.

⁶³ Ibid., 163

⁶⁴ Ibid., 168.

consumption,” as an alternative to mass or individual consumption⁶⁵ “micropolitics of domination and subordination”⁶⁶ and how the “will to classlessness” works to obfuscate the dominant social structure, revealing only the correct “ideological preconditions” for the alternative social structure [rave culture] to then establish itself.⁶⁷ She also takes an important idea from Frith about the continuum between “live” and “recorded” authenticities in the music and performance. The recorded aspect of the music is the construction of an “idealized event” rather than a realistic performance⁶⁸ – something especially true of electronic music. While the DJ must mix and remix skillfully on the fly, the locus of liveness shifts, in this culture, from the music stage to the dance floor. The crowd thus becoming a “self-conscious cultural phenomenon” is a part of the performance and it is the crowd that generates the mood and experience that is *unreproducible* and it is this phenomenon that places the seal on the event as an experience of authenticity rather than a commodity.⁶⁹ The interplay between crowd and DJ in the decision-making process qualifies the music as a primary art object.⁷⁰ I argue it goes farther than Thornton’s argument and that, in fact, the entire rave becomes a single autographic art piece. Throughout her study there is a persistent tension between the forces of press and of assimilation and individuation and the needs of an individual to be an authentic individual and the fact that these two poles must somehow meet in a space of compromise that claims successful reconciliation but denies the compromise.

The majority of research on the rave phenomenon is from an anthropological perspective. I found no “traditional” musicological analysis aside from a few histories of genre lineage

⁶⁵ Ibid., 34.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 168

⁶⁷ Ibid., 167.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 27.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 28.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 27.

included in some of the more comprehensive studies. However, this was of no relevance to the scope of this thesis. Beyond the possible lack of scholarly interest, very likely, a significant reason for the scarcity of musical analysis is because the nature of the music – especially in the re-mixing of live DJing – defies traditional modes of musical notation and the attendant cultural assumptions accompanying their use; the real flesh of this art form is not about writing melody, rhythm, and harmony (though those are components, to be sure) but the subjective, slightly more elusive or intangible elements, most complicating to the analytical endeavour is the collaborative role of “audience” (if such a term is even appropriate) feedback. It is difficult to get much farther past descriptive accounts of timbre and noting tempi and production effects applied to the sound before beginning to lose relevance; musical analysis of the actual songs played during a set, while far from irrelevant, is certainly limited. Writing from an ethnographic perspective, I have not aimed to fill this particular gap (Indeed, I was surprised by it as I carried out my research and struggled to find in-depth musical analysis or performance analysis from a musicological perspective). Rather, my ambition is to bring an interdisciplinary approach to the question ‘why?’: why be a part of this music? why belong to this culture that surrounds it? I endeavour to situate something of the idea of the live form of this music into synthesis with its sociological formations and the motivational structures of the individuals involved so intimately with it. These questions, I believe, will provide some of the ‘what?’ answers as well: what does this music do and what are those engaged with it actually doing? What makes this art form work?

Leonid Perlovsky has a theory of a coevolution between music and consciousness and therefore, as it plays out, extends to the relationship between music and culture at social and, eventually, civilizational scales:⁷¹ Human beings understand the world via idea or concept

⁷¹ Leonid Perlovsky, “Music and Consciousness,” *Leonardo* vol. 41 no. 4 (2008). One has to note that he argues this is a *co-evolution* and one must as always remain aware that correlation doth not causation make.

models, models that are being constantly tested and redefined against the physical (objective) world; when these models fit, an “instinct for knowledge” is satisfied and this satisfaction garners aesthetic pleasure.⁷² In this way it is a very classical theory of the beautiful and the true. His brief but thought-provoking article, “Music and Consciousness,” provides examples of concept models and correlating musical developments running from 6-8 B.C. to the present epoch. He leaves off in a 21st century where culture and psyche are vastly differentiated.⁷³ His preeminent example of the era is the domination of the culture by hip-hop and rap. With a life spanning generally the same dates – though it took much longer to influence the mainstream in the same way – EDM and rave are a perfect counter-example, an alternative “coevolutionary” response to the same civilizational, cultural, and psychical conditions. Consciousness organizes in language (symbols), organization splits (differentiates) the world into autonomous pieces (very much in the form of “Janus fragments” à la Koestler’s conception for the holon⁷⁴), music’s “manifold emotionality” (synthesis) reunites (harmonizes) it.⁷⁵ The idea of musical coevolution with humans shares some resonance with the findings that emotional activities yield evolutionary purpose facilitating survival, individual and cultural memory, instructional wisdom,⁷⁶ and that the human ability to identify formal function of musical sound in composition appears to be connected to the survival need of a sensitivity for decoding sounds in order to identify how the environment works, as in the case of the detection of predators or potential sources of fresh water, etc. Responses to auditory stimuli are deeply encoded by and with “expectations of how the world works.”⁷⁷

⁷² Ibid., 420.

⁷³ Ibid., 420.

⁷⁴ In, Arthur Koestler, *The Ghost In The Machine*, (New York: Arkana Books, 1989), 48.

⁷⁵ Perlovsky, “Music and Consciousness,” 421.

⁷⁶ Levitin, *This Is Your Brain On Music*, 182-183.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 91-93.

3.2. PHENOMENOLOGY

Because of the importance of meaning-making and experience to this study, and the qualitative nature of the data available applying some of the tenets of phenomenological research approach is appropriate and useful; in this case, a hermeneutical approach.⁷⁸

In his research guide, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches (3rd edition)*, John W. Creswell defines the object of a phenomenological study as the description of “the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon.”⁷⁹ After defining the phenomenon of study, for which Creswell borrows van Manen’s succinct definition as “an ‘object’ of human experience,” a successful distillation of the research participants’ experiences of the phenomenon reveals a shared “universal essence” of the experience.⁸⁰ This is described through “what” individuals experienced and “how” they experienced it.⁸¹ The information of “how” one experiences a phenomenon comes in the form of qualia, packets of data describing singular instances of subjective, conscious experience. Qualia refer, not to the thing-in-itself, but to the perception (experience) of it.⁸² There is debate over how to most accurately define qualia and some thinkers from other epistemological perspectives question the existential viability of such a unit, but it is perhaps appropriate that qualia is a somewhat subjective term. Presently, the qualia discussed

⁷⁸ Hermeneutical phenomenology, as defined by John Creswell according to the work of Max van Manen as research “oriented towards lived experience (phenomenology) and interpreting the “texts” of life (hermeneutics),” requiring a “dynamic interplay” between research activities and that the researcher ultimately be prepared to mediate the possible different meanings of subjects’ experiences. (Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*, 79-80).

⁷⁹ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*, 76.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁸² The most common example is the perception of colour: It cannot be empirically shown that we experience a given hue in a shared way, even though we employ a common set of descriptive labels to identify what constitutes each colour.

will be accepted as existing according to the above definition insofar as the perspective of this study presupposes the validity of the axiom that all experiences are “real” in the sense that they are events of conscious perception that individuals have undergone and can identify as lived phenomena/experience. The nature of what those events of conscious perception refer to is quite another matter.

The philosophical orientation my interpretation and use of phenomenology most closely resembles is that of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), who first established the school of thought. I further borrow specific developments and concepts devised by his protégé, Martin Heidegger.

Phenomenology is inextricably bound to an understanding of the nature of consciousness. Husserl understood consciousness to be a consciousness *of* something, a mental process rather than a free-floating thing that might exist independent of this cognizing activity.⁸³ He therefore stated, “only phenomena are truly given to the cognizing subject,”⁸⁴ and so, “the task of *clarifying the essence of cognition and of being an object of cognition, then this will be phenomenology of cognition and of being an object of cognition* and will be the first and principal part of phenomenology as a whole.”⁸⁵ It is not possible to assume congruence between objects of cognition and the cognition of said objects *a priori*, and, in fact, questions the validity of *a posteriori* knowledge. Any experience or act of consciousness (any perception or thought known to the perceiver) is a necessarily conscious act or experience (rather than an interjection of the “subconscious” or “unconscious” or what-have-you). This is an important proviso. It further implies that while there may be structures of the mind originally categorized by psychoanalysts like Freud and Jung as unconscious and subconscious, their interactions with the

⁸³ Edmund Husserl, *The Idea Of Phenomenology*, trans. William Alston and George Nakhnikian (The Hague, Nijhoff, 1964), 15.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

conscious mind are more complicated than simply being the bizarre machinery behind the curtain. Their content is available as conscious content through their influence; that is, though perhaps obfuscated, the experience of this content or its affect on the conscious mind qualifies as a part of consciousness rather than the domain of a state inaccessible without resorting to special means of access.

Husserl called this nature of “being of or about something,” the *intentionality* of consciousness.⁸⁶ This use of the word makes sense in light of that “intend” is coming from the German “*intendieren*” – “to aim or direct;” therefore, an act intends an object or the subject intends an object in an experience (the experience intending that object).⁸⁷ Consciousness requires experience of perception aimed towards some object. Thus, intentionality is *representational*.⁸⁸ There is a vector of sorts belonging to the object of consciousness – the phenomenon – and the mind aiming its intentionality towards it (there is a direction of act and of perception). Intentionality is a *relationship* between what is perceived and the one who perceives it. This is very important if we are to understand motivational structures, in this instance in raving, but also generally, from this perspective. Since consciousness requires the consciousness of something, intentionality does not function in a vacuum; nothing is experienced from a condition of *tabula rasa*.

Other conceptual content of the mind enriches and colours the qualia of sensory perception. This content forms “the meaningful structures of experience far beyond pure sensation, addressing perception, imagination, desire, thought, and so on, as we engage the world around us.”⁸⁹ For this reason, phenomenologists try to identify objective forms and structures

⁸⁶ Ibid., 43.

⁸⁷ David Woodruff Smith, *Husserl* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), 201.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 181.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

realized in the subjective conscious experiences of their subjects. Form including “meaning or sense [i.e. sense of a thing] that represents the object of consciousness as experienced.”⁹⁰ It is meaning that is “the significant content of conscious experience...renders experience a consciousness ‘of’ anything at all.”⁹¹ Consciousness, through acts of intentionality, arranges the perceived world according to structures of meaning, meaning being the ultimate form: the structuring of all information and experience into something graspable, understandable. In this way, the coming discussion of motivation, of the rave itself, is, like phenomenology, a formal analysis.

To this end, when understanding structures of intentionality, “how things are intended,”⁹² it is important to remember that contents of consciousness are also representational; phenomenologists consider what exists within consciousness to be representational of the objects’ “intentional content,” rather than of the object in and of itself.⁹³ This “background” provides “implicit meaning” to experience (experience being the act of consciousness) and its objects, defining the “horizon” of possibilities of the object and what it can mean to us as an individual existing in the world.⁹⁴ In addition to informing additional vectors of intentionality when situating our relationship to the experience in question, background will eliminate the perception of “unmotivated” possibilities that do not fit the context⁹⁵ – both situational and in terms of individual, personal context.

In describing the intentional relation between acts and objects of consciousness:

⁹⁰ Ibid., 183.

⁹¹ Ibid., 182.

⁹² Ibid., 184 – and with all the wonderfully human semantic interpretations that phrase implies.

⁹³ Husserl, *The Idea Of Phenomenology*, 23-24. Husserl says, “every mediated warrant goes back to something immediate; and it is the unmediated which contains the riddle” (29). Looking at implications to a sociological perspective, this complicates Adorno’s ideas of cultural mediation in an almost fractal way.

⁹⁴ Smith, *Husserl*, 200.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

We may say the content prescribes such-and-such an object, and if there is an object that satisfies the content, then that is the object of consciousness, the object intended in the act of consciousness. If the content is satisfied, then the act is intentionally related to that object. If the content is not satisfied, the act still has the intentional character of being as if intentionally related to such an object.⁹⁶

From this abstract systematization comes the path to understanding that a multiplicity of meanings can represent one object. What more, the concept of an object is suitable to be the content of thinking; a perception can be seen and held in the mind in memory and imagination and thus it becomes possible to reflectively cognize one's *perception* (of the object) without such mediation.⁹⁷ The concept will always still be related to the object, the mind intends the two to be related, even when the object itself may not be part of the experience. The "horizon" becomes a complex of meaning(s), a nexus of potential relevant meanings (or "motivated possibilities") of the object represented between individuals. Experience is an exercise in semantics⁹⁸ and is thus a conscious effort, rather than a passive subjection.

3.3. MOTIVATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Within the field of psychology, the study of motivation seeks a better understanding of the governing forces at play in the influence of an individual's thoughts, desires, and actions, and the systems by which these forces become manifest. For example, Dmitry A. Leontiev enumerates an idea of multiple logics of human behaviors: "The logic of drive gratification; the logic of responding to stimuli; the logic of learned habits and dispositions; the logic of social norms and expectations; the logic of life-world or the logic of life necessity; the logic of

⁹⁶ Ibid., 189.

⁹⁷ Husserl, *The Idea Of Phenomenology*, 23-24.

⁹⁸ To attempt to clarify what this means, let me give a personal example: I am fond of saying how much "I enjoy the *idea* of a party." My idea of a party (content) prescribes an object of certain criteria. I more-often-than-not show up to said party and despite the intentional character of the act, the content of my mind is not at all satisfied by the object (the party). This information, this process, all directly informs (intends upon) my experience of the actual party.

possibilities; and the logic of ultimate understanding.”⁹⁹ It is worth recognizing the significance of his characterization of these behavioural trajectories as multiple, independent, and potentially conflicting modes of logical reasoning; all of equal relevance and prevalence (though not necessarily always equally weighted in a given decision). At present, one of the paramount features of the field of motivational psychology is the general consensus that “motivation” not be considered as a force acting upon an individual, but, rather, a process; an existential exchange between subject and environment that has a “dialogic structure, connecting the given reality of both subject and object with the intentions of the individual.”¹⁰⁰ In this case, the *subject* is the individual, subjective person and the *object*, the objective exterior world and all that encapsulates and with which the subject necessarily interacts.

As human beings, we interact within a matrix of need where even our relationship to our most basic needs is in constant flux. Motivational psychologists have devised numerous theories to explain our motivational interactions with need. These theories differ and disagree but do not necessarily contradict one another at all times. Some past theories have been discarded in light of further investigation and reflection but in the contemporary theories are descriptions of differing models that become more or less relevant in changing lived contexts. Some of these need-based motivational models include: deficiency and growth needs: needs defined through lack, found and consumed to reach gratification, defined by or intending a specific object, and needs necessary to the process of unfolding, development, and realization “of one’s potentials, not focused on special objects,” respectively; Fromm’s five existential needs: the need of relatedness, of transcendence, of rootedness, of a sense of identity, of a frame of orientation and

⁹⁹ Dmitry A. Leontiev, “Why We Do What We Do: The Variety Of Human Regulations” in *Motivation, Consciousness, and Self Regulation*, ed. Dmitry A. Leontiev (New York: Nova Science, 2012), 97-98.

¹⁰⁰ Dmitry A. Leontiev, introduction to *Motivation, Consciousness, and Self Regulation*, ed. Dmitry A. Leontiev, (New York: Nova Science, 2012), vii.

devotion; the three need typologies of “Existential Personology:” biological, social, and psychological;¹⁰¹ Self-Determination Theory’s three basic forms of behavioural (motivational) regulation: controlled (extrinsic), autonomous, and intrinsic.¹⁰² There is the need recognition of Activity Theory: the process by which undefined need “meets” or “finds” its “object in the world,” thereby transforming the object into “the motive of an intentional activity” once it has been thusly “recognized.” In this view, where *motive* is the object of a need, the motive object can be material, ideal, sensual, or imaginary.¹⁰³

What is so special as to have motivated Tal, as a young raver, to ride the bus for a 10-hour round-trip across the Canadian/US border, from his home in Pennsylvania to Toronto, Ontario, every weekend until he finally decided to immigrate to Toronto, where he still resides more than ten years after? Malinowski states that most cultural products gratify biological needs in humans.¹⁰⁴ To this Lee adds a definition of “values” as something socially constructed and culturally shared that can be understood as a construct equitable to the “needs” of an individual but, in this case, values are the needs of a given social order. The individual internalizes a given value-set as a part of their own motivational process, informing the personal needs of that individual. Thus, Lee sees fit to claim values are the most central of human motivators.¹⁰⁵ But what gives impetus to the present study is Malinowski’s observation of the relationship between culture – in this case a subculture – and the motivation of the individual: Culture creates new responses to existing needs, never the essential need itself; but culture does create new

¹⁰¹ Dmitry A. Leontiev, “From Drive To Need & Further” in *Motivation, Consciousness, and Self Regulation*, ed. Dmitry A. Leontiev (New York: Nova Science, 2012), 14, 15, 17-18.

¹⁰² Valery Chirkov, “The Motivational Nature Of Good Living: Human Autonomy & Why it Is Good For People & Societies,” in *Motivation, Consciousness, and Self-Regulation*, ed. Dmitry A. Leontiev (New York: Nova Science, 2012), 119.

¹⁰³ Dmitry A. Leontiev, “Personal Meaning as the Basis of Motivational Process,” in *Consciousness, Motivation and Self-Regulation*, ed. Dmitry A. Leontiev (New York: Nova Science, 2012), 69.

¹⁰⁴ Leontiev, “From Drive To Need & Further,” 14.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

imperatives.¹⁰⁶ What this means is that a culture provides a context for needs – for the motivational process *en tout* – a readjustment of the value of needs and the relationship(s) of things (subject to object; object to subject; subject to subject; object to object). Culture provides the selection of available frameworks to support Leontiev’s multiple logics.

The importance of the idea of multifarious logics governing an individual’s decision-making process in synergy becomes very natural in conjunction with the “multiregulation personality model,” which understands “the person as a system, thereby involving the interplay between consistency and diversity, stability and change, and integration and conflict”¹⁰⁷ Individuals are complex and their equilibrium or stability, physically and mentally, rely significantly on the ability to strike a balance between the multi-directional forces within the “person as a system.” As Valery Chirkov puts it, to be happy (which we can understand in this context as a macro state of positive, healthy psychological experience) people need to gratify their needs regularly and in a balanced way, strive strongly intrinsically relative to extrinsic aspirations, and be relatively self-determined in the main domains of their life and functioning.¹⁰⁸

In the current era, more than ever, the trend of being able to choose one’s own happiness is on the rise globally. Values concerning the significance and meaning of work time versus leisure time are under question in a big way and, consequently, the conditions under which society has agreed merit happiness are under question. The popular conversation tends to favour a generational lens, heralding the fledging age of the millennial facing a world where the North American dream of previous generations – house, car, marriage, 2.5 children, linear career path

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 14.

¹⁰⁷ Lawrence Pervin, “Personality Theory and Research: Prospects for the Future,” in *Handbook of Personality Theory and Research*, ed. Lawrence Pervin (New York; London: the Guilford Press, 1990), 726. (Quoted in Leontiev, “Why We Do What We Do,” 101.)

¹⁰⁸ Chirkov, “The Motivational Nature Of Good Living,” 105.

with financial stability – is scarcely even an available stereotype as a stand-in for of mainstream culture and potential disillusionment (though still persistent as a cultural standard of “success”). In this narrative, value shift is a reaction to changing environmental conditions and their ability to provide for individuals’ needs. But it is equally true that this observation today – while probably true – is an example of the lag between cultural change on the radical fringe and in the mainstream center, slow to adopt or co-opt new values, often biding its time until the truly radical values have been anesthetized by nostalgic sentiments. The rave scene with its tribal cultural model, so reminiscent of movements of the 1960s in vision and language, attests to this lag, its progenitors predating the millennial generation.

According to Hungarian psychologist, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, happiness is something we make happen; it is a personal interpretation. Personal happiness, rather than a momentary experience of pleasure, is, in this view, defined by one’s capacity to engage in activity that one finds meaningful in their life – whatever that activity may be – that is capable of reflecting what one values. To be happy we require the ability to meet our central needs but the exact definition of our central needs and their fulfilment conditions are specific to the confluence of processes and contexts that make up the individual, as Leontiev, Lee, and Pervin have described above. The focus of this study is to understand the motivational relationship between the individual and raving. In order to do so requires understanding the *meaning* rave and raving holds to the individual raver. More than forty years ago, Marshal McLuhan found it to be that, for a young person, growing up from the 1960s onwards is a matter of harder work than for any preceding generation. This work is pure data processing of “an intricate and complex integral world of electric information”¹⁰⁹ A world of data classification is one of pattern recognition; it is an

¹⁰⁹ Marshal McLuhan, “Address At Vision 65,” in *Essential McLuhan*, eds. Eric McLuhan and Frank Zingrone (Don Mills: House Of Anansi, 1995), 222.

environment that exists as both an external and internal space, where the task of its youth is to create meaning from this information. The rave is, arguably, no less than a perfect environment for this process. Ravers confront a hyper-stimulating, information-rich environment which they combine with the information of their lived experience outside the rave, the cultural values of the rave, and the values of their society writ large. The mode of examination that describes lifestyle bifurcation in such a manner that play is a “reward” for work and work a “penance” for play¹¹⁰ is anachronistic. That is no longer the meaning – that is, those are no longer the *values* – of the “life-work” balance that has become such a talking point from economists to educators to health-care advocates to politicians (to speak of adoption and co-option).

Victor Frankl, in his pioneering work establishing the theory and practice of logotherapy (the foundational theory of the third Viennese school of psychotherapy), described a “will to meaning” as humanity’s most potentially powerful source of will, of motivation. Powerful, not in the sense of its force of compulsion (one might easily argue, for instance, that the drive to eat is a far greater force in one’s life for all but the rarest cases), but for its ability to fundamentally – and, in Frankl’s view, necessarily – define and redefine one’s very existence. He therefore states, “Man’s search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life and not a “secondary rationalization” of instinctual drives.”¹¹¹ To define, uncover, or create this meaning can only be undertaken by each individual for themselves,¹¹² constituting a unique, personal, and life-long project through which one structures their life – implicitly or explicitly – in action, desire, and understanding.

¹¹⁰ Theodore Adorno, “The Stars Down To Earth: Los Angeles Times Saturology Column,” in *Adorno: The Stars Down to Earth & Other Essays on the Irrational in Culture*, ed. Stephen Crook (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 73.

¹¹¹ Victor E. Frankl, *Man’s Search For Meaning*, (New York: Pocket Books, 1985), 121.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

In relation to Frankl's will to meaning, there is what he considers to be the noetic or "spiritual dimension's" level of needs and, towards the pursuit of which, therein exist three interrelated basic human potentials: 1) "psychological" spirituality, which is simply to capture the meaning of a situation. 2) Freedom. According to Frankl, one's capacity to be free is activated by their capacity to grasp meaning in a situation, thereby allowing them to perceive possibility in the face of reality and chose to act upon that possibility (move to an intentional act of consciousness in phenomenological terms). 3) Responsibility. Frankl imposes the existence of human free will because humans can be imposed upon to bear responsibility towards their fellow beings; otherwise, how could one possibly be influenced if they were not first free to be influenced and have that imposition affect their available possibilities and ultimate choice of possible action.¹¹³

What proceeds henceforth will eventually demonstrate that the question of "why rave?" of what motivates its participants, its *community*, is that rave provides a special opportunity for individuals to restructure lived information, to pattern the *bits* of their lived experience, into a needs/value-based hierarchy of their choosing, to redefine the conditions of their existential relationships in a way not otherwise available to them, fulfilling their felt needs when within a rave itself and imparting a new cognitive paradigm for creating personal happiness in a broader life context.

3.4. ALTERED STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN MUSIC

The incumbent restructuring of the contents of consciousness into a peculiar internal environment necessitates the consideration of the role of altered states of consciousness (ASC) in

¹¹³ Alfred, "The Existential Fundamental Motivations Structure The Motivational Process," 29.

the rave. Consciousness itself is, likewise to the rave, a field system of interactional relationships. It is impossible to attain a meaningful understanding of what raving is to the individual without attending to the active reorganization of the order of consciousness taking place.

In Ruth Herbert's "Reconsidering Music and Trance: Cross-cultural Differences and Cross-disciplinary Perspectives," she states that, according to Judith Becker, ASCs are commonly experienced across a broad spectrum of artistic practices in industrial Western society.¹¹⁴ Herbert further notes anthropologist Erika Bourguignon's findings that alterations of consciousness occur cross-culturally in forms of both "private individual, unpatterned (secular) states and those that occur in culturally patterned institutionalized (sacred) forms"¹¹⁵ to which Herbert directly ascribes dance club events to the latter classification. Herbert agrees with Judith Becker's opinion that, considering the different manifestations of altered states of consciousness, they should be understood as "a Wittgensteinian category, a set of similar events that bear 'family' resemblances to one another"¹¹⁶ This consideration, along with the choice of using "ASC" rather than the more specific – though by no means clear – terminology of "trance" and "ecstasy" heads off unneeded taxonomical debate.¹¹⁷ What is primary is the understanding that the state of consciousness in question is altered from what would be considered the subjects' baseline state. To be more specific than that is unnecessary to the purpose and scope of the present study.

¹¹⁴ Ruth Herbert, "Reconsidering Music and Trance," 205-206.

¹¹⁵ Erika Bourguignon, "A Framework for the Comparative Study of Altered States of Consciousness," in *Religion, Altered States of Consciousness and Social Change*, ed. Erika Bourguignon, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1973), 8. Quoted from Herbert, "Reconsidering Music and Trance," 210.

¹¹⁶ Herbert, "Reconsidering Music and Trance," 209.

¹¹⁷ Anyone interested in the typology between "trance" and "ecstasy," should read Gilbert Rouget's *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession*, Trans. Brunhilde Biebuyck, (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1985).

Herbert notes that some researchers, such as Dissanayake (1988), Duchniewska and Kokoszka (2003), and Killeen and Nash (2003) have theorized “trancing constitutes a psychobiological need,”¹¹⁸ dovetailing the discussion of ASC with that of motivation. Accordingly, I will explore the ASC experience found in the musical space(s) of individual and shared dance club activities, specifically focusing on what could be considered the “pull-factors” that draw individuals towards this space/experience.

The Oxford Handbook of Medical Ethnomusicology states that “music is most often practiced as a means of healing or cure – a way for a person or patient to transform from illness or disease to health and homeostasis.”¹¹⁹ While this generalization may seem problematic at face value for discussing rave (perhaps Western music practice more broadly in the eyes of some – particularly in the popular realm), it is not. It *is* a viable frame of reference to start from in identifying the desired data found through (or indeed created by!) rearranging the contents of the mind. For example, from this perspective, the rave/club space seems prime for at least the temporary dissolution or resolution of some sort of cognitive dissonance. While Gilbert Rouget strongly cautions against attempting to identify specific musical means or practices that directly themselves “cause” alterations to a subject’s conscious state,¹²⁰ the importance of this study lies in what can be said about the nature of the experience itself that participants are motivated towards attaining and, most intriguingly, what can be said of the nature of the participants’

¹¹⁸ Herbert, “Reconsidering Music and Trance,” 220.

¹¹⁹ Benjamine D. Koen, Gergory Barz, and Kenneth Brummel-Smith, “Introduction: Confluence of Consciousness in Music, Medicine, and Culture,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Medical Ethnomusicology*, ed. Benjamine D. Koen et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 6.

¹²⁰ As he holds a sustained argument throughout his watershed study, *Music and Trance*, in favour of the psychoactive power of expectation, cultural tradition/practices/modes of expression, pharmacological agents, and the physiological responses to exertion/exhaustion, breathing/oxygen levels, and general stress or pleasure responses over a direct psychological response to physiological or sensory musical stimuli. (Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession*, Trans. Brunhilde Biebuyck, (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1985).

experience of that motivation. Therefore, a maintained awareness of the sense of *ritual* and anticipation at play in raving experiences is an important salt the reader should apply throughout to fully bring forward the subtle and intricate notes of the research participants' contributions. This is perhaps paradoxically even more true when it comes to the discussion of creating new or altered expectations and experience *outside* of the rave ritual form.

The question is the phenomenological nature of the experience itself, rather than the categorization of its stimuli and state of alteration; that the combination of stimuli, expectation, and ritual works is enough. Accordingly, the character of a “rave state of consciousness”¹²¹ will be discussed simply as an ASC differing from subjects' baseline state, unique in its nature as informed by the rave context and the pre-existing psyche of the subject (with the individual's multiple networks of motivation and interpretation in full play) who is experiencing the ASC and participating in the concomitant ASC activity. The premise of this study begins with an understanding that the rave is at one valence a “musical space” that corresponds at one level or another to a “head space” or the entrance to an altered state of consciousness or awareness. This is in conjunction with its existence as a physical and temporal space (i.e. existing specifically in space and time) and as a cultural-space. These four planes exist integrally; they are perhaps most easily conceived if one over-simplifies their relationship by visualizing a cross-section diagram of a complex mechanism depicted layer by layer on multiple sheets of transparent laminate.

3.5. MUSIC AND THE BRAIN

Music is central to the rave. Its omnipresence means that it is not only a constant ruler of the auditory environment; music plays perhaps the central role in defining how individuals

¹²¹ The rave is not a place, it is a state of mind.

interact with the rest of their environment and with each other. This is especially true when the music is played at the palpable volumes raves are known for. We are not only discussing the space one occupies in one's physical body; this unique environment of course includes one's own cognition, or "head space," within which the outside phenomena are experienced and internalized. Having no wish to flirt with pseudo-scientific extrapolations or blunder into accusations of epiphenomenalism, I would nonetheless be remiss to not include a summary of some of the ways in which the perception of music relates to effects occurring within the mind and brain. This goes double, given the stated position that fully engaging in raving entails engaging a new conscious state.

While many ravers will ingest mind-altering substances, there are at least as many claims by those who attest that they have experienced similar cognitive shifts while raving without the aid of pharmaceutical intervention. There are a number of physiological events and interactions taking place in the brain and body during a rave that may be important to the extraordinary experiences of ravers.

One common theory that has been discussed in relation to ASC phenomena in musical cultural activity is the idea of "entrainment." In a lab, a spectral EEG can detect major rhythmic groups of brainwaves: Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, and Theta. In 1962, Andrew Neher discovered that "auditory driving" could invoke similar responses to what was known about photic driving in influencing the brain to entrain its natural rhythms to that of a drum-beat.¹²² Using electrodes on the scalp to monitor brain activity in "normal subjects," Neher found the auditory cortex to recruit the occipital cortex (responsible for vision-processing) in its altered

¹²² Andrew Neher, "A Physiological Explanation Of Unusual Behavior In ceremonies Involving Drums," *Human Biology* vol. 34 no. 2 (1962): 151-160.

firing.¹²³ In the context of rave, it is powerful that both photic and auditory driving are acting upon the brain-rate of participants and that “slightly lower frequencies” are prime for auditory driving “due to presence of low frequencies (theta rhythms) in the auditory regions of the cortex.”¹²⁴ Though the phenomenon of consciousness is still ill-understood, it is thought that it arises from synchronous 40Hz neural firing¹²⁵ thus reasonable that modification of the brain’s natural rhythms can affect conscious state. Nada Pop-Jordanova further states the important characterization of consciousness and arousal arguing that it is possible to affect brain rate both by directly inducing more of a frequency and/or by reducing activation in its opposite (for example Theta:Beta).¹²⁶ “Brain rate...can be considered as an integral brain state attribute correlated with the brain’s electric, mental, and metabolic activity. In particular, it can serve as a preliminary diagnostic indicator of general mental activation (i.e. mental arousal representing consciousness level), in addition to heart rate, blood pressure or temperature as one of the standard indicators of general bodily activation.”¹²⁷

Fuchner and Rittner agree with one of the assumptions of this study that “music offers a mental space where significant themes may be coded and decoded.”¹²⁸ In this head-space, rhythm (and dancing) alters the perception of time and space and relativizes one’s position in, or relationship to, the two. Meanwhile, lighting effects especially reduce differentiation between

¹²³ Andrew Neher, “Auditory Driving Observed With Scalp Electrodes In Normal Subjects,” *Electroencephalography and Clinical Neurophysiology* vol. 13 (1961): 449-451.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Daniel J. Levitin, *This Is Your Brain On Music: The Science of a Human Obsession* (New York: Plume, 2007), 188.

¹²⁶ Nada Pop-Jordanova, “Brainrate as an Indicator of the Level of Consciousness,” in *States of Consciousness: Experimental Insights into Meditation, Waking, Sleep and Dreams*, eds. Dean Cvetkovic and Irena Cosic (New York: Springer, 2011), 198-199.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 200.

¹²⁸ Jörg Fachner and Sabine Rittner, “Ethno Therapy, Music and Trance: An EEG Investigation into a Sound-Trance Induction,” in *States of Consciousness: Experimental Insights into Meditation, Waking, Sleep and Dreams*, eds. Dean Cvetkovic and Irena Cosic (New York: Springer, 2011), 242.

sensory experiences, leading to synesthetic-esque confusions.¹²⁹ They assert that in an ASC one is more open to something like the transcendent experience of touching or connecting with a Jungian collective unconscious; a state of increased perception and fewer or weaker psychic barriers than in everyday consciousness.¹³⁰ They observed in their experiments using a full-body monochord a range of personal reactions to frequency stimulation two characteristic correlations they drew were that decreased Theta wave presence marked observable increase in physical alertness, decrease in mental alertness and intentionally controlled imagination (control was relative to the subjects susceptibility to hypnosis, interestingly).¹³¹ Beta frequency levels “indicate differentiations of music-related cognitive activity” and they observed emotional correlates to this as well.¹³² Levitin hypothesizes that sheer volume is also capable of inspiring unique cognitive effects, postulating an ASC of loudness itself, not dependent upon the quality of the sound, but emerging through the saturation of the auditory system as neurons sustain firing at maximal rates.¹³³ This affect is linked to the fact that “very tiny changes in loudness have a profound effect on the emotional communication of music”¹³⁴ and also fundamental to the perception of form in decoding musical phrasing, rhythms, and meters.¹³⁵

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 242, 243.

¹³¹ Ibid, 250. Their results also indicate that the more one is susceptible to ASC inducing influence, the less likely they are to notice the shift from baseline-consciousness into ASC and that one must be willing to let go and allow it to slip from the norm and take root – must respond harmoniously towards the process, so to speak – though the duo are also quick to clarify: that suggestibility does not at all mean this is simply a matter of expectations acting out as a self-fulfilling prophecy; there is more at play (252). In further consideration of this point, it would be worth revisiting the interview data of one of my research participants, Laura, under this specific light; it suggests insight into the paradox emergent between some of her statements concerning solipsism and intentional behavior and the anecdotal evidence she presents suggesting the more Jungian ASC model of experience and the collective alteration of social normativity in the club.

¹³² Ibid., 251

¹³³ Levitin, *This Is Your Brain On Music*, 71.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 72.

¹³⁵ Ibid. One research participant [Laura] described the sensation of navigating a deafeningly loud club in the following words: “You can’t hear anything; it feels like you’re underwater – which also I think contributes to, like, disorientation a little bit and I think some of the bars do that on purpose. It would make sense because when it’s like quieter you feel a lot more sober, even when you’re drunk ‘cause you feel more visible – even though it’s sound and

Music listening takes place in the construction of a multidimensional conceptual space – still linked to the physical, such as in the perception of musical sound occupying a physical space¹³⁶ – and is observable across the entire brain. Take, for example, the neuro-physical structure of musical memory, culling together specifics and abstractions but also cultural prototypes and tropes – valuative qualities – and also forming connections with multiple memory traces, coupling sound to states, places, perceptions, actions, memories.¹³⁷ The amygdala and hippocampus both fire in the processing of music (combining the seats of emotion and memory, respectively) but this is not the case with simple, non-musical sounds,¹³⁸ and the cerebellum, responsible for timing (think perception of rhythm, dancing, entrainment phenomena), is massively connected to the amygdala and the frontal lobe, which governs planning and impulse control.¹³⁹ Music is an experience of a bilateral cognitive and physiologically combined spatial experience. This is a special synthesized cognitive space created or active during musical experience that does not heed the usual Left/Right processing divide that characterizes much of the common wisdom¹⁴⁰ (such as the left hemisphere being the seat of language) and facilitates a unison of the “Mammal” and “Reptile brain.” This *gestalt* is the doorway to the proposed psychic space and its ASC-type special interactivity.¹⁴¹ It resembles the way in which new knowledge or understanding comes through the synthesis of nominally independent and pre-

you’re not actually behind anything!” This sensory confusion and ability to mitigate or enhance the phenomenal experience of inebriation certainly suggests the influence of loudness over an individual’s state of consciousness.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 108-109

¹³⁷ Ibid., 64.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 167

¹³⁹ Ibid., 175.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 226.

¹⁴¹ This hyper-interactivity also be observed in the phenomenon of tactility as psuedo-synaesthetisa, such as the physical sensation of ultra-loud soundwaves or extreme-frequencies (like the sub-bass systems used in raves) or the linkage between occipital and auditory cortex in circumstances of sensory driving and other entrainment events (For example, physical rhythmic entrainment between humans during sexual intercourse or spatially-intimate [prominent and plentiful body-contact] partnered dancing).

existing data. Shifting the perspective from brain to mind now, according to Levitin's application of the "Gestalt Principles of Grouping," broader recognition of sounds *as music* requires a balance of synthesizing and differentiating sonic elements, including identifying object sounds (like distinguishing a drum from the footsteps of someone walking by) – but this requires drawing from several mental sources of information and leaves open the potential for cross-grouping with other psychological data; for example: impressions of time and space, the resonance of sound (as, for example, stereo mixing and artificial reverb effects); this extends to specific memories and emotional associations.¹⁴²

Musical perception and, particularly musical pleasure, has also a bilateral relationship to the ventral stratum (the pleasure and reward system, opioid transmission) as this area of the brain is stimulated when hearing music but can also mediate our response to music. If, for example, a dopamine inhibitor were introduced, it would interfere with the subject's musically derived pleasure.¹⁴³ The drug use engaged in by ravers, such as ingestion of MDMA, is known to release a flood upon this system.

Rouget categorically denounces the thesis that musical stimuli are capable, of their own powers, of inducing the trance and ecstatic behaviours documented throughout his tome, *Music And Trance* (1985). There is nothing in the evidence supporting this thesis to disagree directly with Rouget, but it is critical to understand and remain cognizant of the fact that an altered state of consciousness is a *primary* cognitive event.¹⁴⁴ Rock and Krippner clarify the field by insisting that the focus of inquiry should be a concern with "[altered] patterns of phenomenal properties,"

¹⁴² Ibid., 77-82.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 188.

¹⁴⁴ Fachner and Rittner, "Ethno Therapy, Music and Trance," 239.

with processes of the phenomenal field, rather than objects.¹⁴⁵ The phenomenological conception of consciousness as an intentional “consciousness of...” inherently recognizes the consciousness/content fallacy: consciousness is not its contents.¹⁴⁶ Instead of focusing on outward-manifesting trance or ecstatic behaviours or the “mythic information” of these ritualized responses/behaviours/interpretations, as Rouget does, this study takes interest in the internal cognition phenomena under conditions of ASC.

In concert with the idea that there are multiple logic-trains which may lead to a single conclusive outcome when it comes to motivation, Fuchner and Rittner state that “normal consciousness” is only a specific construction (or configuration) in the sense that it is a “specialized tool” for everyday purposes.¹⁴⁷ The benefits of ASC experiences (and one illustrative example they cite is a 3-day rave festival event) is that it allows for a different organization of perception along with prior-held knowledge, yielding new perspective and insights, sense of togetherness (reduced psychic barriers), freedom for personal growth now that the system of normality and its confines have been at least temporarily disrupted, and even a perception of the (or a) meaning of (or in) life.¹⁴⁸ ASC’s break habits, beliefs about reality, and make one alert to “new and more complex information.”¹⁴⁹ This ASC paradigm will become a primary analytical focus of this study later, in interpreting the interview data of participants.

¹⁴⁵ Adam J. Rock and Stanley Krippner, “States of Consciousness Redefined as Patterns of Phenomenal Properties: An Experimental Application,” in *States of Consciousness: Experimental Insights into Meditation, Waking, Sleep and Dreams*, eds. Dean Cvetkovic and Irena Cosic, (New York: Springer, 2011), 257-258.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Fuchner and Rittner, “Ethno Therapy, Music and Trance,” 238.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 239.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHOD

My approach to this study has been, from the start, patently multi-disciplinary; however, its general framework and grounding structure of inquiry is ethnographic. Therefore, my method is that of an ethnography informed and enhanced by selected philosophical, psychological, and sociological concepts.

My primary data is qualitative and comes through two forms of field research: participant observation and interviews. My participant observation ventures¹⁵⁰ consisted of attending raves within the Greater Toronto Area and the Kitchener-Waterloo and Cambridge “Tri-Cities” area, attempting (to degrees planned-out to vary night by night) to balance a curiosity to understand the overwhelming “native” experience of a rave first-hand and the antithetical wherewithal required to observe the phenomenon dispassionately and with subtlety. My interviews¹⁵¹ ran approximately 30-60 minutes with six different participants from the same areas I attended raves in. They were formulated as semi-structured and interviewees’ responses were followed-up with critical dialogue where appropriate, as informed by my fieldnotes and secondary research. I analysed the interview transcriptions to find “clusters of meaning” and through this process identified the six salient themes that comprise the six major analytical chapters of this thesis (chapters five through ten).¹⁵² I integrated this information with the observations of my fieldnotes, looking especially for areas in the data sets that were resonant or that conflicted.

Combining primary with secondary research I was able to generate grounded theory addressing my research questions. The synthetic catalyst of the multi-disciplinary approach made

¹⁵⁰ See the structural description of one such observation in appendix A.

¹⁵¹ See appendix B.

¹⁵² Part of my synthetic approach in so-blending ethnographic researching with phenomenological practices of analysis.

it possible to introduce both the emic perspective of my subjects and my own admittedly etic one in a blended manner, interconnectedly, rather than as a point-counterpoint or at the risk of becoming pedantic or paternalizing. The use of motivational psychology and phenomenological investigation in particular allowed me access to an understanding of my subjects' own rave-informed processes of understanding, much deeper information than simply the end-result answers alone.

Drawing from broad disciplines of thought, I was thereby far better equipped to understand how rave culture works, the essence of how it functions, and how it translates into a broader way of life; what ravers need to know and do to make their system work and what the “way in” to acquiring a new awareness, including the necessary knowledge and abilities, necessary to belonging as a full functioning member of the culture, is.¹⁵³

An ethnographic approach to the rave subculture gives this thesis the enframement needed to encapsulate the relationship between rave's aesthetic (especially musical) content and its inter/intra-personal social content while, at the same time, allowing the intellectual scope relied on to generate the partnership of ideas and disciplines that make the depth of this analysis possible – especially when contending with the post-modernist complexities that thrive in rave culture's heart of hearts. Most importantly, it is the ethos and ethics of ethnography's “boots on the ground” foundation in fieldwork that protects the research from baseless abstraction, keeping all my theories firmly grounded and responsible to my research subjects.

¹⁵³ Enquiries definitive of an ethnography according to Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 92.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE EMPHASIS ON NEW, NOVEL, UNIQUE EXPERIENCES

Participants repeatedly stated the importance of novelty or one-of-a-kindness in their desire to attend or throw rave parties. The attention this engenders for crafting a total experience is part of what defines a rave event as such. It is necessary to create an environment each night in opposition to what happens at a regular club or live music venue, where the only potential for aesthetic novelty arises in what songs one might hear (and this too is often quite predictable). Tal explains:

There's a level of effort and thought that goes into creating a particular atmosphere and vibe with the – what I would call a “rave” – where you're looking to setup decorations that really highlight and complement the kinds of costumes you expect people to wear and the outfits people will wear.... There'll be a lot more intent behind the themes where as a club night, really, you just go to go there and hangout, play some music. You probably won't even give it a name or a theme. You might.... Something very passive. Whereas, with our raves we would really try and make it interactive. We've done some where you come in and you have different quests to complete; you get little prizes. The prizes were meaningless. They were just for fun.... One series that was very *very* popular was a total request rave. You would actually get to vote on the songs as it plays. So you get glowsticks and you use glowsticks with different colours to vote on songs.... So really get people involved and participating. What's drawn them to it is going to be that vibe and that atmosphere, because that's the only thing we have! So that's what's drawn them to it, so that's what you get.

This example highlights another characteristic, perhaps unique to rave, and that is the collaborative nature of creating these experiences between organizers and attendees. Tal stresses the interactivity with the audience required to conjure this level of highly memorable experience.

Erika also hits on the interactive aspect in alchemizing the sense of experience particular to raves.

I know why I'm there! I like the music, I like the people, the art is cool, I like drugs.... But I don't know if I would say that [the drugs are] a draw, but it's a nice place to do them. I can do them at home and have just as good a time but it's more fun to interact with people, I guess?

There's all these bright lights and loud noise, you come home and have to decompress from having had this explorative interaction.

She points out that it is the interactions between separate phenomena and, at the same time, the interactions of individuals with these phenomena and with each other that are necessary to the gestalt of the rave experience. It is an network of interconnections she must actively "explore."

The primacy of novelty is foremost for Gaston. The first thing he does when planning his own events is to "think of a theme for the show. Something that would appeal to people, you know, usually try and make something weird and interesting that they wouldn't experience otherwise. Um, sort of to create – foster new experiences...." It is, in fact, the *raison d'être* for his venue; "I don't think there's anything like this in Kitchener.... This is what I'm drawn to and there's nothing like it so I was like, well... let's see if we can make it." He elaborates, "I think it's atypical based on what people in general do... you know, [being] open to new experiences, new ideas and not necessarily, umm, not, like, *pleasant* experiences, I guess. Not negative in, like, an emotional way, but, like, nobody really wants to hear a guitar screeching while it sounds like a computer falling apart but it's something cool, right? It's an unpleasant sound that is a cool experience that you enjoy in a way."

It is possible for an experience to be unique or singular in a sense without being wholly new. After all, there has to be some structural and experiential similarities or constants or else it would not be possible to talk about "raves" as a type at all. I came across two common solutions to this problem. The first is simply a principle of variation. Tal's all-request raves are a good example. Even if between raves he were to employ the same set of songs, the unpredictable order in which they could be voted to appear or be vetoed by the audience would result in a set list specific to that night's party. The pacing of the set, song-to-song, in terms of tempo, intensity, popularity, etc. would create a unique musical passage through the time-span of the rave to

“explore” – to use Erika’s language. The interplay between song and the pacing of the night they encourage (ex. are they going to encourage people to expend themselves with intense dancing earlier in the evening? Will there be more relaxed content maybe not allowing people to really let loose? Will there be a steady crescendo throughout the night or will the energy rise and fall?) Of course, one can always simply play different songs. Tal advises,

you want to play songs that fit the mood of the crowd and, also, you can play songs that they didn’t *know* they wanted to hear, but they want to hear it. So, it’s easy to play the big anthems, it’s easy to play the songs everyone knows.... You want to play those songs that... stay in the groove but aren’t those songs. And that’s giving people new experiences and new music so it creates a uniqueness [in] a set.

This does not even touch on the improvisational aspects of the art of DJing.

If not novel, there is still experience unique to rave – or *seemingly* unique. This is best embodied by the phenomenon of a party “going off” – at least as far as an individual is subjectively concerned. Having that kind of singular, unusual experience imparts an air of “specialness” to the moment that seems to be the essence of what the participants referred to as unique and new experiences of the kind they deem memorable and valuable, and continue to seek out. For example, Emile sung high praises of a one-off rave thrown by a friend, describing how she attained a

unique environment for a one-off party.... And that’s something I don’t think can really be replicated. To have a really exceptional party you need to create an environment that is unique to the party and has a sort of *terroir*, so to speak; it needs to have it’s own unique vibe and.... something that nobody will throw a party that was exactly this.

A unique *terroir* can still be shared amongst Bordeaux and still naturally vary by vineyard and vintage without negating a shared or continuous aspect of tasting it. If, as one explores and interacts with the experience of the rave, there is no reason to suggest it is not possible to create a wholly unique subjective moment in the combination of subjective and objective factors; that is, what the individual brings to the experience, the objective events themselves, and how the

subject interprets or experiences the occurring or even resulting phenomena. It may be enough that this perfect storm create the intense feeling that there may be similar parties and similar moments but none will be ‘exactly this.’

Therefore, through this emphasis, we can conclude that rave is unique, intentional experience.

Laura and Marika’s experience at clubs reveal a rather stark contrast. The impetus of a similar desire is discernable but here it appears crudely. Says Marika,

a lot of the venues that I’ve been to are aiming to achieve some sort of identity; so you have the more grungy places that offer cheap drinks because they just want people to get wasted. And then there’s places that try to be a bit more classy and...they serve their beverages in *glasses*.... Those places usually have like a nicer seating area and play different kinds of music to aim to a different crowd.

Laura confirms, “the two categories – the two main categories – are the sit-down chill one and then the dancing one.” There is not much flavour in those options.

Interestingly, though, Laura mentions a third category of venue, a “mish-mash,” that she and her peers enjoy most. She tells me about a very small club she likes that offers eclectic music choices – some nights featuring a live DJ, occasionally a live band – and often the music ranges into the obscure attracting a crowd that seeks out new music. During a musically themed night of French music,

it became a giant dance party and we were moving tables into the corners and stuff – which was funny because it doesn’t happen every time. It happens only on the good nights like when people are just feeling confident enough that they can just...move all the tables around! ...Even though there’s no dance-floor...it elicits that kind of behaviour... Even though it’s entirely *not* designed that way [laughs]! Which is funny.... people push the tables out of the way anyway because it just needs to happen [laughs] whereas there are bars with massive dance floors where nobody dances in them ‘cause it’s weird or something for whatever reason. Just ‘cause they failed at...creating that proper atmosphere.

It is evident in Laura's description of the "mish-mash" venue that the desire for novelty and unique experience is not unique to ravers. Both Laura and Mirika make it clear that even regular commercial establishments try and advertise a unique identity and therefore experience in an attempt to attract clientele. Though, in her final comment about bars with massive dance floors, it is apparent that regular commercial venues can be somewhat inept at attaining these aims. Much can likely be said about this by the fact that, while a rave is a *party*, and its organizers are concerned with throwing a memorable party, a club or a bar is a business, and its managers are concerned with making money. The regular clubs have to have enough general appeal that they are often unable to offer anything truly unique.

**CHAPTER SIX:
DRUGS ARE CONSUMED FOREMOST AS A MEANS FOR REORDERING SOCIAL
AND BEHAVIOURAL NORMS**

When it comes to escaping the harsh light of reality, there is almost no more direct route than tinting the spectrum, hopefully towards a rose colour, with the aid of mind-altering substances. Drug use constitutes one of the primary stereotypes about rave culture – and there is a reason for this: raves are rife with psychoactive substances. Far more interesting than the sensationalist imagining in moral panics of a scene of “fear and loathing,” of hedonism and contorted sensuality, more interesting than subjects’ use of the drugs themselves is the use *for* drugs. Subjects who reported on drugs capacity to distort sensation and reality usually only mentioned it as a secondary feature, and sometimes even pejoratively. The drugs’ pure pleasure effects were likewise listed secondarily (though by no means similarly scoffed at!). Interview subjects were far more interested in talking about the drugs’ contributions to their social behavior and what they would consider normative levels and qualities of person-to-person interaction for a rave, but that are unlike their experiences in everyday mainstream contexts.

Tal recounts part of his first trip to Toronto, one of his earliest experiences of a rave:

I was with one person that I knew; we drove up there and now there’s all these people I’ve never seen; it’s a very different environment; I’ve never seen this. And [I] felt perfectly comfortable, perfectly at home, and *confident* [laughs] – The drugs help with that! Because I was not that kind of outgoing person at the time – or, at least, not until I got over the inhibitions of *how do I feel about people?* And so on. And it really helped me reset my default to being open to people – because that’s how you feel in that context.

Tal began lacking, if not the skills to be outward and social, the confidence to use them.

Furthermore, thrusting himself into what was then a totally alien environment three times over – new set of people, new type of social environment, new geographic region – set himself at a social disadvantage of unfamiliarity. This kind of context of unfamiliarity means that one does not know where social boundaries and personal barriers exist, much less how to navigate them.

For someone naturally introverted or uneasy in new or highly social situations, the fear threshold for violating these boundaries, resulting in ostracization, is high. To this end, the staid option of alcohol as the old “social lubricant” is always available:

Alcohol, too, I guess is going to lower your inhibitions and I think that’s why it’s...so common, right? It’s a such a huge part of human culture and people *are* naturally [going to] have a few barriers – and [alcohol] does lower them. Obviously that *can* go too far, so you have to moderate that – alcohol in particular, I think, it’s easy to go too far. But...with ecstasy, for example, it’s *almost* custom-made for that experience of being companionable, being open with people, and I was just *not* like that by nature.

This is where the less common – or at least, less socially accepted – drugs come into play. MDMA, or ecstasy, is the quintessential party drug. It is a synthetic amphetamine capable of providing the energy needed for all-night dancing, but, as Tal references, it is known for stimulating immense feelings of empathy and affection towards others while knocking down personal inhibition. The most common drugs to appear at raves are any combination of ecstasy, speed, LSD, Ketamine, cocaine, and, of course, alcohol.¹⁵⁴ In addition to being the gate-way drug for almost all North Americans, from a functional perspective, it makes sense that something as socialized and available as alcohol be a steady fixture of rave drug-use. As Gaston says, “it’s just.... I guess it kind of helps....not worry about making mistakes. For example, if you’re drinking, you’re not- you’ll try- you’re not as self-conscious so it opens you up to these

¹⁵⁴ When I began my study, based on what I had read, I was under the impression that intoxication by alcohol was somewhat looked down upon by ravers because of its association with the regular club/bar scene as something almost vulgar. I had anticipated subjects would tell me alcohol was something sloppy, dilettantish, and outmoded for frat and “bro” culture to content themselves with, a catalyst and normalizer of unhealthy social behaviours. This prejudice was nowhere present in my own research and experiences and may be more a feature of the UK scene which features so heavily in much of the published materiel on raving (rave having been so thoroughly brought to the mainstream club culture as to allow for a popular dichotomy between a more “ravey” set and the stereotypical “punter” as exemplified in Thornton’s work in *Club Cultures*). It could possibly be that this was a prejudice of the pioneering rave generation(s) that has since fallen out of relevance. My findings indicate alcohol is a background of intoxication shared between most of the ravers who have chosen not to remain sober (as some do), regardless of what further substances they choose to ingest. It appears as almost a first-step in the lowering of personal boundaries and earnestness of behavior espoused by ravers as necessary to embracing the highly-social environment rave offers.

new ideas or if, you know, if you're taking drugs...." He applies this to situations as a performer and as non-performer.

We also get pretty shit-faced when we play, but.... I think that just kind of same the same idea, I guess, calm the nerves or 'state learning' or whatever you want to call it. Mushrooms, it's kind of hard to do things on mushrooms [laughs]. It's more something that you do that opens your eyes to different experiences that I think gives you different perspectives just in general; it doesn't necessarily just have to be for art so I don't think we've ever taken mushrooms and then sat down to jam.

Similarly, Tal mentioned that, for a DJ, it's not going to work if you try and spin while you are on LSD, he has played major sets so drunk he does not remember them. Alcohol allows access to the feelings and behaviours of a social group of lowered inhibitions and personal boundaries.

The drugs provide a fast-track to familiarity. Erika provides a response that addresses the negative attitude towards alcohol that I failed to find earlier and reframes it as a difference, not between intoxicants, but between culture. The difference is how these substances are used, not what they are.

It's not like, 'oh, they're on drugs so they're friendly!' or something like that. Even sober, I find everybody really pleasant. They're not really there to get anything from each other.... They're there just because they like interacting with people.... It's not like they're there trying to take you home with them or something. They're just there because they like talking to people and like hanging out listening to weird music in a dark room with bright lights! It's obviously a very stimulating environment, when done right.

What becomes evident is that when Erika is not referring to the high-dose sensory input when she refers to how stimulating the environment "done right" is. She is referring to the intensity or strength of the social environment possible if one opens their self up to the experience – an explicit goal aided, not created, by intoxicants. While the effect of psychedelic drugs on sensory perception can be wondrous, Erika says, "I used to do psychedelics at festivals and stuff like that but I don't really, like, do that anymore. I just got overwhelmed once, it's not for me. But I respect them for what they are." While not everyone will have had a similarly negative

experience to put them off, the fact that across multiple experiences one negative one was enough to determine the risk of that particular type of unpleasant, fearful experience (not itself dangerous) is not worth the risk for her, suggests psychedelic-type psychotropic effects were not why she was interested in drug taking.

“Oceanic” feelings of connectedness are common in psychedelic experiences. On a “bad trip,” however, one experiences the opposite. Whereas an oceanic experience would support the kind of sociality ravers seem motivated towards, an overwhelming experience can quickly become intensely fearful and alienating. One is entirely alone against a threatening world, a world solipsistically rendered and therefore resilient to external aid. If she valued more highly the sensory aspects of drug-taking, it is more likely she would accept this risk. However, if her primary goal in taking them is for their empathetic, emotional, relational effects on one’s social sense of being-in-the-world, the risk becomes meaningless and, of course, she would prefer to take other intoxicants with effects more geared to this end. “I mostly drink and do K now,” she says, “which I find rather comparable – except that you can’t buy K at the liquor store, obviously.”

Emile reports most of his initial drug-use at raves to be LSD. However, he then states, “I will defend that I don’t even consider psychedelic substances to really be party drugs and I don’t think their place *should* be there. I think they’re very good for introspection and personal exploration and sort of more in line with sort of the vision quest usage than the usual current state of affairs.” He contends that drugs – psychedelics in particular – often make up the difference for poorly executed parties, “because so much of the environment is rooted in your current state of consciousness and I’ve seen a lot of people get away with throwing really shitty events under [the] presumption that their audience is going to be on drugs.” Essentially, the

potential of the party and the drugs are often wasted. While the greatest potential for the user of psychedelics, according to Emile, lies in introspective activity, focus on the ego-self is not the purpose of raving.

There is a confusion that arises with the colloquial use of Freudian terminology when people discuss rave and “ego,” especially “ego-death” or “escaping one’s ego.” It is worth clarifying since ravers themselves are very prone to such discussions. It is true that the kind of let-loose and party, free-flowing and transformative, id mentality is favoured over what is construed in most pop psychology discourses as the rigidly constructed mentality of the ego. However, a large part of what, in their conscious mind, ravers who take drugs or drink are trying to subvert is not so much entirely ego, as individuality is also highly prized,¹⁵⁵ but they are looking to subvert the super-ego. The ego and super-ego concepts are, troublingly, often conflated. It is the super-ego that provides the “thou shalt not” in mental dialogue and is responsible for imposing the learned moralities and values of society that one has been enculturated with upon thought, action, and one’s sense of identity.

Intoxicant use shifts the emotional modality of the social body¹⁵⁶ to advantage social bonding between individuals, doing so in confluence with the inherent self-selection of the group. In Emile’s words:

[I]t’s going to attract certain kind of participants. Part of the reason why I enjoy the kind of events that I do is because it brought in very unique kind of people: the kind of people I want to be friends with! And that’s what really started me going and if I had to go to a bunch of events that I felt were.... I don’t want to say people that aren’t like cool or anything – because I think everybody’s cool in their own little way – but people I am *compatible* with. I think that if there was an event where [I was] with people I wasn’t compatible with, even if it had all the other elements, it just wouldn’t be enjoyable...it

¹⁵⁵ It is more accurate to say reports of empathy-inducing psychotropics describe a softer or blurrier ego, an osmotic, porous, and more suggestible sense of self but one that is still an outwardly recognizable ego or personae. This is sometimes the case with alcohol as well, though it can also have the reverse effect, depending on the individual and other context-specific variables.

¹⁵⁶ Note that a high proportion of raves I spoke with self-reported a natural tendency towards introversion.

involves creating a very specific kind of environment to create that and to create something [together in that environment].

The culturally determined process of member self-selection that elects the initial peer-group at a rave will receive elaboration later, however, in the meantime, Emile's response contains the evidence of a deeper and powerful process of inner-self selection that is an integral part of the practice of substance use at raves, reciprocally transformative of individuals and collectives, that requires address. Philosopher Jacques Lacan thought that "man's desire is the desire of the other."¹⁵⁷ In other words: humans desire to be desired (a basic noetic level motivation explained elsewhere in this thesis) and, therefore, in order to relate to others one will assimilate, enacting a sublimation of their own desires for the desires of the other, thus gaining the other's affections and, no less importantly, feeling a sense of kinship through sharing in these values, expressed as desires, and the agreement of what holds meaning in life, action, and relationships. The phrasing of this "desire to desire" further expresses itself in the implication that all one can truly desire is to desire that which one recognizes as meaningful or important (or that one has idealized as the embodiment of such), to live up to a certain standard of value on an internal level, not just intellectually but fundamentally and emotionally. One wants to possess the desire itself, rather than the object of that desire. This is the means by which one is able to form a living relationship to that standard of value reflected in the desire and by which one may assess their own thoughts, feelings, and behaviour. This is sensible in such a participatory culture as rave: To aspire to desire-the-verb, something one can do and participate in actively according to the intentionality of that desire; it provides a model for action.¹⁵⁸ With the personal barrier dissolution brought about by drugs and alcohol, especially drugs causing sensations of

¹⁵⁷ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar Of Jacques Lacan Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991), 235.

¹⁵⁸ A model capable of supporting autotelic, negentropic action – but, more on these concepts to come later.

transcendent emotionality like MDMA, the prevalent characteristic of the super-ego and the social environment informing it shifts to a characteristic of profound empathy. Dealing with the Lacanian formulation, what results is a room full of the desire for empathy and a corresponding an empathy for desire: To want to relate, touch, and connect in sympathetic empathy (i.e. P.L.U.R.) and to live up to the reflected desire to possess this will to empathy.

The role of drugs interacts directly with the concept of the “T.A.Z.” (Temporary Autonomous Zone) mentioned in the introduction. To recapitulate what that means, again in the loquacious Emile’s words:

When you step into this environment, you are – you are basically leaving the world around you, you are leaving its laws, its conventions, and you are stepping into an entirely new set of ones that is based around personal expression. How that exactly goes is entirely dependent on the environment and I think that how people treat the music, how people treat the DJs, how people...design [the] decorations around [that] are going to shape that overall experience, and it’s going to be...the environment that overall sets the emotional timbre of the evening and of what people really want out of it.

A vital part of this environment is the internalized subjective-cognitive one, one can even think of the neuro-chemical and electrical environment of the brain.

The shortcut to familiarity that ravers’ substance use induces, invoking feelings of being of the same “tribe,” likely has another link to the kinds of social connectivity a rave is meant to be a conductive environment for. Gaston mentioned the idea of “state learning” when he and his partner perform, that being “shitfaced” allows them to tap back into the uninhibited creative space of their jam sessions. There could be a correlative case made for the bonding between intoxicated ravers and the sense of trust, beyond the pure effects of these substances. For most people, their first experiences with mind-altering substances are with very close friends. These are bonding moments in the friendship as they form new and unique shared experiences – these still have a sacred quality to them as they are taboo to the mainstream or establishment culture;

they are intimate and exclusive, arcane. Very few people have their first drug experience given to them by a stranger, but rather by someone they already trust. Safety in present company is presupposed. Erika reports that she was already familiar with taking ecstasy because her friend in high school introduced her to it. Being given the drug by a friend is a situation of implicit trust and comradery. Further, common activities during these “first trips” are not unlikely to involve listening to shared musical tastes, dancing together, endorphin overloaded laughter, and a sense of deep bonding through conversation which, in retrospect, may not have been so deep in actual words communicated, but the emotional exchange was genuine. Raving and intentionally re-accessing this cognitive state must surely enforce a social mode more akin to a close group of intimate friends or tribe and the sense of acceptance idealistically associated with family than anything resembling the more fractious, alien, and fragmentary social organizations found elsewhere, such as at a regular club.

In the club the substance use is mostly just alcohol, though quite often a lot of it. However, its role is again to alter one’s social relationship to their fellows and what is considered, within the situational context, as “acceptable” social behaviour. Although my clubber participants present a more problematized scenario. The way Marika presents it, it is pretty straightforward:

Well, I love to dance! And I am a very awkward person when it comes to my body, I find, so I need to drink to dance comfortably. In the past I have gone to places where there is Spanish music or whatever it may be and I was completely uncomfortable in those situations so.... There might be a deeper problem at the root of this but I want to dance but I need to be drunk to do it and it seems like a club setting is pretty much the only place that allows that.

Her intention is to dance and her use of alcohol is to grant herself social permission – permission mediated through the alcohol’s effect on her social and personal awareness – to dance and move her body to express herself (“I love to dance!”). This permission also acts from without as well

as the “club gaze” is altered by its collective holders’ intoxication; the person who dances becomes not the other but the norm, people are less likely to concentrate on others’ physical flaws, people are sometimes granted a “pass” for their behaviour (and this is sometimes problematic) on the grounds of being “just drunk.”

The relaxed personal boundaries are not familiar as in a rave, but far more sexually charged. The idea for males to work up the liquid courage to “pick up chicks” can make this alcoholically-altered environment threatening for women. Laura characterizes how this is difficult for women to deal with, especially because of the limitations for clear communication (noisy atmosphere, female discomfort, drunkenness’ interference with ability to express oneself clearly and to interpret incoming information accurately and discerningly, reduced judgement): “Because people are drunk, it’s like they don’t understand you give a vibe or your, like, *not* wanting their presence. Because, it’s... people are even likely to be, ‘she’s lovely!’ Or ‘he or she is loving it!’ And then, like, [come on stronger] than they already are. I’ve been learning a lot of people have no idea when people are not loving it [laughs].” It was an ironic laugh because she also notes the advantages of alcohol. On the subject of pre-drinking she says, “you have to already be like ready, in a state where you’re already having a good time before you get there is important. Like, I think you can still get away with having a good night, even if you didn’t do that but like it’s much more difficult and you’re like more aware.” This critical self-awareness interferes with one’s freedom to enjoy the evening dancing to the music, as Marika explained.

The balance between awareness and “freedom” comes into play again, later in Laura’s thoughts on alcohol and clubbing. She describes it as almost a means to a bootstrap flow state.

I drink. Preferably a lot. And it’s mostly because...it makes me not focus on anything and it makes you experience the night without scrutiny on specific things or specific things that were bothering you...you don’t hang on to things the same way that you would when you’re sober. When something passes by it’s kind of like when some people from Eastern

religions and stuff will say you should never hold onto stuff and it will just pass away, it's kind of like that but without the choice when you're drunk [laughs], you know what I mean? Because you can't! That general state of... Forced Buddhist Zen state, where you don't follow anything and you don't...give a shit about anything [laughs]! – is very desirable. But is why people do any kind of drugs I think or why they do anything that's escapist, is to be in that – it's chasing that state.

Marika says that when she references the role of her “her state of mind” in how she interprets her experiences at the club to me, “typically it *does* mean how much I've had to drink...8/10 times.”

She then mentions something similar to Laura about an elusive level of inebriation she refers to as the “Perfect Level:”

Everything is just pleasing to me. If I don't know the music it doesn't bother me at all. I'm just happy to be out and socializing and dancing. Typically when I'm in that window, I will talk to anyone who comes up to me and be very friendly and kind to them [laughs]. Whereas if you're not drunk enough or if you're too drunk you might be a bit of a jerk, depending on how they rub off on you, I guess.

In her statement at the end we see a motivational relationship between the desired optimal intoxication and social behaviour: whether that means how amiably or hostilely one feels licensed to respond to other individuals or how “freely” one can interact with their environment (i.e. socializing, dancing – be it solo or with a group or partner, perhaps even a stranger or new acquaintance) without fear of negative repercussion – repercussions that can only be imposed from without; the exception being “shame,” which both women mentioned as a potential social threat lurking around the morning-after. However, shame is again an imposing expression of the superego, the conscious apparatus where the limits of society are embedded and enshrined, “identified” with – limits that were perhaps temporarily transcended – for better or worse – the previous night.

Finally, there is one detail of drug use that qualifies it as holding a fundamentally different place in the motivational structure for rave that it does in mainstream clubbing. Going out to the club, getting drunk and dancing is essentially autotelic, there is no goal or progress

beyond the self-fulfilling moment. It is a repetitive act that requires, essentially, a fresh start each night. Whereas, in rave culture, while the drug-taking and drug-altered social behaviors and activities¹⁵⁹ are enjoyed as autotelia on one level, there are, in fact, holons in a larger teleological structure. For my raver subjects, their drug use changed and, more rapidly than is accountable to simple aging or supposed “maturity,” diminished. However, the social behaviors and norms originally made comfortable for them or encouraged by drug and drink have become acculturated values they have integrated. At least in the case of the positive affects. All of the participants, clubber and raver alike, readily acknowledged some of the drawbacks to all the substance use in their culture; health-wise, economic-wise, and in terms of actions they wish they had had the presence of sober-thought to avoid and relationships that suffered from the ramifications of excess and the specter of habitual abuse. However, as Tal told me,

I feel much more comfortable with myself now and much more comfortable in so many different situations because of that. Because now I have those experiences to draw on, no matter what; no matter where I am or what I’m doing. So it’s a huge improvement, I feel, for me – to go through that to have that experience and I think... I don’t know how it would have gone *without* drugs and alcohol, but certainly they *were* there and they did help.

For the ravers, these experiences reveal a potential for personal growth in the form of interpersonal skills and for social integration. These are possible lasting, long-term effects one doesn’t find listed on erowid.org; they are made possible by the context of their use, by the properties of the T.A.Z as a culture-body.

Tal says that he found his use changed when he “started throwing big parties because now I was responsible for a lot of things and I found, typically, I would be largely sober for the event.... [You] can’t be all off your rocker when you’re throwing a big party.” After he became socially comfortable, it became a priority to create events for the community, to take

¹⁵⁹ Raving being, *en tous*, social behaviour, full stop.

responsibility and that replaced his previous social role that could afford to get completely unhinged. Now, he doesn't even drink. Emile, likewise, doesn't partake in the drug-aspect of the culture anymore, reporting his use of "illicit substance" to be taking a psychedelic "once a year, maybe" in an introspective setting. He says he started going to raves sober when, "I hit a point where I realized the epiphanies I'm going to get off of these substances I have experienced and doing them anymore is going to be an excess and purely for hedonistic purposes – and that's not why I wanted to do them. they exhausted their purpose in my life." It was after this point when he began to discern the raves thrown with passion and *affición* from those of lesser quality. Then, "*seeing* the passion of the scene and seeing it without the actual inebriation going on that I think I really *wanted* to be more involved on the organizational side." This revelation marked the beginnings of his DJ career as well. Once a certain familiarization with the defamiliarization of objects under drugs and alcohol is established, the novelty of that set of altered-subjectivity and its perceptions wears off, degrading the role of drugs in relation to the values of theme one (emphasis on new, novel, unique experiences) and opening one to the luxury of doubting the projective emotionality of their intoxication as legitimate. However, participating in raves sober – again or for the first time – reveals objective-subjectivity: perceptual phenomena and cognitive shifts stemming from a base-line sober state will be unfamiliar still and there is a second revelation of one's relationships within the subculture and a new intentional palette to explore the aesthetic, social, and cognitive events and spaces of the rave. Social experiences can acquire a second sense of authenticity after the litmus (rather than the acid) test of sobriety authenticates the experienced reality of their interactions with others. If not, the subject, like Emile, is able to fructify their social tree through pruning and to follow the fruits of these remaining fecund branches to establish new roots and regrow a healthier orchard of social opportunities and

support. The social-ease learned during drug-use does not necessarily fade with the high. One gets the impression they have a role as socio-emotional training wheels; while they will support unrealistic use of the bike (in this case, vapid and insincere friendships based on the solipsistic stimulation of the drug rather than a connection between people) they reduce the risk of falling off altogether while one cultivates the necessary skills to keep balance without them (in this case outgoingness, trust, empathy, conversation and other bonding activities).

Though Erika describes herself as still regularly getting drunk and doing ketamine, she says it has a less important role, drugs no longer being important to bridge her insecurities. Mostly, she says it's to make up for bad music, uninspiring organization, or bad or uncomfortable venues. The pleasurable effects of her early MDMA use became a diminishing return for her and after she became comfortable, became redundant: "I am much more social now.... This...definitely kicked my butt into gear into being social and meeting people." Now at a rave she goes primarily to see friends she has made over the years.

I didn't have a lot of friends at the time when I started going to parties and then going to parties I made just tonnes of friends.... I went to a party three or four weeks ago and there was people there from the states there was people from like Quebec that I hadn't seen in years and I consider to be good friends but I hadn't seen them in forever and so, you know, sometimes you're going to run into people you haven't seen in ages and you don't really get that when you're not going out to a party unless you [are] actively making the commitment to get someone to visit you.

When Erika is at a rave, "I'm like guaranteed that I'm going to interact with a bunch of positive people who are, like, have a good outlook on life and are not just there to get shit-faced and wake up with some woman they don't know." She contrasts the fulfilling experiences of social happiness she was opened up to through her experiences at raves with her experiences of clubs.

Her complaints echo those of Laura and Marika:

before I started going to raves, my concept of going out to a club was pretty accurate to what it is like and whenever I go to a normal club for a normal club night, I'm always

disappointed and want to leave. Um, people are emotionally cold, not interested in talking to strangers, they're more into drinking typically. People go to a club and they just want to get as drunk as humanly possible and... and that is like their excuse to escape being a reasonable person and do things that they wouldn't normally do, I guess? I find it very loud and packed and there's.... there'll be a lot of people but they're not.... Experiencing each other? They're just like there being their own loud, drunk self and there's not really much that I get out of that whereas I go to a rave and you walk in the door and people are smiling at you, like, 'oh my god hi!' And shaking your hand being, like, 'Oh, I love your hair! And, like, neat pants!' And people at raves will wear really outlandish things and will make them themselves or buy them from other artists. It's [a] very artistic and inspiring place to be.

While club culture is characterized by a drive towards disintegration of social order through a sort of drunken entropy, rave is a space one inhabits requiring a reorder of the social rules. Instead of escaping the pressure to behave as responsible moral beings like Laura and Erika pointed out in clubs, the rave is an opportunity to take on new responsibilities in the form of personal connectedness, of shared values, experience, and an exchange of empathy with those around oneself; ravers construct a culture of new social prerogatives modeled on the idealistic interpersonal experiences nearly all ravers share in: the sense of *communitas* earned through the rite of these socially reordering experiences of intoxication. Once an individual has integrated these experiences and learned the social value set they [the raver] are meant to embody, taking the drugs and/or getting drunk, is optional as they have fulfilled their meta-purpose within the culture. Rather, "the dominant environmental cue everybody takes is P.L.U.R. – Peace, Love, Unity, Respect," as Emile explains. The deeper motivation within the rave context for the use of these drugs is to harmonize the outer and inner environments, objective and subjective reality, to P.L.U.R. In an art-centric subculture where the primary mode of social interaction will be dancing it is easy to see how facilitation role of the drugs transpires and interacts with the musical art. Lyttle and Monagne found that not only with psychedelic drugs did music "pattern

the hallucinatory experience culturally”¹⁶⁰ but that, more generally and more importantly, under drug influence, music can replace structures of lost ego boundaries with its own “implicit” structures.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Lyttle and Montagne, “Drugs, Music, and Ideology,” 1172.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

**CHAPTER SEVEN:
MUSIC IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL FACTOR, A SHAPER OF BOTH THE INNER AND
OUTER ENVIRONMENTS, A DEFINING CONDITIONER OF SOCIAL ACTIVITY**

There is a second psychoactive substance at work in the room: that is, the music itself.

Whereas the use of consciousness-altering substances may rearrange one's perceptions of events and sensations in accordance with an idealized, perhaps fetishized, model, the music is a constant factor for providing raw data that the individual must interpret. The music is consistently central among ravers' possible content of consciousness. It doubly exerts its influence both by its contribution to the state of the individuals' consciousness¹⁶² and by its nature of being the actual phenomenological materiel, much of it heavily coded with societally defined instructions and with personal associations, for the raver to interpret. Marshall McLuhan understood Flaubert to be correct in saying "style is a way of seeing" and wrote that "the role of art in the past has been...the making of counter-environments, or anti-environments."¹⁶³ By framing a past environment, and thus establishing such a "contrapuntal environment"¹⁶⁴ our present provides a new frame of reference and something of the nature of a harmony appears in this relationship between the present (the tonic note) and all other points in time. The present thus is able to make art of it by providing or changing the context through which the contrapuntal environment is enframed, or, in the post-modern world, how something like the Pop art of McLuhan's time (or the art of the Dadaists, fifty years before) took regular objects from the outside world and made art of them by (re-) framing them inside the environment of the gallery.¹⁶⁵ It is also possible to establish these contrapuntal environments synchronically, as, indeed, rave does. In the "re-

¹⁶² Recalling that, not only can the content of consciousness cause a reaction that alters one's state of consciousness, but very loud music "saturates the auditory system" and that the maximal neural firing this entails *could* enact a unique shift in brain-state all its own (Levitin, *This Is Your Brain On Music*, 71).

¹⁶³ McLuhan, "Address at Vision 65," 224.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 223.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

tribalized” “electric environments” McLuhan characterized his burgeoning media world (really prefiguring the contemporary digital media landscape) as one in which the environment itself is an art form and that to understand it one must see the “actual existing new environment” as such.¹⁶⁶ To use his trademark: “the medium is the message,” it is apparent that the intentional nature of sound, that the phenomenon of not simply making but of listening and responding to music is a *Dasein* practice within these art-media environments. If style is, indeed, a way of seeing, raving suggests this extension: that perception is a way of existing.

Constructed as a foundational pillar in Martin Heidegger’s epic ontological investigation, *Being and Time*, *Dasein* translates directly as “there-being”¹⁶⁷ it is a manner of being-in-the-world specific to human beings because only humans, as beings with the character of *Dasein*, are beings imperatively concerned with and aware of their very being.¹⁶⁸ It is tied to a level of self-awareness, existing “in the sense that the continued living of its life, as well as the form that its life will take is something with which it must concern itself,” as only the being of *Dasein* “leads” its life, choosing how to do so – or even *if* to do so – through how action is taken and how the significance of those actions is interpreted.¹⁶⁹

Dasein always understands itself in term of its existence, in terms of its possibility to be itself or not be itself. *Dasein* has either chosen these possibilities itself, stumbled upon them, or in each instance already grown up in them. Existence is decided only by each *Dasein* itself in the manner of seizing upon or neglecting such possibilities.¹⁷⁰

Heidegger identifies three “priorities” of *Dasein*. 1) an ontic one: ontically this species of being is defined through its existence (its identity of “who” and “what” it is is fixed through its

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Stephen Mulhall, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Heidegger and Being and Time* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), 14.

¹⁶⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press: 2010), 11.

¹⁶⁹ Mulhall, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Heidegger and Being and Time*, 14-15.

¹⁷⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*., 11.

exercise of “there-being” rather than expressing a pre-determined nature); 2) and ontological one: *Dasein* is an ontological being by nature of it can only be said to exist through its continued ontological analysis (ex. the tacit ontological analysis required by the nature of “leading” a life); 3) the “ontic-ontological condition of the possibilities of all ontologies” – the ability to recognize and grasp the nature of any and all entities as such – because this recognition is necessary to the self-reflective processes of the first two priorities.¹⁷¹ Concerning the interpretation of the meaning of being that was Heidegger’s task in *Being and Time*, as well as is, I argue, ultimately that of the rave scene, “*Dasein* is not only the primary being to be interrogated...always already in its being [it] is related to *what is sought* in this question...the question of being is nothing else than the radicalization of an essential tendency of being that belongs to *Dasein* itself.”¹⁷²

It is by this nature, this *Dasein* practice of existence through perception, of being, that the music at a rave actually creates an environment participants inhabit.¹⁷³ This environment is in one way a shared experience and in another, of subjective creation; it is likewise in one way physical (as soundwaves that act upon the body, as the bodies and objects that create the sound, the space containing the sound) and in another way a mental environment of perception (interpretive). The nexus between inner (mental) and outer (physical) environments is demonstrated in the way this very musical space (the rave) and this type of “headspace” (of the individual raver) interact with each other and script the social activity through a continuous system of feedback between crowd and DJ. When the interactions in this musical space alter and harmonize these inner and outer environments adequately, the result is a negentropic cycle of

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 12.

¹⁷² Ibid., 13.

¹⁷³ Likewise, analogously, Heidegger notes that *Dasein* “is the site of the understanding of being” rather than an instance of abstract representationalization of being (Heidegger, *Being And Time*, 8). We can (through synthetic analogy) interpret him to have *placed* this phenomenon within the space of the existent (existential) inner environment embodying the cognition of *Dasein* (the aforementioned site), itself existing within and interacting with the larger outer environment.

congruous intentionality and information, an alignment of outer experience with the order of consciousness from which optimally arises Csikszentmihalyi's "flow state."¹⁷⁴ When this system functions at peak efficiency, that is to say, when the music is most effective across the audience, this phenomenon extrapolates into a mode of *social* "flow," the experience of a collective ASC of this kind. This is because the transcendental musical space opened up is a highly social space of these sorts of well-defined and almost pre-interpreted interactions.

I like to provide music that's just going to give the crowd a good energy and to sort of give them something very specifically towards what they want. I want to be the DJ that the person came to the party to see just to sort of experience that environment. I want to also help with the community's cohesion. That's why I try to be very interactive in interacting with the crowd while I'm playing...

This is Emile describing his objectives as a DJ. The music-maker is the *de facto* leader of the congregation, an exemplary of moral behavior, of "values" as defined earlier by Lee. He puts high stock in the performance aspect of making the music as one of the DJ's central responsibilities:

I think in a way everybody is looking [to] the DJ...this is some messed up aspect of our Christian society, a relic of it – the way that a dance hall or a club is structured is very similar to like a church where you have the masses of people below and then you have – on a sort of *deus*¹⁷⁵ – raised up, you have this one person who is sort of preaching. In this case it's music, it's performing but...it also means that people look...to get permission for what to do from that person at the front. The person up there is the one sort of setting the precedent for "*what is done* here." And, I think that, in order to have fun, you need to have a DJ who is enjoying himself because...the people who might be not as into it, the people who are new, who are green to the environment – I think that it's a lot harder for them to get in if up there it's somebody who's just stone-faced and just kind of still while he's doing his thing.

He moves on to hammer home this point after I question the DJ's role as a "musician" in light of the controversial practice some DJs engage in of pre-programming entire sets. Something Emile

¹⁷⁴ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology Of Optimal Experience* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008), 36.

¹⁷⁵ Correction: "dais." Emile misspoke but clearly intended to say dais.

says he is not against on ideological grounds, but rather that he considers the practice ineffective because of a pre-planned set's lack of responsivity to the immediate feedback of the crowd's "need." Surprisingly, with a Modernist flash he immediately then looked ahead to the promise of A.I.

This is something that I do think could be automated by computers and I think at some point – I've seen the algorithms! They've been improving *greatly* over the years – and within a couple years I wouldn't be surprised if they had scripts that could just completely supersede the need for a DJ on an actual being-there level. But what's still important is that they're the human up there and they're the one who's setting the culture for the next hour...it's important to have fun with it and to sort of set a precedent for what the environment's going to be.

What he is saying is that the DJ's primary responsibility is not their technical duties, but their social obligation to fulfil the function, the social *rôle* of DJ – covering analogous duties to a cleric and to an MC, in Emile's description – to facilitate the smooth operation of the culture.

This might contextualize the nature of other participants' responses. Everyone, in some form or another, stated that the music itself was important to them. Tal's first introduction to EDM was when a co-worker introduced him to the single "All That You See And Hear." His colleague "played this music for me in his car and.... Like, within a minute into the song I was like, *No! This is it! I'm listening to this for the rest of my life! That is it!* And I was right. I still do it. It just hit me in a way that nothing else did." Erika remembers that in her introduction to raving, "the music, initially, was the draw. Like, someone said, you can hear the weird nerdy, like, dance music that you don't get to hear normally out at a venue and like what? What the hell? I thought nobody was listening to this stuff. To sort of find people that were not like, not only listening to it, but actively involved in making it was pretty cool." As DJs, both Tal and Emile are explicit about the importance of choosing a repertoire of songs and samples that reflect the audience's taste in music, of "playing the gig," as the expression goes.

However, no one said the music was the main thing about a party for them. In fact, it could be quite difficult to get interview subjects to say much about the music without being very deliberate in a line of questioning – and even in this case, discussion about the music itself was quickly discarded to explain to me something socially-oriented. Most organic references to the music were dealing with a negative: what happens if DJ is bad, if the music is ill-suited to the crowd, or if it is out of synch with everyone at the party's vibe? It is not that my subjects don't care about the music itself per-se, but they are far more concerned about the music within its function as a part of the rave and how the room reacts with it. If it is good, they dance, and the better the music the more they dance with a certain intentional energy. If the music is bad or uninteresting they report being more likely to hang around and drink and do drugs to try and make up the distance between where they are and being touched by the music. Instead of dancing together, they talk. Because the music itself is not the center of focus does not mean it is not of central importance. Quite the contrary: music is the ubiquitous, most constant factor. The rave party is organized around facilitating the performance and, especially, the reception of EDM and its social activities are directly formulated by the nature and presence of the music. Dancing is the primary mode of expressive interaction, verbal conversations on the dance floor are limited (meaning emotionally charged, implicit, and "immediate" dialogue through mediums like dance are given preference over more intellectual abstracted mediums like language). The venues are designed to optimize the dance floor experience. The preferred drugs make one not mind, perhaps inspire one to even savour, the idea of packing in together with other bodies, forgoing personal space of any kind. As well as being usually to some degree psychedelic, these chemicals are stimulants providing thrusts of physical energy and mental alertness for dancing and following the inducements of the crowd and music. The participants reported a

preoccupation with the *affect* of the music; the specific phenomena they fixate upon are evidence that the effects of the music's power to suggest and organize are interwoven into the context in which it is consumed. It is an *active* consumption, and this multilateral process is of intersecting intentionalities is what they all wanted me to understand.¹⁷⁶

“I don't typically listen to it just to listen to it,” admits Tal, “That...experience is a lot of fun to me, that's a big part of it to me, is being involved in doing it *with* people and listening to it *at* a show, or playing it at a show is really where I experience it. And it's all packaged in for me. So, it's not just the music that does it, it's that experience part of it.” Emile touches on how ravers' attention on the music is an integrated part of the whole ritual of rave – until something goes wrong. The music becomes conspicuous when it is received as being bad or fails to reach its audience in a way that supports the teleology of the room. Often, it fails because it does something conspicuous, jarring, or out of character with the flow of the night.

The music has to be...good. It doesn't have to be great for it to be a good night, in my opinion, but it has to be enough that it doesn't bring me out of the experience and that's one of the things where DJing is important in that you need to make things flow seamlessly. If I can notice all the hiccups it does affect the experience...

I feel a lot of great DJs are doing things that aren't even noticed but are *felt*. It's a thing that's experienced on a level...that sometimes you aren't even aware of; and even now as I'm venturing more into making music, I'm noticing more those subtle little elements that go into a song that I didn't notice before, that actually totally do shape my experience.

It is not that the music itself does not matter, “if the audience in general, at mass, doesn't enjoy the music, that's gonna be a bad night,” or just as easily, according to Erika, “it can be in a dark, boring room and that's not as great but you can still have a good time if the music is good.” After all, the music itself is the initial draw for many ravers, so it would be a mistake to imply that no

¹⁷⁶ Any attempts to deal clinically with the music were missing the point. Several subjects, knowing that was research was in connection with a music degree actually apologized at the end for not talking more about the music, fearing they hadn't been useful to a “music project.” It just hadn't seemed important to them while answering the questions to feature the music itself more in their answers.

one pays attention to it – but in this instance, the music really does serve a higher purpose – one that ravers are extraordinarily sensitive to.

Music at a rave takes the responsibility of facilitating the social cohesion normally accomplished through conventional conversation. While on the dance floor or in the main area, more than perfunctory chatting is not very feasible. The main social bonding, the forging of a sense personal connectedness and community is in the physical exchange of dancing. This doesn't necessarily mean coupled dancing, but that individuals come together, sharing in the activity, a common experience between those present. It represents an implicit and embodied agreement over social values and aesthetic taste.

The equivalency in practice is evident in one of Erika's responses:

I dance a lot. If I'm not dancing, I'm probably drinking a beer at the bar and talking about how the music is bad with a friend. I don't really leave; I'm the kind of person who stays all night. If there's someone there who I can talk to and be entertained by, I'll stay even if the music isn't fantastic. I just like the social interaction, being out and near people.

Here she presents very clearly that hanging by the bar in order to sustain a conversation (about aesthetic values, nonetheless!) is a second-choice activity meant to compensate (and console, through commiserating with her respected peers) for the fact she is not dancing to good music. She is there for the "social interaction" of being "out and near people." This is the sort of thing that can be accomplished through verbal or non-verbal communication. Raves present the means to do so non-verbally, which differs from the stress mainstream culture puts on linguistic communication – whether by oral or written means. The music can act further as a proxy so that, through dancing, one can share in this "conversation" without requiring the kind of direct confrontation that might be a barrier to less extroverted personalities. This would support the P.L.U.R. "vibe" of a totally non-confrontational environment and makes further sense when one

considers the high frequency of self-reported “shyness” research participants identified themselves with when they first came to raving.

The importance of choosing recognizable tracks (Erika told me a story of attending a club event outside of her normal comfort zone because a DJ booked for it was someone she had waited years for a chance to see live and “want[ed] to hear them play this one really weird song”)¹⁷⁷ or delivering an experience in-line with genre preferences of the audience is a central commitment in the DJ’s responsibility to provoke dancing, to bring everyone into communion, *vis à vis* dancing. For someone like Emile, who is trying to build a portfolio as a professional DJ able to take as many jobs as possible, this means switching entirely between different base sets of music to work with during an event.

I tend to very much try and tailor my set towards the vibe of the party and...a lot of my events are these Japanese type of things and I will play remixes of anime openings and things like that there. Meanwhile, if I’m getting booked for a drum and bass event, you’re not seeing any of those, you’re not hearing any of those, and you’d be surprised hearing me play there and then hearing me play at a con,¹⁷⁸ to hear the differences in sound because I am tailoring things towards the audience.

As a rule of thumb, people dance when they know the song. Musical preference is a tremendously personal thing and can be definitive of one’s relationship within a given social setting far beyond the rave context. Because of the affect experienced when hearing music one enjoys, an individual *recognizes* something of themselves, of their values, in the piece – whatever part resonates with the music or lyric in question. Subjectively, one is able to project or assume something of themselves onto the objective environment; by this means, the music is again harmonizing the inner and outer intentional environments at a rave – the recognition is a second-take or perspective of how things fit together in the relational world, an implication of the

¹⁷⁷ Unfortunately, they played what she felt to be a completely sell-out set and didn’t hear her song. She had a disappointing night and was “bored the while night...when we got to the party, just did not have fun at all.”

¹⁷⁸ At an anime convention.

forest for the trees as the pattern appears simplified and decipherable when viewed on a different axis. In application, the need of the individual to communicate, be understood and accepted, and to share meaningful experience can be accomplished through social dancing, an activity in complete conformity with the rave environment's press (and the social-artistic goal of the DJ) intending them to dance and party, generating the oft-mentioned positive "vibes" or "energy" that fuel the event.

This phenomenon is shared between raves and club events. It is perhaps even more prominent in the answers of my non-raver participants because the club crowd lacks the quality of being a pre-existing, insular social group that one can depend upon and safely predict the appropriate social chemistry. There is a greater element of risk that a good or decent night could not happen or that things might even go badly because there are simply a greater number of variables and fewer guarantees. Though, it is true, certain archetypical "crowds" are associated with different venues and, as Thornton observes, the music plays a role in self-selecting the composition of the crowd on any given night.¹⁷⁹ The music is further able to override immutable factors of the environment that might otherwise dampen one's experience. Marika points out, for example, Phil's, a notorious Waterloo club, deservedly infamous for its squalid sanitary conditions, seedy atmosphere, and all the associated behaviours when alcohol is served near two university campuses at the minimum required price:¹⁸⁰

They have different music themes for every night of the week.... Although, maybe the grungier places will play music that is just crowd pleasing, so...people are guaranteed to have a good time even if...for example: the venue is not nice *at all* – but if you're loving the music, somehow, that doesn't matter.

¹⁷⁹ Thornton, *Club Cultures*, 23.

¹⁸⁰ To say nothing of the legendary listing of "mac'n'cheese" their menu board. Most say it doesn't exist, that it's just a myth to ward off the law that they must provide the option of food if they are to serve alcohol. Others fear it and whisper conspiracies to order it, if only to find out the truth. But these are quiet murmurs kept far from the ears of the staff, lest they inadvertently tempt mortal fate.

Laura adds that, in her experience of this same venue, the self-selection of the crowd is evident. For example, “on the electronic night music it seems everyone is like – it just seems – I generally feel more pumped for it and more social and more – but it’s just because of the more high-energy music, I guess?”

But this is not a solely unidirectional relationship. Music’s social cues can sometimes be transformative of the physical environment and bring *it* more in line with the headspace of those present. Sometimes at a rave the organizers will have planned mechanisms by which the crowd can transform their environment. It can be things like Tal handing out glowsticks to turn the audience into a churning sea of phosphorescent lights and then letting them use those lights to vote on the direction of the music or it can be like the painting room at a gallery-space rave I attended where attendees are encouraged to decorate the environment. But, by and large, the rave space, once prepared for its role as a T.A.Z. is already set up to accommodate the appropriate social behaviours; the physical transformation takes place before the rave and is done for the ravers. However, standard bars are not always adequately designed for certain activities, especially if their business model requires them to be a little more versatile. This is the “mish-mash” Laura described. In fact, the night she references where patrons rearranged the bar is a perfect example of this kind of transformation of the external environmental at the behest of the music’s command:

[I]t became a giant dance party and we were moving tables into the corners and stuff – which was funny because it doesn’t happen every time – at Jane Bond. It happens only on the good nights when people are just feeling confident enough that they can just...move all the tables around! ...It’s funny like how some bars will be...an appropriate situation for dancing...even though there’s no dance-floor...it elicits that kind of behaviour exactly because of the design of the bar or whatever.... Even though it’s entirely not designed that way [laughs]! Which is funny.... people push the tables out of the way anyway because it just needs to happen [laughs]!

The room or physical place can be made to seem familiar and safe, but, to reiterate, this operates on a subject to subject level. No matter the venue, by choosing to dance to a song they both know, two individuals who happen to be side-by-side on a dance-floor are able to have a basic conversation in which they communicate their shared relationship with each other and to, if not to the particular song, then to songs of whatever that type – which often share common philosophical/aesthetic outlooks or themes. Familiar musical *matériel* allows participants to identify themselves – or their personal value sets – in their peers and physical space. Marika talks about this aspect of her relationship to what music is being played:

[I]f I know the song it's more fun because you can sing along or, I dunno, you feel more comfortable. However, I am the type of person who really, really loves finding new music so sometimes I will keep my ears open for something that I may like. And depending on my state of mind I might really, really love just a good beat or something. But, yeah, it definitely *does* make it way easier to enjoy if you know or can at least recognize what's being played. I've even been to the club with people who refuse to dance if they don't know the song.

Some are pickier than others. There is an innate joy to seeing oneself thus reflected; it vindicates one's choices about what they consider “good,” and this is a totem of what one values as meaningful in their lives. At least, of how one decides what to value.

The French music night at Jane Bond was a display of this type of case: the music was explicitly esoteric French language music imported into an Anglophone club, because it would be unfamiliar. However, Laura defends the choice because

places like Jane Bond that play – like they *seek out* newer like less-popular music because it's – like you kind of go there to hear it. If you were going to hear a band or something you just heard were good and you never actually listened to them before, it's kind of like that because you can discover new stuff and I feel like when you don't know the music, it puts a different filter on the evening

The choice to play music the audience couldn't possibly be expected to be familiar with appealed to a crowd with a certain value-set, one that values new and different experience and perhaps –

judging from the tone of voice she delivered her answer in – some of the haughty prestige of arcana. It offers a sense of exclusivity, despite being an open uptown club, that comes with choosing the musical path less traveled. That sense of exclusivity yields a feeling of comradery amongst those present. Those present did not recognize the music itself, they recognized their values. This, what I would almost term a “punk-elitism,” is certainly shared with rave culture. Laura also readily admits part of the appeal of a karaoke bar she frequents is high school nostalgia for classic rock songs and that the most fun club night she’s ever had was a soul music night of all the classic hits, where the crowd struggled enthusiastically to dance to the music that required a different physical sensibility and move-set from the accustomed EDM.

“Did I find the music worth dancing to? I guess, did I, like, technically, did I find that the DJ was doing a good job? You know, because you can play good music and it can still be boring.” Erika makes the point that the DJ has a more important job – especially in the more focused, demanding atmosphere of a rave¹⁸¹ – than simply to show up with a USB drive full of everyone’s favourite singles. As has already been evidenced, part of this responsibility is to interact with the crowd, but it goes further than what Emile has to say about the need to simply have a human face up front to connect with. DJing is a full performance art; whatever the “character” or persona they bring to the stage, “the DJ” is an archetyped role they are expected to play, one that is socially and artistically intertwined. Tal sheds a little more light on what a good DJ knows about that role:

[D]eliver a show...that passion is a really big part of that; if I’m really into it, it’s going to help the crowd groove to it. So that’s step one. And then I look for songs that match

¹⁸¹ Emile on the discerning ears of local scenes: “[T]hey generally tend to hold quality in a higher esteem for their DJs so.... First of all, they’re all local so you don’t get the celebrity hype going on. They also tend to be an audience that’s more savvy of what good DJing sounds like and so they’ll tend to react more positively when somebody does a good job of it. And even when somebody they like does a worse job than usual, they’ll notice. They’ll still be very nice about it – but they’ll notice. And I think that does create a bit of a different, um, demand for quality than a lot of the big events.

the mood of the crowd – and what I *do* have experience with and what I am very involved with is people. So I'm very engaged with the crowd and reading the crowd. I started out as an MC, so I'd be rhyming and hyping the crowd and that stuff. That was my intro to performing so I brought that mindset to DJing as well.

Just try and include people, particularly people who are not feeling included. You know? ... Just take care of their needs and make them feel like they're *part of it*. And then they *do* contribute – that's the thing: once they feel like they can contribute, people do. That *makes* that happen, makes that vibe happen!

The DJ must be constantly interacting with the crowd not just during, but *through* their performance. This interactive aspect is integral to accomplishing an affective set. This affect must again be multilateral: The DJ plays music that affects the crowd, the crowd's reactions affect one another, and the crowd's collective responses affect the DJ. This feedback breaks down, the energy dissipates, and the night gets boring and repetitive if the DJ is not responsive or clumsy at reading the crowd. This is why Tal is explicit: he knows nothing of musical or composition theory, has no traditional music-making experience, but he is a good DJ because “what I *do* have experience with and what I am very involved with is people...I'm very engaged with the crowd and reading the crowd.” He goes onto explain some of the incredible technical feats skilled DJs pull off but then concludes that they are impressive but non-essential, sometimes distracting from the point, “you really do have to be able to get a handle on the crowd.” Emile seconds this emotion:

A lot of times it's playing off the crowd's energy and the fact that you're supplying something they're enjoying is a very exhilarating feeling; I don't feel like I am entirely the center of the party in any way but the attention is up at the front and they are sort of relying on you to provide a very important staple of the environment and that...pressure I enjoy.

As much as he enjoys “the fact that I am put on a pedestal for this,” Emile is quick to qualify that what he does only works because “The difference between the DJ and the audience isn't like a stern wall or anything.”

Along with the sense of space – perhaps it is better at this point to say sense of engagement with space – DJs manage the sense of time along with it, the total sense of *place* requiring the intersection of both time and space to exist within. This is not a vapid pseudo-physics platitude but is the very core of how human beings experience, how they perceive those experiences, and how they become stored as memories and affect the cycle of future experience. Through the conjuring of multiple memory traces into a gestalt that incorporates the vast sum of the subject's experiences, that individual is able to understand a context – or relationship – between themselves and the moment they are experiencing. Prime among the perceived reality of the most meaningful contextualizing memories (essentially, what is known, what has been learned) is a sense of when they happened. Memories become more meaningful tied to a certain place(s) and/or certain people *at a certain time*, a “life-context,” so to speak. Some might be tempted to call this nostalgia, however, it indicates a teleological significance to the possessor of these memories. This is usually because the moment is essentialized as formative to who the individual is now, in some way. It could be a first of a given type, or a last, or a point at which some revelation was reached, or simply an optimal experience when their inner world was perfectly aligned with their actions in the external one. The sense of progression, the irretrievability of that specific co-ordinate makes it something special, something different. The exceptionality of these types of moments exaggerate the oft unperceived constant, sense of being, that which Heidegger called *Dasein*, a sense of human *being in the world*. There must be a full perception of place – a unique combination of time and space for this to occur.

Simon Frith marks two of popular music's social functions (considerations of which, he argues, are inseparable from study of pop aesthetics) as: “its use in answering questions of

identity,” to create a self-definition that also provides one a “particular place in society,”¹⁸² and, as I have just discussed above, “to shape popular memory, to organize our sense of time.” These functions tend to overlap as memory and identity are so integrally entwined. Music of any brow-level, Frith states, has the power to affect us so as to make our experience of the present more intense, “to ‘stop’ time, to make us feel we are living within a moment.”¹⁸³ This phenomenon is part of the magic circle drawn around the T.A.Z. – it is not only a physically enclosed environment, but a temporally enclosed one as well. It’s autonomy allows a further dissociation from outside time because it’s experience of a timeless moment is repriseable or resumable from party to party. They are all, in this particular sense, at (or *of*) the same time. “The physical impact of music...the use of beat, pulse and rhythm to compel our immediate bodily involvement in an organization of time that the music itself controls”¹⁸⁴ is precisely how raves can entrain a room full of people into an intense shared experience of place (space + time + identity). At the interstice of “individual identity and social space,” where the questions of “the control of public and private feelings” are laid open,¹⁸⁵ this dual-impact of music takes everyone into one time and space/place where they are all in the same circumstance; the outside world’s teleology and geography are almost totally subverted. The formal structures of EDM at raves furthers this by nature of it’s abstract relation to time. As a dance music, the beat is quintessential; however, harmonies, melodic motifs, lyrics, are all woven in a decidedly non-linear way. There are no reliable structural “landmarks” of progress throughout a piece. Instead, everything becomes looping: the music crests and dips, sometimes the tempi shift, density tightens and loosens; sonic

¹⁸² Simon Frith, “Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music,” in *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance, and Rejection*, eds. Richard Leppert and Susan McClary (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 140.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 142

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 143.

elements come, go, repeat, and recombine in a blur between the totally through-composed and the utterly repetitive over the uninterrupted long-form continuity sustained through a set. This rejection of discernable “progression” through musical-time disrupts one’s experience of being in time – of being a being in time passing, that is – in time with the music. Within the T.A.Z., one’s existence is defined within a fluid moment.¹⁸⁶

Thus the obstacle of the T.A.Z., of the rave, is that it removes itself from the regular flow of things; it is the proverbial pebble cast into a river, sending out ripples that disrupt the flow of the river of time. Because of the construction of a rave party and the continuous, repetitious, form of EDM – especially when DJ’d live – there is a risk of monotony in losing all sense of time perception. Even if it is not specifically “boring,” one moment stretched over hours loses its novelty, its excitement. A dramatic chord is only dramatic because of what comes before or after (even if that is silence) – or rather, the sense (inculcated by our exposure to music since *in utero*) of this dramatic chord *intending* to lead to or from something: implied narrative. This illustrates the importance of the DJ’s skill in managing the narrative sense of their art; it is the difference between the Second DJ on the night I wrote about and the others, particularly the Third and Fourth DJs. It is also part of the organizers’ role to plan out the pacing of the aural environment’s progression. This rate of movement directly commands the possible actions of the social body; the raver’s body is at once a social body and a part of the larger social body, the collective present. Again a holistic structure reveals itself.

¹⁸⁶ An interesting association concerning the impact of time and identity: Frith writes, “Hence the pleasures of dance and disco; clubs and parties provide a setting, a society, which seem to be defined only by the time-scale of the music (the beats per minute), which escapes the real time passing outside.” I have already explained the defining relationship between beats per minute and EDM genre identification. From there we observe what has already been stated about enitre scenes developing around specific genres....

Tal, the most experienced of my subjects, who, again, was the central community leader for the Toronto Happy Hardcore scene, iterated the importance of planning the pacing of the sets in many of his answers to different questions. When it comes to being a DJ or choosing who to play, he clearly cannot place a high enough premium on the importance of ensuring a teleology against the disruptive chronological affect of raves, or else risk the party falling to entropy.

[A] rave is not gonna be full-tilt all the time. During the beginning parts we usually start with a really cheesy Happy Hardcore set the first part of the night, because the *really* eager people get there first; that's what they want to hear. And then the next set will be our slowest set of the night. You know, Electro or Break or something like that because the 10:00 crowd is the people who are a little older, they're just coming out; they're going to filter in around 10:00-11:00, right? 11:00, we start to build the energy, just build it up until it peaks at like 1:00 or 2:00 and then the last set will be a little slower to kind of send people out, a trance set or maybe an anthem set, so we'll.... Send them off. So there's a flow to the night and a set *has* to play into that.... So it's like that: respecting your slot, being able to deliver consistently. If you're booked for a set, they expect you to play your set to suit the crowd.

A set has to be paced to match the energy level of the crowd and move in tandem with it, guiding it upwards towards peak energy, providing drops and plateaus for rest and variation, before maxing-out and releasing the pent-up energy explosively, then cooling back down to an eventual resting level post-climax in a measured and controlled way; much like a well-structured exercise routine.¹⁸⁷

For a Temporary Autonomous Zone to function fully in its autonomy, it has to fully produce a microcosmic environment and this includes the progression from one experience to the next within the rave, not just from one rave to the next, and in order to perceive this progression,

¹⁸⁷ On this form or structure, much has been written on the similarities between the ritual of rave and the idea of the shamanic journey and shamanic ritual-cultures' practices. The self-professed tribalism and explicit shamanic fetishism makes it a somewhat obvious starting point. It is also not uncommon for references to Sufism and the practicing of *samā* to arise from time to time. While I have researched into both of these subjects and found them to be worthwhile as informative and provocative avenues, for reasons of space and continuity, I find it impractical to include an adequately meaningful implementation of either in the present form of this thesis. I invite the reader to use the bibliography as an introductory suggestion of articles on shamanic and tribal symbolism and ritual and rave and would point them towards Regula Qureshi's *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context, and Meaning in Qawwali*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

there must be some source of sensual information to communicate its passage to the individual. Lacking natural light or other interactions with the chronology of the outside world, the music is the primary source of this or else ravers would be more likely to report a motion-sickness type phenomenon of physical-mental dissonance, becoming utterly exhausted in some kind of temporal void of a single moment.¹⁸⁸ If this were the case, the sense of personal growth through raving (particularly concerning their interpersonal skills and ability to connect with others) already reported by my interview subjects would not make any sense. If it were not for these micro-journeys through each party, the only source of personal growth would be the experiences between raves, in the outside world. The rave would be a diversion, a source of entertainment, but there would be no cause for them to ascribe to it such a crucial role in shaping their own development as individual subjects. As such the music completes the place necessary for creating *and sustaining* an (autonomous) environment in which its inhabitants can have meaningful experiences.

If Emile loses his synchronicity with his audience,

I'll try to find an environment that fits the crowd again. I also won't try to fret it. It's a bummer when it happens, especially if I can't reach the audience again but I do like it then becomes a challenge about finding what they *do* want and giving them *that*. Sometimes if I'm losing the audience I'll shift to something entirely different and it'll work but [the] very few times that that doesn't work... I guess I'm in it to the end and I guess it's not unenjoyable but it then...it no longer feels like this emotional experience, it feels like it's just the parts moving. I'm pulling this knob, I'm pushing this slider kind of thing, rather than actually having that intimate enjoyment of it.

I do have sort of a game-plan generally but I deviate from it if the crowd's not into it or anything like that so I try to stay flexible, to still tailor things towards what the audience wants even if I have a road map of where I'm going... [O]n my own I don't even do DJing the same way. When I'm doing something at home I do studio-mixes... I pop it into some software and I fine-tune some things in non-real time and I find that ends up with more precise results though it's a lot less fun. So, if I'm making a studio-mix...it tends to

¹⁸⁸ The high-level plateau afforded by substance use makes the case for the enhanced role of the music in providing any sense of time if one is able to sustain such high levels of energy without feeling the wearing down of the body and mind through exhaustion, or at least experiencing these indications of time-elapsing with reduced feeling.

end up being a lot better as a commercial product but...[t]here's a lot less soul in it than performing live and that's really what I'm about.

That "soul" he describes is the gestalt impression of everyone present's experiences coming together in a collective sense of *Dasein*, something temporary and fragile. To consciously experience it to that level in daily life is very difficult. There are many distractions and disruptions constantly acting to diffuse one's awareness of this being-in-the-moment, that sense of universal or oceanic connectedness. Raving allows one to tap this experience as *funktionlust*, defined as: "the pleasure derived from using one's own body in activities."¹⁸⁹ This is a reflection of basic human motivation that allows one to derive such enjoyment from sport, from art, community.¹⁹⁰ Rave is an environment, hyper-charged through music, designed to conduct this effervescent and all-to-ephemeral recognition. In the moment, ravers all thrive in togetherness off of that energy, their own energy: their own collective *flow*, in essence. The energy of this phenomenon provides an environment well-suited to sustaining a complex cognitive state of particular configuration. The *complexity* in question is a measure, in this case, of "how well the information in a person's consciousness is differentiated and integrated."¹⁹¹ Pursuing this flow is of inherent value to the individual as, through practice, "it has the potential to make life more rich, intense, and meaningful; it is good because it increases the strength and complexity of the self."¹⁹²

Csikszentmihalyi writes that, "One of the major functions of every culture has been to shield its members from chaos, to reassure them of their importance and ultimate success."¹⁹³ To this, Michael Brake adds that it is possible to

¹⁸⁹ Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow*, 230.

¹⁹⁰ Csikszentmihalyi even demonstrates socializing itself can clearly be a flow activity for some. *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 230.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 10.

define subcultures as meaning systems, modes of expression or life styles developed by groups in subordinate structural positions [to the dominant culture] in response to dominant meaning systems, and which reflect their attempt to solve structural contradictions arising from the wider societal context. As such, a subculture has to develop new group meanings, and an essential aspect of its existence is that it forms a constellation of behaviour, action, and values which have meaningful symbolism for the actors involved.¹⁹⁴

The musical environment of rave insulates and focuses its members' actions for the duration of the event. It is a two-fold phenomenon, thus: the rave pressure chamber encourages embodied joy of doing – *funktionlust* – and further raises this personal action to art-level status with the attendant positive moral attributes; their action is then further refined to a diamond state of complex meaning and significance, of *virtuous behavior*, because of the role dancing has structured into the rave culture.¹⁹⁵ Christopher Small writes that, “thus do styles of musicking [any and every form of involvement with a musical performance] evolve in conformity with the favoured styles of encounter of various social groups.”¹⁹⁶ Dance and positive musical interaction in general (including the DJ, of course) is interpreted and thus respected as “important” to propagating and sustaining a desirable social order amidst the chaos of the mainstream as well as a healthy relationship between the individual and their peers; it is furthermore an assurance of individual “success,” not only in the gratification of peer-to-peer admiration and larger social

¹⁹⁴ Michael Brake, *Comparative Youth Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1987), 8. The “subordinate position” of many ravers when they first come to the subculture and the promise of rave, by its nature as a subculture, to be a “collective solution” (Ibid.) is explicit in what Tal had to say about the social responsibility he felt to the people who came to his raves, “a group of people who don’t have a lot of places to go for a strong community.... We were getting a lot of people who had nowhere else to go.” He felt his raves provided a solution for a demographic that was overwhelmingly populated by underage kids and young people who were out all night, with few safe spaces available (most nocturnal establishments being bars and the like, therefore off-limits to those below the drinking age) and probably without enough support at home or from other sources of community.

¹⁹⁵ As expounded elsewhere in these pages. Furthering the point is Brake’s statement that, “subcultures offer, through their expressive elements, a meaningful way of life during leisure, which has been removed from the instrumental world of work (ibid., 24).

¹⁹⁶ Christopher Small, *Music of the Common Tongue: Survival and Celebration in Afro-American Music* (New York: Riverrun Press, 1987), 61.

standing, but the recognition (both internal and external) of one's personal contribution to the social mission of the movement.¹⁹⁷

To apply a closer look at one of Small's ideas about ritual performance in music and community to this environment we note that relationships and identity are one another's "inverse and obverse" and that these twins are "explored, affirmed and celebrated on perhaps a more profound level...than in talking" by musicking and dancing – a notion reiterated *ad infinitum* throughout this thesis.¹⁹⁸ "We are moved by music because musicking creates the public image of our most inwardly desired relationships, not just *showing them to us* as they might be but actually *bringing them into existence*...helping us to structure those feelings and therefore to explore and evolve our own identity."¹⁹⁹ The result of this process for ravers is a relationship of co-evolving inner (personal identity) and outer (social relationships) environments.

In the end, the music of the rave is essentially a conductive fluid, saturated with individuals primed and submerged in the ASC of loudness and zipping with the energy of their intentions; it fills the room to the brim. In an idealistic, perfectly-insulated rave, this energy is shared, *communicated*, and moves together in a unified flow, like a circuit controlling the program. In the regular bar or club, the solution is not as conductive and the room is leaky; with rogue grounds, short-circuits, components with unmatched values, and broken traces disrupting the potential type of circuit ravers are on.²⁰⁰ By governing the types of one's possible social

¹⁹⁷ Something Tal is exquisitely clear about in his contributions.

¹⁹⁸ Small, *Music of the Common Tongue*, 56.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

²⁰⁰ Again, I must state that none of this is to lazily characterize the club as simply a lesser-rave (as there is a level of dismissive prejudicial stereotyping of clubbers by ravers and *vice versa*), however, as I have stated already: raves are optimally designed for this specific type of experience and I have never heard of a North American club experience matching the peculiar quality of raves. Regular clubs and bars are simply not designed to reach that kind of critical mass – first off, it tends to require breaking the law and, secondly, all of the participants have noted how throwing quality raves is not a reliable, profitable business model and any given venture is lucky to break even. It should also be noted that this study deals with a specific mode of gratification to essential human drives. It is the answer according to one "possible logic" and, just as easily, one could do a similar study on mainstream club culture as

behaviours and informing their quality and content, the music provides for a, yet again, *unique and intentional experience* of communicating one's own human 'being in the world;' it supplies a previously agreed-upon context for interpretation and a clear set of means for expression within this context, the primary means among them being, of course, dancing. During a rave, it is as Small attests that, "musicking may be seen as an exploration, an affirmation and a celebration of the ideal personal relationships of a particular group...as situations in which human beings encounter one another and try to create meaning from those encounters, it is the relationships that are established between the participants which constitute the most important element of that meaning."²⁰¹ Despite any additional values associated with genre aesthetics or lyric content, this is the real theme and function of the EDM at a rave.

Thus, Tal summarizes the responsibilities of the DJ: "So, yeah, so: being aware of those things; being aware of the community, being aware of *what you're doing* with your set, ah, and the vibe of the night – maybe the night has a theme musically. Play to the theme. Just communicate."

This communication is more than just extemporaneous expression. The message is implied and magnified by the *dispositif* of rave²⁰² and reinforced by the crowd's actions, by the accepted and advocated modes of perception-as-being in this environment. To be an artist as a DJ or promoter requires another Heideggerian practice: *Gestell*. Elements of light, sound, space,

another possible logical solution to fulfil the relevant needs before any Adornian cries of "ersatz culture" should be let fly. The true subject is the people, as individuals and as a collective, and their behaviour is predicated on the recognition of their values and needs as represented and prioritized in the given structure. In this case it is rave culture and the associated objectives/values, and these shape the context by which I reference club culture. Had I chosen the opposite – to study mainstream club and bar culture and compare them to other venues for context, say raves or concert halls – I would have restructured the values and priorities to align with the unique manner in which *that* culture addresses, with whatever level of effectivity, its members' needs.

²⁰¹ Small, "On the Ritual Performance," 62.

²⁰² See Jackson's *Experiments In The Art Of Being Human* for his Foucault-heavy analysis including *dispositif* in rave culture.

and body are gathered together through the use of technology (social media, internet, sound-systems, electronic instruments, playback devices, laptop computers, cellphones, the physical building (or modified “public” space), lighting, atmospheric effects (like artificial fog), projector effects and animation, pharmacological agents....) and enframed as means to rave. The rave environment itself (an *intentional* performing artform), especially as a sonic environment from which there are no dissociative reminders and therefore is totally enfolding and permeating, enframes the society gathered within it: another gear in this (“contrapuntal”) world-machine. In their perceptive being, ravers are enframed as, in the fears of Adorno, “ideology is replaced by instructions for behaviour,” as ravers engage “subjective reactions that psychologically are more deep-seated than manifest ideological contents.”²⁰³ As the creators and perpetrators of the rave environment enframe the crowd, so too – and in simultaneity – does the mass respond to the environment or system of which they are a part as a framed artwork. Both intentional directions respond to the same construction of an active functional field or structure.

Csikszentmihalyi’s theory agrees to two basic modes of music perception once sound passes the pure sensory reception: analogic and analytic.²⁰⁴ Analogic is the evocation of images from sound patterns, feelings, narratives, memories, etc.²⁰⁵ This is the more passive vulnerability of humans to music. But the analytic mode, though it is fundamental as a “background program” in unconscious or subconscious responses to music, to the ability to recognize music even as music (as detailed by Levitin) is active on the listener’s part. From hence arises perception (or misperception) of form; it is the perception of the structural aspects, how to engage/interact with

²⁰³ Adorno, “Function [Gerbrachtmusik],” in *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, trans. E.B. Ashton, (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 52

²⁰⁴ Of course, he is not the only, nor the first, to recognize this basic categorization.

²⁰⁵ Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow*, 109.

the music,²⁰⁶ and the process of critical evaluation.²⁰⁷ At the heart of technology and the heart of art both is enframement and the key to understanding and evaluating the two is likewise. Since this action furthermore defines our relationship to either (and, as McLuhan would no doubt remind: art is produced through the use of technology – if it is not the technology itself!), there is another light in which to consider *intending* music at a rave.

Adorno defines the “Entertainment Listener” as someone from whom “production and consumption are intertwined” and takes in the phenomenon of a subjective consciousness but “with a leveled Unitarian ideology” that may be left unrationalized or dressed with further ideology.²⁰⁸ Thus far, it is a fair typology for the mad-dancing rave audience. However, Adorno goes further to assert that the fare of the entertainment listener “is not a meaningful context but a source of stimuli”²⁰⁹ and considers it more a relief from the dissatisfaction of deprivation, a reward felt in the longing or craving, rather than an experience of joy itself – he likens it to cigarette smoking.²¹⁰ Instead, the dancing raver (and this will include everyone from soloist to those toe-tapping and head-nodding to the beat along the back wall) should be seen as a critic and dancing as a form of bodily analytic listening²¹¹ as each individual interprets their sonic

²⁰⁶ For example: “The Drop.” This event is a feature of EDM music where after a prolonged period of build-up including crescendo, rising modulated pitch, rapidly increasing rhythmic subdivision, and maximal density of arrangement minus the bass frequencies, the music suddenly cuts for a heartbeat before splashdown in a simple, deep groove of sparse instrumentation – usually a “thick” bass line and percussion – where the 4/4 pulse is exaggeratedly present and catchy through contrast to the complexity of the build immediately preceding and because of the reduced instrumentation to a core rhythm section. The sensation is the auditory equivalent to driving off a cliff or the moment of silence before everyone screams into the roller-coaster drop. In fact, if done well, everyone usually screams after that heartbeat of weightless silence. This convention is well understood in EDM and the placement and execution of the drop (or the anticipation of its prolonged denial) is massively impactful on the reception of the piece or performance by the audience – particularly of contemporary EDM. This convention is also shared with hip-hop production, though the rapper generally raps through the pause in the music, often delivering a punchline of sorts (or the lyrics are given the weight of a punchline in the space where the beat punches out).

²⁰⁷ Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology Of Optimal Experience*, 109.

²⁰⁸ Adorno, “Types of Musical Conduct,” in *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, trans. E.B. Ashton, (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 14.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 15

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ It would be worthy of an independent study to assess *Embodied Analytic Listening as Expressive Performance Art in Non-Choreographic Dance Practice*. Thought even such free-form dance as at a rave does incorporate

environment, the directionality of its forces, and determines how best to navigate it through movement. Also prevalent is the critical-qualitative assessment in whether or not the dancer is so-to-speak “inspired” to dance in the first place, to what level of involvement, and if the music is actually fit to function as “dance music” and to what competency/effectiveness. This is admittedly a different understanding of analytic/critical listening than other authors intend. It is a different process: it is emotions-based, affected, and decidedly not a cerebral exercise requiring one to be “learned” in a formal way, skilled at logic-crunching or theory – it is bodily, intuitive, felt; it reflects and acts according to different values that are other-than but equally valid to the traditional interpretation. This critical analysis asks different questions – or at least seeks the same questions differently. For those who engage in it, it is a search for what moves them. At a rave, they want to find it, understand it by deeply and emotionally relating to it, and revel in that sensational revelation. The identification of specific features or necessary essence need not be explicitly stateable; recognition – *presence* – is the operant factor.²¹² The DJ is constantly trying to extract the maximum response from their audience while each dancing raver is engaged in mining the utmost *enjoyment* possible from their environment, elementally refined through the use of their bodies in processing the raw and synthesized sonic materials of their musical environment.²¹³ It is through its *practice* that they identify the *Gestell* of raving, that the *Geist* of the total environment and its potentials and resources as an active body, is individually embodied

popular dance moves/styles (skanking, pogo, poppin’ lockin’ and breakin’, even more exotic forms such as prop-based dance forms like those seen with hula-hoops, ribbon-dancing, and the like).

²¹² This type of knowledge (intuitive, felt) can only be fully shared implicitly, in communion with the experience and with one’s peers. Its emotional essence renders it somewhat difficult to discuss and this ineffability has probably contributed a significant role in its general dismissal in Enlightenment-descended rational-scientific civilizations.

²¹³ The *voyeur* is, of course, also present in the audience but is, beyond their physical presence in the space, a non-contributor in the solipsism of their fully-cerebral analytic listening (anything physiological or embodied without being somehow actively expressed – like getting a chill and goosebumps from a piercing musical moment – does not count if it is a solely private experience. If the entirety of the room were to freeze in their tracks and intake a sharp breath – elevating this to a, perhaps transcendental, shared, arguably *collective* experience – that would be another matter.

and understood. The process (and practice) in raving is “irrational” in the Jungian sense. It is, however, imperative that one not fall prey to Adorno’s reductionist axiom that the irrational must mean the senseless or “nonsense.” What I have just attempted to demonstrate in this last argument is the irrational’s character as an alternate schema, perhaps even a cooperative schema, as one that is not a necessary antagonist to the rational, rather, as one that simply makes use of some of our other “sense;” that there may be virtue in this.

**CHAPTER EIGHT:
THE PRIMARY CONCERN IS FOR THE HEALTH OF THE SOCIAL BODY**

In the early stages of research, I made the mistake of occasionally referring in my head to a “rave concert.” Such is the ignorance of the uninitiated. To misinterpret the structure of a rave like that belies an outsider’s values; it is one of the most fundamental mistakes those outside the culture (myself previously included) who “don’t get it” make. There is a very real reason members of the rave community refer to “the party” when they talk about a rave.

[D]efinitely the social element is extremely large for me.... I feel like, with electronic music in particular, there’s very little difference between having [a] recording and an actual live performance – aside from seeing the person up there doing it. I really believe that, as an artistic form, electronic music really doesn’t need to be live the same way music in the past has been and, as a result, I really do think it is about community and everybody coming together and having this mutual experience of either seeing this person perform, or seeing everybody else at the event, or going there for the fashion – if that’s somebody’s cup of tea.... But, I entirely believe that the social aspect of it [is above] the music.

This is Emile speaking. Of all my interview subjects, he was the most focused on the music itself and the power of the music and the DJ as a locus within the rave. Though here he is, dismissing music as the number one factor in favour of the social element.

The rave community – by its very nature as an intensely interpersonal and social subculture, supported by its dual presence as an information community – makes for a transcendent social body comprised of all the participants and all the raves, past and present, that fall under the umbrella of a given scene (ex. the GTA Happy Hardcore scene). Regardless of which actual individuals are present on any given night, ravers know that there is a ready-made *anti-structure* standing-by and waiting for them to step out of their role in the mainstream world and into their mutagenic relationship with the liminal scene, a relationship that holds a unique and shifting place in each person’s life.

Friends, I'd say, was the biggest draw. I didn't have a lot of friends at the time when I started going to parties and then, going to parties, I made just tonnes of friends. And it's really the only time you necessarily see a lot of people. There's a lot of people you don't make the time to see on a daily basis, but you know if you go out to this event those people are going to be there.

[T]he parties that I am going to are – I don't really want to use the word 'underground' because they're public, anyone can go to them. They're not elusive or hard to find but they're smaller, more intimate events and the people that are going to them are more into techy, nerdy sort of stuff [like the music genres] rather than just going out to.... drink beer and hit on women [laughs] I'm not into the bro scene so... [laughs]!

This is Erika speaking. It is important to note that when she references the “bro scene” she is making reference to something she presented earlier in her characterization of much of mainstream and club cultures. A large part of her discomfort with this culture, as she described, is her relationship, as a young woman, to its patriarchal hierarchies and hyper-masculinized, sexualized, aggressivity that makes her feel incredibly out of place and vulnerable.

Ravers can expect to see people they have established personal relationships with as well as new individuals who, nonetheless, are pre-screened to meet to the qualities of a friend, such as; shared interests, values, certain lifestyle choices, an openness to accept one as they are (according to the tenets of P.L.U.R.) and an interest and willingness to engage in a mutual, beneficial, and meaningful relationship. There is an assumption of “friendliness” that my interview subjects reported being able to depend upon, almost as if personal friendships are already a presumption once one enters a rave and need only be verified through action. A good night is teeming with “friendly people that you can immediately befriend and then add to your social network,” explains Emile. This relationship does not have to be deep in explicit content – once again, meaningful conversation is quite difficult – however, through the implicature of sharing in and experiencing meaningful subjective experiences “together”²¹⁴ that is

²¹⁴ Just as any congregation; from those found in the pews of churches, to those on the streets of protest, or in the seats of an amphitheatre, gallery, concert hall, or cinema.

communicated through other rave activities such as dancing, (as explained in the previous theme) meaningful emotional relationships can be forged and further tempered by subsequent encounters.

The path to sharing a meaningful experience is here streamlined because positive social interaction itself is one of the most highly held values of the community. For any utopic catch-22s rave culture is culpable for, this is a case of its polar opposite; as creating an environment of positive social action/interaction is rave's autotelic means and ends, even simple gestures of kindness and empathy like two people sharing a smile and nodding on the dance floor become meaningful exchanges – or, even more potent, two individuals spontaneously coupling to dance together, *vis à vis*, for a brief moment of intensity and focused *intention*, before disintegrating into the crowd again. The subsurface information all contained in the signification of these shared values these simple interactions or gesture are agreed to imply. Individuals are able to recognize themselves in their peers during these simple interactions; their values and motivations are reflected back to them, intensified in feedback. That this is never a linguistically rendered communication might account for why so many times ravers struggle to convincingly explain the process and depth of these encounters; how they are able to bond so intensely and personally with anyone, much less a throng of moving bodies, in such a saturated, disorienting, and distracting environment. As Erika says, “it’s one of those things that’s difficult to put into words without actually having *experienced*.”²¹⁵

Beyond agreeing with P.L.U.R. and the loftier moral statements or aspirations in the air, these gestures do relate to bonding over shared aesthetic tastes and interests. Musical taste is

²¹⁵ Ineffable as it is for most, this phenomenon is a major through-line in Jackson's *Inside Clubbing*; it might just be core to the “art of being human” suggested in his subtitle....

broadly enculturative²¹⁶ (remember Tal's co-worker introducing him to Happy Hardcore on his car stereo and initiating him to the existence of raves). In terms of the sharing of a smile, the most obvious and heavily documented gesture,²¹⁷ it signifies an agreement: *Yes, I am enjoying this song too; this is what I think good music is – or – This is a great party, isn't it?* It is worth revisiting the gesture here because it allows a clarification: the music *is* important – as are the lights, the décor, costume, etc. – but not as art for art's sake. The music is enjoyable because it is accepted and recognized as good art embodying valued aesthetics; because it is designed and executed in a way that supports rave-activity and stimulates its audience; the music embodies the social and moral code aesthetically and through conduct of engagement. The music is important because of its political dimension. To be expressly political in lyric-content would be a violation of the T.A.Z. principle, not to mention be a downer and “seriously harsh on the positive vibes,” however, as a signifier and as an *intentional force* directing and moulding social interactions, this is a political music in the reductionist definition that “politics” is the nature and form of one's relationship with society.²¹⁸ The music is music with a message and the message is to care for your community; dance, party, and create and share positive experiences in a safe, inclusive environment.

Levitin documents how we experience safety in musical preference; our tastes represent both a memory and further anticipation of positive experiences.²¹⁹ On one level, this is to do with personal subjective responses, our ability to relate to the content on an emotional and intellectual level and recognize its patterns; to cognitively organize the information into a meaningful structure. Tal's recount of his first encounter with Happy Hardcore perfectly demonstrates this:

²¹⁶ Levitin, *This Is Your Brain On Music*, 228-229.

²¹⁷ As a recurring motif in Thornton, Fritz, Jackson, Hutson, *et al.*

²¹⁸ Fritz goes as far as to claim raving to be a subcultural “micro-revolution” (Fritz, *Inside Clubbing*, 10).

²¹⁹ Levitin, *This Is Your Brain On Music*, 242.

[T]he song was called, “All That You See And Hear,” I really liked the vocals...she *really* means it, you can tell. I like that enthusiasm, that meaning the vocalist had. And then the octave changes and the intensity of it; it’s very fast-paced and energetic and I’m a pretty fast-paced person. It *really* resonated with me. This is music that is going...[at] 180 bpm, it’s really driving along, solid kick drum...just carrying you forward – I really enjoyed that.

Tal is earnest in conversation and seemingly in all his endeavours according to the history he gave me; he is ambitious and always on the move, looking for the next thing to be done. It makes sense that he can pick out in the music things sympathetic to the attributes he values in himself: the speed and intensity, the guileless directness of the lyric, the feeling constant change (necessary to be dramatic enough to warrant the adjective, “intense”) in the register shifts, the impression of being carried relentlessly forward by the ever-present beat....

There is also the physiological response that accompanies enjoyable sensual experience including some of the neurological events described earlier in this paper. Ravers are aware of these in a general sense and how they can be affected, “[n]ot on a conscious level. Like, I wasn’t: wow this song is really great! I’m sure the music actually being there provided the energy, even if I wasn’t, like, intentionally going out of my way to seek it. Like, this music is 180bpm so it’s bound to like elevate my heartrate or something!” as Emile put it.

In addition to these, Levitin, makes the larger connection that this sense of safety extends into an expression of trust²²⁰ as one seeks out further positive experiences with this music. There is an assumption of safety (this experience will not be unpleasant or its harm will not outweigh its benefit) and to seek out these enjoyable sensory experiences in a social setting implies the possibility of belonging to a community, such a membership implying safety amongst one’s “tribe.”²²¹ Levitin writes: “To a certain extent, we surrender to music when we listen to it – we

²²⁰Ibid.

²²¹ In addition to being one of the hottest trending terms in sociology right now, “tribal” or “neo-tribal” has long been the primary – or at least most common – serious descriptive model for rave culture. The culture makes open

allow ourselves to trust the composers and musicians with a part of our hearts and our spirits...many of us feel that great music connects us to something larger than our own existence, to other people, or to God.”²²² He then adds for the skeptics, “Even when music doesn’t transport us to an emotional place that is transcendent, music can change our mood.”²²³ For this reason, he argues that aesthetic choices are tied to feelings of safety within the ideas the music contains or is associated with – because of our shared vulnerability to music that stirs emotional responses that bypass one’s usual logical defenses.²²⁴ By collectively experiencing music that intends a certain emotional response in its audience, there is an assumption of an innate synthesis of consciousness – a collective consciousness experience – conducted through music.

A successful rave requires that all present trust the people around them (ravers, organizers, staff, *et al*) and that they give themselves – *themselves* as recognized subjects in autonomous control of their own agency – away and surrender trust to the DJ to provide them with a musical environment that will act directly on their consciousness, and influence their thoughts and emotions in a positive manner. The amount of implicit trust is exponentially greater when one considers that most ravers place themselves in an explicitly vulnerable state when raving. This can be a combination of being in a foreign or unfamiliar place; distance from institutions of order or emergency response services; participating in activities outside the law; being amongst strangers; exhausting and weakening themselves physically through exertion;

references to this assumed cultural lineage or reclamation. For example, there is the owl totem of the Technoturnal event, or the mysticist quotes from tribal societies or written in the style of those sources on the diptych; rave communities that flat-out call themselves tribes like The Good Vibe Tribe; the technoshamanism in the language and imagery; the focus on ritual; references to transcendent consciousness connecting ASC practices like the “Peyote Cults” or, again, shamanic cultures; Sufism and the culture surrounding the practice of *samā* is another parallelism that many within rave culture are conscious of.

²²² Levitin, *This Is Your Brain On Music*, 242-243.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 243.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 243-244. He explains the neurological process that essentially means you cannot outthink how music makes you feel in the moment of perception.

consuming intoxicants that will reduce critical faculties and potentially make it difficult to ascertain reality or form reliable memory, potentially even causing loss of bodily control or of consciousness altogether. A rave is predicated upon every individual's ability to trust *each and every* single member of the community to not take advantage of their vulnerability. Perhaps this is why and *how* even the cursory or "shallow" types of interactions normally taken for granted or as a perfunctory going-through of the motions become meaningful shared experiences: for this reason the music too must ensure the health of the social body.

The worst thing imaginable for each of the participants was that something bad happen – something that means the trust shared between those present at a rave has been broken – to someone at the party. It did not have to be them; if the social bond the rave is supposed to nurture fails to protect anyone from harm, and if the group turns out to have temporarily sheltered someone willing to violate another person's safety and dignity, that is enough to ruin the event for them personally.

Everyone takes it as a part of their responsibility to the community to help ensure the safety of those involved, to act as caretaker and advocate for the health of the social body. This is implemented on the ground level in what Tal describes as an all-important "check-in culture." However, it is a fact that sometimes this culture fails. In a worst case scenario, Tal confides one serious situation he knows of where the culture of trust was broken and taken advantage of, something for which he very viscerally demonstrated a lasting sting of the shared responsibility as a community member and leader:

[I have] been in situations where I have failed to contribute. I know one of the worst [things is]...that this is an environment that is very trusting and very open, very welcoming, and, unfortunately, that does attract people who are predators too sometimes, right? And we've experience that.... Because the default is to be trusting...[y]ou don't want to believe that it's the case and so things go on too long sometimes. We had a case of that a few years ago – four years ago. Someone who had been in the scene a long, long

time was arrested and convicted and had gone to jail for it – and *should* have. And we, as a scene, didn't act fast enough; we just didn't believe it. That...was *really* difficult – and really modified my stance on things. I've become much more active now in watching those situations and being a little less trusting and more alert to that – *a lot more* alert to that. And...setting a tone of making people know that this is *not* acceptable....

As a venue owner, Gaston's usual concerns are only about ensuring patrons get to experience an enjoyable, unique experience but cautions that, while aggression is the exception, the idea that one bad apple spoils the bunch is the rule and that sort of behaviour is the largest probable threat, therefore it needs to be checked immediately.

The things that you usually worry about is will the bands be good? Will people enjoy the music? Will everyone who shows up behave? Especially in environments like this, there is that risk of some asshole showing up and ruining everyone's time. So I think that's the biggest concern... Obviously if it's something negative, that needs to be addressed right away and then you're gonna deal with it.

Speaking to this threat, Emile contributes that from his vantage behind the turntables, "if I see the audience being very aggressive towards one another, if somebody were to try and sexually assault somebody else in the audience, that's going to kill the energy no matter how...yeah."

Addressing the potential negatives, Gaston, Tal, Emile, and Erika all report that the biggest concern, far beyond the potential risk of a medical incident related to drugs or alcohol, is an aggressive individual and they either imply or outright state that the destructive aggression is usually perpetrated by a male and is most dangerously directed as sexual violence towards a female. However, at the same time, there is a constant will to vigilance and, because these are members of a tribal-esque community, the sense of responsibility and *communitas* that behooves all members equally to look out for one another runs deep. This is not the case in regular clubs. Marika and Laura are both explicit about the misogyny and unwanted sexual overtures they face on a nightly basis: "when you're a girl and you go out, you pretty much get stepped all-over if you like give anyone a half-a-centi[meter]." The two women reported harassment ranging from

guys not “taking the hint” that their overtures were unappreciated to disrespectful violations of personal space, poor humour, tasteless coercions meant to corner the women in compromising verbal or physical innuendoes, inappropriate touching, verbal abuse, to the point where I was informed it was almost necessary to go to the club in a co-ed group to prevent such predatory behaviors as single males at the bar would be more likely to consider the women were “off-limits” in a co-ed group under the assumption the men present were their boyfriends. This, I understand, was less to do with them respecting the women or their choice in romantic/sexual relationships as a respect for the “claims” of the boyfriend, if present and the aversion of conflict. The response “I have a boyfriend” or “I’m here with someone” did not deter would-be suitors when the male companion was out of direct proximity or if the offending male did not fear a confrontation. Marika says this leads her to “find a lot of the interactions [at clubs] very fake...usually when a guy talks to you it’s *because* he’s hitting on you ...it really does just feel like they’re putting on a show and I’m like, okay, moving on.” Though she is not deterred from going out to clubs and bars, Laura admits, “I’m, like, changing how I interact with people so it’s kind of funny: Like, ‘cause I used to just be happy-go-lucky like, ennnnng! [shrugs shoulders] Like, just trying to be having fun, no matter what, and, like, now I’ve become more of an asshole.” She doesn’t state this forced personal change as a problem – or, more accurately, a symptom of a much larger institutional-level problem in society – so much with a fact-of-life attitude: that hers is just an appropriate response to the reality of the world she engages daily. In fact, she happily reported, “I’m having a better time lately” since, before, there were no acceptable options available to her without negativity and rudeness that the men (and sometimes

women) who harass her will respond to – but they get the message if she is willing to “be an asshole.”²²⁵

There is no corresponding sense from the clubbers that this type of behaviour is socially unacceptable. It is either looked-over out of a complicit complacency or it is accepted as an implicit “part of the experience,” perhaps even part of the point. Even Marika and Laura suggest the parts they hate or find degrading are essential. For Marika’s part she admits, “yeah, it is confidence boosting sometimes; if you’re in the right mood it can be fun to watch some guy try and win your affections” and then “Um, I actually get really, like, anxious about touching people that I don’t feel comfortable around but for some reason, and of course when I’m drunk, and I’m dancing – let’s say you’re like dancing up against a girl or whatever – I guess that just kind of breaks down that barrier for me, which...yeah. I think it’s a good thing because it’s something that I want to get over and that has really helped with that.” I wish I had clarified with her if the “you” in her hypothetical was directed towards me as a male or if she was speaking about herself dancing with other women. Admittedly her wording is not clear but her intonation in person suggested that the subject in question was the former. Laura is of the opinion that just about everyone who goes to the bar not in a relationship is there to meet new people, and that it is somewhat in the character of a safari – though the metaphor of a shark tank came up more than once. However, it is “for entertainment” that people gravitate to the bars and clubs and while she supposes some people may have met significant others, “I like going out and I pretty much don’t

²²⁵ I should point out that she stated elsewhere that she doesn’t accept the double-standard of what is considered rude behaviour between men and women where just about any defiance or rejection on the part of the woman is considered rude or “bitchy,” etc. When she characterizes her behaviour as “asshole” behaviour, she means it truly is aggressively rude. But what other recourse does she have?

expect to meet anybody that I actually will have any kind of actual, like, connection with because of the pretense.”²²⁶

It is discomfoting. Both women relate this to a paradoxical female use of alcohol: because it is an environment that is potentially unsafe for women, they risk the vulnerabilities of drunkenness to gain the emotional defences – the emotional *defiance* – of “liquid courage.” They describe a will to participation *despite* the culture, rather than as a part of a culture that encourages them to participate in a self-fulfilling way (rather than as passive sex-objects, and potential prey). The only familiar group one can trust in a club is the small sphere of friends one has brought with them. There is no confidence in the population *en mass*, there is no transcendent community of friends similar to the stability that awaits a raver. “It’s like being in the middle of a – like, say you’re walking through the tubes where there’s like fish around you and sharks around you and stuff...and one might swim up to you...” After a digression she returns to finish her initial analogy: “it’s not very respectful like from any point of view I think, from a girl’s point of view of a guy’s point of view. You go, like I said, like without intention of really taking much from the night, which is what makes it so stress-free and like no-pressure and whatever. But I feel like most people still act with like respect towards people but I feel like you do still kind of view them like the shark passing by in the tank.” The glass between her and the shark, she explains, is only the social barrier of whatever group of friends she happens to be with. It is incredibly porous.

Ravers are motivated to collaborate on all levels to build and support their community life according to values, like P.L.U.R., that are clearly not universally upheld outside the rave. Even Gaston, who owns his own venue and does not always have much in common with those

²²⁶ The pretense is sex.

renting his space, takes joy and pleasure from interacting with the people who come to his establishment on equal footing with them.

We try to set up a very welcoming vibe so even if you don't know someone, you walk up to them, chat with them; see what they think of the place, what brought them here; try and figure that stuff out.... I try and be on people's level.... I have this preference for people not to know that I'm running stuff. I just fit into the crowd and see how people are reacting to it and get people's opinions and make people feel welcome.

He supports the rave's traditional ideal of a horizontalized social structure, of the *communitas*.

There is a pride of belonging and accomplishment, that they are, if not making the world a better place, making a better place in the world where even the marginal and the liminal can experience belonging and safety. This sense of meaningful contribution, of purpose, is likely at the root of why all of my raver subjects have participated in the organizational/performance side of things or voluntarily progressed to other tasks or projects meant to support, grow, create, or otherwise benefit the community. Most of them know what it is like to be an outsider or disadvantaged socially. Rave provides an opportunity of personal empowerment and the chance to empower others as well. If an individual has no meaningful positive connections to society, it is difficult for them to find a satisfying way to engage in the world. Without this engagement, if one cannot do anything that produces tangible effect or "feedback," life can quickly begin to be experienced as totally arbitrary and disempowering; there is little purpose to doing anything and meaningful experience is elusive since there can be no meaning in total arbitrariness. In short: the void stares back.

But, in the responsibility for one another that an individual takes on by becoming a member of a rave community, possibilities for meaningful, affective action are made available. As the most senior community member of the GTA's Happy Hardcore Scene for about a decade, Tal's thoughts on this matter were extensive, ardent, and invaluable. I was very fortunate that he

took the initiative to contact me when he heard on social media that someone was doing a study on rave. Doubtless, part of his motivation is his will and joyful desire to take care of his community, to give back some of what it has given him through commitment and hard, diligent work.

[P]robably the most important thing that I can do as a person to make the world better is to contribute to strong communities and to help build strong communities...we have done our part to do this...with a group of people who don't have a lot of places to go for a strong community.... [T]here's a lot of different places you could wind up...Most of them don't provide a particularly strong sense of community; and sometimes they do but in a negative way.... [A] lot of the work I do now is structured along the same lines... I worry about the community; that's why I stay involved...to kind of hold it together.

Another thing that was striking was the sense of personal responsibility Tal felt, not just to “the community,” but for the individual well-being of each person – something he identified as integral, not just to him, but to the existence of the culture itself.

...club nights tend to be just 19+, whereas the raves we really tried to make 16+, which was the curfew age, plus those kids don't have anywhere to go – certainly nowhere safe to go and party.... [W]e always had medics, proper security...T.R.I.P. [Toronto Raver Information Project] – they do harm-reduction. We'd always have them there, make sure people had information that was reliable and safe.... We were getting a lot of people who had nowhere else to go...or these were kids who couldn't go to like the cool hip places because they would be laughed at... [I]t became integral to the experience to make it a place where people could come and be welcome, and [where] we're *welcoming*...the people who came would welcome other people and that became a whole part of that group trying to create... let people know there's P.L.U. R.... [A]s a promoter, typically I'm the first person they see...making them feel welcome, if they want a hug...[setting] the tone.... [W]e always hand out fruit, candy, and stuff, just so people have food...because they're there for 8 hours sometimes, right? They don't eat because they're busy dancing, or they're high, or whatever it is.... [W]e make sure they have water, make sure their basic needs are taken care of... [W]e encourage people who are there to look out for each other... [T]hat check-in culture is important...you are going to be expected to contribute to the community.... You have to be involved with people.

On the subject of providing a space for those usually shut-out or disconnected from other cultural venues, Gaston has this to add: “I think it definitely is a distinct community and we try to be as open too, people are welcome to it. I do think [there are] some things that sometimes scares some people off because it kind of seems like a niche, cliquey thing. But it's like a

community of people that don't feel like they belong anywhere else." He sees the role of his gallery space as a haven for this and similarly "outside" subcultures. "Kind of, especially in terms of say, club culture, what we try to go for is provide is a space where people can come, have a good time, enjoy music, be social – but, they're people that wouldn't necessarily go to a club. They have no interest in going to clubs and stuff like that...[a]nd I guess in terms of artists as well, they're usually artists that galleries are like, oh, we don't want to display this weird shit. We're like, *we want* the weird shit [laughs]!" He sees a niche worth filling by providing a rallying point where people can gather who share unorthodox tastes in art and music (like his own band's experimental electronic music) or are trying to throw rave-style events, meanwhile ensuring that the community remains open to new individuals and influences.

This open-system aspect is important for sustaining a thriving community. In my experiences, ravers are openly evangelical about it and will invite anyone with "good vibes" to try it. The Happy Hardcore scene is an older scene and the lack of new blood means it is beginning to die off or splinter off into other groups more relevant to the younger members.

Erika gives this overview of the state of the scene:

The scene is part of this total community, I mean, we've been partying with each other for a decade. There used to be a lot more new involvement from different people and there isn't so much any more; it just... Nobody new took up the reigns to the throw their own parties or create their own community. So, we're sort of living off what is left of the community I feel I helped build six or eight years ago and just surviving off of that. There isn't a lot of new blood in our community, which is kind of sad. I would say it has wound down and it's at this low-level plateau right now. Which...I'm sort of okay with. A lot of people in the scene go more into other scenes, really. They're partying in other scenes that I'm not necessarily partial to. I go to some of them. There's festivals that I go to – I haven't talked about festivals at all! There's festivals I go to in the summer. That is definitely a community; that's like a fuckin' family as well.

Erika and Tal are the oldest participants in my study and it is showing that what has lasted for them, what has remained important, is the rave community more so than the parties. Both

mentioned upcoming summer festivals – Ohm and Solstice – that featured more community activities than actual raving. Tal referred to these as “Post-Rave,” explaining about Solstice that, “it’s all-week-long; the music’s only on the two nights, so you’re there mostly to *connect*.” The week consists of workshops and other features like a community kitchen. Erika talks about Ohm similarly, saying

you camp for a week and then on the weekend there’s a party. And that camping for a week is really the best part of it because you’re not drowned out by music and partying and people doing drugs. You actually get to experience those people for who they are and you get to enjoy not being in a dark room with flashing lights and loud music and actually talk with them.... The Happy Hardcore scene...for a couple of years, they did sort of a festival, a camping festival – which was neat because I was used to seeing all these people at night, at a club downtown, so to actually see them out in the forest and camp with them gave me a lot more opportunity to connect with more of them which was.... Nice.

Of course, this is not to give the idea either have become curmudgeons; they both still enjoy raving and have a lasting feeling of strong intimacy with the scene. However, through sheer amplitude and amplex of experience, they have sussed the essence of what is meaningful to them about these experiences. Experiencing fulfilling social relationships trump this list and so they have found ways to tweak the nature of their interactions with the scene in ways that focus intent more towards that aspect.

Erika rhapsodizes on the merits of the after-party as an extension of the rave:

I’d say typically after a party I’ll stay up all night. Usually, I would go to someone’s house after or have people at my house, which, when you have an after-party like that, keeps the party going.... And, honestly, usually the after-party is the best part because when you get to interact with people [without] loud pounding music – and sometimes the after-party will last a whole day, just hanging out with people the entire day after having partied with them the entire night. But, I mean, even if you’re sober – if you party sober – there’s still an emotional comedown after you go and interact with all these people.

This is not a new affinity that should be understood as taking away from her investment in the raves themselves. Even Tal at his peak involvement organizing the community and running raves

mentioned earlier that, for as much fun as he was having, because of his level of responsibility, it was at the afterparty where he was able to cut-loose, truly let his hair down with his friends, and do his partying.

In Emile's case, while he does not place the same emphasis on the afterparty stage of the ritual, even though he is only in his early twenties, he has already experienced a crisis of belonging and emerged from it with a changed relationship to rave society that stresses the social bonding. For Emile, this was the transformation from audience member to performer. This happened at the point he chose to stop using drugs; he found he was having difficulty finding a similar connection at many of the events he was now attending sober, he found himself getting bored and unable to find that same self-recognition without the assistance of substance.

Around the time that I started performing – I probably would have moved away from the scene if I wasn't a performer because that really kept me tied and interested in it.... I'm not just there because I just want to play shows or anything, but it's because I still have a relationship to the audience. Even if I'm not on substances – I tend to be sober at all the events I'm at and I think that there is a good deal of people who show up and are only lightly inebriated or not inebriated at all.

Becoming a DJ, he found a new way to relate personally to the thronging horde by offering a performatization of his own aesthetic values. His musical and performative judgements – his ability to read the crowd's mood, recognize what will be the most impactful thing for him to do next, and then influence the experience of the crowd on the basis of anticipating their responses – allows him to have a meaningful interaction with others, himself. It also allows him to make a tangible, positive contribution to the community as the caretaker of the crowd's personal and shared "trip" or experiences during his set.

[T]he lack of difference between the crowd...there's no social hierarchy between the audience and the DJ to the extent that I see in other scenes, and because of that it feels like when I'm up there I'm just one of them with a skill that I'm sharing with everybody else. It tends to make it feel like even when I'm up there I'm one of them, just dancing along – and sometimes I do! I'll put on a song and then I'll just start dancing. I'll maybe

even jump into the crowd and just dance for a bit. Kind of, ‘I’m enjoying this just as much as the rest of you; I’m doing this for fun!’ And, sometimes, somebody will maybe throw up a little heart-sign or maybe they’ll try to high-five me and it’s just really nice to be able to have that kind of interaction and that it’s not only about just providing them the joy but it’s about doing it while still being me in the process.

Emile stresses that, although he is directing the shape of events for everyone, it is a dialogue. They are providing him with constant feedback and gratifying his need for recognition and affirming that he has a place in the group by approving his aesthetic choices. At the same time as this strengthens his sense of personal connection to the room, it is providing the musical medium for the others within the audience to bond between each other. His argument is that DJing, rather than set him apart from the audience, created a space where he could feel accepted within the audience – just as the rave scene generally provides a space that accepts those who feel disconnected from society. A large part of Emile’s performance is visually signifying his integration with the audience: he demonstrates the behaviour of dancing to his own music and even leaves his equipment to physically enter the crowd in order to dance with them and reinforce the sensation of being together on a person to person level. This kind of interaction during a performance does as much to strengthen his personal connection with the social body as it does to strengthen the affinity the crowd feels for him. It provides a visual example of a unified and coherent, though fluid and egalitarian social order. By example of fueling the room with the performance of a healthy give-and-take, it is possible for the social body to act in such a healthy way until it *becomes* healthy – just as Emile’s performances have now made him more closely integrated into the society, more able to “be himself” and be accepted than he ever felt when he went to raves simply to *be* there and not to perform a conscious script or role.²²⁷

²²⁷ It is important to demarcate the change from an unconscious to a *conscious* script or role in order to recognize the intentionality of Emile’s *dasein* that he is able to express *as a DJ* or *as his DJ self*.

So, in sum, in addition to the logotherapeutic and antistructural motivation – the provision of *communitas* for broader society’s marginal, liminal, and anyone else willing to engage on rave’s terms – as secondary result of this desire to create a viable community, raves become a setting where one can find gratification for some of even the most basic and fundamental of human needs: both deficiency needs and growth needs, Fromm’s five existential needs, all three groupings of needs in “Existential Personology,” Self-Determination Theory’s three basic forms regulating (motivating) human activity, Activity Theory’s need recognition, as well as the traditional ideas of safety, shelter, love or acceptance (another type of recognition) – even food is sometimes provided to an extent!

**CHAPTER NINE:
THE UNIQUE INTENTIONAL EXPERIENCE IN QUESTION IS CHARACTERIZED
BY THE SUBJECTIVE CREATION OF MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCE AND
INTERACTION IN BOTH CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION ROLES,
OPTIMALLY WHILE ACCESSING A FLOW STATE**

The first thing Tal had to say about his central role in the Happy Hardcore community was that creating and contributing to strong communities is, literally, the “most important thing” that he, as a person, can do to improve the world.

When we – when George and I – started throwing parties together.... And it was '05 and the big party company in Hardcore at the time was Hullabaloo and they were winding down. And both of us had really had our lives changed by these events and really felt that we wanted that capacity for changing lives to still exist. So we felt we were willing to take on providing that....

That the participants have found raving a source of meaningful experience is not in question.

However, in order to interpret this intentional process of extracting meaning any further requires examining motivation through a confluence of lenses which, at their core, examine a subject's structuring or perception of experience and how that translates to action. In this sense, meaning is an existentially derived *form* that one gives to experience. It is analogous to what Levitin calls the “ultimate illusion” of structure and form that allows human beings to make any sense of music, or even recognize it as such.²²⁸ The same can be said of languages in that, just as there is nothing objectively inherent in many of the musical rules or features and associations of a given musical tradition, aside from enculturated aesthetic sensibilities and tradition itself, there is nothing of an inalienable “dogness” about the word “dog,” for example. Furthermore, there is nothing quintessentially “bad” about unpleasant experiences, sometimes quite the contrary. Earlier, Gaston spoke to the value of music that might be “an unpleasant sound” but is “a cool experience that you enjoy in a way.”

²²⁸ Levitin, *This Is Your Brain On Music*, 192.

The experience of *Dasein*, in which ravers elate, requires not only a “being in the world” that is a sense of existing *in the moment*, but also requires that one be oneself dealing with “otherness” and either individuating oneself from it or incorporating with it. The ultimate *Dasein* phenomenon is what Csikszentmihalyi coined as a state of *flow*, describing *optimal experience*. He defines optimal experiences as those that push up against and enter into our outer-limits in a *voluntary* effort in the difficult and “worthwhile,” providing opportunity to expand and challenge the self; and that, while they are enjoyable, optimal experiences are not required to be pleasant at the time of the experience itself.²²⁹ This is important because there are many sensations at a rave which may be unpleasant: the intensity of light and sound can be physically uncomfortable, even painful, dancing for hours on end is physically punishing – especially if not properly taking fluids and nourishment, anxiety or paranoia are prevalent effects of the stimulants and psychedelics taken by many ravers. Even the social pressures or anticipation can be sources of extreme anxiety. This is curious because that very social interaction is the keystone of raving. As Erika tell it,

[Before going to a rave, I get] totally anxious. Terrified. I have super-bad anxiety. It used to be a lot worse; it's better now because I know when I get there I'm gonna know people...[e]specially now with social media...[W]hen I first started going to parties there was a little bit of social media but no one was using Facebook yet. So you got a flier; someone handed you a flier at a party and you go: this date, this place; and you'd go and just hope people you knew were gonna be there and I used to get so anxious that...I don't know if I ever threw up, but the feeling that you get when you wanna throw up and you just don't wanna go, almost. But you go 'no, I'm gonna go there and I'm going to have a blast.' You get there and [the anxiety would] just melt away. So excited. But getting ready and getting out the door, like, for me anyway – I'm so enthusiastic about it but it was like almost difficult to do.

For Erika, the act of even going to the event requires pushing well beyond her comfort-zone socially, to the point of inducing psychosomatic responses of extreme discomfort. Yet,

²²⁹ Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow*, 3.

everywhere else, she describes being totally free to be herself and engage with her fellows in an easy and spontaneous manner. Through these experiences she experiences personal growth to more comfortably integrate what was once something at her personal “outer limits.”

Csikszentmihalyi describes his theory of flow as a combination of phenomenology and information theory.²³⁰ He considers consciousness as “intentionally ordered information;” there must be a succession of conscious events (feelings, sensations, intentions, thoughts) and the ability to direct their course. Consciousness thereby corresponding always to subjectively experienced reality.²³¹

All three of the participants with organizational or performance roles (Tal, Gaston, and Emile) reported both a tremendous level of stress or pressure and a corresponding level of accomplishment and an ability to slip into a flow state – a term they were familiar with and used comfortably, casually, without my ever bringing it up. For Tal, no matter how well built and oiled he has gotten his machine over the years, the experience of throwing a good party is first and foremost:

Frantic. Yeah. There’s a lot goin’ on: We have a team called The Dreambuilders that does the deco and they’re usually at my place putting stuff together, building things. I’m usually organizing – if there’s flights, I’ve got to make sure the DJs are picked up and have places to stay, whether they’re staying with... us [or at] hotels. And the last burst of promotion. Ticket sales. Man, ravers are just *terrible* at buying tickets in advance! So, ticket sales are really driven by the day before [chuckle] and the day of the party; that’s when all the tickets get sold. So, you’re really pushing those last couple days, like, ‘hey! this is it, they’re out there, here’s where you can get the tickets, you can come to me!’ So I’m meeting people to give them tickets directly or nowadays everything is online. If I have a theme to it where there’s interactive elements, I have to make sure I’m ready for that. So I have a list drawn up for what I need to do, checklists so everyone knows their roles – so very frantic! The goal is to be very frantic during the lead-up so that at the

²³⁰ Ibid., 25-26.

²³¹ His model thus avoids the state vs. content of consciousness conflation by stressing the process of information management; the intentional conscious acts rather than the qualities of immediate perceptions. For this reason, he refers throughout *Flow* to the “order of consciousness” the hierarchical form into which one arranges the content of consciousness, embodying what the individual values, their outlook on life, sense of self, desires, etc.

event you're just chillin', you're just doin' what you need to do and it's automatic. The more systematic you can make it, the better off you are because during the event you're not going to have time to deal with anything, right? So you already have to make it as pre-dealt-with as possible. So, yep! A lot of frantic – which I really enjoy; it feels really productive, it feels [good] to be in a state of constant motion and doing things – that's my preferred state of being – so I like that

Tal, self-described “very fast-paced person,” finds his rhythm, a frantic rhythm probably somewhere fittingly around 180bpm until everything becomes “automatic.” Frantic, for him, is not a negative haphazard state, but this “constant motion” is his “preferred state of being” where he can function optimally and enjoy the process. To Tal, that state is his most “productive.” Since he is self-motivated to do all this (it is not for monetary gain or other external imposition) being “productive” means his actions and consequences are meaningful for him; it is an intrinsically valuable process with valued results. The act is both autotelic (he finds it worth doing for his own sake) and teleological (in that, it is also an ends towards a means, that he finds worthy). This same dual nature applies to the responses of the participants in DJ capacities as well as to the participants simply as community members. Every description solidifies that raving is an innately rewarding, eudaimonic experience that facilitates new experience enabling growth – which is inherently valued as a good thing (for example, the previous response from Erika). At the same time they sustain that community building and social benefits of their scene are invaluable pursuits that are to being actively pursued.

Csikszentmihalyi is much in line with the logotherapeutic ideas of Victor Frankl when he argues flow need not be explicitly pleasant at the time. They share the existentialist argument that all external events are those of an ambivalent universe; it is the self that interprets these events and ascribes to them harmful or beneficial affect²³² – or in Frankl's terminology,

²³² Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow*, 36.

determines their “quality.” Emerging from the horrible crucible of Auschwitz and two of Dachau’s satellite camps, Frankl’s optimistic promise is that “spiritual strife” offers one the possibility to more deeply understand one’s own experiences and actions and to thence make a defiant triumph of them.²³³ Essentially, in the face of obstacles, one reveals their true mettle and if they can understand their experiences and actions, they can find a course to meaningful ones, even in the face of realities beyond one’s control. They become so much fuel for the furnace as Frankl once said, “that which is to shine must endure burning.” The stakes do not need to be mortal by any means, the interpretive action is what counts. Emile makes the case elsewhere for the meaningfulness he experiences in his interactions with the crowd through his performances as a DJ, however, he has to endure the anticipation leading up to his set (much as Erika does her anticipation of the rave) and struggle to overcome his stage-fright on a nightly basis. This is a quintessentially spiritual struggle in that it is completely governed internally; Emile is not facing a hostile audience, he is facing himself and whatever his own fears are. This feeling of stress, of physical anxiety, doesn’t break his will to perform or his ability to extrovert himself; he instead transforms it into potential energy.

I’m very much the type of person who cognitively approaches stage-fright with anxious energy – in a good way, so I say that it kind of gives me a “eu-stress,” a happy stress, a getting hyped-up and energetic thing and that’s what makes it the most enjoyable for me when I’m DJing. The DJing itself is fun for me; it’s my hobby, but doing it in front of a crowd is a million times more fun than doing it on my own.

Here again is the process of finding meaning in the activity, interpreting obstacles as challenges and, instead of dwelling on internal contradiction and conflict or doubt, falling into the “zen” of optimal experience, pushing the outer-limits of personal experience along the balance of

²³³ Frankl, *Man’s Search For Meaning*, 170-173.

challenge and ability, assimilating or metamorphosing unpleasant sensation until as a whole it becomes a joyful, fulfilling experience.

Frankl wrote that meaning arises from possibilities over reality; I like the way Längle Alfried puts it, as it invokes the spatialized concept of overlaid physical and metaphysical environments so demonstrably present in raving: “a possibility against the background of reality.”²³⁴ Potentialities are defined and delineated by meaning (interpretation) and values; only one choice will fulfil the parent purpose of existence, which Frankl surmised that, beyond the somewhat superfluous question of “what is the meaning of life?” the “Will to Meaning” is the most fundamental human motivation.²³⁵ In other words, the drive to subjectively meaningful experiences is the most basic spiritual need – the “noetic” or spiritual needs being a class needs parallel to physical needs like food, shelter, etc. and include needs like transcendence (spiritually or interpersonally), sense of purpose or significance, happiness, etc. What potentialities that exist for reality are made possible by the meaning(s) ascribed or embedded in one’s order of consciousness.

Optimal experience, or Flow, arises within an individual when their order of consciousness and external experiences align. Gaston analogizes it perfectly,

Yeah, there’s almost this tunnel vision thing that happens. Where you’re just ploughing through everything that you have to do to get it setup so if a show’s on a Saturday, starting on a Monday, you wake up and got to work in the morning at nine and you come straight here, work on stuff, go to bed at 2 or 3, wake up and it’s just like this tunnel vision and then the day of the show, as soon as everything’s set up...there’s that hour or whatever before doors open: it’s just extreme anxiety. I think it’s positive; I think it’s one of those ‘you’re in the zone’ [things]. I mean, it’s like when Michael Jordan gets the ball and there’s ten seconds left. He’s got tunnel vision; there’s only one thing that’s going to happen: he’s gonna get a dunk. That’s kind of how it feels to me.

²³⁴ Ibid., 121.

²³⁵ Leontiev, “From Drive To Need & Further,” 15.

In this scenario, the information (object and press) is congruent with the subject's intentions and conducts psychic energy – more specifically, one's ability to focus attention, a limited cognitive resource²³⁶ on nothing but the aim of the moment – with such intensity that Csikszentmihalyi describes it as a positive feedback cycle, or a “negentropic system.”²³⁷ This is the essence of optimal experience: when nothing but the activity seems to exist or matter, the experience being so worth it, it *will* be done, even at great cost, “for the sheer sake of doing it.”²³⁸ The effort of focusing is erased, fed by the feedback. While the information and intention, as he puts it, are aligned, there becomes, for the individual, only one meaningfully possible reality: the one defined by the individual's flow activity.

What one wants, or experiences as a sense of need, most in the moment is what one values the greatest in that moment; is a direct measure of their intentional relationship with that desired object or outcome, whether this is by a positive (attraction) will to something or a negative (avoidance). So, if to experience flow means the total engagement of mind and/or body, let us say of the self, or even *Geist*, that results in a sense of “thrill, fullness of being, joy.”²³⁹ There is an innate meaningfulness to the activity or, the activity is one of meaning because one experiences it as or in a state of flow. One possible source of this deeply impactful perception one has of Optimal Experiences is that they add up to a sense of mastery or of participation in the determination of one's life content.²⁴⁰ Small contests that if one enjoys a performance as a participant (musicking, ideally in a flow state) “we feel that our sense of identity, our sense of who we really are, has been strengthened, and feel more intensely and knowingly *ourselves*.”²⁴¹

²³⁶ Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow*, 30-31.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁴¹ Small, *Music of the Common Tongue*, 67.

In order to generate fields of shared meaningful optimal experiences raves are capable of requires a grand-scale cooperative effort and experience of negentropy. Emile offers his experience of the phenomenon from the stage:

I will just say about that: It *is* way better than drugs and that is part of why I stayed in the scene, because I realized that DJing in front of an audience is, to me, the most phenomenal experience... I do have to describe it again: It's almost to the level of sex where it's very euphoric, just this sort of dopaminey *rush* [smacks fist into hand]...I [enter] just in it – complete flow-state – I also get to share that with a crowd and that's what makes it even more beautiful; is that I'm not the only one alone on this experience; they're getting some of the euphoric energy from it too.

Retain in mind also the community values previously discussed surrounding the meaning ascribed to sympathetic experiences and that a second aspect of this enjoyment is the manifestation through the performing actors that one has been, “for the duration of the performance, in the company of like-feeling people, in an ideal society which listeners [and dancers] and musicians have together brought into existence for that duration of time.”²⁴² This society is an optimal environment for flow engagement; creating and thence sustaining the environment being, itself, a flow activity.

Motivation is engaging in the flow of reciprocal relations according to the “Interpersonal [Existential] Paradigm” model.²⁴³ The same process of reciprocal relationships governing the internal/external synergy needed to flow and the intersection of perceivable possibility and present reality that defines the appearance of meaningful acts. According to this theory, humans are essentially dialogical; being is a process of constant change – of *becoming* – of communion, and both positive and negative feedback. To exist, to grow, and to prosper the self “needs the field of tension of the ‘inter-,’ the ‘between,’ the ‘aida’.”²⁴⁴ This is just such a field as that of the

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow*, 30.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

rave environment and that Emile describes in his intimate and intense exchange of energy with the crowd. From his point of perception, it is a dialogical negentropic circuit of intention as both he and his audience experience and move to express acts of consciousness in self-perpetuating response to each other. From the crowd's point of perception this breaks down further into a multilateral exchange because they are also acting in response to the actions and possibilities presented by one another, *vis à vis*.

This existential perspective towards motivation, as a structure of exchange between subject and environment (including other subjects within the environment) understands basic human motivation, at least its impetus, as intrinsic;²⁴⁵ specific drives and motivational structures “provide a theme for that pre-established energy...do not help people to be motivated, but...what for.”²⁴⁶

One need look no further than concern for the health of the social body to see this process at work amongst ravers. Simplifying one possible trajectory, the example can be put into a theoretical three-level process according to the three basic human potentials identified by Frankl:

1) Psychological Spirituality: the subject recognizes the meaning of the rave as a possibility for fulfilling spiritual needs through engaging the social body and the individuals who comprise it (ex. a need for meaningful experiences of transcendence; to experience a connection of belonging, love, and/or acceptance with another person).

2) Freedom: the subject then participates in a chosen manner that fulfils the meaning they have discerned in the rave, i.e. as a crowd member dancing and “vibing,” as a performer, or in an organizational or other creative capacity.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 27.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 28.

3) Responsibility: the subject, as Tal said before, is “going to be expected to contribute to the community, to be a part of it...to be involved with people.” Thus, the subject experiences responsibility towards the community to further the creation of meaningful experiences in others. Thereby, in the present case, this selfsame obligation – or the “imposition” of others – upon the subject provides them with possibilities for further meaningful experience as they recognize the meaning in engaging the social body and the individuals who comprise it.²⁴⁷

One can essentialize from the content, attitude, and tone of my interview subjects’ responses that ravers rave because it makes them happy in some tangible capacity; they provide an opportunity for optimal experience and the state of flow they enter is inherently enjoyable. This is possible because, from this perspective, happiness is a personal interpretation of experience. In the same vein, flow, as an experience of autotelic activity, is accessible through a gestalt structuring of the content of consciousness that allows oneself to invest totally in the present activity because, in that moment, it is the highest order of meaningful content in the mind and eclipses everything else. Raving provides a specific structure for accessing flow experience – a particular flavour of a transcultural basic human experience²⁴⁸ - based on an idealized model of social structure and individual *Dasein*. “They’re just there because they like talking to people and like hanging out listening to weird music in a dark room with bright lights!” Erika quips, ironically understating the fervor that permeated the rest of our interview, “It’s obviously a very stimulating environment, like, when done right.” Frankl’s idea of “man’s search for meaning” is hereby analog to Csikszentmihalyi’s concept of nature’s quest to flow: mastery of the external

²⁴⁷ The theories of flow, logotherapy, and the classical phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger have now all exhibited a shared appreciation for the relational, intentional nature of the relationship between the internal and the external insofar as concerns the analytical structuring by which meaning is interpreted from and applied to the individual’s life is given subject and shape.

²⁴⁸ Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow*, 3.

world can only be good for survival and happiness relies on the harmony of the inner-life and outer-world²⁴⁹ (the most perfect state of this sort of existence being flow). “Successfully” raving requires precisely this balance; the “joy” ravers experience has to be understood as a verb rather than a noun. Over-conscious pursuit of the phenomenon of a party “going off,” or of any of rave’s social ambitions is an albatross, it is “chasing the dragon” and spoils the capacity for optimal experience. The party has to be an experience of *joie de vivre* that allows participants control of consciousness²⁵⁰ through the ordering of its contents into the structure advocated and effected by the experience of raving. The sum being identifiable as a special state of consciousness – not defined by its content, but by its organization process as explained above – that is, the rave manifestation of a flow state. Raver’s are thereby granted means to satisfy the intrinsic drive towards meaningful experience in a way probably not met elsewhere in their lives if it is comparably satisfied elsewhere in their lives at all.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 7.

**CHAPTER TEN:
THE “RAVER’S CONSCIOUSNESS” FOSTERED HAS LASTING RAMIFICATIONS
BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES OF THE TEMPORARY AUTONOMOUS ZONE AND
THE PRIMARY OPTIMAL EXPERIENCE**

Flow is an intensity of experience to the level of altered state of consciousness, based on the process of meaning creation in one’s life. The “Raver’s Consciousness” is simply a meaningful order of content and perceptual process of said content. From another perspective, it is essentially learned cognitive behaviour. Rave’s hyper-stimulating, hyper-social experiences are prime phenomenological conditions for the *internalization* of the collective conscious properties promulgated and enacted during the event. This process, which involves “taking on or adopting external demands, norms, and social proscriptions and integrating them into one’s identity and sense of value,”²⁵¹ has the potential to bleed into their everyday life and shape the nature of reality perceived and their choices of how to live in response to that outside of the T.A.Z.²⁵² Raves are a collaboratively creative space and, really, a type of *gesamtkunstwerk* relying on multiple and multilateral intentional performances, “collective intentionality,”²⁵³ a collection of performance practices, and multiple media sources. Since ravers cannot simply “consume” this type of art but, for the reasons and by mechanisms outlined in previous themes, can only experience it fully through active participation – through *production*. P.L.U.R. is as much an artistic creed as it is a societal one.

²⁵¹ Chirkov, “The Motivational Nature Of Good Living,” 108.

²⁵² This is not to be confused with the idea of organizing one’s life around attending raves.

²⁵³ Chirkov, “The Motivational Nature Of Good Living,” 118. This is not Husserl’s phenomenological intentionality but, nonetheless, relevant to the existential validity of rave’s transcendental social project. As Chirkov relates it, John Searle’s concept of collective intentionality states that certain things, or phenomena – for example, the experience of ideology as phenomena – exist if the community believes that it does. This is because human autonomy is socially constructed in terms of meaning. Psychological autonomy is an independent variable in the equation of meaning but its manifested reality, meaning, and phenomenal existence (as perceived), are dependent. The two “intentionalities” operate in concord quite nicely in this context.

Once imbued with the meaningful phenomenological framework (hereon a *meaningful framework*) that is the scaffolding of rave, my research participants revealed how the meaningful framework of a raver's consciousness can be applied in praxis to synthesize meaning and lead a broadly meaningful life outside of partying that is in harmony with rave, its values, and its practice. This is an invaluable step if one is to remain attached to raving in a healthy way. Without integrating their experiences into "real life" one runs the definite risks of dissimulation and then Adorno's perspective would be right: the cultural product of rave would be an ersatz, a Promise In Place Of The Thing Itself; what he described as individual pleasure in the vicarious enjoyment of what is assumed to be society's writ-large's lived experience,²⁵⁴ that the day-to-day dissimulation, isolation, and dissatisfaction of the somehow liminal or marginalized individuals who overwhelmingly make up the rave population is exceptional and irreconcilable with the norm of experience beyond the type of exceptional shared experience of the rave itself. In this scenario, the experience is of a substitution of reality or *Dasein*, where participation creates the illusion of non-mediation²⁵⁵ via unconscious perception²⁵⁶ – the mediation being the vicarious nature of basic assumptions of values and shared experience/perception – and this, indeed, would be sheer and simple escapism.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁴ Adorno, "Function [*Gebrauchsmusik*], 45-46.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Adorno is speaking of the influence of the culture marketing machine, subliminal lyric content, ethics and philosophies inherent to industrialized musical form, music/sound production, ritual and other "influencing machines" of pop culture. His analysis extends to what would later be researched in terms of rhythmic and photic driving techniques as well but his preoccupation was "mass culture." One of the axioms to his ideas is that, through such processes encouraging dissimulation, unconscious perception is encouraged while conscious, active engagement is discouraged. This would subvert the intentionality of these relationships, sterilize them, divorce them from conscious acts, thereby definitively bifurcating "entertainment" from Meaning in a cultural-Marxian model of alienation and disenfranchisement.

²⁵⁷ Csikszentmihalyi likewise writes about "cultural shields" that are meant to stave off the "listless malaise" – existential discontent – that can be rectified through meaningful activity. Because this discontent provides the impetus to seeking fulfilling optimal experiences, he cautions that these shields eventually threaten to fall back into instruments of misery and repression; the original discontent is not external, and therefore can only be confronted within and grappled with active tools (as I argue in this theme), rather than passive barriers (Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow*, 11). He maintains that cultural barriers are not inherently unhealthy and have their uses, but essentially they are

The risk to neglect the need to integrate one's entire life into a meaningful framework and allow raving's potential towards individual growth and fulfilment to dissipate into escapism is always possible, as Erika acknowledges: "It can be kind of... Absorbing I guess? You get into raves and you start going to them every weekend and you miss out on other things you might have done. I don't know what those things are because I don't do them!" Tal admits, "it does skew your understanding of what's reasonable or not." he also relates that the substance use within the scene can propel a similar, entwined imbalance, saying, "certain situations cost me relationships...and [I] just didn't take care of it because I just partied too hard," and, more sobering: "it's cost me in opportunities where there are things I've really wanted to do; I've done them...I don't remember them." Meaningful structures are intentional networks, thereby incapable of incorporating elements not consciously available. Without the information, one cannot organize it meaningfully. No one is touched by phantom limbs.

However, each of my interviewees have demonstrated in their responses how they have successfully internalized the meaningful structure of the raver's consciousness and integrated it into their day-to-day existence. This does not necessitate examples that don't interact with the world of raving or its community – most of them explicitly do – but that they seamlessly connect their experiences in the T.A.Z. with those of their broader life-context as a way of intentionally shaping their life and acting in the world in an enriching or fulfilling and [subjectively] meaningful way. Part of this is covered by the preoccupation of creating and actively participating in a strong community and supporting the continued access to rave itself that has already been documented in these pages; it is ubiquitous. A certain *élan* animates Emile's response, "because there is – there is something beautiful about, like, this magic black-box of fun

symptom managers, rather than lasting solutions. Much as he differentiates fleeting pleasure from impactful enjoyment.

but I think there's something much *more* magical when you see the amount of altruism that goes into somebody sacrificing, like, thousands of dollars and tonnes of their time for this thing just to see people smile – and that's just.... Fuckin' magic!" This community-centric *Weltanschauung* is thus a through-point to the meaningful structure. However, it reaches beyond the subculture, inwards into the private lives of individuals, and outwards to larger communities (both real and imagined) and champions the development of the individual.

Tal is the ultimate example of this transformative power:

I'm a very different person than I was before I started raving, absolutely. I'm originally American; I was in the army. I was quite conservative; I grew up in a very small town.... By going out to these raves and experiencing very differently people, all different backgrounds, coming together and doing this thing, and their different philosophies and different mindsets, really gave me a new perspective. Really changed the way I engage with the world. I would say I'm a much better person now, I think; I'm a lot more considerate...a lot more welcoming to other kinds of people than I was before that. Also, it's given me a lot of skills.... In jobs that I do now a lot of times I draw back on those skill-sets.

...I've been gone working in politics, which is really where I do more of my work now. I was in the Bernie Sanders campaign for the last five months, so I've been gone entirely!

Now, Tal's "changed engagement" with the world has manifested through work with the Canadian NDP, applying the skills, and promoting the values and idealized relationships, he carries with him from his raving heyday. As mental symbolic representations develop, a person can distance themselves psychologically from not only the symbolic environment, but their physical environment.²⁵⁸ Once those environments have been integrated into the individual self, specific representations of elements are free to become more abstract forces. Tal says, "I have put a lot of time and effort into building this idea of what an ideal party is, uh, and I create that then." As he continues to do in a metaphorically matching arena: politics. The congruence for Tal, between worlds, both in values surrounding skill-sets and personal qualities, and, more

²⁵⁸ Chirkov, "The Motivational Nature Of Good Living," 119.

importantly, in the ultimate perception of a meaningful structure, is evidenced by his response to my final question: If, for some reason, he had to give it up completely, could no longer participate or remain in contact with the subculture, is there anything that he could do that could satiate the same base desire he feels is gratified through rave and, if so, what? He did not hesitate in responding,

Yeah, and I'm doing that! I'm in the process of doing that now and, for me, I'm getting very involved with the NDP and with political activism and that meets a lot of the same drives for me: I'm building communities, I'm connecting with people who are very passionate about the thing that they're doing; it's not music now, it's something else, but it's...the same kind of passion and drive. It is the same sense of helping, of doing something worthwhile and helping, of creativity, the same opportunity to engage my creative drive...there are...existing norms but within that I can be creative and say, 'well, why don't we try this campaign? Why don't we try this technique?' [T]here's also a lot of *new* things for me to learn, so it feels similar to when I started raving. And it's meeting the same kind of goals and drive for me. I think you'll probably find that for a lot of people. There's different ways to engage this. Raving is very obvious; it's very direct, it's very clear what you're doing. It's easy to relate to it, it's very open about what it's doing and what you're doing with it so it's easy to engage with it. Some of the things are a little more subtle [in politics], but you are getting the same kinds of experiences. Raving kind of equipped me, in a way, to do and get other things as well.

Tim no longer requires direct contact (despite his desire to continue, "sort of keeping an eye on things") with the symbolic or physical environments of rave because he has learned, through experience, its "subtleties" and is now able to recognize them in other realms (such as the political community of left-leaning parties in Canada and the United States), structured meaningfully like guiding constellations: allowing him means to intentionally navigate a broader world than just that of the rave subculture.

Gaston has found an even more immediate, though perhaps less "profound" way to synergize the ethos of the rave-style events he hosts at his gallery with his relationship to the world-at-large. In his case, he has chosen to navigate by that constellation in order to chart the seas of capitalism. He presents an interesting paradox in this way. While all of my subjects prove

to manifest a drive and ambition wholly at odds with the notion of escapism, Gaston is the one who doesn't appear to see any contradiction with the utopian idealism of the culture and participation in the status-quo. His gallery is not self-sustaining and requires influxes of capital he and his business partner earn working second jobs. However, rejecting the notion of pining after or advocating a change in society's economic model for the "entertainment" or "arts" sectors that would create a more amenable environment for his gallery, he effuses something of the Romantic-entrepreneur's spirit and stakes it as a challenge to meet.

Why do I do this? Because I'm crazy! [laughs] ...I enjoy music; I enjoy art; and I really like putting it on.... There's a really good feeling that you get from a successful show. I don't think that's the only reason that I really do it; I think that that's what keeps us going. ...I have an entrepreneurial spirit so I figured why not do something, combine everything I love into one thing.

When asked if anything could sublimate the need he experiences to meet this challenge in this arena, he admitted, "I don't know if there is. I don't know what else I would do. I mean, I can see myself, you know, stopping at some point and not wanting to do it anymore but I don't know if there would be something that would take its place.... I would just be back at thinking about how to do it again [laughs]! [Like a] crackhead!" This is not the only example of Gaston describing the "addicting" quality of what he does. According to the Self-Determination Theory of motivation, there are three regulatory forms governing human action that are constantly at play: *controlled*, *autonomous*, and *intrinsic*.²⁵⁹ Each tie back to different loci of defining meaning. Controlled motivations or actions are tied to extrinsic sources of meaning – that is, the subject undertakes a task because its meaningfulness has been dictated to them by another individual or by the rules of a social system. A good example would be a "dead-end" job; it is not "enjoyable" in the Csikszentmihalyian sense – not rewarding, or pleasurable, or worthwhile for its own sake

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 108.

– but, someone else has decided the job is worth having done and is willing to pay someone to do it with money that has been deemed by a larger system to be an adequate motivator because it can be exchanged for its “worth” for other goods and services...etc. That Gaston’s gallery venture appears so Sisyphean in nature is ample indication that his actions must be regulated by autonomous or intrinsic modes – and, indeed, both are apparent.

The intrinsic reward reveals itself in his description of what the portrait of a “successful” night looks like to him:

If people are enjoying it, taking in the art; there’s a lot of interactive installations so if people are really into that, feedback from the bands, you know they had a good time. And, of course, at the end of the day it’s about money as well. So lots of people having a great time; lots of good positive feedback; great music – so people also *enjoying* the music, just the art and everything. I like when people are in there dancing to the music. And then just a successful night money-wise where everyone gets paid and everyone’s happy.

Of course, he mentions money; he wants his gallery to be a viable business so it can continue to operate, but this is last on his mind. One will recall earlier, in theme one, where he describes his goals as to create new, unique, and enjoyable²⁶⁰ experiences – not to turn laudable profit margins. His decision to operate his gallery – and in the unorthodox manner that he does – is clearly an autonomous choice, something he (along with his partner) decided and continues to believe is worth doing, is a meaningful input for their energies, finances, and time. He could shut down anytime if he were to “get tired of it” and was under no compulsion to start the business. He carries on because his motivation is also intrinsic; this is where the “addictive” quality appears. The way optimal experience is perceived by Gaston is as “a very addictive joy.” The addiction is hyperbolic metaphor, to a degree, but the operant concept is “joy.” Joy, a term for a pure and intense sort of happiness (again, not something to confuse with *pleasure* in this context)

²⁶⁰ In the terms of optimal experience.

is a type of flow state. It is an autotelic experience, with no direct consequences or objectives beyond the experience itself. Though, as an ASC it obviously has an influencing effect on one's intentional processes of perception and conscious action. Obviously, autotelia is not preclusive of causal relationships; this sort of activity often leads to other beneficial outcomes, (such as the positive mental and physical effects of being happy and happiness itself) outcomes which, the work of Csikszentmihalyi and Frankl agree, are a side effect of autotelic activity, not the objective). It is one manifestation of experiencing the “harmony” between what is, what [subjectively] ought to, and what can be, prior discussed.

What Self-Determination Theory does not completely resolve is the contradiction between autonomy and intrinsic motivation. It concludes that for an individual to subjectively experience happiness and feel they lead a meaningful life, (again, recognized as the most basic level of noetic need) autonomous regulation must dominate controlled regulation in the balance of the grand-scheme.²⁶¹ But if “man’s search for meaning” is a basic need on the spiritual level of hunger and thirst, how autonomous is the conscious act to fulfil that need? My interview participants all report a high potential (if not infallible) *motivational competence* – “the ability to make motive-congruent decisions...reconcile future and current situations with...activity preference;” something not requiring, then, permanent volitional control and effective functioning.²⁶² – but this is where the question of internalization²⁶³ again appears in problematic light.

²⁶¹ Chirkov, “The Motivational Nature Of Good Living,” 108.

²⁶² Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow* 83. It is a different thing to actively chose to act in a way to defies one’s motivations (if such a thing is indeed possible) than it is to act poorly, inefficiently, or mistakenly in response to one’s motivations – or, to act in such a manner as sabotages one goal at the behest of a conflicting drive or desire without the competence to understand the motivational (thereby valuative) hierarchy [meaningful structure] imposed or implied by such conscious acts.

²⁶³ Conceivably in private, or as enculturation or acculturation.

According to Self-Determination Theory, there is a difference between psychological autonomy, personal autonomy, and motivation autonomy. Psychological autonomy is dependent upon the subject's human capacity to form symbolic mental representations as discussed above (usually this symbol-base is linguistic, but aesthetic or non-linguistic iterations are valid as well).²⁶⁴ Motivational autonomy refers to the executions of specific acts and behaviours, whilst the purview of personal autonomy is self-generated or freely internalized rules and norms.²⁶⁵ Only the psychologically autonomous can *recognize* their desires²⁶⁶ and, likewise, recognize meaning or the "subtleties" of a meaningful structure. Therefore, psychological autonomy is a prerequisite of personal and motivational autonomy. But, then one is left in a true Catch-22, for the development of symbolic mental representation (as demonstrated in the rave context already) is not an autonomous process but an enculturative one. There is also the specter of operant conditioning appearing through implication throughout this study – but that is different from this process of symbolic mental representation. In fact, highly developed psychological autonomy should shield one from the effects of such conditioning. This, however, depends on the origins of one's powers of cognition in this realm and if it is not too-highly specialized to detect the resultant blind-spot in the intentional process enabled by this ability to form symbolic mental representation – specifically, in this case, in order to perceive recognition. How free is an individual to attain psychological autonomy when it relies on one's capacity to exercise their personal autonomy to freely internalize the rules and norms necessary to developing (primarily through instructive experiences) a symbolic network (or language) predicating psychological autonomy?

²⁶⁴ Chirkov, "The Motivational Nature Of Good Living," 115.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 113

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 114.

Therefore, meaning requires personal interaction with the world in all three tenses because of this problem; to recognize – thereby experience – meaning, requires cognition removed from immediate context and stimuli in order to place it intentionally within a meaningful structure. Searle argues that the resultant “gaps” this cognition creates between events, between command and execution in the causal chain of intentional actions, is the psychic environment which breeds autonomy.²⁶⁷ Thereby the sense of *self* developed by a reflecting (or *reflected* in the case of a social environment like a rave) individual is a symbolic representation of one’s own conscious process.²⁶⁸ This is also what one refers to as a frame of reference for differentiating internal and external worlds, quantifying autonomy as the level of ability to make this differentiation. The “raver’s consciousness” or its meaningful structure, as experienced individually or as a collective phenomenon, exists similarly in contrast to that of the raver’s other lived models of experience. The autonomy of my research participants comes from their choices in navigating the “gap” between what raving has taught them and what they have learned elsewhere at school, in the home, at work, the city they live, on the internet, etc.

Where a motivational mainframe that includes creating meaningful experiences is in operation, “escapism” is not possible. The autonomy-drive necessary to recognizing meaning includes a striving to “be oneself;” this necessarily includes “seeking engagement and communication with others.”²⁶⁹ This subjective existence is inseparable from a connection to otherness in the world, meaning that this engagement cannot be limited to within the context of the rave. There would be no “gap” for sufficient interaction to generate meaning without a present and engaged otherness to the raver’s consciousness. This is no more true than the

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 115.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Alfried, “The Existential Fundamental Motivations Structuring The Motivational Process,” 28.

examples in which my subjects have taken that meaningful structure and sense of self and implemented it in the outside world. Tal, again, is the shining example of this.

Motivation is a dialogic exchange between subject and environment connecting the “given reality of both subject and object with the intentions of the individual” that becomes of existential relevance to an individual’s life because of this process’ causal link to what they *intentionally* define as the fundamental themes of their existence.²⁷⁰ Noetic power – noetic motivational power – is embedded in the conscious experience of “personhood” operant in the processing of motivational information.²⁷¹ What begins as an internal dialogue almost immediately becomes a discourse with the immediate environment (in the context of this study, a rave) – but that is only one part, a holon, of the much larger field of experience (encompassing the whole of lived experience) and information that the individual subject is in constant dialogue with. When my subjects exercise autonomy in deciding to carry rave’s meaningful structure into their lives in a broader context they act in response to what they recognize as “first-order values,” non-reducible and not a means to other values. The goals of their actions become of inalienable intrinsic value because they take root in the psychological need to exercise autonomy rather than act as an externally defined surrogate of base psychological needs.²⁷² Because motivational regulations arise along a continuum of “a person’s perceived locus of causality”²⁷³ the fact that my subjects recognize the autonomous and transformative potential of interactions within the rave world and report how rave has directly and indirectly shaped their ability to perceive events as well as how and what they have chosen to engage with (that provide structure to their lives) outside raving, suggests that they perceive a very internal locus of causality –

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 27.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Chirkov, “The Motivational Nature Of Good Living,” 107.

²⁷³ Ibid.

meaning the rave does not offer them a refuge from external causality, but rather a model for personal agency and proof of their capacity to act meaningfully with transcendent effect.

This sort of self-determined motivation leads directs subjects to sharpen their motivational competence in the pursuit of Eudaimonia as they learn how to live and act according the best of their capabilities, self-realized characteristics, and intrinsically set goals. Thereby they are impelled towards the construction of a meaningful life, which requires intentional dialogue between all facets of one's existence – including the meaningful, absurd, beneficiary, deleterious, necessary, and superfluous – towards the ideal of creating a sustainable balance of benefits and acceptable drawbacks to the individual. This is, again, an example of autonomous definition of one's objective relationship to the world: an active interaction, rather than attempted withdrawal or escape. Despite rave's surface-culture of hedonism, one can look to Emile's very Heideggerian project to assemble one's life-goal and meaning:

I've been trying to think of this philosophy... that everybody should have one hobby that involves physical activity, so they can stay fit, one hobby that involves them to express a creative outlet – and something that they can really grow with – and one that provides them with a social institution within their actual hobby itself. So they can do a hobby that has a social aspect where people either watch or people participate in – but something that sort of allows you to meet new people. Let's say I was dropped in a new city. DJing really satiates both my creative and my social aspects of this where, if I could pick up gigs inside a new city, I have a very good in for meeting people: it isn't forced because I'm there naturally; it isn't me having to wedge my way into a friend-group. It would occur very organically. And the creative aspect is because I feel everybody wants to be unique in their own little way.... So, DJing satiates a lot of my artistic drive desires too. Like, if there's a pressure building to do something original.... I have other [hobbies] too, with writing, but that doesn't provide the social aspect. And then the physical aspect, it's like I said: DJing, it's not [physical] like to [that] extent – that's why I picked up another martial art, because I wanted to have something that would get me fit if I was doing it regularly. I would be fit if I was just doing DJing...but I feel like I'm in a lot better shape from doing a martial art but...[DJing] gives a nice supplement to it because of my dancing around on the stage.

Emile's three priorities are physical health, a body to live in the world with, a means to creative self-expression that fosters personal growth and exerts one's agency, and the social

element so that one has a means to avoid the solipsistic bog and create meaningful subject to subject connections. Scott R. Hutson has likewise noted this dynamic between individual health or healing and social improvement in rave culture.²⁷⁴ He further attributes this as characteristic of North American subcultures and connects this quest to find meaningful structures – in his study, the alternative spirituality predominant in rave culture – and healing with the desire to fill an experienced “gap.” The results of my study suggest that this gap is in fact the one identified by Searle as the home of psychological autonomy and the means to create meaningful experience – the perception of meaning being an intentional act of consciousness – and that the participants have learned the motivational competence to recognize, decoded through the meaningful structure of the “raver’s consciousness,” the opportunity and desire to action possible within this gap as it presents beyond the confines of the Temporary Autonomous Zone.

One last point worth considering in relationship to the raver’s consciousness is how the rave functions as a subculture, in this context, on its imagined and information community levels in concert with the primary interactions at actual events. Normally distal social relations – among people and institutions, based on cultural ideology, political and economic organization, etc. – the “social life of societies” as Valery Chirkov describes it,²⁷⁵ provide the backdrop for one’s proximal relations: those with the closest social environment, face-to-face interactions with people one knows.²⁷⁶ It seems as though my interview subjects’ responses imply the opposite in this case: the proximal relations with other ravers are forming the backdrop for their approach across distal social relations. Now, it can be argued that these are secondary actions influenced in the primary by the preconceived cultural ideology, politic, etc. of rave as an institution (therefore

²⁷⁴ Hutson, “The Rave: Spiritual Healing In Modern Western Subcultures,” 44.

²⁷⁵ Chirkov, “The Motivational Nature of Good Living,” 109.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

the distal); however, I disagree with such an order of operations based on my perceptions during field observation and, especially, because of what participants had to say for themselves during their interviews. It seems useful here to translate a concept from linguistics: structural proximity.²⁷⁷ Instead of analysing the locality between linguistic components, thus determining their structural relationship, it is possible to look at the structural relationship of social bodies and the individual bodies within and between them. The raver's consciousness forms intimate proximal relationships with its holder's raving social relations – that is to say, with the groups and individuals connected through the rave context, particularly those the subject actually has the experience of partying with. The intimacy down to the level of shared experience of the “raver's consciousness” is such that even when a raver's proximal social relations change, as in the case of Tal and his new political career, there persists a structural proximity between themselves and their rave social relations and, following this channel, their structuring of distal relations is modified by the unusual distal-proximal relationship found in rave culture (wherein the norm is inverted so that, in rave culture, proximal relationships provide the backdrop for distal ones in and between communities); so it is this modified distal relationship that provides the backdrop or context for further or future proximal social relations. Therefore, in the macro-field, the closest *structural proximity* in this larger locality of phenomenology is still between the subject and rave – regardless of one's present theater of operations – so long as the “lessons” of raving persist in the intentional mind.

²⁷⁷ My understanding and application of the concept originates from Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures*, (The Hague: Mouton, 1957).

CHAPTER ELEVEN: CONCLUSION(S)

As Hutson observes, the “project” of the rave is to create a vision of a world where people are happy and healthy and to temporally execute this plan in an experimental microcosm.²⁷⁸ In order to be happy, individuals must find regular need gratification and, in a balanced way strive strongly intrinsically, relative to pursuing extrinsic aspirations; they must also must feel they are relatively self-determined in the main domains of life and functioning.²⁷⁹ Goals, the loci of motivational regulations, and the specific manifestation of psychological needs themselves determine the level of “harmonious living and wellness” that gives rise to happiness²⁸⁰ and creates bountiful opportunity for optimal experiences.

Rave offers its participants, its community members, its architects and inhabitants, a means to regularly exercise their drive to self-determination as qualified through its motivational embodiment in pursuit of intrinsically valued goals by autotelic means. The rave constitutes an environment which provides immediate dynamic feedback, validating the fecundity of one’s conscious acts as they observe immediate causal affect within the rave’s dialogic system; socially, musically, and philosophically. In other words, ravers get to enjoy an experience of mattering, of being able to impact their social reality in an important way, and to see their efforts reflected in and by others around them as they develop new modes of perception (including “new listening skills”)²⁸¹ in order to navigate it. Rather than confirm what might appear, at surface-level, an expression of escapism, research participants engaged in the rave community issue such a notion the lie; they instead eschew a veritable cosmology of Leontiev’s *multiple logics*: drive

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Chirkov, “The Motivational Nature Of Good Living,” 105.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Fritz, *Rave Culture*, 75.

gratification, learned habits and dispositions, social norms and expectations, life-world or life necessity, possibilities, ultimate understanding.²⁸² Once internalized, particularly the dynamic between ‘possibility’ against ‘ultimate understanding’²⁸³ – the existential play between “freedom” and an inexorable system – the motivational competency learned and the value-hierarchy informing one’s understanding is not relegated to be context-specific and, as demonstrated in the responses of my interview subjects, is *intentionally* accessed across experiential contexts.

The experience of this human – and, indeed, humanistic – cosmology is encapsulated in the transcendent themes of my interview data, revealing that, for members of the subculture, rave is substantiated and given its *substance* from: 1. Emphasis on new, novel, unique experiences; thereby establishing a special scenario optimizing intentional Subject-Object interreaction. 2. Consumption of drugs foremost as a means for reordering social and behavioural norms; revealing a teleological drive for artificially altering conscious-state, whereas the experiential-specific state of optimal experience (flow) as substantiated through raving is an autotelic ASC experience. 3. Music is an environmental factor, a shaper of both the inner and outer environments, a defining conditioner of social activity; the sonic content of a rave acts thusly as a collectivising ritual environment rather than an art object, directly linking the peculiar aroused conscious state and external environment. 4. The primary concern is for the health of the social body; because of “positive social interaction’s” principle status as a community value, a healthy social body or ecosystem generates the preconditions for sharing meaningful interactions, *prima facie*, and directs the individual’s [sense of and actual] power to contribute to society. 5. The unique intentional experience in question is characterized by the subjective creation of

²⁸² Leontiev, “Why We Do What We do,” 97.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

meaningful experience and interaction in both consumption and production roles, optimally while accessing a flow state; this is achieved through a marriage of optimal experience and logotherapeutic action in the collaborative essence of the rave process. 6. The “Raver’s Consciousness” fostered has lasting ramifications beyond the boundaries of the Temporary Autonomous Zone and the primary optimal experience; the understanding a total world-field system that an individual can work with(in) is established as the subject develops a holistic phenomenological perceptive process and exercises it fractally, beginning in the small-scale rave dynamic.

As a means to autonomy as autonomously deriving meaning, the T.A.Z. and P.L.U.R. are structures within a particular intentional logic system. They are core facets of a meaningful structure providing a framework of field connectivity synergizing meaningful experience in an environment where idealistic values are attainable and affectable in a tangible way, providing the lived experience of a eudaimonic project individual subjects may then use dialectically as an “alternate reality”²⁸⁴ in conjugation with the reality always awaiting their return from the T.A.Z. The net result, when successful, being “happiness” of the subject and positive engagement with the broader society directly or indirectly through meaningful rave experiences. Ravers become equipped to navigate the multiregulatory influences upon their agency and have an exemplary model of how to exist “harmoniously” within their external and cognitive environments. The rave is at once an aesthetic object and a disruptive, subversively sensational social model that ironically provides stability and social set and standing – especially for the otherwise vulnerable and/or disenfranchised. The “tribal” influence (and here, speaking of the societal archetype rather than the perhaps questionable aesthetic flavouring) is the paradoxically traditionalist component

²⁸⁴ But, crucially, an alternate *lived* reality.

of the utopian fantasy that betrays a thorough grounding in basic real-world human needs and raving is not a disengagement, but rather a reorientation of one's approach to the human question of how can one exist in and amongst a world – and how, as an individual cognizant being, separated by subjectivity and perhaps even dire solipsism, does one reconcile this relationship and balance a sense of self amongst something much larger? As Malinowski provides: a new response to an existing essential need.

Even rampant pursuit of the pleasure principle is nothing more than evidence of a lack of motivational competency. Those who choose to engage rave as a *pleasurable* activity – or, in this study, one can look to the responses of Marika and Laura and their clubbing experiences – don't do it preferentially to engaging the activity in a context of *enjoyable* action. Marika and Laura's answers infer a desire for depth my raver subjects reported in their interactions and experiences – these two qualified the pleasure as an experienced lack, a deficiency in light of the desired enjoyability. This long-lasting realization and fulfilment, sense of accomplishment, is proof of the eudaimonia, the integrated function of rave, in the participants' life as a total system.

The whole ritual provides an archetype or template for creating meaning inside its own crucible, the party, with its stress-inducing environmental elements, social and aesthetic intensity, and the sheer demand for stamina, all situations biased to enforce the desired value shaping. In addition to providing a skill set for how, it provides the valuative, moral, and self-fulfilling motivational context of why. Showing through those themes arisen through the interview data it is the revelation that Rave creates a head-space for productive participation with life, and for the integration of its lesson of empowerment.²⁸⁵ One does not have to believe the

²⁸⁵ I once again refer to what Brake writes, that one of the vital functions of subcultures, particularly for the younger members of society, is to “offer, through their expressive elements, a meaningful way of life during leisure, which has been removed from the instrumental world of work” (Brake, *Comparative Youth Culture*, 24). This provision for meaning rather than divertissement in leisure space, time, company, and activity, refuting the standards

conflicting individualist-collectivist social-revolutionary rhetoric. Even if raving does not lead some sort of global shift, dramatic spiritual enlightenment, or appear directly reflected in the “professional” lives of many of its participants, its benefits may, in the least, be summarized by *The Oxford Handbook of Medical Ethnomusicology*’s summary that “most means of music [are] practiced as a means...to...homeostasis”²⁸⁶. Musical activity such as of raving’s character can provide the balancing foil to frustrated or [philosophically] absurd areas of one’s life, providing stability in the larger equilibrium established. At the *very* least, it can provide resolve for the conflict of one’s esoteric aesthetic values – which, after all, is an incredibly important and potentially vulnerable part of an individual’s private identity and can be a bastion of individuation in circumstances where the public persona is highly regulated (internally or externally) and perhaps somewhat an expression of a cognitive dissonance – or of other potentially subversive associated moral values (sexuality, identity, spirituality, politics, etc.) expressed through art and its reception.

Ultimately, the liminality of the subculture is transformed into a sense of the possible. This is an idea relevant at all stages of life; Thornton was mistaken to label it simply a youth culture²⁸⁷ – Jackson, Fritz, and my own observations disagree with her on this point. The concept of raver’s consciousness suggests that the culture can travel with its keeper, the holder of this cognitive key, long after their youthful heyday of perennial parties. Ravers learn new ways to

of the mainstream dissimulated work/leisure spheres, is clearly not exclusive to my findings of rave culture. What is special about raving in this context is the “offer for a meaningful way of life, through its interpretive/semiotic elements, which can be removed from the instrumentalist world of raving,” by means of the development of this “headspace.” Ravers can take the phenomenon identified by Brake with them, beyond the subcultural or leisure sites in which Brake identifies its occurrence and turn the process on its head, as it were. The locus of subculturally informed meaning-making activity is translated from the leisure realm into that of the work realm (and everywhere else, all the tertiary spaces [public and private] not broadly accounted for within “leisure”).

²⁸⁶ Benjamine D. Koen, Gregory Barz, and Kenneth Brummel-Smith, “Confluence of Consciousness in Music, Medicine, and Culture,” 6.

²⁸⁷ Though, of course, demographically, she is correct that it is predominantly populated by “youths.”

order, encode, and integrate information, stimuli, and personal and collective values through their experiences into a broader *weltanschauung* that fundamentally changes the nature of their sense of being in the world, *creating* a space for them to experience a sense of meaningful *Dasein* – their relationships of being an individual in the world – in a phenomenologically unique way. Performing across artistic, individual-psychologic, and societal stages, the alteration to the raver’s state of consciousness is not a confusion of *state* for sensual phantasmagoria and utopian-cultural *content*, nor is it a phenomenon limited to a blazing distraction meant to temporarily dazzle the eye to a dread reality; it is truly a potential to change in the patterns of cognition needed to perceive the over-loaded information environment and recognize inlaid forms. As the *Oxford Handbook of Medical Ethnomusicology* states: “people use music in their daily lives to inspire, motivate, remember, forget, or otherwise situate themselves in relation to their internal and external landscapes.”²⁸⁸ Rave transcends its aesthetic materials to impart its subjects with bespoke powers of *recognition* to perceive anywhere the ultimate illusion of form.

²⁸⁸ *The Oxford Handbook of Medical Ethnomusicology*, 19.

CHAPTER TWELVE: FURTHER RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

While the rave scene is now more than twenty years old, there still seems to be an inexplicable dearth of serious scholarly attention paid – with notable exceptions, of course – to the broad implicatures of its culture and art, and the blurriness of the boundaries between the two. It would be of great benefit for more outsiders to turn their attention to the study of rave culture and to the music *in rave context*, where it becomes a genuinely distinct art form; live and performative, organic, collaborative, hazard-fraught, and interdependent. Good work has been done by cultural insiders like Phil Jackson and outsiders like Sarah Thornton, however, there is a notable divide in much of even the very good existing work between the proselytizing bordering on propaganda by some of the insiders and an opposing bias of haughty self-conscious skepticism by outsiders. Furthermore, additional inquiries are needed into the relationship of the aesthetic and cultural practices that are willing to consider them from a potential holistic vantage, rather than rigidly linear perspectives that fail to see the forest for the collage at the deference of the pastiche. The post-modern temporality of the cyclic through-composed musical performances of the DJs and the anachronistic techno-tribalism of its iconography and mythos are incompatible with a traditional, unironic²⁸⁹ logic at their deeper levels.

There are several areas I see branching directly from this study with the promise to provide enlightening insights into the rave phenomenon and its culture: Further investigation into the active structures of motivation and experimental analysis of rave according to the multifarious lenses of the different theories of motivation; medical ethnomusicology, (though some work on concepts of ritual healing does exist – such as the paper by Scott Hutson that was

²⁸⁹ Something itself beautifully ironic of such a culture so earnestly preoccupied with earnestness!

referenced in this study – there are many more questions concerning stress and trauma,²⁹⁰ catharsis/resilience, fitness, cognitive dissonance; both physiological as well as psychological development questions....); the idea of cultural authorship or *auteurship* and the questions concerning the concept of integrated social-body-as-artwork, auteur, and creative hierarchies. There is also much more to be said on the topics of the creation of meaning, questioning “escapism,” and the reconstitution of “the real” that the present study broaches. Each of these three could be broken down on specific and abstracted-systemic levels. All six have the potential to reveal basic (though intricate and multi-valent) human processes, manifested in peculiarity but engendered by much broader shared natures, values, and needs. I readily admit and encourage that, due to the novel and exploratory nature of this study, any of its content, analysis, and implications could surely be expanded upon, refined, critiqued, or be more broadly taken for application and/or testing in other areas or contexts.

There is also the prospect of addressing the oversight in existing rave scholarship identified in the literature review, namely, that there is an absence of any attempt of musical analysis. There are options as to how one could approach the task as traditional musical transcription and score analysis is not fully-equipped to the task. In the case of analysing a DJ’s set, if the DJ were running a fully digital system (no analogue turntables), it would be very possible to set up a computer program to track their actions as the set was recorded. This could employ full audio capture, charting a beat-grid, tracking use of different timbral²⁹¹

²⁹⁰ Directly connecting the subjects of “stress and trauma” and “meaning” is the recognition that, to an extent, intensity denotes or engenders meaning. The absolute intensity of a rave experience – particularly in the context of a life that may at the time be predominated by the tepid and mundane, or else lacking in *positive* intense experience – can make it a meaningful one as *Dasein*, of a powerful awareness of Being, of being fully “alive” to one’s potentiality. Of course, the abstract formulation itself of “intensity : meaning” is, by no means, exclusive to rave. But, as has become an undercurrent theme: the rave appears as a laboratory for identifying and testing such broadly relevant phenomena.

²⁹¹ A musicological study of timbral use in a rave set alone would be a worthy effort, especially if it were to look to what is known about some of the psychoacoustic ramifications of different sound-types, wave-forms, etc. Perhaps an

elements/sounds, sample use, etc; the researcher would have a list of every patch in the DJ's arsenal for the given performance. One could model an analysis after Thomas Owens' study of Charlie Parker's playing;²⁹² the DJ has a set list of possible devices to employ in order to create a successful musical narrative through their set. A full theory could even arise from analysing the decisions made by DJs, out of all possible solutions (which, in this case, can be more or less quantifiably known), as to which device they choose to employ and when in any given scenario and its effect on and function within the performance.²⁹³

It must also be admitted that there is a new cultural relevance in the Western world for the discussion of what constitutes reality, escapism, and what holds meaning in light of a mood that has been coined the "post-truth" era. Especially the degree to which such things can be reconstituted differently between co-existing and co-habiting social entities and if such incongruities can be reconciled in any meaningful or substantive way. Beyond the ontological, and epistemological, there are questions here of the moral responsibility of art (and, in this study, the understanding arises that a rave is a social group that is simultaneously an extreme form of collective performance art). Towards this issue, Schopenhauer wrote that

music is as *immediate* an objectification and copy of the whole *will* as the world itself is, indeed as the Ideas are, the multiplied phenomenon of which constitutes the world of individual things. Therefore music is by no means like the other arts, namely a *copy* of the Ideas, but a *copy of the will itself*, the objectivity of which are the Ideas. For this reason the effect of music is so very much more powerful and penetrating than is that of the other arts, for these others speak only of the shadow, but music of the essence.²⁹⁴

analysis of "timbre and rhythm/tempo action and interaction in rave" would be what is needed – as it might miss the point of this type of music/performance to forget about the beat?

²⁹² Thomas Owens, "Charlie Parker: Techniques of Improvisation" (PhD diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 1974).

²⁹³ Remembering too that the entire rave scenario is a large collective performance.

²⁹⁴ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E.F.J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1969), 257.

When Schopenhauer speaks of “will” and “essence” it is difficult not to recognize the direct kinship to rave’s motivational basis and the way in which raving, primarily through its musicking practices, creates a representation of a world cosmology – at the very least, of a model society – willing into existence a phenomenon of the very essence of rave’s meaningful framework.

This is entwined with the notion of rejecting escapism if the argument can be made that there is a difference between creating an *alternative-as-possibility*, something (at least aspirationally) transformative, versus a pseudo-object, an ersatz *not-thing-as-substitution*, that characterizes “alternative facts,” as they have been labeled in the parlance of our times. The crux lies in the ability to differentiate between rejecting the objective-external world outright and the refusal to accept those conditions as the only possible experience (acceptance can itself be a form of escapism, of denial). The rave world is an excellent laboratory to make such *intentional* observations and document art’s ability to intercede in one’s whole being-in-the-world, to test the reality and power of a heightened praxis of what R.G. Collingwood referred to as “magic art.”²⁹⁵ There are, of course, antecedents to this type of vision. I have implicated Romanticist ideals that persist in the rave subculture and purposefully described rave as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, invoking Richard Wagner’s project to create “total artwork” in his opera productions at Bayreuth (for that matter, the opera house’s construction is easily identifiable as an extreme effort to create a T.A.Z. with the express function to support an idealized experience of the total art; the overwhelming extravagance of the project echoes in the storied rave festivals held at Ibiza and other meccas). It plays to other themes of dismissing high/low brow distinctions and prejudices

²⁹⁵ Gary Kemp, “Collingwood’s Aesthetics,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia Of Philosophy* (Fall 2016 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/collingwood-aesthetics/>.

running through in this thesis to point out the kindred nature between the utmost High Romanticism in Western Art Music and a pop culture such as rave.

As much as reception of rave-the-art-form is transformative and morally proscriptive, it evolves quickly for the individual into less of an art changing one's perception and – possibly, idealistically – future action (*à la* Collingwood) as it becomes the potential site of an art form that at once *is* a new act, a new relationship itself, of the personal-individual, and the cultural-social (therefore political *à la* Schopenhauer) . The performance art form at its apothetic level being not aesthetics that continue their influence over individuals or groups of such but something discursive, coincident, when individuals influence, conjure, otherwise construct a reality; what one could romantically call a “Poetry Of Being.” The *empowered art* is translated from an identification – from the examples of “art,” as one commonly knows and perceives in its object-status (in this case the music, visual decoration, dance-form, etc.) into an existing; individual subjects and their phenomenal relationships become medium, message, and meaning. Meaningfulness is morally constrained but justified by its level of phenomenal intensity. The fundamental motivation of raving – embodied in its community, aesthetic artifacts, and rituals – is essentially apothetic.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: FIELD REPORT

A1. DANCE TO THE END OF THE TECHNOTRIBAL NIGHT: AN OBSERVATION:

Of the raves I attended as a part of this research, the one that took place on May 7, 2016 was representative. Of course, there were variations on the themes, scenes, and set comprising each night, but a description of May 7 provides an emblematic description of a typical rave party. I came to hear of the event through acquaintances of the owners of the gallery space being rented to host the event. They were aware of my research. Shortly thereafter, about two weeks before the night of the party, the group organizing the event created a public Facebook event page for a night they were calling “Technoturnal.” Not every rave is so easy to find. There would be many cases where I only would have received word of the event through personal connections to the scene or by being a part of internally vetted information community – not an imagined community in the sense that Benedict Anderson proposes,²⁹⁶ as its members do meet physically and function as a coherent communal group – an established network that mirrors the community it represents, allowing relevant news and information to circulate, helping maintain the community bond between raves and bring them back in for the next one. In past days, these

²⁹⁶ Anderson’s concept of the “imagined community” was originally formulated in the context of an analysis of nationalism. It is a group whose members “will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 49). While this could be perhaps considered true of the rave subcultural community at large, as large as the global “community,” as there is a spirit of pan-tribal *communitas* that exists, the information communities to which I refer are much smaller and function as communication networks for “real” embodied communities that do not fit Anderson’s definition of “imagined.” I raise Anderson’s work for contrast because, at first blush, there is undeniably a resemblance of infrastructure on certain levels between the two in the realm of promulgating ideas of identity and sustaining or extending a boundary of cultural identity. A legitimate detailed comparison of the two would make for an interesting and likely worthwhile analysis but is not relevant to the present study. Such an essay instead remains a promising option for a future project.

groups would have communicated through peer-to-peer fliering, independently produced zine mailing lists, even cyphers hidden in public ads or distributed promotional objects. The rave community were early adopters of the original net, creating forums, advertising, letting each other know how to find the party behind the veil of forerunning technological and communication literacy and the safety of the platform's anonymity. The privacy of early mobile-phone text messaging made it a likewise well-suited medium. In these days raving was almost exclusively underground, hosted in unsanctioned, unlicensed venues which were illegal – hence the secrecy. While trying to find my way into the community I attempted to join a closed facebook group, “The Good Vibe Tribe.” I was denied. Despite being told by Facebook that I was friends with a couple of members, as an outsider, I failed the necessary criterion of familiarity and trust. That said, I met some of The Good Vibe Tribe at Technoturnal and they were openly talkative, enthusiastic, and inviting – both to me as a “new raver” and as an academic researcher taking a critical interest in something so meaningful to them that, they feel, is still oft-misrepresented in the popular consciousness and misunderstood by the formal intelligentsia and “the institutions.”

In many ways much of the characteristic features of the original rave have been enfolded by mainstream dance clubs and EDM festivals but there is a gestalt in “genuine” raves that probably owes a lot to the selectivity of the community. I would need more than my two hands to count the number of times in the course of my research someone expressed surprise that “actual raves” were “still a thing.” Even within my interview group, surprise that rave was a still a thriving subculture they could participate in was a shared part of their initiation. It seems every generation of raver “discovers” or “uncovers” the scene anew. Not that it is a community that defends its elitist membership steadfastly from outsiders (ravers have quite evangelical

tendencies, as I found out for myself) but the self-preservation reflex towards, if not secrecy, then privacy, still persists like a vestigial organ, even though the majority of raves taking place in the GTA and Tri-Cities are now legal. Even some of the “underground” raves are not underground in the purist sense – they’re just unorthodox and require esoteric knowledge to access.

However, Technoturnal was openly advertised and the Facebook event I found for it was a public one. The organizers, a debuting rave event promotion/production group calling themselves Co-Inspiracy,²⁹⁷ posted this description of the event on that page:

After the sun sets, the night life awakens. Creatures of the dark move through the shadows, following the pulsing beat of the primal dance, drawn to the tenebrous techno caverns.

You asked for it KW, and Co-Inspiracy is proud to deliver a proper techno night for our official launch. Held at the intimate Outpost Gallery, we will treat your senses with beautiful beats to groove to all night, a cozy ploungue room to relax in when you need a break from the dance floor, tasty snacks to keep your energy up, and an array of installation, projection, and visual art to feast your eyes on. Taking great care to create a unique, memorable, and community oriented experience... this won't be your typical party.

A little further down:

Installations and projection visuals by Co-Inspiracy, and visual art by Paige Hayden, Dave Fox, and more TBA.

19+
Licensed Bar

To keep the vibes intimate, this venue has a LIMITED capacity! Get your tickets early!

\$15 advance

Get ready to get Technocturnal. We don't sleep till the sun comes up!

PLUR or GTFO.

²⁹⁷ It is a shame that I was never able to meet with one of the two founders to discuss the choice of name, though the transformation of “co” into a prefix, subverting the innate threat of “conspiracy” with a signifier of cooperation or togetherness and the suggestive scanning of “inspiracy” appearing to play off the root “inspiration” is intriguing and fits very beautifully with the ethos of rave. This conspiracy in question is no longer the vehicle of a cabal of repression but instead an alt-reasoning humanist cooperative of inspired and inspiring individuals.

Ironically, this mission statement to create something beyond the “typical party” is itself typical if not iconic of raves and key to the aforementioned gestalt. The artwork filling the top banner displayed the event name, featured DJs, and the promotion group in clean, white, all-caps lettering. The bottom half was filled by a black line drawing of an owl, head-on and with its wings outstretched, exceeding the frame. The background was a blurred out image in dark earth-tones that appeared vaguely psychedelic or surrealist. I found this a little surprising; it was a much more imposing totem than the happy-faces, soft-fonts, cartoonism, or sheer neon technical-psychedelia I had come to expect. Nevertheless, this owl would serve as mascot and familiar for the evening, manifesting prominently in the décor. A link was provided by buy tickets online. On the evening of the rave, I printed my ticket and drove down to The Outpost, an alternative downtown Kitchener gallery and “art space.”

The event was advertised as beginning at 10:00pm but I was told by the venue’s owner the doors would be opening earlier than that. As the name of the event implies, raving is a nocturnal event; planning an event to begin in earnest before 10:00pm would be foolhardy and naïve. The name is actually a perfect emblem for an accessible description of rave to the uninitiated. Having been asked countless times since beginning this project, “what makes a rave a rave?” I have come up with the following essentialist description: A rave is a nocturnal – that is, late-night, easily all-night – dance party set to EDM,²⁹⁸ with decorations, usually a theme, and

²⁹⁸ Depending on the scene or the theme, the specific (sub)genre of EDM may vary. That in-itself is not so important. There is so much dispute as to how to accurately categorize EDM that it requires a certain level of expertise to parse precisely what genre one is listening to. One of the most popular methods of categorization is by tempo but this is problematic since there is much overlap and even genre-specific nights will feature music that varies dramatically in tempo and texture/density of sound. For example, Techno is typically thought of as 120bpm but can be as fast as 160bpm; House is often considered anywhere between 118-135; Dubstep can be thought of as in the range of 140bpm – but so is Trap; Triphop or Downtempo can be 80-110bpm. These are averages of the figures I have come across and are completely disputable. Even some of the other defining characteristics of sound and the names themselves of EDM types are susceptible to flux and complete change. What was once called Jungle

lots of atmospheric and lighting effects. It is different from a club because the bar (if there is one) is not the centerpiece, the focus of intent is that it is a dance *party* rather than a bar that also has a DJ and a dance floor. Most of all, it is the gathering of a *community* of individuals sharing an experience that reflects and allows them to embody their innermost values.

I arrived a little before 9:00pm. Aside from a handful of friends of the owners and of the Co-Inspiracy duo, who had likely been there all afternoon lending a hand, I was the only non-essential personnel to have arrived. I introduced myself to the organizers and they enthusiastically granted me permission to leave an advertisement for my research and how to become an interview participant at the ticket table. This method didn't yield any direct participants but ended up being the strategy that created the greatest snowball sampling opportunities. People who had seen my ad shared on facebook that someone was doing research on raving and soon I had e-mails and facebook messages from more interested participants than I could accommodate.

I explored the gallery. Once you passed through the antechamber that served as a coat-room and where the ticket-taker had her desk, there were four rooms available to the public. The central room was the smallest and had a little cash-bar at the back as well as some bottled non-alcoholic beverages for sale, mostly fancy pop and, of course, water. Two tables had vegetable spreads, crackers, and hummus for ravers to snack on at their leisure. The walls were haphazardly adorned with paintings by local artists with a flare for the bizarre and grotesque. This was a sitting installation, not associated with Technoturnal, and all the paintings were for sale.

has been largely supplanted by the evolution of Drum'n'Bass (clocking in, by the way, at 150bpm to as fast as 200bpm).

A doorway to the right led past a nook filled by another spread, there in case of late-night snack attack, light-headedness, or just a need to refuel, and opened onto the dance floor. This room was a relatively high-ceilinged cube with a concrete floor and very dark. A little black-lighting glowed off the imperfections in the wall-paint, but the room's lighting systems had yet to ignite. The door was in the corner of the room on the back wall or opposite the stage. This wall was hung with a few more paintings, abstracts that reacted with an otherworldly lubriciousness under the black lights. The side walls were both hung with a series of large mirrors able to reflect nearly the entirety of the room except where the wall on the right was divided by two doors. One was locked, likely a supply cupboard or housed the DJ's personal affects. The other was lined with cut-open black garbage bags and housed a blank diptych, both panels together measuring probably 8 ½ by 7 feet. There were acrylic paint jars and a bucket filled with water and brushes on a table. The DJs' "stage" was a series of tables in front of a large projector screen that covered the back wall, and doubled as a privacy screen to keep people from the greenroom accessible from behind the curtain. The table-front was covered by some sort of artwork and large paper-mache wing-tips extended upwards at an angle from the ends. Multiple digital turn-tables, midi trigger pads, midi keyboard controllers, and a laptop were already wired up in anticipation of the first set.

To the left of the bar room was the "plounge room," a chill-out zone filled with couches, futons, thick duvet comforters, pillows, beanbag chairs, enormous pillows, cushions, the light of soft yellow lamps, and absolutely nothing abrasive or overly-stimulating. There was even a plush tiger that spent its evening floating around the room. Some suggestively Grottage-like artworks lined the perimeter. Throughout the night I would regularly escape to the plounge room to jot down observations, short-hand, into my notepad or to catch my breath. The nights were still a

little chilly to stay outside for too-long when looking for the relief of fresh air and relative quiet so the plouge room was the next best thing. This was also the room with access to The Outpost's single bathroom (though there was a suspect port-a-potty available in the parking lot next to the Asian massage parlour). Needless to say, the lineup became a permanent fixture where people could find a willing partner and common grounds for conversations not possible on the dance floor.

People trickled in for the next hour but it wasn't until the first set was well underway that people really started to arrive in significant numbers. There were no grand introductions for each DJ. Simply, the lighting and projected visuals started up, the music mix went live, and the DJ got right down to business plying his craft. All of tonight's DJs were men. Rave spaces aspire to an egalitarian order²⁹⁹ but there is still a considerable gender gap in terms of female organizational and artistic leadership (Although, Co-Inspiracy itself is a co-led male-female partnership). Refraining from emphasising the DJs' entrances and exits reaffirmed the focus was on the party itself, not any one individual. However, for me, the downside is that I don't know who was who. On the Facebook event page, Co-Inspiracy provided the following description of their lineup:

/// SAMMS ///

SAMMS has been heavily involved in the depths of the Toronto underground scene for years. Not limited to their DJing expertise, SAMMS can frequently be found doing sound and art setup, working the door, and doing everything they can for the love of dance, art, and music. Becoming a member of the Deep North crew, SAMMS found themselves working with some of the world's finest international talent in the most underground parties. Spinning late nights in many afterhours, love of the music and community keep SAMMS going strong. Creeping out from the shadows behind the scenes, SAMMS will be in their element dropping their most delicious darkest and dirtiest techno on the dance floor.

/// Adam Spears ///

Adam Spears has already put together an impressive resume for a young musician, with many original tracks under his belt. Beginning his music career as a guitarist, then branching out to the irresistible groove of house music, his skills propelled him into the

²⁹⁹ Thornton, *Club Cultures*, 167.

student party scene as a DJ, which led to him breaking out into the club scene and becoming the resident DJ at Beta Nightclub in Waterloo. Spears will be treating us to something a little different by bringing things back to his techno roots, and we can't wait to hear it.

/// Kevin Thomas ///

Not much is known about this eager but elusive newcomer. A mysterious demo appeared in our inbox, and upon hearing the skillful mix and solid beats, we knew we had to book him right away.

/// Cape Esan ///

One half of Co-Inspiracy; CAPE ESAN is a remarkable up-and-comer from Kitchener, ON. Liam Bristow is a multi-instrumentalist and tasteful electronic producer, whose range of genres spans from blissful ambient chillout, to 4-on-the-floor house and techno, to groovy d'n'b. Expect a selection of deep, murky techno geared for the bass music enthusiast.

From my own impressions of their performances, I believe the lineup appeared in reverse-order.

I cannot substantiate this.

SET ONE

This set had the feeling of a warm-up. Most of the people on the dance floor were lined along the back wall, watching the DJ and visuals. People were “introspectively grooving,” enjoying the music, but maybe holding a drink. Glances around at their peers usually followed by a few seconds of head bobbing with closed eyes signified everyone was still self-conscious of their presence and about their movements. With the coming of the first DJ, the façade of the stage was transformed by lights. The wings were painted with luminescent orange paint, previously unnoticeable, now lit by direct black-lighting. They were larger than I first realized and the patterning made them appear cicada-like.

Most people were still in the bar area or had taken to the plounge room, either getting to know one another or catching up since the last rave. The music was loud but not nearly as loud as I expected, well below the pain threshold. By the time the music made it through the lock-like

zigzag of the doors to the ploung room it was about the same volume as elevator music. I happened into a conversation with a newly certified substitute teacher with the Catholic school-board, Giovanni. He was outwardly friendly and interested to get to know me. It turns out he was both new to the area and to raves. He had just moved from Ottawa for work and, while looking to meet new people, had met a woman at a bar the previous weekend who invited him to tonight's rave. He said he'd accidentally stepped on her foot while passing and when she was very warm and polite, inviting him to join her and her friends when she saw he was there by himself, he figured anyone that personable would be a great person to befriend. By extension, he figured any gathering of people she vouched for would mostly likely be the kind of friendly, good-natured people he was looking to meet. He had driven there and so, as he explained, since he was very cautious and couldn't bear the thought of *what-if?* he did not have anything to drink, much less use any other substances that appeared that evening. I never saw him dancing much either, he went to the dance floor, stood along the back, listened, and watched. I ran into him a week or two after and he confirmed he had enjoyed himself – particularly how friendly and outgoing everyone was.³⁰⁰

I chatted with a few more people. The mode of conversation was to have very concise, earnest banter. There was to be nothing as in-depth and long as my talk with Giovanni. Rather, to convey some extension of empathy toward you, identify something shared between you, and to depart. Everyone inhabited this surface-level conversation with a high-level of emotional involvement. Meanwhile any deeper content or meaning behind their statements or of our interaction were left totally implicit.³⁰¹ At first I had fears being regarded with skepticism as an

³⁰⁰ Giovanni is an excellent example of the “gaze” in action. He was there for the social experience/exposure and to observe, to enjoy vicariously, but also personal aesthetic pleasure in the event.

³⁰¹ This opportunity for subjective projection and interpretation is a recurrent theme across rave accounts and will be revisited later in this study. Scott Hutson discusses this idea most engagingly in the context of the “hyperreal,”

outsider when I decided I would be honest with everyone about who I was and my reasons for being there. It turns out skepticism is for outsiders; everyone I met was just as enthusiastic as the organizers had been that someone was doing “legitimate” research on something they loved and was such a part of their identity. The external validation that rave was something to take seriously for those outside their community seemed only to heighten their support of my project. Everyone said they wanted to be interviewed. No one I spoke to that night actually joined my project for a formal interview, but the enthusiasm that *someone* might represent them was genuine.

By now the aesthetic expressive side of raves was becoming apparent. The woman working the door had been wearing only neon leggings and an open denim vest; stars made from what looked to be heavy-stock neon paper covered her nipples. Her face was also painted with neon coloured paints. Many ravers, especially those who arrived between 11:00pm and 1:00am had used similar paint on their faces in abstract shapes or vaguely tribal patterns. A group had even used fluorescent paints on themselves, similar to what was used for the stage construction. A few people had opted to wear ponchos. There were a number of capes. Full on costume began appearing. One young male had funky multi-coloured tights on and wore a kind of leotard. The stand-out costume had to be the person I took to referring to (to myself, at least) as Tigger-Man. He wore tiger-stripe tights under a pair of pants that were one-half green, the other-half orange, and sprouted a tiger’s tail; his shirt was a woman’s mesh crop-top; on his head he wore an LED illuminated halo or crown that may actually have been a children’s tutu. As much as the ravers in full uniform were given instant respect and kudos, it didn’t ultimately seem to matter if you came

where a “multiplicity of surfaces replaces singularity of depth” (Scott R. Hutson, “The Rave: Spiritual Healing In Modern Western Subcultures,” *Anthropological Quarterly* vol. 73 no. 1 (2000), 38). The “hyperreal” surface is a mirrored one.

in civilian clothes or went all-out. Chatting about some of the fashion with someone I was told the point was that you could wear *whatever* you wanted, could present yourself however you felt best expressed how you wanted to appear before others; it was not a differentiating mark of sincerity or “authenticity.” So long as you were comfortable in what you wore, it seemed understood that everyone was there for the same purpose. Some of the fashions that people probably followed in everyday contexts were prevalent; there was punk, hippy dresses, a bohemian artsy look. Some came in clothes that would have been suited for looking their best for any night out on the town: attractive shoes, short skirts, designer jeans, flashy shirts. Eighties chic made an appearance. A few people were dressed in sweats because that was better for sweating it out on the dance floor. There was also no shortage of plain jeans and t-shirts.

The diptych in the side room off the dance floor was beginning to fill up. The owner of the Outpost told me it was something they had put up before at other events held there. It was actually the same canvas painted-over with white. The idea was that it was a space where everyone could and should express themselves freely. The pieces on the canvas would become a representation of the collective assembled. Anything was allowed: you could paint a new stand-alone image, you could write something, you could add to someone else’s work, or do something in response to it, you could just smear paint over it if you had some aggression. I painted the face of a fat French artist smoking a cigarette, with hepcat sunglasses and beret and a walrus-tusk like mustache. He was in the company of, among other things, some flowers, a face, a few abstract shapes, words like “Love” and “Peace,” a stick-man DJ, and a skeletal formula for an unconfirmed chemical compound.

I wandered back to the dance floor. It was beginning fill and accumulate some energy about it. There was still much standing along the walls but the periphery now made a full

horseshoe around the room, ending at either end of the stage. The people standing more towards the middle were beginning to get more involved and as they danced, the self-consciousness in the room began to dissipate from the middle of the floor, outward. A few individuals eager to dance but not ready for to put themselves out there under the gaze of the perimeter cleared little pockets by the walls and were dancing fairly intensely in their private zones. A few couples and groups danced were dancing together but as the momentum caught on, more and more people were dancing with the crowd, as if a room full of people could be a dance partner. As person-by-person got deeper and deeper into it, the effect was not wholly like particle physics where the energy from one excited molecule is transferred to the molecule adjacent and so-on until the whole room was activated. The most intense response was in those closest to the music source (all the speakers were front-of-house) and secondarily in those dancers directly interacting with each other; the effect receding towards the continual standers bobbing their heads, leaning against the back wall, wrecking at least one of the paintings that had hung there at the start of the evening.

The music was a very level Techno: consistent in volume, overall timbral palette, and textural density, without much dramatic fluctuation in terms of build and drop (stress and release). The entire set was slow, steady modulation of the beats and textures. Never too dense, it had suggestions of the trance genre in its use of interchanging layers and sparsity. The beat was for the most part a clear 4/4. Despite the minimalist aesthetic a couple musical transitions contradicted, blurred over, and then completely erased the sense of pulse until the new beat established itself. People were enjoying the growing vibe but I did not get a sense of the connection or communication between the DJ and the audience that is so ineffably extolled by ravers and DJs alike. I realized I had somehow missed part of the stage decoration until now: the

front of the DJ's table set-up had the owl's face and body from the advertisement artwork painted on a sheet of paper that had been hung to cover the front of the tables in white fluorescent paint. The shapes on the wings represented feathers, not the veins of some kind of insect wing. The imagery suddenly made a lot more sense. The projector behind the DJ was playing an scene of a farm field and grain silo under a starry night. Different aouras and owl constellations were animated appearing and disappearing, illuminating the sky. It was brutally hot – the only circulation in the building was from a single fan beside the bar – so I decided to duck out to the plounge room for a breather and to jot down my notes-so-far.

There I encountered Giovanni, who said that when heard from out-here, away from the main room, the sparse pulsing music was completely hypnotic. He was right, it would have been easy to doze off to it in the comforts of the plounge. We were interrupted, however, by someone who was already tweaking under the clear influence of stimulants. The conversation was an intense deluge from his end about the power of audio. He was an audio editor and knew in very detailed way the minutia that made heard sounds so powerful. A few people joined the conversation here and diffused his intensity a little. The conversation turned to a round table on how raves like tonight were so important because of the need for and power of “social medicine” and community. Especially a physically intimate activity like raving. One person described how the self was like a natural resource and social media was extraction economics. By contrast, the sociality of raving was “green;” it was renewable and healthy, allowing one's Self to grow and become more flexible while at the same time hold onto a stronger center of stability. This conversation ensued without introducing myself as a researcher.

SET TWO

The second DJ was far more animated than the first one had been, mechanically bobbing. He danced from machine to machine, jerking in time to the beat from the shoulders up. The music was more lively too: more aggressive synths, denser arrangements, clear counter-rhythms and harmonic progressions appearing as the set unfolded. Things were slightly louder too, and maybe 5-10 bpm faster. The lasers geared up for the first time, cutting lines through the thin, chalky-smelling artificial fog that had at some point been added to the atmosphere. It began to appear to me that the backdrop was actual night-footage of someplace with the animations of stars and aurora superimposed ovetop; the quality of the light in the sky had shifted.

A check into the art-room showed that the canvas had nearly been filled. Now, people were beginning to paint more commentary: stick figures were captioned or labeled with the name of individuals present or known in the manner of in-joking; abstractions were metamorphized into objects such as some squares that were turned into a “High Robot” and labeled as such; inspirational quotes and fragments of Eastern mysticism dealing with desire, flame or burning, revelation or sudden sight, living “*la vita bella.*” There were also a few outbursts of aggression evident. Someone hid the words “THIS IS SHIT” in a blotch of abstract shapes and overlapping images and the right panel became dominated by an enormous blue “FUCK” across its top-third, a long with a pentagram. The warning “THE PENIS IS EVIL” below a big-headed alien dominated the center of the panel with uncharacteristically little overlapping its canvas space. Interestingly, though surely coincidental, the positive/negative balance of content on the two panels mirrored a Taoist yin-yang symbol: The left was predominantly positive, including the mystic quotes, pastel colours, and a fertility symbol; though this is where the “this is shit” was painted. Meanwhile, the right canvas was dominated by the negative “fuck” and mistrust of the

male sex-organ, dark and intense colours, and even a picture of a face wearing a gas mask with dead-man's x's in its eyeholes; still, there was a heart and the word "Love" scrawled on this panel.

Some of the ravers were beginning to react to each other's presentation and appear more exotic as well. More glowing neon face-paint appeared and states of disrobe started happening. A few articles of costume had been traded around, including some hats and the tutu tiara/halo. Tigger-man had now rolled up his pantlegs and switched on a string of lights hidden under his tights, backlighting the leopard pattern with a visible network of LEDs. A new costumed figure had arrived: "Rainbow Man." He explained over a cigarette outside the door that he had come directly from a "Halfaween" party (a costume party halfway between last and next Halloween). The faux-superhero was enough of a character in its own to fulfil its requirements as a costume and the PLUR vibe of the rainbow reference to the LGBTQ community made it perfect for a rave uniform as well.

A discussion of the arts and fan-fiction ensued outdoors including the synopsis of an indie-film one of the women was producing about the bromance of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Mitt Romney including the promise of a punchline climax revealing that Justin Trudeau was the Zodiac Killer all along. She made us promise not to reveal her idea to anyone or on the internet because she was sure the idea would be stolen to someone else's great profit. A small detachment of three of the males present, including myself, were then recruited to guard the port-a-potty because the lineup for the bathroom inside was huge and the fan-fiction writer/producer did not feel safe using the outdoor facilities otherwise. I watched a sizeable hippie-esque group troop past and enter the Outpost. I followed the tail-end of them in once my duties were fulfilled and was immediately hit by how loud the music had grown. A bearded man

with a pony-tail who had been giving his all earlier marched out of the doorway to the dance-floor with gusto and declared to everyone in the bar room in a loud but hoarse voice, “There’s some math-based shit going on in there in case anybody wants to know!” I headed for the dance-floor.

The room was switched-on. All ages from teens to people in their late-forties were dancing together and apart. Everyone had their own variation of how to dance to the four-on-the-floor beat and feel the groove of the shifting cross-rhythm – no doubt the “math-based shit” the guy was talking about. The backdrop was projected with surreal scenes of time-lapse photography including a desert highway leading from dusk to deep night with the same kind of animated owl constellations as had been over the farm field. The DJ was now fixed to his dual-turntables and one midi-pad. He was working with a repertoire of his own original beats and samples at this point. The DJ was expertly working the crowd. Spontaneous whoops and hollers broke out from all over the room, especially in the affect of breakdowns and musical transitions, creating a positive feedback between music and masses. The people applauded the DJ at moments of obvious technical skill in managing his beats or when he satisfied musical expectations by using build/drops or anticipating a return to the root full-ahead 4/4 groove.

The ravers were intensely focused, either on the stage from the back of the room, on their own dancing – many with eyes closed and an expression of exertion or abandon on their face – or on one of the several “soloists” who repeatedly emerged from a dense cluster of people. These dancers were given the floor and, after their “solos,” accolades based on a virtue, not of technical skill, but of expressive commitment. Dancers got back from their fellows equal to what they had to give in a quantitative sense. There were four or five of these solo dancers who appeared in the center of these rings of created spaces a couple times. Representative of the crowd as a whole,

their dancing abilities varied, one was clearly a trained dancer, there were practiced amateurs, even the almost arrhythmic. One young man in a too-big tacky Hawaiian shirt was especially good at losing himself in an ecstatic dance-style of ungainly grace. Seemingly unaware of his surroundings he would flail his limbs with a joyful expression on his face. His movements were far more closely related to the music's level of intensity than they were coupled to the beat. Regardless, every time he began to slip into this routine a circle would form around him, affording him space, and every onlooker would cheer, a few women tried to dance with him, and once he'd exhausted the current burst of energy, those nearest would clap him on the back and express accolades for his performance.

This system was part of an automatic organic organization of the collective body of dancing ravers. Despite the density and activity of the room, it was surprisingly easy to navigate. In fact, now that everyone was in some kind of motion, it was actually easier to move through the crowd. Those who made eye contact had a friendly smile for me and slid out of the way to allow passage. In this way, it was an incredibly – ironically, in light of some of the overt sexuality or even brusque “vulgarity” of some of the dancing – polite space. The process had a rather elegant equation behind it: if your average motion was greater than those immediately around you, you naturally sifted towards the center-front of the room; if you motion was less, you drifted towards the calmer periphery. Nobody had to push through bodies to get through or urge others to clear space if they wanted a solo of their own. Space appeared as you moved through it. It was almost a perfect expression of a collective act of consciousness acting on the world as in the form of mutual agreement in intentionality: the simultaneous – or, more technically correct, instantaneous – interpretation of and modification of the environment (here an environment of individual bodies) to create a new state allowing for the intended action(s).

The only rudely obstinate bodies were those who stood in the doorway between the bar room and dance-floor, drink in hand, somehow removed from the action. Even compared to those leaning and resting along the walls and others only observing, there was a capacity in which this group was not participating to the same extent with their gaze. Their relationship to the rest of the dancing bodies as a whole came to mind, honestly, as being like a benign tumor or a kidney stone that was refusing to pass.... They broke with the natural motion of the way the rest of the room was organizing itself, oddly purposeless in the otherwise cooperative, self-propagating system. Whereas, in the case of the periphery crowd, they still maintained a continuum of subtle movements entrained to the beat and, importantly, performed at minimum the voyeuristic role of audience, emboldening the performative character of the atmosphere ostensibly fueling the more radically exhibitionary dancers, particularly the inspired “soloists,” as part of the transferal relationship between these two roles.³⁰²

SET THREE

The musical intensity broke at the end of the second DJ’s set. While the last set had featured a few ambient vocal samples as an additional texture, this time they were much more prominent. Wordless female vocals mixed into ethereal reverb effects dominated the music for the first half of the set. Behind the voice layering in and out, the groove held a somewhat anti-climactically even keel the entire time. There was little of the dynamic drama or inventive use of sonic textures or layered arranging that propelled set number two. If the previous DJ’s performance had the *clichéd* air of the shaman leading his tribe on his journey, then this set was

³⁰² As between live audience and live performer, or in the discursive context in the exchange between (and exchange of the roles of) speaker and listener.

perhaps an totem of what critics of EDM assume it all to be: monotonous 4/4 beat under a few samples with a bit of spacy, aimless synthesizer for spice. The energy fell from the room.

It may have been slightly downtempo from where things had been, but this DJ was expert at not disrupting the focus of the beat during his transitions. There were still plenty of people on the dance floor but the dynamic had shifted, instead of feeding off the DJ and feeding back at him by reacting and responding to his musical gestures, as if he were the leading partner in a dance, the energy in the room was coming from the dancers. They were creating their own dynamism in pockets on the dance floor. These microcosms were trained to the steady pulse coming from the DJ's equipment but they had stopped following the diminished contours of the performance and improvised the now dance-led aesthetic narrative for themselves; deciding when to let loose and when to groove smoothly, or subside to the edge of their group to let someone else take over.

There was one woman somewhere in her forties who seemed to have been waiting for a moment to take this kind of leadership role. She wore a white tutu and was freely dancing with a fan in the style of a hyper-kinetic, tripped-out Chinese fan dance. Over the course of the next hour, that fan made its way around the room. Meanwhile, she produced a hula hoop from....somewhere, and began contorting her body in and around the hoop with maniac grace. I overheard her conversation later, utterly exhausted and trying to rehydrate with a water bottle she'd packed; she has no dance training but she has been a dedicated raver since her late-teens/early-twenties. About three-quarters of the way through the set, her influence came to dominate the attention of the room. She became the focal-point of the operant intentional nexus; instead of the DJ, it was through her dancing and relentless intensity that those who remained on the dance floor interpreted the music. They came to respond to her lead, not only in borrowing

her props, but in guiding the ebb and flow of their dancing. When she built to a climactic peak of fast motion and difficult moves, everyone danced faster, came to the point of losing themselves in the motion and the shared expenditure of energy, when she had to rest and slowed down, the crowd danced more subtly and moved closer to the walls.

Meanwhile, in the ploung room.... Somewhere between the fan-dancing and the appearance of the hula hoop, the second DJ staggered in through the door and all but collapsed face-down into a mass of futon cushion and blanket in the center of the room, exhausted. A few people gathered round him in amazement. Three, two women and one man, were openly fawning over him. Perhaps understandable as his performance was stand-out the most remarkable of the night. His skill in manipulating the crowd was remarkable. One of the women took off his shirt and began massaging his back and shoulders, calling him a “genius.” Once again, despite the egalitarian ideology, some animals are more equal than others. No one, in praxis, seemed the least bit uncomfortable with the totalitarian bent of Romantic artist-hero worship. I say this because the DJ’s attitude towards his fawning supporters was aloof to the point of appearing entitled to a certain measure of disdain for those heaping adulation. He certainly appeared to feel he’d spent himself working hard and was now due – however moodily he accepted it – reward for his labour and exhibition of his higher status. I was curious if this kind of sharp ego was necessary to enrapture and direct the crowd, given that the stated mission of the ravers is to encounter the experience without ego, and in total cooperative receptivity. That kind of malleable, Id directed, ego state seems ripe to be taken advantage of by an individual of forceful, libidinally focused, directed, *intentional* ego.

SET FOUR

I only noticed the change in DJ by a shift in the synthesizer tones coming from the door to the dance floor. The quality of the tones were a little glassier, *swooshy*, and featured phaser or flange effects – I wasn't quite sure which one, it may have been applied only on the reverb sound, not the direct signal itself. There were only a few people on the dance floor. Most of the key dancers responsible for leading the others grass-roots fashion when guidance and leadership from a central authority-figure in the DJ pulpit was lacking had either left or, like the woman in the tutu, had burnt out and spent most of the time in the plounge room, only dancing for short minutes at a time near the periphery, somewhat a shadow of their earlier, inspired and transcendental performances. Transcendental in that their conscious act of dancing extended beyond their own subjective experience and entered – or exerted – a meaningful intentional relationship with their peers, affecting the perceptions, actions and experience *en tous*, of those in their presence.

One of the owners of The Outpost revealed to me that it had been him who had painted the massive “FUCK” over the right canvass of the diptych when his business partner had mentioned that, at that point, the right side had been the “positive” side of the piece. It seems that piece of the collage was enough to alter the course of subsequent additions and ultimately reverse the thematic balance of the collective work. I added another message about madness and living art, inspired by earlier events on the “negative” panel, near my artist portrait from what seemed like some past, younger age. Time had lost all relative sense, significance, or logic.

This was clear when the clock seemed to be turning itself back around 3:00am when I decided it was time for me to leave. The overall crowd was thinned from its peak but strong when congregated together. This was beginning to shift into the hardcore, dedicated crew now,

the kind of people able to dance to the bitter end and still hang out at the afterparty or even the next day. For my part, I was sober and tired. Not-so for a good number of these elite-guard: A man in his mid-to-late twenties who had spend the past three-and-a-half hours wearing Tigger-Man's tutu tiara rushed me in the bar room, frantic and frenetic.

“Do you have gum? Do you have gum? I NEED GUM!”

It's common for ravers to bring, or sometimes someone will pass-out, lollypops, gum, hard candies, gum, some kind of oral fixation to fend off lock-jaw, a common side-effect of the stimulant effects of amphetamines or stimulating psychedelic drugs. I did not have any gum. Thankfully, I think I heard someone else call out that they did and the man rushed towards them, grateful, if, while not aggressive, a little intense for comfort. A number of ravers that night had been “Hippy-Flipping,” the combination of taking LSD, the most potent hallucinogenic drug, and MDMA, a designer amphetamine with hallucinogenic qualities, though often cut with speed. One of the Co-Inspiracy organizers was giving away LSD. With an active high of 6-10 hours, plus come-down, there was plenty of party left in these bodies still.

I have never seen an event with so much capacity for drama to flare run so smoothly. Everyone who wasn't already acquainted with someone else in attendance seemed to share a mutual friend and the hardly anyone except Giovanni and myself failed to fit into one of those two categories. Nonetheless, social harmony was buoyed by a shared cause, purpose, and *experience* (with a little extra ballast provided by the social lubricant applied at the bar and the empathy engendering drugs). Intriguingly though, the most intense, long-time ravers were sober or at least mostly so (this affirmed my conviction that I was studying something worthwhile, beyond the ephemera and kitschy clichés that I myself used to scoff pejoratively at). There was one confrontation between one of the gallery owners and a guest. I couldn't glean the details but

it fizzled when, without resolving whatever the source conflict had been, the guest re-entered despite the owner's protest and the owner passively backed-down. That person left within the hour. The same owner was furious when he found out the promoters were distributing free acid under his auspice. He paced around freaking out for a little – his concern was for legal and liability issues for himself, his partner, and their gallery, not that he morally objected to the drug-taking – but I am not aware of any major confrontation or fall-out due to this.

As I left a surprise DJ materialized, ushering the refuelling of the dance floor with able bodies – more than I thought were still there. Some new faces even arrived at this hour! This secret act went by the stage-name The Coke-Pope. He was ostensibly a vapour-wave underground heavy from Portland, Oregon. Lasers, thick smoke, and 80s neon-pastel lit the dance floor as his set started to a custom background animation, with faux-vintage computer inspired visuals. He sported a cape and wore a giant paper-mache camcorder on his head. I walked out to my car, leaving behind the drugged woozy sound of David Bowie's "Let's Dance" remixed down at somewhere around one-quarter to one-third speed with added synthesizer and drum sample splash.

A2. COLLECTIVE DIPTYCH PAINTING FROM "TECHNOTURNAL," MAY 7, 2016



Left panel



Right Panel

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEWS

Over the course of several months I interviewed seven research participants. In a semi-structured format, we discussed their experiences in single sessions lasting between 25 minutes and just over an hour. The length of each interview was determined by how much the participant had to say on a particular topic and if their answers presented openings for further critical dialogue. In circumstances of critical dialogue, I did not directly challenge my research participants statements or positions; I asked them to clarify ambiguities in their statements, elaborate on their statements with greater detail or specific examples, to defend or focus their statements in order to test other information I had collected in my research, to resolve apparent paradoxes with prior statements or research information, or, mostly, to answer further questions begged by their initial responses.

One participant chose to withdraw immediately afterwards, feeling that, for personal reasons, they had not been in a state to answer my questions in a way that was satisfying to them. Plans to meet again to reattempt the interview eventually disintegrated, leaving me with six completed interviews for my data set. Reasons of space, time, and resources encouraged me to remain with the six and to not pursue additional participants, nor to seek to “make-up” for the withdrawal.

B1. PARTICIPANTS

My six participants were in their early twenties and early thirties, Caucasian (though, notably, Gaston is a first-generation immigrant who moved with his parents to Canada as a child in the nineties because of the conflict in the former Yugoslav region), and evenly distributed between male and female. Most had some connection with the “Happy-Hardcore” scene (a subcultural community within rave and subgenre of EDM), either as members or having simply

been to events thrown by the community or community members. This is the likely result of the snowballing technique used in gathering my sample group and that my initial contact with the rave community – and most successful postering – was at a rave thrown by a group with ties to the Happy Hardcore scene. Because of the self-proclaimed “tribal” nature of rave culture, I simply fell in with this milieu.

Tal holds somewhat the position of an elder in the GTA Happy Hardcore community (which serves as the main community for surrounding areas). He is in his early thirties and, for a decade, was at the top of the pyramid organizing raves, providing guidance and acting as a community leader. He built global networks to his community, performing internationally as a DJ and bringing in some of the world’s top talents. He made clear that his mission required a preoccupation with building up community and how vital ensuring the health & safety of people was to rave.

Gaston is a venue owner and musician, a curator of art and extraordinary experience. An enterprising and self-described experience junkie, his prime motivator is to blend entrepreneurial motivation with a lust for the novel and unique. He is not tied to the Happy Hardcore community but does know some of its members and has rented out his space to host their events – although I do not believe these events have been “Happy Hardcore raves.” Events he hosts are not all strictly raves but share a substantial set of core principles and phenomena. He and his business partner have created a core community tied to his space most directly characterized by a blossoming Vapourwave aesthetic.

Marika is not a raver. I intentionally tried to recruit “clubbers” as well in order to provide a contrast that might add a layer of contextualization to the rave experience. Marika is a university student majoring in classical piano, also a visual artist, who spends the school year in

Montreal and her summers and holidays in the tri-cities area where she is from and where she does the majority of her clubbing. She describes going to the club as an activity largely predicated on the opportunity for maintaining engagement with her friends/friend-circle when she returns home from school.

Laura is another predominately clubber but she does skirt the rave scene freely. She is a tri-cities bar and club frequenteur. She works and studies in the communications field and is an abstract artist. She is intimately connected with Gaston's scene and has contributed multiple pieces of artwork and décor for their walls. At the time of our interview she was in discussions with officially taking a share in the venue's operations. She self-identifies as an adamant solipsist, basically looking for a good time outside the pressures of what she considers the "real world" – or of her broader life-context.

Erika is another long-time Toronto-based Happy Hardcore raver of Tal's generation. She has seen her scene peak and, while she was fully immersed in the lifestyle at its heyday, has allowed herself to gradually broaden her focus in proportion to the slowing-down of Happy Hardcore events. She has allowed her interests and social group to replace Happy Hardcore's prominence by connecting her more with the anime convention community and her growing interest in becoming involved in as an independent in fashion serving the blended needs of her overlapping communities.

Emile is younger, in his early twenties, and a very ambitious DJ. He came to raving during the tail-end of Happy Hardcore's period of momentum. He prides himself on having become a versatile performer able to meet the needs of promoters looking for any genre, though his primary scene has become that of J-rave; a crossover between rave and North American *otaku* (fans of Japanese anime and manga) culture. Essentially, they are niche-themed raves.

Musically, it is a genre based on remixing anime theme songs. Emile sees a meaningful and “professionally-viable” future for himself in DJing, with one eye on what he can contribute to rave communities and the other eye turned to what the scene can give him in return.

I favoured asking interview participants a larger set of open-ended questions – all poised to imply through their wording Moustakas’s two-question approach to phenomenological interviews: “What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon?”³⁰³ – that would direct participants’ responses to include details both of the quality of their experiences themselves and details revealing their personal motivations to participate in raving/clubbing. Having avoided to the best of my ability any directly leading initial questions, consistent and interrelated themes nonetheless appear throughout the interview data.

B2. TRANSCRIPTS

B2a. TAL

A: Okay so.... Just to start off, would you mind maybe giving me just a brief sort of general overview or statement of your, ah, kind of, uh.... Participation or relationship with the community, with the activity, with the kind of the general.... –

T: Yeah sure! Absolutely! I’ve been involved as a participant in the rave community since.... 2002, December of ’02. Um, I had begun performing in 2004; and I was throwing my own events 2005 – still do all of those things – and so I’ve been quite heavily involved in the community for many, many years.

³⁰³ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*, 81.

A: Okay, great! So, if you can think of maybe a recent rave you've been to – it could be one you just went to as an organizer, as a performer, or – it doesn't really matter – but if you could maybe just give me a kind of anecdotal account; give me an idea of what the night was like?

T: Sure! Yeah, there was a big one that I played at a few weeks ago at the Opera House, which was actually thrown in collaboration with a group from the UK, called Hardcore Underground; and that was the first one I've done in a while because I've been gone working in politics, which is really where I do more of my work now. I was in the Bernie Sanders campaign for the last five months so I've been gone entirely! A little out of practice.... But I got to play with my long-term partner on this stuff; he's George. He runs Daydream productions and they threw the event with Hardcore Underground. So I got to play there; it was at The Opera House; it was quite a large one for the state of the scene, which Hardcore is *not* as big as it used to be. But, a very enjoyable event and it was a proper Hardcore rave; everyone was decked out with their candy bracelets and all different kinds of Hardcore music, Drum And Bass, umm.... Definitely had that – captured that vibe, which is what we're going for.

A: Can you maybe describe that vibe a little more?

T: Yeah: The appeal of raving for me – at least the one's that I go to and try and create – has always been that welcoming and.... Really energetic and optimistic vibe. The music that we play is called "Happy Hardcore," and one of the features of it that appeals to me is you *really* can't take it too seriously. It's very silly, lots of rainbows and sunshine, and very fast; and that, I find, attracts a certain type of person who's looking just to have a good time. It's tough to be like a serious, macho jerk if you're singing about rainbows. So it lends it self well to the creation of those very welcoming vibe – and on top of that, the promoters who throw those parties tend to reflect that as well, so they put in place things that make it – explicitly – a fun, silly, optimistic

vibe, happy vibe so.... And everyone kind of contributes to that. So one thing that stands out: the costumes are really really ridiculous; they're very very bright so that, as soon as you come inside, you see: I am in a very different place; this is not just a club, its not just a party where I'm just going out, you know. This is something – there's intention here to make this space really fun, really welcoming to people coming in.

A: Okay, great. So, I know you said you've been away for a while –

T: Yeah....

A: Pretty busy?

T: Yeah....

A: So, typically or, on average, how often would you say you're at raves. Maybe break it down for me: Participating, organizing, performing.

T: Oh man! These days a lot less because I've been so focused on this other stuff; I'm leaving again in a month. Typically, before I left, I was doing a bi-weekly series of just small club-nights that weren't really properly raves but to play that kind of music and it did attract some of the same kind of people. There was a time where I was doing raves every weekend, where I was living out of airplanes and flying all over and doing stuff – really living the life. I'm old now!
[laughter]

Now I probably go to just a couple a month and I probably only throw – like I haven't thrown one now in some time – last year I would say I threw, like, 2 or 3 big ones and then.... quite a few smaller ones but by smaller I mean 50 people to 100. And then the big ones, like, 300-400. I don't do the really really big ones anymore. There were times we used to do ones where like 4000 people would come out at Sound Academy and stuff like that. Those days are

long over. Happy Hardcore certainly won't support that anymore, in Toronto. So now it's a more sedate pace.

A: I'm curious; what would the difference – or the most notable difference – be between, I guess, what you would call kind of the more, you know, proper raves versus those club nights you mentioned?

T: Sure. There's a level of effort and thought that goes into creating a particular atmosphere and vibe with the – what I would call a “rave” – where you're looking to setup decorations that really highlight and complement the kinds of costumes you expect people to wear and the outfits people will wear – which, again, are very brightly coloured, lots of those candy bracelets, which are – they're not actually made out of candy; they're plastic beads. People wear them and trade them around; it's a very enjoyable tradition of community bonding as well. You meet someone, you give them your bracelet, something to remember you by. Um.... Designed to encourage that. There'll be a lot more intent behind the themes where as a club night, really, you just go to go there and hangout, play some music. You probably won't even give it a name or a theme. You might.... Something very passive. Whereas, with our raves we would really try and make it interactive. We've done some where you come in and you have different quests to complete; you get little prizes. The prizes were meaningless. They were just for fun. Or we did some, one series that was very very popular was a total request rave. You would actually get to vote on the songs as it plays. So, you get glowsticks and you use glowsticks with different colours to vote on songs.... So really get people involved and participating.

And that's obviously a lot of work, a lot of time. You really wouldn't do that with just a regular club night. You're just bringing a couple DJs down to have fun, have a few drinks. That's one thing; with the rave environment, it's bigger. Also, one thing too: the club nights tend to be

just 19+, whereas the raves we really tried to make 16+, which was the curfew age, plus those kids don't have anywhere to go – certainly nowhere safe to go and party. So, we tried to create a safe – we always had medics, proper security.... Club night, you don't spend the effort to have the medics. They're 19-year-olds, they're just going to have a few beers; it's going to be fine, right? 16-year-olds, you've got to be sure they're safe so you have those precautions.

A: Okay, excellent. So, speaking then, personally, why do you want to perform? Why do you organize events? What's the personal payoff?

T: Okay, well there's two different answers there:

For performing, it's really just a lot of fun. I enjoy it. For a time there was – I was building this network around the world and I was really involved in doing that – I'm a very goal driven person! So, I was enjoying that process. Now, I've pretty much done everything I wanted to do as a DJ; I played all-over, I've done all the big shows I wanted to do, so now it's just really – I still do it; I'm still good at it; so I do it for fun. So that drive is still there. It's just fun to be in front of people, fun doing it. And I also like still being involved and engaged with the scene, to an extent. Sort of keeping an eye on things....

As far as throwing parties.... When we – when George and I – started throwing parties together.... And it was '05 and the big party company in Hardcore at the time was Hullabaloo and they were winding down. And both of us had really had our lives changed by these events and really felt that we wanted that capacity for changing lives to still exist. So we felt we were willing to take on providing that to some extent. And it started out, obviously, had no idea what we were doing, we were just kids throwing a party, no clue. But it really evolved from there and we developed a philosophy of what it should look like, what it should be, how to make it safe, how to make it fun, how to create that vibe and that experience.... And grew quite good at it.

And so it became satisfying to provide that role when no one else really was. There was several – at the time, Hardcore was very very big; so there was a lot of companies doing it and over time they kind of dropped by the wayside. For a while we really were the only ones doing it on a large scale. And now, fortunately, there are more people coming and doing their own events, so.... Seeing more of a renaissance on it now, which is good. So, it gives us a chance to step back a bit and go, okay! We've done this for twelve years; you guys can have at it! [laughs]

A: So then, when you say “changed your life,” how so?

T: I'm a very different person than I was before I started raving, absolutely. I was ah.... I'm originally American; I was in the army. I was quite conservative; I grew up in a very small town, I didn't have many experience with the real world outside of that context. So, um.... By going out to these raves and experiencing very differently people, all different backgrounds, coming together and doing this thing, and their different philosophies and different mindsets, really gave me a new perspective. Really change the way I engage with the world. I would say I'm a much better person now, I think; I'm a lot more considerate of other people, a lot more welcoming to other kinds of people than I was before that. Also, it's given me a lot of skills that I now use. In jobs that I do now a lot of times I draw back on those skill-sets. A lot of organizing people; making sure everyone's taken care of, making sure things are getting done in a timely fashion, but in a way that respects their needs as well, the people that are doing it. Um, which is tough, it's a very fast-paced environment to be dealing in so that's come in very handy as well over the years. So a very positive experience for me.

A: So how old were you when you were introduced to raving?

T: Heh! I'm still trying to track this kid down, actually....

A: That smile sounds like a story.

T: Yeah, I was working at just a call centre in Pennsylvania; I was going to school there, serving the military part-time as a reservist, and one of the guys there – this was the age of Napster, and everyone was just finding new music, and I didn't listen to music hardly at all, of any kind, when I was growing up [unintelligible] so I was just discovering music and talking about it with people – and one of the guys at work was like, hey, let me tell you about this stuff: It's called Happy Hardcore. You gotta hear about it; there's this party where they like check your vibe at the door and they're like so into it! I was like, alright, sounds really cool, played this music for me in his car and.... Like, within a minute into the song I was like No! This is it! I'm listening to this for the rest of my life! That is it! And I was right. I still do it. It just hit me in a way that nothing else did. And so then I was like, you gotta tell me more about this party. It was this Hullabaloo party and so he told me about it, showed me where to find it. And this of course was when the internet was really blowing up too, right? Um, early 2000s, so, uh, I was able to track it down online, use forums. And, uh, one day just told my friend who I'd been partying with – and I was partying with a lot of frat parties, stuff like that. So the Penn state party stuff – umm, and then one night.... You wanna go to a rave? Yeah! It's in Toronto, you wanna go? He was just like, screw it! Let's go! So we went and had the same kind of experience; we went in there and like.... The DJ I had gone to see came on, was playing these songs I recognized. Was like, yep, this is it! I want to do this. Absolutely. Just everything was perfect. I met all these people, and I was, I mean, just getting over, I was very shy right, just starting getting over that from meeting people in college and that *really* accelerated that. I became really personal a really interested in meeting people. Very unlike I had been, and I liked it. I enjoyed it so I just kept doing it. I started going every-other month to all the Hullabaloo and then I started going regularly.... Before I knew, I was going every weekend to Toronto. Now I live here....

A: Cut down on travel....

T: For sure! Spend 5 hours on the bus. I started taking the bus because I couldn't just talk people into driving all the time, so.... I started taking the bus: 5 hours on the bus there, 5 hours on the bus back, every weekend.

A: Wow.

T: Yep.

A: So, what was it about the music, when you first heard it, that hooked you so instantly?

T: Um, so, I really liked – the song was called, “All That You See And Hear,” I really liked the vocals, very like she *really* means it; you can tell. I like that enthusiasm, that meaning the vocalist had. And then, um, the octave changes and the intensity of it; it's very fast-paced and energetic and I'm a pretty fast-paced person, um, it *really* resonated with me. This is music that is going – it's 180Bpm, it's really driving along, solid kick drum, there's, you know, just carrying you forward – I really enjoyed that.

A: Okay, cool. And, then, to take you back to one of the things you said, you mentioned you and your friend were developing your philosophy throwing these parties; could you lay out your philosophy for me?

T: Yeah, we found that the people that were coming to these parties were coming for the same sort of reasons we were. They were looking for a place that was fun, um, you know, no pressure on you to conform to things. There is a – people do tend to wear this particular outfit or costume but people who don't wear it – it's fine, you don't get ostracized for it at all; there's no uniform.

And we were getting a lot of people who had nowhere else to go. These were younger kids who otherwise would be like lying to their parents going – you know, I'm going to stay over at my friend's house – and then going to the alleys or something and drinking out there. Or these

were kids who couldn't go to like the cool hip places because they would be laughed at. So – and they were all coming and having this great time, ah, listening to this music that we really loved. So it became integral to the experience to make it a place where people could come and be welcome, and we're *welcoming*, we're contributing to that vibe. So, not just that we would be welcoming but that the people who came would welcome other people and that became a whole part of that group trying to create. It comes down to signaling, right? We're going to signal with our events, this is a friendly warm place, let people know there's P.L.U. R., which is Peace, Love, Unity, and Respect, - that's kind of the watchword of the scene – when we put that on our flyers it let people know we were embracing that. Um, we would make sure that we had, you know, medics who were there who were visible, who people knew were there, who were safe, who you could go to, who you weren't just gonna go and then get arrested if they were doing drugs or something like that or maybe that they felt they shouldn't be doing. Well, okay, but we're going to make sure that they're doing it safely. There's a group called T.R.I.P. – which is Toronto Raver Information Project – they do harm-reduction; we'd always have them there, make sure people had information that was reliable and safe and um.... And the music as well is very geared towards that fun experience and that low-pressure, just kind of, come on in! Have a good time! So it was really important to us to create that kind of space. That philosophy was, make it safe, make it welcoming, make it fun, you know?

A: Okay, awesome! So, everything I hear from everybody, especially from what you're telling me, is that it's all about the interaction with the crowd and everyone there is super-important, kind of the paramount thing. So, in your experiences can you describe how you engage with or interact with everybody there?

T: As a....?

A: As a... I guess, maybe, how does it change depending on what your role is?

T: Sure, okay! Um, so as a promoter, typically I'm the first person they see. I'm taking their tickets, welcoming them in, and that engagement sets the tone for the night when people are coming in, making them feel welcome, if they want a hug, let them know what's going on – here's the theme! Here's what we're doing tonight! – Um, just making them feel like they've been invited in. So, then, if I'm not at the door, once the big rush is over at the beginning and I'm off doing other things, we always hand out fruit, candy, and stuff, just so people have food, you know they're getting energy – because they're there for 8 hours sometimes, right? They don't eat because they're busy dancing, or they're high, or whatever it is – they typically don't eat – so we bring them food, um, make sure they have water. Make sure their basic needs are taken care of, um, and even if they don't necessarily want the food so much, they'll have one grape, whatever, it's still – that presentation's important that like, oh the people here are looking out for me, um, we encourage people who are there to look out for each other. Um, you know, if someone's taking a break, sitting on the floor, you know, it's very common practice to go over say, hey! How you doing? Great! Cool! – and often they *are* fine; they're usually fine. But you always – that check-in culture is important. Um, so you're setting that tone as well.

When you're on stage and you're performing you're still contributing to that. I'll often MC the sets as well, so, I'll get up there and engage the crowd, make sure they're – let the know what were' doing, say, hey, are you having a good time? Making noise, having fun.... But not to the detractor of the music. Just a couple check-ins here and there, maybe a bit of performing and that, and uh.... Just try and include people, particularly people who are not feeling included. You know? People who want to dance with glowsticks, you know, make sure they *have* glowsticks.... So they can do that. Just take care of their needs and make them feel like they're

part of it. And then they *do* contribute – that’s the thing: once they feel like they can contribute, people do. That *makes* that happen, makes that vibe happen

A: Great. So, between.... I guess, between other DJs and organizers, what’s the community there like? Could you characterize that for me?

T: Yeah, like, internal to the back-end of the scene, I guess?

A: Yeah.

T: Yeah sure, so, we’re actually quite fortunate, in Toronto; the scene has been very connected, um, and very considerate of one another. People check-in on dates, share DJs, work together, um, collaborate, *very* readily, which, for many years, I just assumed was the way raving would be, but it turns out, you go to other cities you see, oh, other promoters hate each other, they’re very competitive – not every city, but.... – some cities are like that.

A: So not a given?

T: Not a given. Particularly, if you look at scenes.... If you look at the UK, there’s just a lot of money to it in those scenes just because club culture is *so* big. And so.... There’s a bit of drama that occurs. And that’s just natural also, people are doing this thing that matters a lot to them, there’s conflict. Um, I think part of it reflects the priority that we put on that philosophy, made that a fundamental part of what we consider raving. So, that rave culture is a bit divorced from the wider club culture. There is a bit of that underground “we have our own thing going.” And within that scene is very very collaborative, and I’m quite proud of that, quite fortunate of that. So it’s made it enduring and it’s made it very welcoming for people to promote and do – even if they’re not great at it – that’s okay! They’re trying. We can then work with them, try to show them how to do things better and give them advice. But not everyone can afford to do a large-scale show. Not everyone can put in the time and the effort. Not everyone has the skillset to do

everything the way that *I* would have done it. You know, I've been doing it for 12 years, sure. I know a lot about it. Not everyone is going to have all that. Right off the bat, absolutely not! I didn't know what I was doing when I started; I was terrible at it! And that's okay! That's how you learn. So really try and foster that collaborative spirit – and I think, by and large, we've succeeded. There's promoters who do work on the smaller shows and have their own thing going. Have worked together when we were doing things and there was a much larger scene. We fit in with them too and everyone got along quite well, wasn't a lot of that tension. Sometimes things will come up. Typically, we're fine. So I think we're fortunate.

A: I'm trying to figure out how to phrase my question. Curious about something you said. I guess maybe the tendency around here to be collaborative and have it not really matter in terms of scale vs. the example with the UK where it's kind of.... It's almost a Big Industry in a certain way. Does the nature of the business end of it change things? Like, is it more.... Is it easier to be more collaborative because it's less of a viable industry?

T: Yeah, probably. Um, I think partly because, the people who will then come to do these things will not be there to make a buck – which is a different mindset. What's drawn them to it is going to be that vibe and that atmosphere, because that's the only thing we have! So that's what's drawn them to it, so that's what you get. Um, and ah, there's some coaching; people follow the lead of those who are in the scene already. Certainly I've modeled *this*, George and I, when we started, modeled on you know the Hullabaloo vibe we got out of it – obviously filtered through our perception. I don't really know what they were going for; it's how we experienced it. So that's what we created. So people who come in *then* probably model some of what they're doing on what *we're* doing and what other people who have been doing events do. And we're very explicit about what we're doing; we tell people, we're very interested in communicating with

people: *This* is the goal, we take this seriously, we want to make it you know fun and safe, um, this is how we do it, and what we want to help *you*, so.... They have a very clear set of outlines of what *we* expect and what we want to do, so that attracts people who want to do a similar thing, uh, to work together and be a part of this scene.

A: So are you and George still collaborating?

T: Yeah, we still work together. Um, we both of us don't do as much, generally, we're both just busier with other things now. But we still do things together – we played together at that party that I was telling you about earlier, we still do things together.... So, yep, we still do things together! Still very close.

A: Okay, very good. Um.... So, the, ah – I am an ethnomusicologist, so I'm kind of interested in some of the musical facets as well as the big social groups – so, ah, in terms of, as a DJ, could you maybe just break down your process for me?

T: Yeah. Yeah! Absolutely. Um, so, as a DJ, um, there's a lot of ways to approach DJing; it's an interesting art. And the approach that I took early on was to prioritize it as an entertainer more so than as a musician. I have no musical background, I really *loved* the music. I have no experience with musical theory, any of that stuff. I couldn't explain to you *why* a song is good, you know, type of thing. I couldn't tell you it's in this key or any of that. I *know* when they sound good together, um.... My approach has been to deliver a show, so what I look for is, um, I look for music that *I* really enjoy, because that passion is a really big part of that; if I'm really into it, it's going to help the crowd groove to it. So that's step one. And then I look for songs, ah, that match the mood of the crowd – and what I *do* have experience with and what I am very involved with is people. Ah, and so I'm very engaged with the crowd and reading the crowd. I started out as an MC, so I'd be rhyming and hyping the crowd and that stuff. That' was my in to performing so I

brought that mindset to DJing as well – looking for music that will get the crowd excited, pump up the show.... Because I play sets that are designed to be really excitable and be.... Peak energy, right? Because a rave is going to be.... It's not gonna be full-tilt all the time. During the beginning parts we usually start with, like, a really cheesy Happy Hardcore set the first night – the first part of the night, because that's – the *really* eager people get there first; that's what they want to hear. And then the next set will be our slowest set of the night. You know, Electro or Break or something like that because the 10:00 crowd is the people who are like a little older, they're just coming out; they're going to filter in around 10:00-11:00, right? 11:00, we start to build the energy, just build it up until it peaks at like 1:00 or 2:00 and then the last set will be a little slower to kind of send people out, you know, like a Trance set or maybe an Anthem set, so we'll.... Send them off. So there's a flow to the night and a set has to play into that and I typically play one of those peak-energy sets. [unintelligible – I play music according?] I started out really focusing on that – and you want to play songs that fit the mood of the crowd and also, you can play songs that they didn't *know* they wanted to hear, but they want to hear it. So, it's easy to play the big anthems, it's easy to play the songs everyone knows.... You want to play that songs that.... Stay in that groove, ah, but aren't those songs. And that's giving people new experiences and new music so it creates a uniqueness a set. And then after a while of doing that I started getting more involved in the actual art of DJing itself, so I started doing some tricks and like playing on four turntables at ones and some more advanced stuff. Um, and, although I really enjoyed that, and although it really delivered an interesting show, and that's something, you know, not many people can do, or were doing at least, um.... I found that.... By and large it was less satisfying to me because the DJs in the crowd would be blown away: Wow! I cannot believe he's doing that! There's four decks going at once! There' so much going on here! Right? Um....

People who were just generally there to party just thought it was a really cool song. Ah, who would ask, oh, where did you get that remix? It wasn't a remix – I was playing three songs at once! Right? Um, and it sounded *good*; that's really hard to do. Um, so.... Although that's really satisfying and fun in its own way, I really prefer the performance aspect of it and keeping people entertained to the technical aspect and I was spending so much focus and effort on doing these elaborate tricks and stuff that I wasn't as engaged and involved. So, it was really impressing the DJs – the ten of them that were among the crowd – and everyone else was just, not really any better than playing songs I really wanted to hear and rockin' out. So, nowadays, I typically just focus on that again. I can still do the hard cool stuff but I'm back to just rockin' out, having a good time.

A: Just playing the songs that people need to hear....

T: Yeah, exactly, yup!

A: I think you've more or less touched on this in a couple answers but if there was anything specific you wanted to maybe mention on your personal relationship to the music when you're performing or when you're a member of the audience....

T: Okay, yeah. Um, I.... I've a lot of memories associated with the music now. A lot of very positive memories. It's really the.... Direction my life has taken has been a drastic change because of it, uh, so I still get *really* excited about it. I don't typically listen to it, just to listen to it. Um.... The times I listen to the music are typically the times that I'm playing because that.... Experience is a lot of fun to me, that's a big part of it to me, is being involved in doing it *with* people and listening to it *at* show, or playing it at a show is really where I experience it. And it's all packaged in for me. So, it's not just the music that does it, it's that experience part of it.

A: Okay. If you were just listening to music, what would you be listening to? Like, in the car....

T: The same stuff but I just.... Don't drive so I don't do it. I work at home; I'm working – I can't listen to this music and work because I'll just focus on music, so I don't typically do it.... And I work a lot because I like working. And then, when I'm commuting on the subway, I'm usually reading – or working: writing. On car rides if people want to listen to music, I'll suggest this music, for sure, and then listen there. But, there's just not a lot of opportunity *outside* of a rave for me to hear it so I don't.

A: Okay.

T: Yep.

A: [hums] So then, on a.... in terms of your performance style, would you say that what you're doing – or, I guess, which, because you mentioned t-two different phases, I guess, what would be more representative, or is there, I guess, a *norm*?

T: Yeah.... There is a norm – and it's changing; it always changes. But, ah.... You're gonna find.... When people first start DJing, they're very focused on getting it right – which is reasonable, I mean it makes sense, right? That's what you've gotta do – but there's a lot of technical elements to it you've got to master before you can really get super-creative.... Because it's too hard to *do* anything when you're still trying to figure out how to beat-match.

Laptops have made that a lot easier for people, which is good, I think, because now – it took me *years* to master DJing, to get beat-matching (getting them lined at the same speed). To do it by ear, when you're listening to records, you've got to physical move the record with your hands to get it to the right place and then to slow it down with your fingertips or speed it up while listening to both at once.... It's not easy.

A: Pretty complicated!

T: Pretty complicated, yeah.... It definitely takes – it’s a distinctive skill that you don’t just have initially, so it takes work. Now, you just hit a button and it’s all synched up! Which is great because that part, um.... There was a mark of DJing, like, oh, I can beat-match! Like getting your black-belt, like, I’ve got the basics mastered; I know how to do this now. But that’s really just the start of it. Um.... Once you’ve mastered those basics of beat-matching and lining up the phrases and having – and knowing how the songs sound good together.... Now you get to really be creative with it. And that’s the phase where DJs kind of decide on the direction of their career. If they’re really going to go out and make a name for themselves, they’ve really got to sort of set their style and really start to define themselves and be creative. And there’s lots of different ways to do that. There’s basically unlimited ways to do that, so I think it’s really nice that, now, you can just skip the hard parts and go *right* to that part. It’s good. I don’t know how to do that! I don’t know how to use the laptop ones but it looks much easier and that’s good. So that’s good: embrace that creative part. Um, so I’ve forgotten the question, sorry. Where was I going with this?

A: I was just wondering if....

T: Oh! The Norms!

A: The norms.

T: Yeah, so um from there there’s um you really do have to be able to get a handle on the crowd. There are some DJ’s who are just *so focused* on doing it technically perfectly, they never really read the crowd – and in some cases, that’s okay. There are some people that are there for that. There are people who are you know [unintelligible: crazed, entrained, entranced, trained?]] by this, who just want to see this flawless set, absolutely involved, and just super into *that* performance part of it where there not doing like all over, doing all this, some of that – some

people are just so focused. Some people want to see that. So, you've got to find the crowd, the music that suits *your* personality, suits what you want to do. But, by and large, you are going to be expected to contribute to the community, to be a part of it, to see you out at other shows, maybe that you're not playing at. Um, and, you have to be involved with people. Um, and, musically you've gotta be – you've got to play to your slot and so.... If you're playing at 9:00, 10:00, you probably don't want to be throwing out these top-ten bangers you know that are high – high on the..... that are you know top ten right now. Particularly if that person who made the song is playing later. Don't want to do *that!* That's a big one.

A: That's a bit of a toe-step.

T: Yep. So, ah, it's like that: respecting your slot, being able to deliver consistently and things....

A: Sorry?

T: Being able to deliver consistently. If you're booked for a set, they expect you to play your set to suit the crowd. So, yeah, so, being aware of those things; being aware of the community, being aware of what you're doing with your set, ah, and the vibe of the night – maybe the night has a theme musically. Play to the theme. Just communicate.

A: Alright. Great. So – drugs and alcohol have a big association with the scene.

T: Sure.

A: So.... Do you – has that at any point be kind of a major part of your experience?

T: Yeah, yeah sure, absolutely: When I first started going out I was taking ecstasy when I had not really taken *any* drugs previous to that point in time. So that was a new experience, certainly.

A: [unintelligible: sure is? An experience?]

T: Yeah! So, that definitely contributed to the vibe of the experience, for sure. The nature of the drug is such that it fits that environment. Um, ah.... I have long been a pretty big drinker. I don't

drink anymore but I did for many, many years. It was – I like the taste of beer, I enjoy the experience of being drunk – that was part of it, for sure. Um, my relationship to drugs and alcohol in the rave context *changed* when I started throwing the big parties because now I was responsibly for a lot of things and I found, typically, I would be largely sober for the event and then at the end, and at the afterparty, I would start to do drugs or take alcohol. Um, but during the event, you'll have a couple beers, but, I couldn't really – can't be all off your rocker when you're throwing a big party right?!

A: You've got things to do....

T: You got things to do, right! So, yeah, certainly part of the experience – and I think, ah.... It's been part of the experience for lots of artists and D's [I think that's what he said?] and it's important to me to understand where they're coming from. So, I'm glad I can relate on that level with them. Um.... To their experiences because I know what they're going through, what they're experiencing. So, uh that's why T.R.I.P.'s super-so important. I'm a big advocate for T.R.I.P. because that – people – like, I remember when I first came out and I didn't know what was going on! It was really nice to know there are experts, so-to-speak, subject matter experts who are there who, ah, can explain things. So if I'm like, I don't know, Oooh, this feels weird – I don't know what this means! No, it's fine, right? – and they *know* what they're talking about and they have equipment and information too.

A: And so, beyond the fact that it feels really nice, what, ah, you know, is there any.... Let me rephrase that: What is – beyond just feeling really, really nice – what would you think is the contribution, then, of alcohol and drugs.

T: Oh, well! I mean, it's a – like I was saying earlier, I was quite shy; it *certainly* helped me to open up to people I don't – strangers I've never met. I was in a strange country, Canada!

A: Right!

T:I was with one person that I knew; we drove up there and now there's all these people I've never seen; it's a very different environment; I've never seen this. Um.... And it felt perfectly comfortable, perfectly at home, and *confident* that [laughs] – The drugs help with that! Because I was not that kind of outgoing person at the time – or, at least, not until I got over the inhibitions of *how do I feel about people?* And so on. And it really helped me reset my default to being open to people, to – because that's how you feel in that context.

A: Right.

T: Um.... Alcohol, too, I guess is going to lower your inhibitions and I think that's why it's ah.... So Common, right? It's a such a huge part of human culture.

A: The old “social lubricant,” yes.

T: Exactly, yeah! And people *are*, um, naturally have a few barriers – and does lower them. Um, obviously that *can* go too far. Ah, so you have to moderate that – alcohol in particular, I think, it's easy to go too far. But.... With ecstasy, for example, it's-it's-it's *almost* custom-made for that experience of being, uh, being companionable, being open with people, and I-um-I was just *not* like that by nature. But I feel much more comfortable with myself now, um, and much more comfortable in so many different situations because of that. Because now, um, I have those experiences to draw on no matter what; no matter where I am or what I'm doing. So it's a huge improvement, I feel, for me – to go through that to have that experience and I think.... I don't know how it would have gone *without* drugs and alcohol, ah, but certainly they *were* there and they did help. Yeah.

A: Yeah.... Okay. And ever – ever when performing as a – as a DJ?

T: Sorry?

A: I said, would you –

T: W-While performing? Oh, yeah! For sure, [laughs] sorry.

A: Hold on a second.... [coughing fit]

[T laughs]

A: Choking on my own spit....

[T continues to laugh as A finishes coughing it out]

A: Sorry.

[both are chuckling]

T: Yeah, sure!

A: Okay, go ahead.

T: Yeah, absolutely. Sure. Um.... Yeah, and most of us were *certainly* drinking, um, often drugs – some drugs. You couldn't do any ketamine while you're spinning.

A: [laughing] Yeah, I imagine not!

T: You're not going to work. Or acid, you know.... No thanks. Um, but ecstasy, sure; speed, sometimes; drinking, almost all the time. Yeah, quite common; big part of the culture. To the point now where it's – like, I go and people are *shocked*. They don't even ask: Oh, no, here's a beer. I'm like, I don't drink. OOUUOGGHH! What do I do with this? Right? So....

A: Or one of my favourites: OH MY GOD I'M SO SORRY!

T: Yeah! People do, yeah, yeah, for sure. Um.... [laughs] So certainly, it's quite, quite common for DJs to be performing that – not-not the big shows. I'll have a couple drinks at a big show but like – when I played in Spain, I was pretty sober! I wanted to do that right, you know? The first time, for sure. But.... But yeah, party in Toronto where I've done a million times.... [claps hands] sometimes I get pretty plastered [laughs blushing] you know....

A: We're all friends here.

T: Yeah. – And, you know, like, the skills have become so engrained that.... It's not gonna be my *best* set but it's gonna be fine, by and large. So – there are some *great* sets that I don't even remember. [laughs] So.... I don't, like, now I *like* to, you know, *not* do that but [laughs]certainly, that was the case for awhile.

A: Of course, of course.... I guess – so, how does one go from, you know, taking trips up to Toronto to, you know, being in a position where you *can* be playing shows in Spain and.... *Europe*.

T: Um.... It's a – It's a process.... There's a lot of skills to it besides DJing. There are some *very* good DJs in Toronto. For Hardcore, there are DJs that are better than me who have not had the opportunity to play in all these other places. Part of it is just networking.... Um, because I was throwing shows, I was bringing out the top DJs in the scene, they were seeing me play here, um, so I was able to go out and pitch *me* playing *there* to them. Often and they would take me up on it. Also, um, I would be willing to just *go* and go *to* parties I was not playing at in Arizona, or Seattle, and then become connected with the scenes there, because I was *so* – because that's what I was doing with my life at that time, right? The 20s were my rave years, that's what I did, um, and I did it.... as much as you could do it, probably, so, and then ultimately I was able to get the opportunity to go play in these places. And art of it was, I was a *very* good DJ. Like, I was doing things that were distinctive, you know other DJs were not doing, I was very good, but definitely part of it was that networking, I was very.... At ease with people and connecting and the throwing shows, and the building those connections.... And so that's going to be a fundamental skill in any industry really. So, if you want to reach that-those top levels – because, really, I'm not a producer. Typically, I don't make music. I've made a few songs, um, with other people

but that's not really where my skill-set lies – and typically, to be in the A-list, you've gotta do that; that's how people – *that's* how people know you and decide to book you. Like, I would know the song and book you to play the song.

A: Right....

T:and I wasn't doing that so it was I *really* down to the personal connections and, uh, and being an outstanding DJ, uh, and then setting myself apart that way. So, um, yeah – and then so – and being *creative* with my shows and having the Total Request Rave and having these *really* different and these unique experiences – that was that way that I set myself out, right? Because I could bring out an act.

A: Right. Well, very well-done.

T: Thanks! [laughs]

A: So, what.... I don't know if you want to maybe give me criteria, but, what I guess are some of the key areas that would determine the outcome of a night for you? Like, what would make it a very good night, or a bad night, or a somehow unusual or exceptional night?

T: Sure. Um, I mean.... For.... You know, bad nights are nights where.... No one comes – that happens sometimes, right? And obviously you lose money but the people who *do* come, there's very few of them, it's hard, you don't get that, that vibe that connects you just because there's not enough people to fill the space. So, that's a tough night. If someone gets very sick or hurt – fortunately very, very rare; never had a serious injury at our events, which is good – um, that's always tough. So, ah, if you're doing a renegade and the cops come, that's not good – although I will say, the Toronto police have always been very, very thoughtful; I've had very good experiences with them. Now, obviously, I'm a white dude, I'm lucky. Cops usually just assume I'm doing something okay. I recognize that. But they have come and seen us doing these raves,

like, under bridges and stuff and been like, well.... You know, looks like you're doing this safely, you know, let's pack it in in an hour, which is fine.

A: So when you say "renegade," you mean, like, an illegal or an unlicensed?

T: Yeah, an underground or unlicensed – you know, under a bridge, or on a beach where you didn't necessarily get a permit to set up, you know.... an old warehouse, parking garage – done that! [laughs] So something like that. A good night, you know, by and large, they're all good nights. It's a good thing, they're always of fun. Particularly good are the nights where, um, you've really done something special, people are going to get into it. We always want to create a situation that presents people with the opportunity to have the best night of their lives, right? They don't always do it, but we always want that potential to be there. That's the goal that we have, right? We want this – that – that's – because that's been some of the best nights of *our* lives, have been places like that. So, um.... If-if you get someone at the end saying, this was the best night of my life, or they really just can't stop talking about it, like, it's really gratifying, really enjoyable. Or the connections people make: I love seeing, you know, couples that have been together for eight years and they met at one of our parties. I love that, you know? So there's a lot of really warm feelings that come out of it and that's a really good night for us.

A: Okay. So, in the lead-up to a rave, can you maybe describe your state of mind or just kind of generally how you are feeling?

T: [laughs] Frantic.

A: Frantic?

T: Yeah. There's a lot goin' on: We have a team called The Dreambuilders that does the deco and they're always, like, they're usually at my place putting stuff together, building things. Um, and then I'm usually organizing – like, if there's flights, I've got to make sure the DJs are picked

up and have places to stay, whether they're staying with – by now, a lot of these DJs who are the international talent are our friends as well who are coming from so long, so they just stay with us instead of hotels. Um, but we've still got to organize that so I've got them all over the city at my friends' houses. Um, and the last burst of promotion. Ticket sales, man, ravers are just *terrible* at buying tickets in advance! So, ticket sales are really driven by, like, the day before [chuckle] and the day of the party; that's when all the tickets get sold. So, you're really pushing those last couple days, like, hey! this is it, they're out there, here's where you can get the tickets, you can come to me; so I'm meeting people to give them tickets directly or nowadays everything is online. Um, if I have, um, like a theme to it where there's interactive elements, I have to make sure I'm ready for that. So I have a list drawn up for what I need to do, checklists so everyone knows their roles – so very frantic! The goal is to be very frantic during the lead-up so that at the event you're just chillin', you're just doin' what you need to do and it's automatic. The more systematic you can make it, the better off you are because during the event you're not going to have time to deal with anything, right? So you already have to make it as pre-dealt-with as possible. So, yep! A lot of frantic – which I really enjoy; it feels really productive, it feels to be in a state of like constant motion and doing things – that's like my preferred state of being – so I like that.

A: Kind of find your rhythm?

T: Yeah, I enjoy that.

A: What about afterwards? So, I guess, immediately after and then maybe the morning after.

T: Sure. I guess immediately afterwards is that – that's when *I* get to party, so.... Um, everyone breaks down. Thing is, raves go until 3:00 or 4:00 usually now – they used to go to 6:00 or even to 8:00 – I'm too old for that, honestly, now! [laughs] But, uh, they go until 3:00 or 4:00,

sometimes only 'till 2:00, and people want to keep going. Especially on a Friday night, people have all weekend, so they go to afterparties, um, and that's really where I'll start to hang-out and party and if I'm going to do drugs or drink, that's where I'll do it. Um, typically my role is done and, uh, and if it's a rave where I'm not performing or I'm not helping out, typically if I go I'm going to help out anyway if I get – I'm not that into just partying anymore, um, so I feel less involved if I'm not doing something to contribute to it. So, not as involved that way. So, if I'm just going to party, then I'll do it afterwards, directly afterwards. Um, and that's more comfortable for me; I'm a little older, just like to sit and hang-out, talk, uh, there's people I've hung out with for like ten years. And if there's new people, I like meeting new people still too and that's a good opportunity to do it; don't have to shout over the music. So that's fun – and that's directly afterwards – and then, you know, after that there's usually a day of recovering, just relaxing and sleeping, um, eating a lot. You just don't have time, like, usually during I'll just have somebody bring me like a falafel on the way but I don't have time to eat or drink properly while I'm there usually so it's a day of recovery. And then the day afterwards you want to post the sets, if they were recorded, so people can share them and you know reengage with it; you want to let them know when the next one is so you promote. I don't do a lot of that anymore because I'm very casual about it now, I'm not as involved in building this thing. It's really just whenever I feel like it I throw a party, if I don't.... you know, before there was a system to it, I'd make sure I was promoting the next one, make sure I have tickets ready to go as soon as possible. You don't always do it in time but you try to do – that's the ideal – afterwards.

A: Right. So, why the shift when you're going to a party from, you know, when you're just going to a party versus being more I guess compelled to help run things?

T: Partly, it's that the parties.... Um, I have put a lot of time and effort into building this idea of what an ideal party is, uh, and I create that then. Other people have different visions of what an ideal party is, so they're not going to do the same thing. But I can regularly experience my own ideal party so other ones aren't as appealing. Well, I could just do this *my* way so going to another one is less appealing – not because it's worse, just that it's built to what *they* want, right? Um, so that's less appealing. Also, I'm, like I said, very goal-driven, um, and if I'm just there to party.... Like, that's not really my goal anymore. So, before I would go just to party but I wanted to hear new music, I wanted to learn new DJing, I wanted to meet new people. Uh, now I've done all those things. It's pretty unlikely any of the DJs are going to know more than me about DJing.... Uh, or know different things. If they do, it's probably going to be about laptop stuff and I'm not interested in learning that. I'm 34, I'm not going to learn a whole new way of DJing now. Um, so, most of those things aren't available to me at other parties now so if I'm not contributing in ways that I'm familiar with, it doesn't hold a lot of appeal to me. Again, not because it's a worse party, it's just a different phase of my life; I have different goals. That's all. And, ah, I don't hear a lot of new music because a lot of new music doesn't appeal all that much – I have a particular sound that I like.

A: Alright, well.... So, I guess, this would probably be less-so the state before, more casual, um, but maybe, let's say in the hey-day of your rave days – now that's a sentence! – [T laughs]can you recall if you would have noticed, I guess, a difference in your general mood or state between parties?

T: Yeah sure! I mean, I started in December of '02 and I.... *very* vividly remember December of '03 being a *really* good year. I remember I was really excited, there was a rave every two or three months to go to and I was *so* into anticipate each one, like I sup- so I would just go and do

this incredible thing and then I would go back to Pennsylvania and I... everything would be, I can't wait to do that again! I would be – I would make a t-shirt, you know, draw a shirt; I would listen to music to get ready, and I would, um, make CDs and find music on Napster.... Uh, I would all these things to get ready for it and that was what was driving me and I would try and get involved. Um.... Super-super into that so I was very excited between them. Um, as it got more regular I just didn't have the time to do that. Um, so, as much but you know, I was still quite anticipated, um, and then I was also making these connections with people who I was really excited to meet them and to know them. So, um, um, when I – when I went from Pennsylvania and I moved to Rochester, I moved in with a friend from high school – we were in the army together, as well – he got called up to military duty so I had no one to live with. So I ended up moving in with some ravers and so I got to know them outside of the rave as well. And that was really great and that made me really excited about building up that community and being a part of that community. Um, in a more, you know, more enduring way. Um.... So, yeah, typically between times a lot of excitement, energy, planning and then when it became basically what I was *doing*, I finished school and I was done in the army and I was really.... Raving was the thing I was doing. So I was really focused on doing that. Lots of practicing. Man! They must have hated – I had, like, twenty records at the time – they heard them every day, my roommates at the time, *every day*! They must have hated it. Uh, so lots of practicing and lots of, you know, very driven to dive in, to get more involved, more involved – so lots of planning on that. My free time, like, I'd be planning – when I was working, I'd be working on my job but I'd also be thinking about, well, I could plan this party, I could book these DJs, I could have this theme, and think about some cool creative theme, so.... Very involved in a fill my thoughts are still there. So, yeah, very motivated about it, very driven about it.

A: Very good.

T: Yeah.

A: I forgot to ask you earlier when we were talking about it, but, ah, what is your technical setup for when you're DJing?

T: Now I'll typically.... I'll have, uh, two-to-four CDJs – Pioneer CDJs, preferably – um, with USB readers so I can play off of USB; I have USB on me at all times! [produces keychain with a USB stick on it] and then, so, be ready, you never know.... Easier then when you used to have to carry records around; used to lug those things around, aw man! Um.... And then sometimes two Technic-1200 turntables, for records. Uh, which I still have probably like a thousand records. Uh, and then.... Um, a mixer – also Pioneer, preferably – a DJM-800 or 900, ah, which connects it all; that's very [new or key] to it. Um.... Yeah.

A: Alright. And then the, um.... The tracks you are using –

T: Mhmmn.

A: So, are they mostly, kind of, I guess, you know, specifically songs written within-genre or do you do – is there much sampling from other genres at all?

T: There is sampling from other genres; it depends on the set that I'm making. Um, typically, like, if I just going to go and do a show, just like [unintelligible] people, they've already seen my play Happy Hardcore, I'll just play Happy Hardcore. Um, and then I'll throw other genres in; Drum & Bass, um, some DJs do a lot of that. DJ San[SAMMS????] – who's a friend of mine. He lives in Toronto – and he's all-over-the-place. He does lots and lots of genres. And I've done sets where I do lots of genre-hopping.... I also play other things sometimes now, where I'll play like little gatherings or other kinds of shows where I'm playing Electro, or Drum&Bass, or Breaks or slower stuff, House.... Just to play a different audience, so.... I'll play a show of something like

that. But, typically, I'm, like I'm really into the Happy Hardcore movement when I go out and DJ so... I play mostly that stuff.

There's a lot of variety within that, too. There's a lot of different subsets of very different, um, vibes that you create or contribute to based on the music you choose; there's some that's really really hard and driving, there's some that's fluffy, some that's euphoric and trancy, so it's a lot of variety within.

A: Okay, cool. Thanks. Um... So – and I'm probably at the point where you've already kind of answered me throughout the other questions, but to just get things in more concise forms of answers, I guess – could you explain to me the benefits you have seen from clubbing? For, I guess, yourself and for your community?

T: Yeah! I think, um, I think that there is ah probably the most important thing that I can do as a person to make the world better is to contribute to strong communities and to help build strong communities. Ah, and we have done our part to do this, I think, in this context – with a group of people who don't have a lot of places to go for a strong community. Um, a lot of these kids... Let's face it, if you're sixteen and you're out at four in the morning on the weekend, your parents are probably not keeping close eye on you, right? So there's a lot of different places you could wind up doing things, right? Dauum... Most of them don't provide a particularly strong sense of community. Um, and sometimes they do but in a negative way. I think it's really important to build those communities and be a part of that and I'm pretty proud of what we've done to do that – and I think that we have done that. And I actually worry a bit now that we're kind of winding down because I know there are people who *need* support – particularly if they're in drugs or involved with – if they're street involved – they really need support... and it's nice to have a place where you can go and find people who will support you. Ah, it's really important... And I

think it's an important role for society to fill as well. I'm glad that we fill that part; I don't know if Toronto does a great job of that, particularly now that – the problem we're running into now is that – and the scene is running into now – is that Toronto is boom, right? And you're just not going to find a place that is going to want a bunch of kids partying for a couple-hundred dollars – which you could.... When things are falling apart. Find a club that's decaying, entertainment is dying; they want *anything*; they're happy to have kids there; they're happy to have anything because, hey, it's *something*. Um, now, its-its-there's condos everywhere, upscale everything; there's no place for these people, there's not place for *us* to do this. So, what you get is, you drive it underground further so it *is* all the illegal stuff, uh, or you break it up entirely so these kids are just.... Loose. And they don't have a network or community; it's very loose. Um, so.... We're filling that roll; I think it was really positive thing – certainly positive for me. I feel better about my role in the world when I'm contributing in a way that makes it a little bit better – that's important to me. Uh, and so this was a concrete way to do it – while still having fun, right? And a lot of the work I do now is structured along the same lines. Different areas, um, and I worry about the community, that's why I stay involved; because I think that they need that glue, they need that kind of event to kind of hold it together. And it's just becoming increasingly difficult to have that because Toronto doesn't support it as well as it used to.

A: Right. And then so for you personally then too, having that community was one of the big things?

T: Yeah, it was helpful to me, um, both as a participant, where I had a place to go where I felt I was at home, where I really opened up and developed as a person, and also to feel like I'm contributing to it; I really feel like I – that drives me a lot and I really enjoyed the opportunity to do that. So really positive for me in that regard.

A: Yeah, okay. On the other hand, are there any downsides?

T: Yeah, sure. Certainly I have.... Uh.... Been in situations where I have, ah, failed to contribute. I know one of that worst – like, that’s a-that is an environment that is very trusting and very opening, very welcoming, and unfortunately that does attract people who are predators too sometimes, right? And we’ve experience that and ah and I know that’s a.... because the default is to be trusting.... You don’t want to believe that it’s the case and so things go on too long sometimes. We had a case of that a few years ago, four years ago. Someone who had been in the scene a long long time uh was arrested and convicted and uh had gone to jail for it – and should have. And we, as a scene, didn’t act fast enough; we just didn’t believe it. That’s a huge – that was really difficult – and really modified my stance on things. I’ve become much more active now in watching those situations and being a little less trusting and more alert to that – a lot more alert to that. And.... Setting a tone of making people know that this is not acceptable and setting that that.... Um, so that’s a negative. um

Certainly, I have been too drunk before! That has happened! And I did some shitty, stupid things [laughs embarrassed] being too drunk. Ah, because that – it’s a culture of hedonism.... Of just.... I’ll do it! Also, it does skew your understanding of what’s reasonable or not. If you look at the definition of binge drinking by the government you just laugh, you just laugh! Like, really? [laughs] That is, like, a Wednesday! Right? Um, so when you’re comparing yourself to people who are just doing tonnes of drugs and tonnes of drinking you start to go, well I’m not that bad.... Sure, you’re not *that* bad! But that doesn’t make it *good*. And certain situations cost me relationships, it’s cost me in opportunities where there are things I’ve really wanted to do; I’ve done them.... I don’t remember them. Or I’ve been in relationships and just

didn't take care of it because I just partied too hard. Certainly there have been costs as well. On net, certainly been a positive. But.... aahh.... Yeah, it's not perfect by any means, no.

[long pause]

A: Well, I think you've answered that question pretty definitively [laughter] – is the clubbing experience more of a private or public/communal experience?

T: I have, yep, that was pretty clear! [laughter]

A: Don't even have to.... Rhetorical!

[seconds of laughter]

A: So, if you were now or had been.... Forced to, for some totally theoretical reason, to just completely abandon the life-style, the community – raving at all – is there something that you can think of that you could turn to or could have turned to that would have satiated kind of the same sort of things that you feel you've really gotten from raving?

T: Yeah, and I'm doing that. I'm in the process of doing that now and for me like I'm getting very involved with the NDP and with just political activism and that meets a lot of the same drives for me: I'm building communities, I'm connecting with people who are very passionate about the thing that they're doing; it's not music now, it's something else, but it's.... it's the same kind of passion and drive. It is the same sense of helping, of doing something worthwhile and helping, of creativity, the same opportunity to engage my creative drive, you know, um, there are.... existing norms but within that I can be creative and say, well, why don't we try this campaign, why don't we try this technique, and so there's – there's also a lot of *new* things for me to learn, so it feels similar to when I started raving. And it's meeting the same kind of goals and drive for me. Yeah. And I think that's – you'll probably find that for a lot of people. There's different ways to engage this. Raving is very, raving is very obvious, it's very direct, it's very

clear what you're doing. It's easy to relate to it, it's very open about what it's doing and what you're doing with it so it's easy to engage with it. Some of the things are a little more subtle but you are getting the same kinds of experiences. Raving kind of equipped me, in a way, to do and get other things as well.

A: Okay, great. That's the end of my list; is there anything else that you think I should really know or should really, you know, take in mind when I'm writing this?

T: Um, you should go! You should try one!

A: I have! I have, in-fact!

T: Okay, good! Okay, good, cool. Um, which one – do you know which one you went to?

A: It was, um, yeah it was called.... Technoturnal; it was back at my home in K/W. It was put on by Co-Inspiracy.

T: Oh! I – okay, I was probably there, actually. That's ----- and all those people.

A: Yeah.

T: I know those folks, yeah, for sure. Okay. I may even have played that one, I don't know. I played one of their parties, it might have been that one.

A: I don't think it was that one.

T: Oh, yeah. Okay. Cool.

A: I think I would have recognized you.

T: Oh, yeah, for sure! Right. But yeah I know that for sure!

A: I'm hoping to get to one or two more at least in the next – in the near while.

T: Okay, well, I'm going to Solstice here, coming up in a few weeks, and that's like a festival, um.... And it's what you would call "Post-Rave," I guess, and people who would go they, they often used to rave, now the don't *really*. There typically is music – it is "party" in that context:

older people and it is geared to be very community oriented – more so even than a rave – such that there is-there’s a kitchen, everyone volunteers, everyone volunteers to be a part of it. Um, so everyone contributes to it very directly. There’s a kitchen were we all feed everyone, so a lot of people – there are a lot of workshops and stuff so – it’s all-week-long; the music’s only on the two nights, so you’re there mostly to *connect*, and I really enjoy that. I don’t know if you have the time for that but that’s coming up from the 21st through the 28th.

A: Aw shit, I’m away.

T: Yeah. That’s a good one though.

A: That sounds – that’s a really –

T: I really enjoy that one. Every time I – I help with – I do with the gate, with health and safety, so just overseeing that people are safe.

A: That’s awesome.

T: Yeah, I love that. I really enjoy that.

A: Very cool.

T: Cool.

A: Okay, well I guess that’s all the questions I have for you.

T: Okay, great!

A: Okay, thank you very much; this was a great talk.

T: Yeah, I enjoyed it! So if you have any other questions you think of, just let me know!

A: Yeah, for sure!

T: let me know –

B2b. GASTON

A: Okay, so if could start maybe jus tell me about a time you were organizing an event or maybe running the music and just kind what – what that’s like, just kind of, like, a typical example you can think of from the recent past?

G: Okay, just in general what goes down when you’re setting this stuff up or?

A: Yeah, like in general what goes down, what you do, what’s your concerns?

G: Okay, yeah so basically, you know, we – I would find – think of a theme for the show.

Something that would appeal to people, you know, usually try and make something weird and interesting that they wouldn’t experience otherwise. Um, sort of to create – foster new experiences and, um you know, find the bands. The things that you usually worry about is, you know, will the bands be good; will people enjoy the music; will everyone who shows up behave. Especially in environments like this, there is that risk of some asshole showing up and ruining everyone’s time. So I think that’s the biggest concern – and then, you know making sure that the bands that you pick fit, that people will enjoy the music that you are providing.

A: Okay, so can you maybe just, uah, give me – would you have any anecdotal example maybe of just how an evening went down recently?

G: Well we’ve got Friday night; we had a bunch of bands playing so, I mean, with the events they start really far in advance. We organize everything and then as it gets closer you do more stuff so you got all the deco done, the bands load-in, the bands set-up; so everyone’s in here having a good time while I’m running around making sure that everything’s running properly and the bands are all satisfied and stuff like that. Yeah.

A: So you organize events here....

G: Yeah.

A:Do you ever maybe do the music at other venues, or clubs; or even around here, are there different types of evenings or gigs for you that you do?

G: Here? Yeah! So we do have different types of evenings here; for example, last Friday was more kind of psychedelic, dancy, rock music. We've had straight up DJs playing anything from house to bass music; and then electronica acts that are kind of like somewhere in-between the two; and punk rock, metal – we don't do those as much anymore but, yeah, it does vary quite a bit around here.

A: Okay, cool..... So, I guess it's a very vague kind of question but kind of: Why? Why are you doing this?

G: Why do I do this? Because I'm crazy! [laughs]

A: All right, thank you! [laughing] Solves that!

G: It's.... I enjoy music; I enjoy art; and I really like putting it on and kind of.... There's, like, a really good feeling that you get from a successful show; I don't think that's the only reason that I really do it; I think that that's what keeps us going but – and I have an entrepreneurial spirit so I figured why not do something, combine everything I love into one thing.

A: Yeah, because a lot of people really appreciate music and art but very few would kind of decide to let that manifest in this sort of environment.

G: Yeah, well.... It kind of spun out of control. It started off as a jam hall and it spun out of control.

A: A bit of a life of its own then?

G: Yeah, exactly! And it's like, I don't think there's anything else like this in Kitchener.

A: Not that I know of.

G: Yeah, and it's kind of.... This is what I'm drawn to and there's nothing like this so I was like, well.... Let's see if we can make it.

A: Maybe in the condensed version, how do you go from jam hall to gallery/venue/.....

G: Umm, so, it started of as, like, a jam hall where we wanted to put on shows for our own bands and then people were like, *engh* – can we put on shows at your place? And more people started piling on and it just went into like – and then we switched places. So we used to be in a much smaller place. When we came here we knew that it was going to be, like, a music venue basically. But when we started off as like a big thing I think it was like an abandoned dance hall or something like that and....

A: Where was that?

G: Just over on Courtland. So it started as that and we were like, well, we'll practice here and we'll throw parties once in a while because, like, that was what we used to do. We would go from venue to venue and just like put on shows. But we wanted a place where we could just do whatever we wanted. Like, complete creative freedom, basically. And then more and more people showed interest and we just got more connections and I was like, oh, well it doesn't just have to be us playing all the time; people just want to see cool shows and we can curate that.

A: So the community really kind of snowballed on its own then?

G: Yeah, it really did. It was just kind of like word of mouth and then just snowballed and I was like, well....

A: Very cool. SO then, in terms of, I guess the general crowds or the patrons, what is your general relationship to them? Maybe not necessarily personal relationship – whether or not they are people you know or not – but I guess in terms of when you're.... like say, when you're

running around trying to make sure everything's working or if you're performing.... How do you feel that your relationship or your interactions with –

G: I try to have, like, just – we try to set up a very welcoming vibe so even if you don't know someone you know, you walk up to them, chat with them; see what they think of the place, you know, what brought them here; try and figure that stuff out. So it's just.... I try and be on people's level. I don't - I kind of have this preference for people not to know that I'm running stuff. I just fit into the crowd and see how people are reacting to it and get people's opinions and make people feel welcome.

A: So how would that then reflect on what you're doing. Like, you said you're kind of among everybody and getting kind of their honest opinions

G: Yeah!

A: So not from top-down, really trying to get things kind of from the ground level so how does that kind of reflect in either, I don't know, the next time or even through the course of an evening.

G: Umm.... What do you mean?

A: Like, you're saying you want to make sure everybody feels welcome, you know, you're always asking them how they're doing, and so if somebody, you know, gives you either a positive or a negative feedback, I'm wondering if that is something you try and act on right away or do you have kind of a little file in the back of your head: You know, okay we need to.... people are really looking for x and y and their just not finding it, even tonight so I have to come up with a new plan or a new thing....

G: Yeah, It's usually the day – the day after or like a couple of days after that we kind of think about that stuff or when we're doing the next event we try and take in all the feedback from

everybody. Obviously if its something negative that needs to be addressed right away then you're gonna deal with it. But most of the time the feedback kind of gets put in the machine and comes out in the next show

A: Okay. So, I think you've already spoken to this but, I guess, the relationship between you and some of the other – the ahh, the other artists, the musicians, the – ahh – the people who come ehre.... Then, if you could define that relationship, I guess.... Let's see. It's really – my sub-question there is: Is it a distinct community? It seems like it really is.

G: It is, yeah. I think it definitely is a distinct community and we try to be as open too, people are welcome to it. I do think somethings that sometimes scares some people off because it kind of seems like a niche, cliquy thing. But it's like a community of people that don't feel like they belong anywhere else. Kind of, especially in terms of say, club culture, what we try to go for is provide is a space where people can come, have a good time, enjoy music, be social – but, they're people that wouldn't necessarily go to a club. They have no interest in going to clubs and stuff like that. So that's....

And I guess in terms of artists as well, they're usually artists that galleries are like, oh, we don't want to display this weird shit. We're like, we want the weird shit [laughs].

A: Good, good. Speaking to your role when you are a performer then, so if you could just maybe describe the kind of music that you like to play and I guess kind of what the.... If there are any.... If you have kind of a functional view to what you're doing or if it's just a kind of a, I guess, autonomous music; if it's just you know kind: I just make this music because I want to make this kind of music – or is there kind of a functional role to when you're creating a song or designing a set.

G: There is a little bit. A lot of just stems from, I guess, how we're feeling at the time, subconsciously. But we do have like a certain sound that we go for. So, you know, kind the psychedelic, funky, groovy, electronic sounds all kind of fused into once – that is intended. And then you know, if it is a fast or a slow song really depends on how you're feeling at the time.

A: Right, So its kind of an expressionist sort of thing: unconscious?

G: In a way. In a way yes; in a way no. It's like, I do think when we're making music it is very much affected by how we're feeling at the time. Like, we don't sit down and like, we're going to write a dance song. You just kind of start with the drum beat and then whatever comes out. And I think whatever comes out is affected by how you're feeling at the time.

A: Mnhmmn. So I guess what I'm really trying to, I guess, get at is: is there any sort of...

Explicit affect you're every trying to go for in terms of response to your music? Are you trying to elicit a certain response either emotionally or behaviorally?

G: Definitely! Yeah, I think so; I mean, certain songs that we make, you know, we want people to dance to it; there are songs that we just want people to stare, be like, what the hell is going on right now?! We have songs that we'll just abruptly end it where it seems that something totally fucked up where we're trying to elicit the response of people: Wait, is that supposed to happen? So yeah, there is definitely intent.

A: So then what techniques do you use then, when you're writing and performing. Is it all live of the floor or do you use any recorded material or do you use any sort of recycled/sampled materiel, is it all pre-written, do you improvise at all.

G: Aah, when we're writing it's all mostly improvised. SO we just kind of play stuff and see what sounds good and we listen to it a bunch jam to it add more things, think of other ideas. We do use a lot of samples as well. But not.... Usually it's not musical samples so it's not pre-

recorded tracks that we use but we'll sample people saying things and just, you know, speeches or something like that.

A: And then in live performance how structured is it? Is it very explicit or does it retain some of that jam quality?

G: It's actually quite structured but it does retain some jam quality. We do it, like, slightly differently every time but it is very methodically organized because we do it as one set. So, instead of doing it song by song, it's just like 30 minutes of music.

A: So a broad form with some-

G: Yeah, exactly. So we do have transitions between songs where you know say one song is ending and just kind of melts into this robotic noise and that section is usually pretty improvised because we're just, literally, making noise and cranking things and creating....

A: Creating kind of different sounds.

G: Yeah. Exactly

A: Like you said, new kinds of experiences?

G: Yeah! [laughs] yeah.

A: Okay, very good, very good. So would you say that this is kind of.... In terms of your field or general genre would you say that is kind of a very, ahh, typical approach or would you say it is maybe an atypical way of going about things?

G: Umm, it's typical I guess in this environment but I think it's atypical based on what people in general do

A: Right, in "this environment" you're meaning....?

G: Being kind of, you know, expressionist, experimental art. You know, people open to new experiences, new ideas and not necessarily, umm, not like, *pleasant* experiences, I guess. Not

negative in like an emotional way, but like, nobody really wants to hear a guitar screeching while it sounds like a computer falling apart but it's something cool, right? It's an unpleasant sound that is a cool experience that you enjoy in a way.

A: Right. I understand. Do you use drugs or alcohol in connection with creating or performing your music and if so, can you tell me what, and can you describe why or what its contribution to the creative/performative process is? Remember, you are going to be completely anonymous.

G: Everything about this is anonymous?

A: Totally anonymous.

G: Yes.

[laughter]

A: Totally, all people, places, names, totally changed.

G: Okay, okay, perfect. Yeah, so definitely drugs and alcohol I do think play a role in our creativity.

A: So can you explain the nature of that role then?

G: Um, I think it's just.... I guess it kind of helps.... Helps you think of new things and not worry about making mistakes. For example, if you're drinking, you're not- you'll try- you're not as self-conscious so it opens you up to these new ideas or if, you know, if you're taking drugs you're – you pick up on certain nuances that you wouldn't if you were just walking around.

Let's say you're on a mushroom trip and you see or hear something, you can kind of incorporate that.

A: So would that also be during a live performance or just be kind of pre-creative phase?

G: Ah, just the pre-creative phase. We also get pretty shit-faced when we play, but.... I think that just kind of same the same idea, I guess, calm the nerves or 'state learning' or whatever you want to call it.

A: And then are there any substances which you find are kind of more.... I guess that you would be more likely to use that you find more.... What's the word.... That you find – not productive but –

G: Creative or that just work better?

A: Yeah, like, would you tend – you mentioned mushrooms – would you tend to, by way of example, would you tend to be, like, let's do a bunch of mushrooms and jam on this for awhile, versus, say, anything else?

G: Ah, it's mostly just alcohol; smoke some weed. Mushrooms, uh, it's kind of hard to do things on mushrooms [laughs]. It's more something that you do that opens your eyes to different experiences that I think gives you different perspectives just in general; it doesn't necessarily just have to be for art so I don't think we've ever taken mushrooms and then sat down to jam. I think we tried to once and I was like, this isn't working.

A: It melted into a computer sound.

G: Yeah, yeah, exactly!

[laughter]

A: So then what, for you, I guess, personally, determines the outcome of a night. So for you to have that internal feeling of man that was a great night or that night was awful or that was just an unusual night.... So what kind of factors would determine?

G: So the number of people that come out, what the bands sound like, and then it would be feedback from the people. So if there's lots of people and everyone's like, ungh; this is kind of

weird, doesn't really matter – but if people are enjoying it, taking in the art; there's a lot of interactive installations so if people are really into that; feedback from the bands, you know, they had a good time. And, of course, at the end of the day it's about money as well.

A: So for it to be particularly good night then, what would you require to feel?

G: What would I require of those things, I guess? So lots of people having a great time; lots of good positive feedback; great music – so people also enjoying the music, just the art and everything. I like when people are in there dancing to the music. And then just a successful night money-wise where everyone gets paid and everyone's happy.

A: And then would you be able to describe at all that feeling then after a good night if it's one of a feeling of joy or satisfaction....?

G: It, it is a very addictive joy [laughs]. Yeah. That's what it is. It's the kind of feeling where you're like, yeah that was great! There's almost like a hangover for like the few days after that, like, after the event so that when the event is over you walk around and you feel a little sad 'cause that thrill and the rush is over. It's like a very addictive feeling like, I want another one, let's do another one! MORE ART! MORE BANDS!

A: Beforehand, then, how do you feel or what is your state of mind before a show, is there more of a general feeling you would recognize.

G: Yeah, there's almost like this tunnel vision thing that happens. Where you're just ploughing through everything that you have to do to get it setup so just like if a show's on a Saturday, starting on a Monday, it's like, you wake up and got to work in the morning at nine and you come straight here, work on stuff, go to bed at like 2 or 3, wake up and it's just like this tunnel vision and then the day of the show, like, as soon as everything's set up and the band's are in there's that hour or whatever before doors open: it's just like extreme anxiety.

A: Is there a particular positive or negative attribution you give to that tunnel-vision experience.

G: I think it's positive; I think it's one of those 'you're in the zone' I mean, it's like, you know, when Michael Jordan gets the ball and there's ten seconds left. He's got tunnel vision; there's only one thing that's going to happen: he's gonna get a dunk. That's kind of how it feels to me.

A: And then after words you kind of mentioned there's that.

G: There's the comedown. Then it's just like.... Yeah, like kind of like an empty comedown, hangover feeling, 'cause there's the rush of the party and then everyone's gone and it's over and you're like, AAGH!

A: -And does that set-in immediately? Or does that take until the next morning with the actual hangover.

G: Umm, it's yeah, sometime the next day and I think the following days its kind of.... It builds up to a peak and then it goes away so it's like: The party happens on Saturday, you wake up on Sunday; you're kind of hung-over, you come, you check everything out, you're still talking to people, you're posting pictures on Facebook and it feels really good. And then Monday, and then Tuesday, and you're like *ahhhgh*. Yeah.

A: And what about immediately afterwards, so like, 5:30 in the morning immediately afterwards?

G: 5:30? Exhausted and satisfied. Yeah.

A: Sounds like a good meal.

G: [laughs] Yeah.

A: I just want to sleep but *ahghhh*.

G: Yeah, that's it. Exactly like that!

A: Um, so then would you say that there's any kind of noticeable difference in your general state or your mood in periods between shows or events?

G: Um, so you mean after an event or just kind of like in general?

A: Just, like, *in between*. If there was a stretch of time in between when you don't, say if there was just a large gap in between or just, you know, a period where the next one just hadn't been setup yet. You know, does it – is there any sort of fluctuation between if you were getting a regular, steady dose versus okay.... Could go for another one.... any time now....

G: Yeah, at first, at first. It depends on how many you've had in a row. It first it can be actually be relaxed like, ahghh, thank god I don't have to do that again for a while. But, like, after awhile you start to thinking about it and you get back on your mind and you're like, oh, I wanna, I wanna put on another show. But it is, you know, it is not necessarily like that hangover phase. You just kind of, almost.... Board I guess? You just kind of get the itch to do it again.

A: Do you feel that there is any – in your role as kind of as, as a promoter, as a host, or as an artist – do you feel that there is any kind of particular or implicitly stated purpose to what you want to do. That could either be just that you want to create new experiences or, you know, have people enjoy themselves, or if there is kind of an ideology, an ideological aspect of it. Is there any kind of, I guess, implicit.... Purpose is maybe a poor word for it but....

G: Yeah, I guess it's just creating new, different experiences, making your mark as an artist in general. Fame, recognition, all that stuff.

A: Alright. So could you maybe explain a little deeper that idea of making your mark. What does that look like to you?

G: So I think that that would be either putting on an event or in the grand scheme of things leaving a lasting impression, something that people will talk about and remember as a positive

experience, as a great time that they had, something cool that they saw that they'll talk to their friends about.

A: So, one more question for you, and that's if for some reason you couldn't do this for either, you know, an extended period of time or if you had to give it up altogether for whatever reason, is there anything else you could do in its place that would satiate the same desire you have for doing this.

G: I don't know if there is. I don't know what else I would do. I mean, I can see myself, you know, stopping at some point and not wanting to do it anymore but I don't know if there would be something that would take its place.

A: Assuming, you know, as if, say, in an hour from now, just so you know....

G: Yeah. Um. I don't know if there is anything else. I'm sure I could find other things but I'm not sure if there is anything else. I would just be back at thinking about how to do it again
[laughs] crackhead! AGH! I'M OUT OF REHAB!

A: Alright, thank you very much!

G: Sweet! No problem.

B2c. MARIKA

A: Tell me about a recent time you went clubbing and what it was like.

M: A recent time.... Hmm, okay. Probably the most recent time was Phil's, of course. Aaand Phil's is always an interesting experience because it's so cheap and people just get really drunk and that's what we did. I was with my boyfriend and my friend Sophitia and her friend and we just got really hammered and just danced for three hours straight and don't necessarily remember everything that happened [laughs].

It was a.... Saturday, so it would have been.... EDM, I think, and toward the end of the night they started playing, like, remixes of popular music.

A: Okay, cool.

M: Is that good enough?

A: Yep.

M: Okay [laughs].

A: You're doing great. So, would you say you go out to clubs regularly and, if so, how often and are there different types of venues you would frequent?

M: Yeah, it depends on the time of the year. So, when I'm in Waterloo during the summer, it can be up to like.... 3 times a week, maybe, on average? Aaaand.... Um, when I'm in Montreal, since I know fewer people, it's pretty much only on special occasions. So, it might be once every 1-3 weeks. But yeah, when I'm back here it's quite frequent. And, different venues, I mean, we have our favourite spots, maybe 2 or 3, but, every once in a while, you want to change it up so you go to a different place, just to get a new experience.

A: Okay, so, I guess, two follow-up questions then: With the difference in the time of year, is it just simply because of the amount of people you know, or is there any other sort of things that would make you want to go out more or less often?

M: Yeah, the weather. I mean, like.... It sounds silly but you want to look good so, I mean, if it's cold it discourages you from wearing a dress or whatever.

A: Right.

M: Um.... and then waiting in line is also never fun – like, I personally am the type of person who actually will probably avoid waiting in line where other people think it's worth it. But, yeah,

in my case I'll either go really early or not at all if it means that there's gonna be a line. Um...
Yeah.

A: Okay, and when you talk about wanting something different, like, is there a different, I guess.... If you thought of the places you go, kind of, I guess, ah.... Different kind of archetypes of places? If you could group them in any kind of way, is there anything sort of thing like that?

M: Yeah, it's like a lot of the venues that I've been to are aiming to achieve some sort of um identity; so you have the more grungy places that offer cheap drinks because they just want people to get wasted. Um, and then there's places that try to be a bit more classy and they have like they serve their beverages in like *glasses* and like give you glass beer bottles and trust you. Um, and those places usually have like a nicer seating area and, like, play different kinds of music to aim to a different crowd.

A: So could you elaborate maybe kind of to the differences in music and kind of what that idea of grungy versus classy means, like, what the value in that is?

M: Um.... I mean.... Kind of – and kind of not, like.... Phil's for example, they have different music themes for every night of the week, so that one obviously doesn't really adhere to that.

Um.... Although, yeah, I think.... maybe the grungier places will play music that is just, kind of like, crowd pleasing, so.... people are guaranteed to have a good time even if like.... Whatever.

Like for example: the venue is not nice *at all* but if you're loving the music, somehow, that doesn't matter. Whereas some people, they have different priorities, right? So if they want to go somewhere where they can kind of like *feel* classier or like, oh, I'm 24 now; I can't go to these gross places anymore! And they wanna like go to a place where they have nicer *décor* and stuff – I don't know, that's.... It's almost as if they don't care about the music as much in those places. Like, when I go to Starlight, personally, I think the music kinda sucks most of the time. But,

from what I've learned, a lot of the people who go there kind of go there for more of the environment, rather than the music. I dunno – that's just my opinion!

A: So would you say you, generally speaking, would be more *likely* to enjoy the music at say maybe a place like Phil's on a Saturday versus if you were to go to Starlight?

M: Yeah....

A: Okay. Good! Um.... So, why do you go out to clubs? Like, what's....

M: umm.... Well, I love to dance! And I am like a very awkward person when it comes to my body, I find, so I need to drink to dance comfortably. Like, in the past I have gone to places where there is like Spanish music or whatever it may be and I was completely uncomfortable in those situations so like.... There might be a deeper problem at the root of this but like I – I want to dance but I need to be drunk to do it and it seems like a club setting is pretty much the only place that allows that. And – I dunno, it's just fun.... [laughs].

A: Alright. So how do you interreact – sorry – interact – I can't say this word today: Interact. It's all interreact! Like, everything's a knee-jerk, like a kick in the shin. Uh.... How do you interact or relate to fellow – fellow clubbers or fellow patrons? (5:50)

M: You mean people that I know or people that –

A: People that you know, people you don't know.... Like, what's a.... tell me about both, tell me about both.

M: Ahh.... I find that, depending on the friend, ah, I will enjoy different venues more or less with them because of who they are. Laura for example, I know that with her I can go anywhere and have a good time but there are people who are a bit more picky and get more affected by certain things, like if there is a long coat-check line or if they end up having to spend too much money. Like, I've kind of discerned which friends don't work so well at certain venues. Um, in

terms of fellow clubbers, this might make me a *huge* hypocrite and kind of a prude, but like I typically will never hang out again with a person that I meet at a club – and, again, I would never go home with someone that I meet at a club, just because, like.... I find it.... Like.... I don't know! Like, I go clubbing so often but for some reason I see people who go clubbing as like not [starting to break up].... Someone I want to hang out with [laughs vehemently]! It makes no sense at all! I don't know!

A: Okay, what about still in the club itself?

M: Um.... I find a lot of the interactions there very fake. Um, it may be because everyone's drunk or because usually when a guy talks to you it's *because* he's hitting on you and maybe because I know I'm not going to.... hang out with them outside the club afterward, I am less interested in what they have to say because a lot of the time it really does just feel like they're putting on a show and I'm like, okay, moving on. I mean yeah, it is confidence boosting; sometimes if you're in the right mood it can be fun to watch some guy try and win your affections [laughs]. And then, in terms of girls, ahh yeah! I've had some pretty good conversations with some girls at clubs, like, lets say that the dance floor isn't busy or if I'm just like not ready to dance yet I'll sit and just make friends and I'll talk – but it's always fleeting. It's never long-lasting.

A: Okay.

[M laughs]

Um, and, what about.... Do you feel that you have any interaction or relation with the DJ or the person who's responsible for playing the music.

M: No.

A: Okay.

M: Occasionally, if there's live music at a venue, I will go over and talk to them, especially if there's a keyboardist because I feel like I relate and I would love to like get out and play live music myself sometime.

A: Right, as a keyboardist yourself, right?

M: Yeah, exactly. Sorry, I should, um, yeah, mention that. Yeah, so live music: yes. But if it's a DJ, I don't think I've ever interacted with a DJ ever.

A: Right, okay. So then, what would you say is your interactional relationship to the music itself?

M: uh, I Suppose....

A: Like, you mentioned you like to dance....

M: Right. It's more if I know the song it's more fun because you can kind of like sing along or, I dunno, like you feel more comfortable. Um, however, I am the type of person who really, really loves finding new music so sometimes I will keep my ears open for something that I may like. Um, and depending on my state of mind I might really really love just a good beat or something. But, yeah, it definitely *does* make it way easier to enjoy if you know or can at least recognize what's being played. I've even been to the club with people who refuse to dance if they don't know the song, which is kind of frustrating because like you go up for one song and the like 3 minutes later a new one comes on and they're like, okay, I don't know this one; let's go get a drink go sit down. I'm not like that, I'm not so picky, but I can kind of understand why.

A: So when you say depending on your state of mind.... [M laughs] what do you mean by that?

M: Typically it *does* mean how much I've had to drink but there are times when I'm just in a really *good* mood.... Because of the atmosphere or because of the people that I'm with that that

doesn't matter. But I find that with 8/10 times it's completely dependent upon how much I've had to drink.

A: Okay.

M: So shameful [giggles]

A: Not at all! Not at all. Uh.... So, so you may have answered this question already but.... Do you use alcohol or drugs when clubbing and, if so, what and how, and can you describe why and how it affects your experience?

M: Okay, I've never gone clubbing on drugs – not even pot – because I find that I just get really like paranoid and I don't think that I'd be at all comfortable in a situation where I'm surrounded by people that I don't know on drugs. But alcohol, um, my experience with alcohol and being out is that I never *intend* to get extremely drunk but once I've started drinking I just – it's like a snowball effect. I mean, being drunk makes me want to be more drunk, and then, of course, I lose my ability to kind of like, Marika, maybe you should stop now....[laughs] so, so yeah. That's my experience, most of the time I want to keep getting drunker.

A: Mhmmn, and then so how does that affect your overall experience of going out? Is there any kind of particular way, or just that fact that you end up.... Drunk. Very drunk.

M: Yeah, there's always the window of the Perfect Level, where I just have the Best Time Ever, and then a lot of the time I end up just going overboard and then I'll forget the end of my night. And for me, personally, it's never actually resulted in anything horrible, like, the worst that would happen is I would get sick and I've never gotten sick like not in a toilet. So, like, *I've* been pretty lucky like in that sense and I've never done anything to like ruin any friendships or like piss people off or get in a fight or anything like that but, um, yeah. I kind of wish that I could just reach that Perfect Point and stay there – but I almost never do.

A: Could you describe that Perfect Point for me?

M: Yeah! Um.... I guess it's just like.... For me it's just sheer happiness. Like, everything is just pleasing to me. If I don't know the music it doesn't bother me at all. I'm just happy to be out and socializing and dancing. Um, typically when I'm – when I'm in that window, I will like talk to anyone who comes up to me and be very friendly and like kind to them [laughs]. Whereas if you're not drunk enough or if you're too drunk you might be a bit of a jerk, depending on how they like, like rub off on you, I guess.

A: Right, right. Fair enough, fair enough. Okay, let's see here.... So then what would you say governs the quality of your experience? i.e. what would – what makes for a good or a bad night or what would change the overall course of how a night plays out for you or for your experience? Is there anything that would make a night particularly different or unusual? Um, how do you judge if you've had a good night? If there was a checklist?

M: Um, I think for me the number one most important is the people that I'm with. That may differ for other people but I think I actually tend to avoid going out when I feel that the – the group of people that I'm with isn't.... going to mesh well, in my mind. Or there are certain friends of mine that I won't go clubbing with if it's just them because I know that they're more picky about like certain aspects and.... Um, I think – this might sound kind of shitty, but – um, if I get my money's worth might be a good judge of whether it's a good night? Like, if I go out and I spend a bunch of money on like cover and drinks and then just go home early and like I don't.... have a good time or whatever, then I'll be pretty upset with that.

A: So then the qualities of a good time then? Like, what would make you feel you got your money's worth?

M: Uh, like if I got a fair amount of dancing and just like socializing with my friends or meeting new people – meeting new people is always fun, right? So, if you meet people who you actually think maybe actually are great and you have a good time with them, that can definitely make it worth it, even if you dance less or the music sucks or something. But, yeah, I dunno, I would say I'm pretty easy to please. Like, as long as something good happens I can end the night saying I had fun, I would say – but – that it's successful.

A: Okay. How do you feel, typically, or what is your state of mind before you go out?

M: Uh – I'm usually pretty excited, I have high hopes; I try to have few drinks before we go so that I'm already a bit more comfortable in the setting.... Um, so that helps a lot. Uh.... I guess I always start off a little bit worried that something bad might happen, like that I might lose my wallet or it might get stolen or.... I don't know, that I'll lose my friends [laughs]. That happens sometimes [laughs again]! Aah....

A: The worry or actually losing your friends?

M: Physically losing them, not losing them forever [laughs]! Um, there, there was one girl I used to go clubbing with every Sunday, 'cause that was our favourite night at Phil's. That was Way Back, so they'd play lots music from the 80s and 90s which was really, really fun. Um, and *everyone* would sing along and it was just a good time and they would play the music video on a big screen which is really, really fun too, like, it adds to the enjoyment. Um, I guess you feel just more like stimulated in a setting like that. So, even if you're not dancing, there's something to do because they're displaying the music video. Um, I – I kind of got lost, what was I getting at?

Oh yeah! There was one girl I always used to go clubbing with and *every single time* I went clubbing with her, I would feel very nervous because she's the type of person who would.... If something went wrong, blame me. Like, oh, we should have left earlier; this is your

fault you took too long getting ready, or, you chose this place, like why? You know – I don't know! Um.... We're not really friends any more [laughs heartily]! But! Maybe that's a good sign, that maybe she's just not, kinda, not a good friend.... For me.... Not a good fit. Um, but yeah for the most part I feel pretty optimistic [laughs]. Sorry! I get so, like, sidetracked!

A: No, that's good! It's all valuable information.

M: okay....

A: That's why it's semi-structured; I want to hear all the tangents and side-thoughts. So, then, what about after? After going to the club? So that could be at the end of the night, once you've left the building, or it could be the next morning.

M: Ahhh.... We usually go out for food [chuckles]

A: Is this, uh, the morning after or is this the night?

M: Still the night. There's a lot of places that stay open late around here because it is a University town, right? So we will go for pizza or fries or like 7/11 has.... Kind of shitty hot food if you have no other options, you can get a hot dog or something. Um, so that's always super-fun when you're drunk because, you know, you feel kind of hungry, even if you're not and it tastes so much better. Um, there have been times on occasion where we would go over to someone's house that we met – but I would never go alone – it would only be in a group setting because I would feel more comfortable with that. And in that case you would probably end up just continuing to drink and like playing video games or just listening to music. Um, which is fun and I really like doing that, assuming that I'm not, like, ready for bed.

Ah, as for the next day.... I dunno. I will either wake up and just kinda be like, last night was fun, and go on with my life or, if I got black out, then I'll wake up feeling really nervous and

texting everyone who was there, being like, did I do anything stupid?! [laughs] Which happens more often than I care to admit [laugh].... Does that answer your question? [laugh]

A: Yeah, that's good. Ah.... So would you say that you can notice any discernable difference in your general state in periods between visits to clubs or during – you mentioned that, you know, during the summer you go a couple times a week and then in the winter, only on special occasions – so kind of in those in-between periods, would you notice any difference if you were going every two or three days versus if there was a long stretch in-between?

M: I still do go out in the winter quite frequently but to different venues. So, I don't know if this would fit under your umbrella term of clubbing, but in the winter I tend to just go to a pub and listen to live music, which there's typically never dancing involved there so I wasn't sure if that – if that counted.

A: Okay – it's an important distinction.

M: Yeah, so, um, it's different because you can wear civilian clothes; you don't have to worry about how much bulk you have and what coat-check is going to cost you or waiting in line – you just go, you sit down, you listen to music, order a few drinks. Um, I typically get less drunk in those situations because it's a lot easier to be, um, comfortable in those situations. Like, you're not dancing, you're not putting your body on display or you're not really coming into situations where you're meeting new people most of the time. So, I don't know, I – like I can go and have a really good time without the alcohol. Um.... So yeah, I mean, that would be the main distinction, I guess, just the activities that we *choose* to do. But I guess.... That might actually mean that I enjoy clubbing more if in the summer I choose to do that as opposed to.... I'm still pretty young though, right? I'm only 22 so maybe that'll change [laughs]! I hope that'll change! I'm just doing it now while it still feels acceptable.

A: Alright, well I'd like to come back to that a little bit later but what, if any, benefits do you think you gain from clubbing?

M: Um... I feel it can strengthen your friendships – or, if you go out with people that you don't know really well, its – it's easier to get a fast-track on solidifying your friendship because when you're drunk or in an altered state of mind it's easier to feel comfortable and like be candid with people that you wouldn't otherwise act that way around. So, there've been a lot of times where I went out with maybe one or two close friends and they brought other people with them that I wasn't so familiar with but then good friendships resulted from that night because like I was drunk and they were drunk and we were just like, tell me your life-story! And, I don't know, dancing with people is always a good ice breaker; you feel more comfortable around. Ah... I don't know, what else? Hmmn....

A: So you're talking about – it helps you increase social bonds, then?

M: yeah....

A: – Or as the potential to promote candidacy. Is there anything particular about that dancing that you would isolate as a.... it's strength as an ice-breaker?

M: Ummmm....

A: Like, what about that makes it such a good way to break the ice?

M:I don't know. I guess just.... I don't know, like, maybe I –

[rude and inconsiderate interruption]

M: Okay. Dancing: Ice-breaker.

A: Yeah.

M: Maybe I personally find that like how comfortable I am touching a person is important in discerning how comfortable I am around them. Like, I'm not the type of person who will hug a

person I don't know very well. Um, I actually get really, like, anxious about touching people that I don't feel comfortable around but for some reason, and of course when I'm drunk, and I'm dancing lets say you're like dancing up against a girl or whatever – I guess that just kind of breaks down that barrier for me, which.... Yeah. I think it's a good thing because it's something that I want to get over and that has really helped with that. Umm.... I dunno, it's just a social bonding.... Experience.

A: Okay.

M: Sorry.

A: No, that's good.

[M. laughs]

Don't apologize. Um, are there any downsides?

M: To clubbing, or?

A: Yeah. That you – in *your* experience.

M: Well, I've thrown way to much money at it. Um.... Obviously I don't care that much about the money because I still continue to do it; maybe it's just because I'm at a point in my life where I feel like I can be a bit more.... Frivolous. Um, what else – I mean, it's not good for your health because I think that clubbing and drinking go so closely together. There are a lot of people who could have a great time without drinking – I wish I was one of them – but, yeah, the drinking: not good for you. And, obviously, we usually get food after and its usually really greasy and bad for you. Um.... So that sucks. I mean.... In all of my like attempts to loose weight, I feel like the drinking is the reason that I'm unsuccessful and I'm not willing to give it up because my social life is so important to me. Um.... I *have* lost a friendship because of clubbing. It was the girl that I mentioned earlier, where she would blame me and one night I just

told her, I'm sick of you blaming me when things go wrong! and then it just kind of blew-up from there. Obviously that wasn't the only cause; like it was a long-time coming but, eventually, that was the straw....that broke....yeah....[laughs] I'm not going to finish that!

A: Got'cha.

M: Um.... Downsides.... I dunno, it's fun. People spend their money on different things, right? That's just what I choose to spend mine on; I'm not a big shopper, so [laughs].

A: Okay, so, would you say, from your perspective, would you find the clubbing experience to be, lets say, a private or subjective experience or more of a communal one?

M: Uh.... Probably communal, based on what I've been saying.... hunh!

A: Do you want to maybe just elaborate on what you mean?

M: Well, just because the social factor is so important to me; I would never go alone. Um, and.... The, whether or not the people I'm with are having a good time or not is so important an aspect to me too. 'Cause I'm always worrying, oh, is everyone having a good time? We can go somewhere else if you want to. So that definitely affects me.... Yeah, I don't know, I just think it's a very very social experience.... And.... I can't really think of a way that I can separate myself from the group that I'm with and describe it as more of a personal experience – unless I'm so drunk that I forget they even exist and I'm just dancing the night away by myself [laughing], which.... Has happened!

[takes a moment to laugh]

A: And, we sort of touched on this a little bit when we were talking about when.... Kind of what your pattern of going out is like when you're in Montreal, but, for some reason, if you couldn't go, or.... Sorry if you could not go or could no longer go clubbing, is there anything that you

could do in its place that could satiate the same desire that leads you to want to go out to the club?

M: Yeah, that's something I've been dealing with a lot lately, actually, because it took me so long to get a solid group of friends in Montreal and, even now, um, there's one or two people in the group who don't like clubbing so we tend to avoid that whenever possible. Um, I think the only type of activity that could satiate my, like, my needs or replace clubbing, um.... Are *very* social events that typically involve drinking. Um, there are a lot nights in Montreal where my friends are busy and I'm just at home by myself – and I can do more, like, intrinsically driven activities like making music by myself or, like, writing or whatever but a lot of the time, even though a lot of people would interpret that as *more* productive, I almost feel as though that like.... I'm missing something. Which is kind of sad actually; I almost might describe it as almost like an addiction because.... For example, when I was here last summer, if there was like two nights in a row that I didn't go out, like, I felt like antsy like I wanted to get out and do something and like go crazy.

A: What did you think you were missing?

M: I don't know! Like, it's weird. Just the social element. Like, I feel like lonely and I feel bored.... And it's kind of worrisome because.... I used to be more of an introvert; like, I used to stay in and read and like never go out when I was in high school. I didn't drink for the first time until I was 18 or 19 and that was always enough for me, like, I never cared. It wasn't *until* I started like actively seeking more of a social life and I started drinking and I started going out more that.... The stuff that used to be fulfilling before seemed less so. And that actually does worry me a little bit because.... Like, I used to feel really good about what I was accomplishing in my free time and like now.... It's like all I'm really accomplishing is.... Spending my money

[laughs]. And yeah, social bonds are important but.... I mean, you never know, like, you never know how long that's gonna last so if you – if that's all I think that I'm accomplishing by doing this.... And then I don't even end up staying friends with those people, it's like: did I waste my time? I don't know....

A: You mentioned the importance of social bonds several times; I guess, is, say, instead of working on the music or writing like like you said you were, is that what you meant by productive? When you said that you feel that you're almost more productive when you go out, can you explain that for me?

M: [sigh] I guess, not even productive, I guess that's the wrong word. I just.... I don't know! Like, I feel more fulfilled when I'm out and like I'm experiencing things. I don't know!how else to describe it.

A: Well, fulfilled's a good word.

M: yeah.... I don't know....

A: Okay. And, could you just give me a couple examples of some of the types of social – highly social events that may involve drinking?

M: Uh, yeah – in Montreal specifically I have a good friend who's in a band so we go out and we listen to them a lot and we're already at the bar listening to them play so you're probably going to end up drinking. I've been playing a lot of pool recently. We specifically seek out pool bars where there are DJs or at least really loud music playing because.... It's like I really feel like I'm a product of my generation because I feel like I constantly need to be stimulated or I feel like.... Hollow [laughs] and I don't necessarily think that's a good thing but that's the way it is for the time-being. Umm.... Sometimes we'll just go over to a friend's house and play a board game. Uh.... With alcohol. Always alcohol. All the time. It *maaaay* just be because we're still getting to

know each other – I don't know if that'll change over time – but I think.... That's what really brought us together, was – because all the girls that I'm talking about right now we hang out with um.... We were in one class together and then we invited the *whole* class out to get drinks together after class one day and these were the people who showed up so it was like, Oh I guess these are the people that we.... Like, will get a long with because they like doing the same thing as us and.... Yeah.

A: And you find that it's a successful.... Uh, switch I guess. – Or substitute?

M: yeah. I think so. Uh.... I don't know, in a way I almost think that playing pool could be considered more productive than than getting really drunk and dancing because –

A: Just, in the way – in the way that you feel and the way you experience, I guess, the gratification of that urge.

M; uuuhhh..... Yeah. Yeah. And you can talk while you're playing pool, too. So in some ways it's actually even better in the social aspect because, although there is music blaring typically, sometimes we'll sing a long, sometimes we'll actually have like a good conversation with each other which is hard to do at a club because it's *so* loud; it's like they don't want you to talk [laughs]! I mean.... The different activities have their ups and downs. I.... *if* I could have it my way, maybe we would go clubbing occasionally in Montreal but I am pretty happy with the new activities that I've been engaging in recently.

A: Okay, thank you very much!

[M laughs]

B2d. LAURA

A: Okay, so.... My first question is: tell me about a recent time you went clubbing and what it was like.

L: A recent time I went clubbing.... Umm.... Trying to think. The time that was most recent that was not the Watchtower – which probably, that was Jane Bond at my birthday. That was probably the most legitimate one.

A: We could qualify the Watchtower as just a – a private event.

L: A private event? Okay, so that was a....

A: But either one, talk about whichever you feel.

L: Okay, ummm.... I mean probably the more interesting one is the one where I went out for my birthday.

A: Okay, sure. Let's talk about that then.

L: Okay, so that was – I don't know it was like really busy – a really busy night? So, it was interesting because there were like – I don't know, I just there were like a lot of different groups of people who came together and it was like interesting to see how many people know each other in town because it felt like it was all for me because it was my birthday even though it wasn't [laughs]. But um and also it's funny because I also noticed too some people, like, people become regulars, right? And then that's part of the draw I think for why they go there. Like, for example, like when Piers went and he was like, um, like had the table reserved for him but had it snatched away from him so like now they've got bad report [laughs]! Because it was too busy but umm.... I don't know, I recall it being an interesting experience trying to integrate everybody together because it was like a lot of different groups at one time. But I guess maybe it wasn't a standard night out because of that.

A: Okay, can you elaborate on that – what you mean by integrating the groups? What was interesting about that?

L: Well I, like, when you have different friend groups who aren't always in the same place and then you're trying to make like a kind of a fun relaxing evening for everybody but then its like, basically everyone's like, I feel like, on a beeline for getting drunker. Which is I think is kind of what was happening for the first like hour and a half of the party because like no one was talking to each other. Which is kind of a funny thing about going out [laughs].

A: Right, so everybody was more focused on getting drunk first, as opposed to....

L: Well I feel like because it was an extreme a more extreme socially awkward situation than there usually are because of the fact that it was a party where everyone was brought together and because we happened to go at 8:00 for dinner, which was like a BIG mistake because it put people in that position at first. Which is like I guess maybe its just in the group of people I know; might not be an average thing....

A: So how did that then affect the.... Later on, when people were trying to interact or *integrate*.

L: I feel like they were more joyous than usual [laughing] 'cause of the stress leading up to that! Like it turned out to be a better night than like most nights because I feel like there was all the anticipation of people being like anxious and being like, oh god, and then afterwards everybody ended up in that state it was a lot more like mixing going on and a lot more – it was more interesting *because* there were different people but it was kind of funny how no one has the like.... Nobody's like interested to try until its like easy, until they're drunk [laugh]! Like, I'll wait, thanks. [still laughing] I see the cake going by; I'll get a slice eventually. Like, it's kind of like....

A: Right, I got'cha.... Got'cha. Is there anything else about that or is that pretty well your experience of the night.

L: Uummmmm....

A: Did things change at any certain point of the evening? Like, what were *you* doing most of the time?

L: ummmm....

A: So, you mentioned that you went for dinner....

L: Yeah.

A: And it was very, very crowded.

L:I would be, yeah. I was –

A: So what did you do after dinner, then – after you ate and everyone was drunk?

L: After dinner and everyone was drunk, essentially it became a giant dance party and we were moving tables into the corners and stuff – which was funny because it doesn't happen every time – at Jane Bond. It happens only on the good nights like when people are just feeling confident enough that they can just.... Move all the tables around! And like 'cause it's funny like how some bars will be like-it's like an appropriate situation for dancing; like a lot of them are not. It just doesn't feel appropriate for some reason. Like at Chainsaw its kind of like not really – even though it happens occasionally. But Jane Bond it's like, even though there's no dance-floor, it's just exactly – it elicits that kind of behaviour like exactly just because of the design of the bar or whatever.... Even though it's entirely not designed that way [laughs]! Which is funny.

A: So, by the design, do you mean more the atmosphere than, kind of, the structure of the building, or....?

L: The structure. Like, the atmosphere of the building is like what makes I guess people *want* to dance but the structure, it's like its not even – there's not a dance floor, which is like just funny but it's just funny how people push the tables out of the way anyway because it just needs to happen [laughs] whereas there are bars with massive dance floors where nobody dances in them 'cause it's weird or something for whatever reason. Just 'cause they failed at.... Creating that proper atmosphere, so....

A: Interesting.... Okay, thanks. So then.... Would you say that you go out clubbing regularly and, if so, how often and are there different types of venues that you would frequent, just by random or by, you know, if you had a particular purpose in mind?

L: Oh, okay. Umm.... I would probably go.... two times a week to – whether that's like out to a private party or else like a venue of some kind or just like a bar like Ethel's or whatever. Um.... The different types, I would say, there's like your sit-down, talk bar, where people go for like pitchers and like.... That one you don't really ever expect to meet anyone, if that makes sense, like for some reason. It's like it's not necessarily always true like I'm sure you meet people in those situations but I feel every time I've ever gone to the bar in that way I just immediately expect to not meet people. 'Cause it's more of a structured environment 'cause they also usually are restaurants. It's like you don't feel as comfortable to just let loose and that's part of the – like that's a good part of it; that's why you bring certain groups there or whatever because you don't want that type of interaction, like you want to just sit and shoot the shit kind of thing. Umm.... And then I guess, there's your like dance clubs; which are like so over-rated but um [laughs] but like um and the drinks are always bad. They're always made with that.... Carbonated – they have like the carbonating machine; it's not even like real carbonated water that they buy pop from elsewhere, they're just making it all at home with the fake sugar.

A: So what would you say then you frequent more – which type?

L: Umm.... Well, those are only two types. There's more types.

A: Oh, there's *more* types?

L: [laughing] there's like – this just how I've broken it down in my head like there's there's stuff like Beta and um what else like Starlight is kind of like that too and there's levels of like quality between those but then there's like also stuff like Chainsaw which is like a mish-mash – which is like *my* favourite – and then there's like I guess Jane Bond just kind of feels like a mishmash even though it's *similar* to like a sit-down. I don't know, it's weird. Chainsaw and Jane Bond don't really follow – I guess they're the two categories, the main categories, are the sit-down chill one and then the dancing one. But.... There are definitely – I think the in-between ones are definitely the more popular ones – or at least among young people my age now I'm finding. 'Cause it's.... I don't know. I'm finding it's not like uptight but it's also not *so* out-there.... And then um – sorry, what was the question again?

A: I was just asking how often you went and to what different places or types and if there are particular reasons you would choose to go, say, to one type of venue over the other, or a particular reason that you like the mishmash so much?

L: Okay! You would go-you would go to like the dancing one to meet people or I guess prospective significant other – probably. And then the other one you would go with people you already know or with the intention of being introduced to someone, say, someone's new girlfriend or boyfriend or like someone's friend you have never met before – or you might even go to that first and then move to somewhere else after you've made acquaintance with certain people, if that make sense.

A: And by “somewhere else” you mean....?

L: Like to one of the dance clubs – *if* someone is wanting that type of interaction.

A: Right.

L: Or I like I guess some people just like dancing too which is – if it's the type of music they like.... But um.... Yeah some people just love dancing! [laughs] it's not really with any particular intention, which is like the difference between the people who get married and then like never go out again and the people who still go out after. That's how you can peg someone who just likes dance [laughing]! I guess, well I guess it could be something else but-but like um [laughs] then I would go – like the reason I would like the mishmash so much is like I guess you can bring a larger group of people who will all be happy to be there because there's the possibility – there's like a higher likelihood of still meeting new people while also it not being just entirely.... Kind of based on the pretense or like kind of having that vibe all around you. So people who are not doing that are also happy..... I guess.

A: Okay. Um.... So, I asked you why you would maybe choose to go to a different type of club or venue, but, just, why, *in general*, do you go out, out to the club?

L: Honestly, I think it's to meet new people and have new interactions with people and like whether its just like entertainment – even if you're – even if you're not looking for – I feel pretty similar about it, whether I'm like dating someone or not; like, I like going out and I pretty much don't expect to meet anybody that I actually will have any kind of actual like connection with because of the pretense. I'm sure that's not true; like, I'm sure some people – like for everyone – I'm sure some people have met people while out at a bar and it's been great for them – in terms of significant others. But for me like it's always been not anything in my head about that and it's pretty much entirely written off before I ever meet the person, like [splutters into a laugh] – just 'cause the pretense. So it doesn't really *change*, but.... It's for entertainment purposes and I think

a lot of people view it that way. Like, I think it's kinda.... I don't know it's not like – it's a bit escapist because you're obviously getting into a different state 'cause you're drinking and you're out with your friends and you're just trying to focus on positive things and like laugh at stuff and have things not be heavy. So, I don't think.... Yeah, it's definitely escapist because you-you talking to new people too – even sometimes you end up talking to people you don't want to talk to but its still like you're there with your friends and like you're able to even – you bond with your friends over *that* being funny or whatever, like, things going on around you and you kind of feel like you're in your bubble and people are just kind of passing by. It's like being in the middle of a like – like say you're walking through the tubes where there's like fish around you and sharks around you and stuff....and one might swim up to you and be all, hunh? [laughs]

A: Tap the glass and then –

L: Like [laughing still] that's what it feels like, kind of.

A: Okay [L is laughing]. Good, I like that, okay.

L: You know how unlikely it is for that shark to get into that tube, right?

A: Regardless of what that shark thinks its chances are.

L: Or for me to get out of that tube. It's really not anyone's problem at that point, like....

A: It's funny, you keep kind of leading into what I'm going to ask with the next question, which was: how do you react or interrelate to the people around you?

L: I'm such a good interviewee! No but um....

A: Doing it for me....

L: No, but, um...

A: If there's anything you didn't cover in your answer; you did get into that....

L: Um.... Ah.... I guess it – I guess I’m like changing how I interact with people so it’s kind of funny like ‘cause I used to just be happy-go-lucky like, ennnnngh! like Just trying to be having fun, no matter what, and like now I’ve become more ass hole. Like, [laughs] it’s....

A: When you say “more asshole?”

L: Like I actually – I mean when you’re a girl and you go out, you pretty much get stepped all-over if you like give anyone a half-a-centi – like I feel it’s not probably not everyone, obviously, but there’s a lot of – like a lot of the guys who are like confident to approach you, I’ve found, are the type of people who like – one time I had like sit – a guy like sit on my chair and I’m like, clearly like falling off my chair. Like sit on the half of it until the point – just to be right next to you – to the point that you’re like not even barely on your chair and it’s like you can’t even – you have to *directly* address them to be like, get. Off. My chair. Please. ‘cause you can dodge that like no one gives a crap and like so I just – I realized I’m having a better time lately because for the longest time I felt for a long time that type of behavior was like, there was nothing you could do because it’s almost like you feel like your night is ruined as soon as you upset someone else because like other people showing negativity also ruins your night and it becomes a thing where like its also like you feel like you’re al – you like have to keep everything good, even though that’s *not cool*, if that makes sense? So like I’ve been.... I don’t know it’s been overwhelmingly like that, like, a lot of the time when I go out now with like some of the female friends I have, it’s different when you’re just with females; if you’re with a guy then people will be more like – like if there’s even *one* guy in your group – people will be more pleasant towards you but like I’ve found that it’s like *not that* enjoyable to go out with just girls unless like you’re completely telling people off all the time. ‘cause before it’d be like at the time, ooh this is fun, and then the next day but like uugh, think about all the like the things that people like walked all

over me in any various situation, I'm just like, hmmmnn..... [laughs] So now I'm just kind of like – and it's – it's fun because nobody actually is repell-is repulsed by you being that way but you get to not feel like a push-over but that's kind of how it is. And then when you meet – I don't really ever meet other girls at the bar, almost ever. Like, I'll maybe get introduced to like a friend's friend or something but like I guess that's because most of my friends happen to not have a whole lot of other female friends too. So, I don't think that's like particular to everyone – like I think that's just particular to me, but.... I don't know, I'm generally very jovial and happy when I meet people at the bar. Like, I don't usually try to ever seek out any problems? Like if that makes sense, because the reason you're there is to *not* see people being sad and upset.

[laughs]

A: Okay, so then how would you say you intereagh! – *interact* or interrelate to the DJ or the person in charge of music?

L: Umm.....

A: Do you feel that there is any kind of relation or interaction?

L: Yeah! I feel like people definitely like – I mean, *sometimes*, depending if you can't see them, if you can't really see them, there's music everywhere that you go so you just kind of forget that they're there. But if you can see them, you'll kinda – because you're listening to the music they're playing – it's kinda like when you're at a friend's house and they're putting on a playlist that you really like and you're like, oh yeah! And it's kind of is almost as if they're kind of like the band, even though they're not, because you associate the music playing and the choice of it with them [laugh]

[Door opens and people come in.....

....They are stuffed in bedrooms.]

A: So I'll strike that from the transcript.

L: [breathy wheezy laugh] [unintelligible]....dirt bag. I find that it's stronger at a place like Jane Bond where it's maybe eclectic and they don't play the same stuff and that I might not have heard before. I'm inclined to be more impressed with their D- or be more inclined to be like, oh that's sweet! Like, if I haven't heard it before because I don't have another, like, another group or something to associate with that piece of music other than the DJ playing, because I don't have a name attached to it.

A; Right. So it would be fair to say then that there's more of a connection when there's someone you can see to then kind of attach this exposure to new experience?

L: Yeah, if like especially if you don't already have memory of – if it's a *newer* music....

A: Right.

L: But if you already do have a memory of it, it's still going to – you're still gonna – that's the only thing you have to associate with that person, I guess? Chainsaw's different 'cause they're like always talking and stuff, so they have a personality! [laughs]

A: So what about to the music itself? How does that affect your evening or how do you kind of.... What's your interaction to the music specifically – is it a defining feature of the night or just sort of you know, more of a colouration?

L: Uh, definitely defining for me. I'd say um like when I go to Beta or something, I don't expect to even hear anything because it's just like a beat. I've only went once and I will never go again.... To be fair [laughs]. But like um, I dunno, like I recall there being like a kind of funk, blues, night at starlight a long time ago and it was like one of the funnest, like the most fun dance nights I ever went out to just because it was like music I really, really enjoyed and it was like a

type of dance that like people aren't always doing and people don't know how to do it so there's like a lot of people look hilarious and it was genuinely really awesome [laughs] but um....

A: But that funk and blues night, was it just, um.... Like, playing old tracks or were they remixed and....

L: Um.... I think it was a combination. Like, there were some things played straight and there were some things, like, mash-ups of other things and like – it was so cool. I don't know why like – I know lots of people who used to go to it who I didn't know then and I feel like I was there with a lot of other people that I know now. And then it went a way because I think everybody got busy at the same time who used to go and then when we all came back it was gone! 'cause there was no other group of people to go [laughs] like! But um.... what was I going to say? I think, uh, that I like places like Jane Bond that play – like they *seek out* newer like less-popular music because it's – like you kind of go there to hear it. If you were going to hear a band or something you just heard were good and you never actually listened to them before, it's kind of like that because you can discover new stuff and I feel like when you don't know the music, it puts a different filter on the evening too because it makes it feel a little bit more foreign or especially like the French music night they had, because when it's in a different language – like it was still half in English – but some songs were in French [laughs]. It was like, why is everything on the radio in English? No it's not! Oooh! [laughs] When I was in France I actually – it was genuinely in denial; it was like playing in English as we spoke: no it's not, it's just that station. I'm like.... I'm like [mock slapping of wrist] [laughs]....

A: Slap your hand.

L: Um.... [sighs] I'm trying to think of what other places.... Chainsaw, it's like classic rock and like pop hits but it's obviously karaoke so there's obviously the entertainment factor there to.

Like I go there also because even if people are bad at singing it you still recognize the hits and it's still like.... Nostalgic kind of because I recall in high school everybody in our age group anyway it was like cool to like classic rock and stuff like that and everybody listened to that – at least the people I knew so it kind of brings you back to that because I don't listen to it as much anymore. But um....

A: So would you say that you kind of end up behaving differently or choose to kind of, ah.... Engage in different activities depending on what kind of music you end up with or is that more tied to just where they're playing it and *because* that's the kind of music that they play?

L: Well, it's definitely tied to the setup of the venue, 'cause like, as I said, it's strange that we're – like a t Jane Bond – it's strange that people dance even though it's not setup that way. But, um....

A: I guess what I'm asking is, say you're at Jane Bond, and if they had say a French night or a Top40 night or.... Some other oddball type of night, would that kind of affect how you go about your evening, how you behaved, whether you danced, how you danced.... If you try to engage with more people, less people – anything like that?

L: True. Um.... I feel like yes because I feel like if you go to a bar like Phil's which is a bar that is like Starlight but better [laughs] like it's just more fun. Like it's not as shitty drinks and it's like.... Generally just feels more comfortable. And I feel like there when they have like say like electronic music nights like on Saturdays, that's definitely different than when you go to the same venue for like an 80s night and I feel like the 80s night everybody seems to like cluster with their friends and be all.... Like I dunno, I think it's mostly just like nostalgic for most of the people and their friends. I don't really know if it is for 19-year-olds but like.... Who knows? But um, like on the electronic night music it seems everyone is like – it just seems – I generally feel

more pumped for it and more social and more – but it’s just because of the more high-energy music, I guess? And um.... It’s also because it’s like barling and you can’t hear anything it feels like you’re underwater – which also I think contributes to like disorientation a little bit and I think some of the bars do that on purpose. It would make sense because when it’s like quieter you feel a lot more sober, even when you’re drunk ‘cause you feel more visible – even though it’s sound and you’re not actually behind anything! [laughs] like, ah fuck!

A: You mean the Wall Of Sound was a metaphor?

L: Damn it! [laughing] It’s like Snow, he’s just like naked again..... My love, follow your light/fall on your light. I forget where that’s from.

A: Alright, do you use drugs or alcohol when clubbing and, if so, what and how do you use it? I guess, can you describe why and how it affects the experience?

L: Um, only alcohol because if you smoke weed you might as well not go out at all. Like, [laughs] I would say, that’s only for like watching Mr. Bean.

....I would say I drink – I drink because I, like, I’m – I think a lot of people are nervous, nervous type people or like, even if you’re social, still certain situations are like a little much, or.... I dunno, look it’s M-----

[intrusion of friend. Stashed in bedroom.]

L: It’s trivial that I’m a dirt bag.

A: The question was, do you use drugs or alcohol when clubbing, if so, what and how and can you describe it’s effects on your experience?

L: Okay. I drink. Preferably a lot. And it’s mostly because it makes it – it makes *me* more – I dunno, it makes me not focus on anything and it makes you experience the night without like scrutiny on specific things or specific things that were bothering you or specific like.... I dunno,

you don't like hang on to things the same way that you would when you're sober. Like just when something passes by it's kind of like when some people from like Eastern religions and stuff will say you should never hold onto stuff and it will just pass away, it's kind of like that but without like the choice when you're drunk [laughs], you know what I mean? Because you can't! Like you pretty much can't unless you're like angry or something and that's like when – I guess some people when they like freak out on someone when they're drunk or something and something happens and they can't let go of it and then when you're in a drunken state it's obviously bad for that to happen. I just feel it doesn't happen as much – or if you're in a good mood then it's perfect, like you don't hang onto things. You aren't thinking you just meander through your night interacting with people and it's generally a good experience because of drinking, I think.

A: SO you mention when you're in a good mood; is it critical to be in that good mood *before* the evening starts if you're-if you're going to be consuming alcohol.

L: It's not critical, definitely not critical because I've been in like a bad mood before consuming alcohol, been like not in a happy place before going out and like – because you're with your friends and so long as there's the majority of people in a good mood then you get kind of sucked into that sort of general vibe. Whereas if there were like half of you in a bad mood it would just be horrible and like [laughs] you'd be like really drained out and even if you were drunk you'd just feel it would be depressing or something. Like you need that high energy in at least the majority of people to be that... Like positive and kind of yeah like not pessimistic about the evening.

A: So then, I don't know if you could maybe just make, almost like a check-list, what governs the qualities of your experience. i.e. what makes for a good night, or could change the overall course of how things go, or your experience at the club; what would make maybe a night

different or unusual, like kinda stand out at the end of the day. How would you judge a good night, like, what do you need, what do you need to have?

L: Um.... You need to have like, I find when people don't meet up with friends before the night is like already kind of well-into it you're less likely to have a good night because you're just like kind of starting at that point. Whereas you kind of need like a – like a... *aperitif* with your closer friends, I feel, like it's better.

A: A social *aperitif*, I like that.

L: Yeah, cause it's like or else you're just kind a throw into the.... Like into the jungle I guess and You're not really – you have to already be like ready, in a state where you're already having a good time before you get there is important. Like, I think you can still get away with having a good night, even if you didn't do that but like it's much more difficult and you're like more aware. Where, if you already establish a kind of good vibe before you go out then it's just easy sailing from then. And another thing is like, I guess.... Obviously it affects people in their financial situation (laughs) 'cause like I mean it's not – it probably – it's probably stressful for people when they go out and they haven't got that much money going on and like, every time they buy something, they're like, watching their 50 dollars dwindle that they have to their name and it's probably like terrible. So I think that's HUGE.... Um.... I think you have to have money pretty much, and then , what else.... If the bar is like, I mean there needs to be seating enough for everybody because it's always weird when like you go to the bar and there's not enough places to sit and then you kind of end up sitting at the bar, or something like that.

Or if you go dancing, if you're not all sufficiently drunk then it's like the standing around situation, so that's – which is kind of when everyone else is dancing and your group is not that drunk or not that into it yet and you're just there it kind of puts a damper onto the evening

because of the anticipation and that like responsibly to get where all the other people are. Um... What else? There can be *people* who ruin your night for you (Laughs) Like certain, if if they're not having a good – even if they *are* having a good time, they can still ruin your night for you, you know! Believe it or not!

A: Interesting.

L: (Laughs) Um... Yeah, no, it's like I think it's like there's a social protocol where it's like... But because people are drunk, It's like they don't understand you give a vibe or your, like, *not* wanting their presence. Because , it,s people are even likely to be, she's lovely! Or he or she is loving it! And then like, than they already are, I've been learning a lot people have no idea when people are not loving it [laughs].

A: So, when you mention protocol, what is the protocol, in a nutshell?

L: I feel like.... People usually – I mean like, there are people who have trouble discerning what is appropriate and what is not – but people for the most part, ideally, we'll say ideally, like, can feel it when you're not responding to them or like.... Generally it's just not like improving your night for them to be around you and it's not like it was expected; it's not like you came with them, it's not like, you know what I mean? And but then when someone doesn't take that hint, and I think it's harder for people to take that hint when they're drinking, it kind of ruins everyone's night because if even if just one person is not happy about it, everyone else can tell because probably they can tell if they're friends they can just see that something is not.... Like, welcome, I guess and that can kinda – because there is a lot of pressure to not tell that person off because you don't like to be excluding people even when they deserve it, if that makes sense?

[laughs]

A: I understand what you mean.

L: – and then you babysit for the night and you protect their feelings for the night instead of having a fun time [laughs].

A: Okay.... Um.... So then, how do you feel or what is your state of mind before you go out?

L: Um....

A: Like, would you say there's kind of an average, or sorry an – yeah, an average state that you feel before, whether it be one of anticipation or one of preoccupation, of it it's just, however you happen to be at that time of the day.

L: Um, generally I feel it's just anticipation 'cause.... I dunno, it's like.... you're going to the zoo you know? I mean, zoos are bad; don't go to zoos. But but like [laughing] it's like that! If you've probably been aware you're going to go out for the day and you kind of have been going through your grind and then when you're going out you're like, I'm going to see my friends, there's gonna be music, just gonna be kind of like laid back, don't have to cling to every single thing that's going through my head, just kinda relax and get out of it a little bit? Whereas also though if your day is busy sometimes your day's consumed by that like you're – you know you need to be ready for that like you need to be done everything by that time so sometimes when you're going out, you're just like exhausted by getting everything done in time for it. And then you're like barely getting out the door and by that point it's like almost a mechanism, like, you've agreed to go out and you like, you might even be completely wiped, and you at that point there's not even a whole lot of anticipation. Like, it's kind of like psyching yourself up; kind of like doing having a boxing match that you have that you don't even really want to go into because you're already all fucked up [laughs]. Like you've already been fighting people for like an hour! Like [laughs] but then after that that kind of ache goes away because it is like relaxing

in its own way so once you're out for a bit, you kinda, like, get - that goes away. But those are kind of like the two ways I go into a night. [laughs]

A: Okay, and then what about afterwards? So, whether it's at the end of the night or the next morning....

L: Um, I.... I hear a lot, myself and others, when you – some people who drink a lot, they'll forget things and then that's like that's ins-that's-that's- that if you're even anxious person at all it's like: *sooo* terrible 'cause it's like if you're – I find that a hangover feels, honestly, feels like.... It feels like, almost, like, emotionally painful its so – it's so shitty. Like, you just feel like completely drained *blehndiengh* and if you have any other element of stress being caused, then you wait a minute you're like me and you're just like, last night was fun! Do you remember crying? No.... like [laughs] you know what I mean? It's like.... shit. Like you're clearly all over the place like I think when you drink you get a little all-over-the-place and then if you're ever at a point where you don't remember something it's incredibly stressful, even if you come out fine and no one is like offended by you in any way you're still like – there were *so* many people I interacted with....

A: Worth the trade-off?

L: Most of the time. Most of the time. But uh [laughs] but I mean you aim not to do that but like afterwards usually you feel like – but you feel accomplished, if it was fun because like you know everybody has like these nice memories from like and you and everyone laughed a lot and I feel like – maybe it's just the way society is these days, people not as – It doesn't feel like there's not that many opportunities to laugh your head off; I'm sure li – it does happen, but it's like.... It's easier in those situations and people can just exist and be silly and not like really worry about everything else going on in their life and I think that's why they do it. It's almost become just

like associated with the act of going out, those types of behaviors. Like, even when people stay in, I feel like they're less.... Less crazy, like, even though they can have fun and hang out, unless it's like a party, which takes on the form of a night out, kind of.

A: Are there any notable differences in your state during periods between visits to clubs. So, say there would be a prolonged stretch where you.... Like, longer than between when you would normally go. Um.... Do you notice any change?

L: Um.... Probably, or more stressed out, or maybe you're like feeling more ah.... Restless or more like.... Cooped up, I guess. ...And um I think especially when people go out dancing because I think it's nice for them to blow off some steam and like you don't really dance or do that on a regular basis *unless* you go out for the most part. I'm sure some people do but like.... I feel like the majority of people probably don't have a lot of – find a lot of opportunities where they feel that that's a thing they do or engage in unless they're out.... And also just that general state of.... Forced Buddhist zen state where don't follow anything and you don't give a shit – give a shit about anything [laughs] is very desirable. But is why people do any kind of drugs I think or why they do anything that's escapist, is to be in that – it's like chasing that state, kind of.... And yeah when when you don't go out for a long time I think you feel cooped up and you would like to and if you go out too much though it almost becomes like a - the inertia is like.... Gets really crazy. Like if you go out a lot you just keep doing it because you've been doing it?

A: Do you mean inertia or momentum?

L: Uh.... Inertia's like when a movement starts and then keeps going isn't it?

A: That's momentum.

L: It's momentum?

A: Yeah.

L: hmmm, maybe. What's inertia?

A: An object that's at rest will stay at rest until acted upon... by a greater force.

L: hmmm, maybe I mean moment. But um, yeah, the momentum picks up and then eventually you just completely fall apart [laughs].

A: Train-wreck.

L: Yeah.

A: Okay. What benefits do you feel you gain from clubbing?

L: Hmm! I just think it's a form of.... It's like stress-relief and a form of just.... It's like therapeutic in it's own way because it gives you.... It's interesting way to view people, because like its like less structured and... I don't know it's a really.... Free environment. Like, the way I interact with people at a bar, it's so much more.... Like, I can really say anything the hell that I want to say. Whereas like if I'm at a grocery store or I'm at breakfast like – you still can say whatever the hell you want but it's like.... People look at you more funny but I've been finding that's also awesome to do, like, in general situations! [laughs] But, I feel, most people operate, like their social conduct is different during the day. It's like everyone is businesslike almost, even though you're not in a business and then in that situation you can just be very honest with the people around you, like even new people you're meeting. Which is.... really cool I think.

A: Right, and then the difference in how you see them?

L: The difference in how you see them? That's *bad* I think because you don't see the mas much as – it's not very respectful like from any point of view I think, from a girls' point of view or a guys' point of view. You go, like I said, like without intention of really taking much from the night, which is what makes it so stress-free and like no-pressure and whatever. But I feel like

most people still act with like respect towards people but I feel like you do still kind of view them like the shark passing by in the tank, like, in a way. So it might be....

A: So it's surface but interesting?

L: Yeah! Like surface but it's *also* more honest than usual. Like, more honest than the interactions you have with strangers on a daily basis but like more surface than interactions you have with like close-friends. Even mine. Like, there's like the three different ways of interacting I guess.

A: Right, so it doesn't go too deep but everything is – ah – everything is honest, as opposed to....

L: Yeah, even if you were talking about something deep, it would still somehow be surface.

A: Right....

L: [laughs] You know what I mean?

A:

....Okay. Any downsides?

L: Downsides are it's terrible for your health and your wallet.

A: Fair enough.

L:and also for your dignity sometimes [laugh], if you do a poor job of it! Like, [laughs] you're not a very good partyer, sir!Clubbing is not your *forté*. [laughs] No, but like, if you don't have self control, like have an addictive personality and you don't manage money well, you're gonna have more shame than benefit out of it [laugh]. Like, it – it needs to be used wisely, I guess, which is why its inters – it's good to try to seek those types of experiences elsewhere because then it doesn't glorify the going out, drinking beer, and spending money. I don't that's good, how glorified it is, even though, even if people want to pre-drink before going to the bar some people are like I *eaahh* but it's so much more cost effective. Obviously not as interesting

because there's not as much like things going on around you; you're just sitting in someone's living room listening to music. But, um, I think it's important to – it-it like it's better to make those things cool again.... I think? Because it's.... I do find a lot, I do have friends, even now, who can't really afford to go out, if that makes sense?

A: So in trading off, then, from I guess the glorification of *going out* and drinking and dancing, aside from the, you know, the obvious economic savings, is there anything that you would say then, that the private experience, like, staying home in your living room and maybe doing all three of those things – drinking beer, spending a hell of a lot *less* money, and maybe even still dancing in the living room or something – is there anything that then – that would have something of value that could be *missing* in the other experiences, or is that simply for money-convenience's sake?

L: Umm, I think it would have... I feel like the more secure you are, the more you will prefer that to like going out because I think a lot of it is that people just like to be seen, you know what I mean? They want to be where – as much as they are watching other people – they like to be where they like – they like to know *they're* being watched, does that make sense? It's kind of like a.... and the meeting of new people; it's kind of like a self-esteem thing, I think people really enjoy it and that's why it is surface; like, the people really get a self-esteem boost from like they're interactions with other people who're strangers *in that way* and in that context because it's like.... I don't know, like, your friends are you friends; they're like honest but also probably want you to be happy and it's like interesting to see the way people will treat you and respond to you I guess. Whereas like maybe people hanging out at home with a group of friends – if they're like secure with their group of friends and they're like happy and they're not really seeking much – I think it's less likely that – like I think they might enjoy it even more.... But

also the atmosphere is not so much there.... But at that point I think it's just the atmosphere if you're like – I think it has a lot to do with people's security with themselves and like satisfaction with the people they know in their personal life.... I guess? Sometimes? Maybe not in all areas; it could be just in relationships – relationships-wise, or maybe people don't feel like they relate to all of their friends and they're always like seeking, I guess? It would depend on how comfortable you are with your situation, whether you prefer out or in, I think.

A: Okay, we're almost done. For you, do you think the clubbing experience is essentially a.... it says private but I mean personal – is it a personal, subjective experience or a communal experience, something shared?

I realize there's a bit of A, a bit of B but, at its core, what would it be, for you, yourself?

L: I feel like at it's core everything is a personal subjective experience though but it's like, so that's just like a philosophical like debate I guess you could say 'cause like, *really*, you're in your head the whole time and even a communal experience is like your interpretation of it being communal; it's still in your head and someone might not even be feeling the same thing: it was you. No matter how, oh my god! We always think the same shit! *blahger*-like, no matter how much of it you're all giddy about feeling like they said the thing you were gonna say it still doesn't even really mean they're on the exact same level as you. So like but that's just how I view it so I feel like at that point it's still isolating but like everything is. But like....

A: Does that – does the clubbing context exacerbate, maybe, either aspect of it in any capacity?

L: The communal or....?

A: Yeah. Would it make one *feel* stronger than the other, kinda regardless of your general outlook?

L: Um, Oh yeah! It makes you feel more – ah, depending.... Like, it depends, if you are there with friends who are – or even friends you don't know well but are feeling like you're creating like a more – a stronger connection to them, then you'll feel like more communally connected – connected with people and uh.... If you're there and everyone is kind of like – like or if you're being left out in some way, it feels extremely isolating, even if everyone is just sitting there, people are talking to you sometimes – if you can tell it's just kind of like everyone's in their own world, maybe someone's arguing with someone, some people are catching up on something.... If you end up the odd-one-out it's isolating. But even – it depends on your mood at that point.... Because sometimes you'll be like sitting there and uh talking to people and just like, it's kind of like you back into your own head and you watch everything and there's someone like *right here* talking to you and when you take a step back it's almost like it's grotesque sometimes.

A: So, again, it's an environment that may foster *feelings* of shared –

L: Yeah.

A: But even that is, is kind of rooted in what state you're in, very personal, private.

L: Yeah.

A: Okay, okay. And, last thing I want to know is, for some reason, if you could not go or could no longer go clubbing, is there anything you could do in its place that would satiate the same desire or the same kind of.... I guess – yeah, desire to go out and, if so, what and how?

L: Um, I guess in the sense of if you were going out to meet people or a significant other or something, you could meet – literally just online dating would be the close – closest thing, I mean, if you couldn't leave your house. Like, if you were incredibly crippled in some way, disabled.

A: Or, if just all of a sudden, all the clubs were to just disappear overnight?

L: Oh! I feel like people would just be throwing parties all the time.

A: That's what you would do?

L: Yes.[laughs]

A: Alright, thanks so much.

L: I thought you meant I was like unable to move! *Oh!*

A: No, no, no! Just, just that *that* particular option wasn't available....

L: I'd be like buzzing my friends all the time to bring me ice-cream and then I would be online dating.

[laughter]

A: Great.

L: I don't know, what the hell else do you do when you can't leave your house? [laughs]

A:pretend your legs don't work.... Alright.

B2e. ERIKA

A: Okay, just to get started, if you want to give me just a general overview of your participation.

E: That's a lot of topic materiel! Lie, I've always been into dance music since I was a kid and I didn't really know much about the party scene and in high school I had a friend who ah.... I guess she invited me to a rave and I was like, ooh a rave? That's still a thing? I thought that like died with the nineties. She's like, no! Sweet party this weekend. Like, oh, alright sounds good so I went and it was just the best night of my life; I met so many people and fuckin' like ten twelve years later still doing it. I.... like, uh, most of my friends are DJ's at this point a lot of them throw parties in Toronto or did for a long time and I got to help out with making Deco and stuff

like that and I was like a.... art person so it was a lot of fun to do that and like, a lot of publicity too to get your art displayed at parties with like hundreds of people. So that was a lot of what kept me going to the parties and, it's like, meeting people and displaying my art, I guess. Not so much anymore; I don't go to that many parties; I'm not as involved throwing them but I still love the culture.

A: Right. What kind of pieces were you doing?

E: Umm, like, initially nothing too elaborate; cartoon characters drawn on poster board kind of thing, like, ah, just a lot of stupid stuff, just like blowing up balloons [laughs]. Umm, I guess I've done some things at festivals. I have, like, a glow in the dark wall that you can draw on with lasers.

A: Wow.... That's cool.

E: Which is a lot of fun. I'd like to do more stuff but the budget doesn't necessarily allow for it and it's hard to convince people who are throwing events to front you the money to make art for their event. They'd rather you just show up for FREE! with the art, so.... It's disenchanting.

A: So, how, on average, how frequently do you think you go out to parties....ish?

E: If not weekly, then every second-week. At least once a month, sometimes multiple times a week. But it's not like, I....uh, my friends do a Wednesday night event and it's pretty low-key. Maybe fifty people or something like that – so you can say it's still a rave; you're still going out to a party but it's not staying up all night doing drugs [laughs].

A: Right, okay. Cool. Umm.... So, personally, why do you feel that you're going out. What's the draw?

E: Uhh.... The music initially was the draw. Like, someone said, you can hear the weird nerdy, like, dance music that you don't get to hear normally out at a venue and like what? What the

hell? I thought nobody was listening to this stuff. To sort of find people that were not like, not only listening to it but actively involved in making it was pretty cool. Um, just mostly friends I'd say was the biggest draw. I – I didn't have a lot of friends? At the time when I started going to parties and then going to parties I made just, like, tonnes of friends. And it's really the only time, you know, you necessarily see a lot of people. There's a lot of people you don't make the time to see on a daily basis but you know if you go out to this event those people are going to be there. I went to a party three or four weeks ago and there was people there from the states there was people from like Quebec that I hadn't seen in years and I consider to be good friends but I hadn't seen them in forever and so you know sometimes you're going to run into people you haven't seen in ages and you don't really get that when you're not going out to a party unless you, like, actively making the commitment to get someone to visit you.

A: Obviously you're there, and you're hanging out with the people you know....Just, with the crowd, can you say what's your interaction like on a regular night with everybody who's just kind of there?

E: I mean, the parties that I am going to are – I don't really want to use the word 'underground' because they're public, anyone can go to them. They're not elusive or hard to find but they're smaller, just like, more intimate events and the people that are going to them are more into techy, nerdy sort of stuff rather than just going out to.... drink beer and hit on women [laughs] I'm not into the bro scene so I'm like guaranteed that I'm going to interact with a bunch of positive people who are, like, have a good outlook on life and are not just there to get shit-faced and wake up with some woman they don't know [laughs]

A: Right, so what are they there for, then?.

E: Uh.... What are they there for then? [laughs] I dunno! I know why I'm there? I... like... I like the music, I like the people, the art is cool, I like drugs.... But I don't know if I would say that was, like, a draw but, like, it's a nice place to do them. I can do them at home and have just as good a time but it's more fun to interact with people, I guess? Why are they there? You'd have to ask them independently.

A: yeah, no, sorry, that was poorly worded. I meant it as a kind of.... You know, they colloquial "They" – I meant mostly you, which you then answered, so....

So, when you're at a party, do you have any, I guess, person-to-person interaction with the DJ or the DJs? Or are they just kind of set apart?

E: I mean, the parties that I go to most of the DJs are, like, close friends of my so yes. Personally I don't like to go on stage; I'm kind of a shy person so I don't like to go up there and be on the stage. I have a lot of friends who love being up on stage and even if they barely know they DJs, they'll, like, fight to get onto the stage so they can, like, dance in front of people which doesn't do it for me. I have no interest in being in front of a crowd of people! Um, but, I do – I will go backstage, like, behind the curtain I guess [chucking] and hang out with the DJs because they are friends of mine. Um, my ex-husband is one of the people who like threw the main Happy-Hardcore parties in Toronto for, like, a decade or something like that. So obviously I know most of the people in like the DJ circuit of, like, that scene. Ah, at shows that I don't know the DJs I'd say that I probably don't interact with them much at all unless it was a DJ that I really wanted to meet and, like, get an autograph or something. I have – do you know Prozac?

A: No, I don't.

E: It was, like, a band from the nineties; I got them to sign my hat at a convention last year so that was pretty cool. And this [shows me autograph] is a European DJ that I really like. I got him

to sign my hat. So even though I didn't know the guy I did make an effort to go meet him but it's like, oh hi! I've loved your music forever! Sweet thanks! Can I get an autograph! Yeah, sure! Signs it, you know, takes a picture with you – really pleasant, like, most of the DJs I've met have been really pleasant. But I don't know if they're just, like, putting on a front because they're an entertainer or if they're genuinely like that but like.... Seems pretty genuine usually. You don't travel across the world to play music for people if you're not having a good time with the fans, right?

A: That's a good point. SO then what's your relationship, when you're in the club, with the music, then? When you're interacting with what the DJ's are actually *doing*?

E: Okay that's.... I dance a lot. If I'm not dancing, I'm probably drinking a beer at the bar and talking about how the music is bad with a friend. I don't really leave; I'm the kind of person who stays all night. If there's someone there who I can talk to and be entertained by, I'll stay even if the music isn't fantastic. I just like the social interaction, like, being out and near people.

A: When you're out, do you use drugs or alcohols?

E: [laughs] Yeah [laughs].

A: Would you mind elaborating on what kind of stuff?

E: Uhh.... Yeah sure. Um, I just – when I started partying – *before* I started partying actually – before when I knew raves were a thing I was doing ecstasy in high school. Just a friend of mine was like, oh, I have these pills and that's how I – that was the first drug I ever did, actually. That's how I got into it. And I did that for years but eventually it does just stop being entertaining. I mostly drink and do K now, which I find rather comparable – except that you can't buy K at the liquor store, obviously. I have done other things, like, I used to do psychedelics at festivals and stuff like that but I don't really, like, do that anymore. I just got

overwhelmed once, it's not for me. But I respect them for what they are and I would say that – not that you asked! – but I imagine that most people in the rave scene are probably doing some combination of like coke, ecstasy, K, drinking, typically – sometimes psychedelics – that's about it though.

A: Yeah, definitely seems embedded. But what I would like to know is what about that environment is so apt for taking drugs. Like, why is it a good place for that?

E: Because everybody's really friendly. Like, even when they're sober. It's not like, oh, they're on drugs so they're friendly or something like that. Even sober I find everybody really pleasant. They're not really there to get anything from each other? They're there just because they like interacting with each other? It's not like they're there trying to take you home with them or something. They're just there because they like talking to people and like hanging out listening to weird music in a dark room with bright lights! It's obviously a very stimulating environment, like, when done right. It can be in a dark, boring room and that's.... not as great but you can still have a good time if the music is good. I guess it's been a long time since we've really had underground parties, like, in a warehouse and stuff like that but what I – like, probably the first couple years I was partying we had a lot of, like, weird warehouse parties and that was, like, thrilling in its own right; you, like, break into a warehouse and have a party. That's a much different concept than paying money to go to a bar or club or something like that. That's a whole other beast.

A: And what would be an ideal kind of setting be like if you could describe an idealized....

E: To me?

A: Yeah.

E: Like, an abandoned warehouse that someone had gone through the effort of actually decorating, like, with lights and stuff. You know, power the equipment with a generator or something like that. Like, I don't know, 200 people would be pretty cool. It's, ah, like, it's never gonna happen [laughs].

A: Yeah but, if it's like, *ahh*, if I could have my fantasy party?

E: Abandoned warehouse filled with people.

A: Filled with people and lights and sound?

E: Yeah!

A: Okay, cool. You mentioned what you are going to do is dependant on whether the music is worth dancing to or not but when you're judging whether a night was a good night or a bad night or just kind of an average night, what are some of the key factors or what are the things that appraisal will hinge on?

E: Where my friends there? Did I find the music worth dancing to? I guess, did I, like, technically, did I find that the DJ was doing a good job? You know, because you can play good music and it can still be boring. Like, if the DJ is playing good music and they're, like, actual technical skills are good it makes it that much better.... I guess.... Just, like the atmosphere or the staff. Like, there's some venues that you go to and you wait forever to get in; when you finally get to security the frisk you like unreasonably hard, like, make you take your shoes off and go through every little pocket in your bag and open your wallet and stuff, which, like, most parties, when you look at the crowd of the parties I go to, you know most of them are just – if you don't have a machete in their bag, they're not there to kill anyone, they don't have like a giant bag of meth strapped to their thigh; you can tell just by looking at most of the people and while I appreciate the safety that comes with having like a really intense security check, it just

like kind of dampens the night to be slowed down getting into a party. If you have to wait an hour to get in to a party you've missed an entire DJ set and you know the security's.... I've had security like kick down a door while I was peeing once. I literally was just sitting in there peeing; I had barely been in there any time and they like kicked down the door and I was like [makes face and gesticulates] and they were like, just hurry up and get out of there – I.... Okay, I'll pee faster! [laughing] and that kind of stuff ruins your night but um.... I don't know. My personal parameters for having a good night seem pretty minimal: Just like whether my friends are there and whether I'm gonna dance and have a good time. A bad night would be, like, I drank too much and threw up and got kicked out or something [laughs] – or the music was just awful, which does happen.

A: You mentioned a DJ can still have real technical excellence but still be kind of boring; how would one manage that?

E: To have good technical skills and stuff be boring?

A: Yeah, what's the difference between being proficient and boring versus–

E: –No–

A: –being entertaining.

E: If they have good technical skills it's probably entertaining. I don't know if I phrased that wrong. I mean the music selection can just not appeal to me – and maybe it does appeal to other people. It's just, if you pay to go – I went somewhere recently where I went to see someone I really wanted to see – I can't remember who it was – I got there: I was just bored the whole night. Was really pissed off, like, wow, I really wanted to see these people for years and I know, like, it's eluding me right now I went to the _____ I thin kit was. I went predrinking with a group of my friends beforehand, we were having a great time. When we got the party, just did

not have fun at all. The crowd was just overpacked, security was really rude, the drinks were overpriced, and the crowd was just.... I don't want to stigmatize clubbers and be like, clubbers suck; ravers are better, but it was just really clubby – like, nobody was talking to each other; people were really just like crammed into the bottle service area, which I think is ridiculous, like, why pay 200 dollars for a bottle of vodka? But the DJs – while I know that they're good, they make some great music – their The songs that they chose that night I think were appealing more to a mainstream crowd rather than some of the like weird music they normally would play or put out. So it was strange just to like want to hear them play this one really weird song and then they play like dance floor.... Hit kind of music that didn't seem like them at all? But I guess that's what makes the money so then that's what they're going to play. I can't blame them. I can't blame them at all – but *I* didn't have a good night.

A: Kind of a sell-out set sort of thing

E: Yeah!

A: I'm not trying to pigeon-hole you into stereotyping but could you maybe describe for me what would be some general differences between a rave crowd versus a club crowd?

E: [laughs]

A: Or totally stereotype if you'd like.... Just to give me a better idea.

E: It's, like, so it's one of those things that's difficult to put into words without actually having *experienced* the two different things. I started – before I started going to raves, my concept of going out to a club was pretty accurate to what it is like and whenever I go to a normal club for a normal club night, I'm always disappointed and want to leave. Um, people are emotionally cold, not interested in talking to strangers, they're more into drinking typically. People go to a club and they just want to get as drunk as humanly possible and that is like I don't know their excuse

to escape being, like, a reasonable person and do things that they, like, wouldn't normally do, I guess? I find it very loud and packed and there's... there'll be a lot of people but they're not... Experiencing each other? They're just like there being their own loud, drunk self and like there's not really much that I get out of that whereas I go to a rave and like you walk in the door and people are smiling at you and, like, oh my god hi! And shaking your hand being like, Oh, I love your hair! And, like, neat pants! And, like, people at raves will wear really outlandish things and will make them themselves or buy them from other artists. It's very, like, artistic and inspiring place to be. Whereas you go to the club and everyone's wearing, like, the same black dress and, like, jeans and a white t-shirt with some dub-step band on the front of it. Which... Like, I can't rag on their culture because they do what they do and obviously it's working for them but it's just not inspiring to me at all.

A: So, on a night when you're going to go out, could you maybe describe your general state or your state of mind before hand?

E: Totally anxious. Terrified. I have, like, super-bad anxiety. It used to be a lot worse; it's better now because I know, when I get there, I'm gonna know people. I can predict that pretty easily. Especially now with social media, everyone's like, oh, I'm going! Or I'm not going. So, it's easy to text people – when I first started going to parties there was a little bit of social media but no one was using Facebook yet. Umm, so, you got a flier; someone handed you a flier at a party and you go, oha, this date, this place, and you'd go and just sort of, like, hope people you knew were gonna be there and I used to get so anxious that I would get... I don't know if I ever threw up but the feeling that you get when you wanna throw up and you just don't wanna go, almost. But you go no, I'm gonna go there and I'm going to have a blast. And everything you get there and

[it would] just melt away. So excited. But getting ready and getting out the door, like, for me anyway – I'm so enthusiastic about it but it was like almost difficult to do.

A: Interesting. What about afterwards? Maybe, immediately afterwards as well as the next day when you wake-up?

E: Depends on what drugs I did that night! [laughs]

A: Fair, fair.

E: Uhh, like, sometimes you get home, aahh, I'd say most of the time afterwards I'm still pretty enthused. I – unless I had too much to drink and like I'm just dead-tired and just want to fall asleep. I'd say typically after a party I'll stay up all night. Usually, I would go to someone's house after or have people at my house, which, sort of, like, when you have an after-party like that it keeps the party going. And honestly usually the after-party is the best part because when you get to, like, interact with people with not, like, loud pounding music – and sometimes the after-party will last like a whole day, just hanging out with people the entire day after having partied with them the entire night. But, I mean, even if you're sober – if you party sober – there's still an emotional comedown after you go and interact with all these people. There's all these bright lights and loud noise, you come home and have to, like, decompress from, like, having had this like explorative interaction.

A: And then the next day?

E: The next day? Uhh, tired usually. Even if you've been sober all night, you've probably – you've stayed awake all night. Yeah.... But that's only if you stay awake all night. If you go home at, like, 1:00 or 2:00 and get a good night's sleep, you'll probably feel fine the next day.

A: But you're one to stay.

E: I'm one to stay. Even if the party's not great, I usually stay.

A: Just in case?

E: I don't know.... I like it.

A: In-between parties do you notice any kind of change in how you feel if there's kind of a longer gap between?

E: I mean, I've been pretty steadily going to parties for a decade so, yeah, if there wasn't a party.... Aahh, there wasn't really a happy-hardcore party for, like, a long-time. We didn't really have, like, a big party for, like, the past year and I would say, like, that you're just sort of anticipating the next one, really. You're waiting for the next time you're going to see those people again. And the longer it gets spread-out, the – it's not too hard to put out of your mind but you know you want to go out to a party and see those people again, right? Um.... Yeah, I dunno. I probably don't have that much space between parties so I know when the next party's gonna be in like 3-weeks from now; I've got.... Other things to do [sort of a nervous laugh].

A: So from your experiences, do you feel there are any direct benefits that you have reaped from going to raves?

E: Uhhh, I am much more social now. Before I went to raves – I'm not going to say I didn't have friends, but I had 4 or 5 close friends and now, like, I'm not going to say all thousand people I have on Facebook are my close friends but I did – I have tried to cut down on the people I have on Facebook and I couldn't do it because I like all of those people so much that I, like, I don't want to do that; I want to see all these people again! I like them, I like being friends with them! This is just a, like, a definitely kicked my butt into gear into being social and meeting people. Umm, I've never really known what I wanted to do with my life but I've always been kind of artistic so, getting into raving, finding out, like, OH! I can just, like.... Make.... Weird.... Clothing and wear it and other people will like it was inspiring to me to start making my own

clothing and I'm, like, trying to start a business now, 10 years later, to sell clothes to other people who are interested in that stuff. So, that's been beneficial to me.

A: Kind of every-day street clothes or kind of specific – I don't want to say "costume," but....

E: Umm, yeah – I mean, I'm a cosplayer too. I go to anime cons. So, some combination of, like, weird, ravey cosplay clothes but, like, also.... I wanna, like.... It's not really, like, *my* thing but I think it would be popular to make sort of everyday street-clothes that were, like, a *little-bit* weird. So you can get away with like wearing it to work but they're not super-boring. So, like, a spectrum.

A: Cool, well best of luck with that venture.

E: Thank you.

A: What about any downsides?

E: I've fucked up my serotonin pretty good. [pause, then laughs] Umm, downsides?It can definitely be an excuse to do drugs that you probably wouldn't do if you weren't going out to parties. It is difficult for me to go to a party and stay sober. I feel definitely feel like I have a pretty good control over it and won't *really* do drugs outside of parties, that much? But you, like, you get there, and if the music is shitty, and if you're having a band time and, like, well I'll just make it good! Just buy a beer, do some drugs! But, um, downsides in general?

It can be kind of.... Absorbing I guess? You get into raves and you start going to them every weekend and you miss out on other things you might have done. I don't know what those things are because I don't do them! But, [laughs]That's all I got for that.

A: Okay, that's fine....just checking. [E laughs] So, do you find, when you're at a rave, what you're experiencing is something that is primarily personal, kind of internal feelings, or more of an external community sort of thing?

E: Uhh.... I mean, are.... The scene is part of this total community, I mean, we've been partying with each other for a decade. Like, there used to be a lot more new involvement from different people and there isn't so much any more; it just.... Nobody new took up the reins to the throw their own parties or create their own community. So, were sort of living off what is left of the community I feel I helped build six or eight years ago and just like surviving off of that. And there isn't a lot of new blood in our community, which is kind of sad.

A: So would you say it's winding down?

E: I would say it has wound down and it's at this like low-level plateau right now. Which, I'm sort of okay with. A lot of people in the scene go more into, ah, other scenes really. They're partying in other scenes that I'm not necessarily partial to. I go to some of them. There's festivals that I go to – I haven't talked about festivals at all! There's festivals I go to in the summer. Um, that is definitely a community; that's like a fuckin' family as well. Um., I go to ohm festival every year since.... 2007 I've been going to ohm festival?

A: Where is that held?

E: It's just south of Collingwood. It's – the first couple years I went to it, it moved around but it's settled in a location the last couple years. Um.... And it's like, it's only like – the first couple years I went was like 3 or 400 people and now it's like 2000 people. SO it's still like – on the scale of festivals – it's kind of a small-scale thing but it would break my heart to not be able to go to it. It's: you camp for a week and then on the weekend there's a party. And that camping for a week is, like, really the best part of it because you're not, you're not drowned out by music and partying and people doing drugs. You actually get to experience those people for who they are and you get to enjoy not being in a dark room with flashing lights and loud music and like actually talk with them. Also harvest festival, which is in September, which is like a weird fusion

of that festival that I just described as well as like the kind of clubby people that I don't like. But, somehow they like balance out in the middle and the clubby people become, like, less clubby and annoying and the super-chill like hippy people become slightly more party people? and it's a cool fusion of the two, like, leveling off. The happy hardcore scene actually did, for a couple of years, they did sort of a festival – a camping festival – which was neat because I was used to seeing all these people at night, at a club downtown, so to actually see them out in the forest and camp with them gave me a lot more opportunity to connect with more of them which was....

Nice [laughs].

A: So are there any other scenes you might consider migrating more towards or are you pretty-well content?

E: Mmn, I'm not into burning-man; it's not like – actually going to the desert for like a week just does not appeal to me whatsoever – but I really like the burning-man culture and community and there's a lot of burning-man style events thrown by people in Toronto that.... The people are great. I love the people and their culture but because it's in the city or near the city and you're camping with the people – I like that. So that's, that's an older scene, too. You know, the people that are more, like, thirty to sixty or something like that so it's a little more toned down. I kind of like that community a lot whereas the happy-hardcore scene, it's more like 16-25, which I also like but.... I dunno, sometimes you wanna be surrounded by people who have actually done things and aren't just getting out of high school! [laughs] I dunno.

A: So, who bring a little perspective, or what do you mean?

E: Umm.... There's like less drama? [laughs]

A: Okay, that's fair. Okay. So of for some reason – some theoretical reason – you were cut off from being able to party and from the rave community, is there anything you can think of that would satiate the same sort of fulfilment? What would fill the void?

E: Absolutely! I'm a huge anime nerd! I've been going to conventions, like, long before I was going opt raves. That scene, I was in before I was going to raves the anime scene was my outlet for the same.... Nerdy people with like artistic interests. So if I stopped going to raves I would just go to cons more – which actually kind of happened? A couple years ago I hadn't really been going to cons because I'd been involved in helping to throw raves and then broke up with my ex-husband who threw all the raves in Toronto and I was like, well I've gotta do something else with my time! So I, like, reconnected with old friends from the anime scene and just did that. The nice thing about the anime scene is it periodically overlaps with the rave scene. So, I don't know how I would navigate not going to the rave at the anime con but, I'd manage [laughs]!

A: Alright, so there's a certain similarity, then, between the communities?

E: Yeah, the happy-hardcore scene especially; like, most people there are into like anime and comic books and things like that so to make the switch between convention goers and ravers is not that difficult. Again it's people, it's people who have been, like, secluded from typical social gatherings go to conventions and raves similarly to get the social, uh, outlet I don't want to say they've been deprived of, but aren't privy to?

A: That's the end of the list of questions, is there anything else that you want to talk about or....?

E: I don't know. I'm not good at freestyling at it.

A: You don't have to. I'm just wondering if there's anything we didn't talk about you wanted to add to it. If not, that's fine.

E: Umm.... Yeah, I dunno. It's so engrained in my life that I can't imagine not being slightly part of it. I know lots of people who were really involved and then not involved at all and I sort of like don't understand how then manage to separate from it? Like, factors in their life; I know people who had a kind and just like, oh, well I can't party anymore. Periodically I talk to them and they're like oh man, I wish I could go to a party again. And like, well, you could.... You just, you've chosen not to and that's fine – I'm not gonna like tell you to go to a party – but if you wanna go.... Just find a baby sitter, [laughs] you know? Umm.... I dunno, I feel like I've derailed from the initial concepts that you were....

A: It's all in there. The great thing about these interviews is I can let you talk and go wherever and it's my job afterwards to put it together and see where my concepts line-up, maybe where they're off but – I'm looking for the truth from you, is what I'm looking for!

[laughter]

E: Do you have anymore questions?

A: I don't think I do. I think you've given me some great answers that I can work with but I think that covers pretty much everything I need to know. [E. is laughing] Alright, thank you very much.

B2f. EMILE

A: Alright, so, I guess, to begin, if you want to describe, just in a broad sense, your relationship to the scene or the community.

E: Okay, aah, I started going to rave style events when I was fifteen and then – I'm presently twenty-three – aah, probably about the time I was eighteen I also started to DJ, so from then I've also become a DJ inside my local scene. The events that I've actually been attending have

changed a bit since I started. I started-out going to happy-hardcore parties because they were very popular in the underground when I started. But, since then, those parties have mostly died out and so I've started to become more associated with helping run a very niche scene within that where it's these Japanese-themed raves and stuff that specializes on anime culture, and that sort of thing.

A: Okay, very cool. So you would say you spend most of your time in an organizational or DJ capacity or just attending, just –

E: In the rave scene? Ya, definitely I'm much more a staff than a participant nowadays. Or – I haven't really been to a party – well, I have been to a party recently where I paid to get in – but for the most part in my scene, because I'm the organizational side, I'm usually just let in – or I'm the one running it.

A: Okay. So then, would you mind just – if you think of a recent time at a rave party – just kind of describe how the night went.

E: Okay, I'll describe my most recent event: It was a large event at The People's Opera House. There were international performers playing. The lineup was so, contained with international artists that, there were very few locals playing but at the same time – because it was a party that was involving a lot of older music, a lot of the older people inside my scene came out and so I got to see a bunch of people I hadn't seen in probably about fifteen months. It had actually been about fifteen months since the last event of that kind. So it felt oddly kind of like a high school reunion as well as being, like, a rave. It was very much a happy element. I really wasn't that much into the music at that point in time but it was really – there was a community aspect to it – and it just kind of felt like I was getting to see all of these friends I hadn't seen in a while and because of the energy it made it a lot more positive of an environment to see them in and overall

just a very pleasant experience. I found myself grinning for like the entire time but not really having a specific reason as to why. It's just kind of that was what was happening!

A: So the energy you were talking about was just from seeing everybody again? Because I know you were saying you weren't necessarily getting it from the music.

E: Not on a conscious level. Like, I wasn't, wow this song is really great! I'm sure the music actually being there provided the energy even if I wasn't like intentionally going out of my way to seek it. Like, this music is 180bpm so it's bound to like elevate my heartrate or something! But I think that the most important part of this scene isn't the music, it really is a community aspect thing for me. And that it is an environment where everything feels very friendly and uninhibited where I'm able to walk up to anybody and say hi. I see very few subcultures where you just have that uninhibited friendliness towards everybody and that it feels like the social barriers are so non-existent.

A: Great. So you kind of touched on this earlier but just to clarify: You're a pretty regular raver then?

E: Yes. I would consider myself a regular.

A: Can you give me an average for how often you're out regularly and – you're kind of serving your niche now – but if there are different styles of events or different niches you would go to?

E: I do go to different events. I said – the example I just gave was a happy hardcore party that was one of the very few left. That's probably the only one that's going to happen that year. As I mentioned, probably about 60% of my events are anime based events. I've started to sort of network my way into doing raves at anime conventions because there's a good cross-over audience there. A lot of American Cons have gotten very large doing that and they've sort of had a symbiotic relationship that way. Yeah, so I'd say sort of 60% of my events are like J-raves,

anime themed. Ah, then I would go; 20% of that are the happy hardcore parties, it used to be like 80% but like since 2014 its really sort of died down and like that last remnant of that scene from the 90s stopped being as existent. I'd say the other 20% are gigs from random things that I'm asked to play. So it might be outside of my usual foray but I'll hit it up anyways.... Because I'm being paid to be there. And it's enjoyable; I enjoy performing even if it isn't like my crowd and the fact that I can share something with them pleases me even if it isn't the crowd that I'd usually seek-out.

A: So from your own perspective, why do you go out?

E: It's definitely the social element is extremely large for me. I see a lot of people who say it's about the music but I feel like, with electronic music in particular, there's very little difference between having like recording and like an actual live performance aside from seeing the person up there doing it. I really believe that, as an artistic form, electronic music really doesn't need to be live the same way music in the past has been and as a result I really do think it is about community and everybody coming together and having like this mutual experience of either seeing this person perform or seeing everybody else at the event or going there for the fashion if that's somebody's cup of tea.... So that sort of thing. But, I entire believe that the social aspect of it over the music.

A: Would you say that's sort of the same feeling for you when you're going as a participant and as a performer or as an organizer?

E: Yes. When I'm going as a performer it's a little more self-serving because I enjoy the actual process itself. But, when I go out to see an artist I really like or when I'm performing and there's another artist there I really like, I'm definitely into it from that aspect where I can sort of

appreciate seeing them perform, hearing the music that I like while still sharing it with the rest of the audience.

A: So in your opinion, electronic music, as you said, is still ambivalent on the whole live vs. pre-recorded, so would you ever pre-record your sets, or.....?

E: I wouldn't because.... I don't have as much of an ideological issue with it as I feel other people do. For me that would kill the fun. I still wouldn't do it because I would be worried it would affect my ability to get booked and everything because that is something that is heavily stigmatized at the moment, at least in my scenes. I have seen another artist doing it but they sort of worked it into their artistic purpose where the idea was, they got someone who was very handsome and attractive to DJ and it was sort of a bit ironic where they were supposed to be pretend DJing and they were doing it so blatantly where they were pretending to take selfies while they were DJing – they weren't even taking the selfies, they were just pretending to! So there were like these layers and layers of meta going on and like, I appreciated that. That was a pre-recorded set and, for its artistic purpose, it served that and so I enjoyed that, I appreciate it.

A: I have some friends who pulled a similar gag. To pursue this a little bit, um, so when you're talking about the enjoyment of performing then, can you elaborate on that a little bit for me?

E: A lot of times it's playing off the crowd's energy and the fact that you're supplying something they're enjoying is a very exhilarating feeling; it.... I don't feel like I am entirely the center of the party in any way but the attention is up at the front and they are sort of relying on you to provide a very important staple of the environment and that is – the pressure I enjoy. I'm very much the type of person who cognitively approaches stage-fright with like anxious energy in like a good way so I say that it kind of gives me a eu-stress, like a happy stress, like a getting hyped-up and energetic thing and that's what makes it the most enjoyable for me when I'm DJing. The

DJing itself is fun for me; it's my hobby, but doing it in front of a crowd is a million times more fun than doing it on my own.

A: So you do, I take it, as much of it on-the-spot as you can?

E: Yes! I do have sort of a game-plan generally but I deviate from it if the crowd's not into it or anything like that so I try to stay flexible, to still tailor things towards what the audience wants even if I have a road map of where I'm going. When I'm performing on my own I don't even do DJing the same way. Like, when I'm doing something at home I do studio-mixes which is like, I pop it into some software and I fine-tune some things in like non-real time and I find that ends up with more precise results though it's a lot less fun. So, if I'm making a studio-mix, that's what I'll end up doing and it tends to end up being a lot better as a commercial product but a lot less.... There's a lot less soul in it than performing live and that's really what I'm about.

A: So then, if you can elaborate on your interactions with the crowd then, and what your relationship with the crowd is when you're DJing?

E: Okay, umm.... There are in a lot of ways.... The scene that I have it in, I feel like there's very.... The difference between the DJ and the audience isn't like a stern wall or anything. None of us are famous, none of us are making shit-tonnes of money off of this; it's really like a....um.... Even the people who are out every weekend are doing it as a hobby thing. They're not making an income off of it. They're making a little bonus money on the side.

A: Beer and gas money kind of thing, then?

E: Yeah, like totally! And I feel like sort of the lack of difference between the crowd – like, there's no social hierarchy between the audience and the DJ to the extent that I see in other scenes and because of that it feels like when I'm up there I'm just one of them with like a skill that I'm sharing with everybody else. It tends to make it feel like even when I'm up there I'm

one of them just dancing along – and sometimes I do! I’ll put on a song and then I’ll just start dancing. I’ll maybe even jump into the crowd and just dance for a bit. Just kind of, I’m enjoying this just as much as the rest of you; I’m doing this for fun. And, sometimes, somebody will maybe throw up a little heart-sign or maybe they’re try to high-five me and it’s just really nice to be able to have that kind of interaction and that it’s not only about just providing them the joy but it’s about doing it while still being me in the process.

A: Right, okay. So would you say that makes that level of equality makes them a more perceptive or discerning crowd or is it just kind of a sense of everybody’s in it together?

E: Depends on what you mean by perceptive and discerning. I’ll say that they’re definitely a lot more..... I think that they generally tend to hold quality in a higher esteem for their DJs so....

First of all they’re all local so you don’t get the celebrity hype going on. They also tend to be an audience that’s more savvy of what good DJing sounds like and so they’ll tend to react more positively when somebody does a good job of it. And even when somebody they like does a worse job than usual, they’ll notice. They’ll still be very nice about it – but they’ll notice. And I think that does create a bit of a different, um, demand for quality than a lot of the big events.

Like if I do see some celebrity who is making hand-over-fist of cash, they’re going to – even if they play a bad set – most people are going to enjoy it because they got to see that artist. There’s like that status that comes with seeing the artist and that really isn’t there for this local scene.

A: Okay. That’s interesting, there’s a term called “subcultural capital,” I don’t know if you’ve ever heard of that?

E: Yep.

A: Makes me think of that and just kind of.... Nullification of it almost that you’re describing.

E: Yeah. I-I think there’s still a lot of social capital with the scene but its....

A: Well in terms of somebody's ability to kind of, I guess, throw their currency around.

E: Yeah, you can't say as much for seeing some celebrity play because, first of all, in my scene there's also a little bit of an anti-big music. They're.... probably in a bout 2011-2012, electronic music really made it big. It got to the point where it's no longer *that guy* who listens to electronic music. Everybody kind of listens to electronic music and as a result of that a lot of people in this underground scene feel very jaded about it because, umm, for them raving used to be this place where the alternative people go that gone-never gotten along used to go there and then after that boom it kind of diluted their countercultural movement. It got to a point where anybody could go to events. And that did give rise to a lot more electronic music and a lot of stuff I like but for the local scene, they feel very protective of it and, sometimes, if somebody even sees a celebrity artist – they won't say it but – they much just think very little of it and they might see the person as just being one of the sell-out people.

A: Ah, I see.

E: I think there is some social capital in being the DJ still. It's less so than being a celebrity DJ inside the mainstream world but.... Being one still does get held in higher esteem as well as if you throw parties you're going to be invited to all of the ravers' parties – or, I guess, their house-parties kind of thing. You're the person who everybody wants to be around and during a brief stint where I was throwing a lot of events there would be random kids on the street who'd belike, oh my god it's you! And like throwing a lot of attention at me. Meanwhile, ignoring my friends who I'm also around with who are at the same thing so.... There definitely is social capital, it's just expressed in a bit of a different way and it's a lot less around conspicuous consumption than it is around skill.

A: I see, thank you. So then the relationship between you and the other artists within the community, do you want to explain that to me maybe a little bit. Like, is it.... You mention they'll throw parties and you enjoy where there's someone you appreciate on the same bill but do you guys ever.... Let's see, is it competitive, is it collaborative, is it just all together?

E: It's altogether – it's *far* more collaborative than it is competitive in my scene. Um, for my like Japanese events were a niche to a point where we don't have any competition right now. So everybody's a superfriend on that. And we're like, all of us who are throwing those events are friends and we've like definitely bonded over throwing these events. On the other rave – like a traditional rave-side things – everything is also super friendly. And while I think that there's a slight competition when you realize there's only so many people you can have at one party, we're all very friendly with each other and.... So for example, if somebody wants to book me for a gig and what they sound like sounds more like it's one of my friends, I'll let them know that one of my friends does something and that I think that their vibe would fit more than mine. And if they still wanted to go ahead with me, I'm not going to object but.... There was a time recently when I explicitly asked, like, I think that my friend would enjoy this more, I think he's just as suited as I am; I'd like you to pick them. And they said, well I know you, I trust you, so I'm gonna go with booking you so.... I still accepted it but I did try to persuade them to pick one of my friends over me.

A: Okay.

E: And I think overall there's very little feuding between DJs. There's a little bit of ego once in a while that goes on but it's not because of the actual, like, limited resources or anything but I think it's just like.... People clash. It's a natural thing that they do in my opinion, so.... Yeah.

A: Okay [hums] A music focused question now: So, I guess in your relationship to the music you're performing, a couple questions, so: Do you perform kind of the same stuff – or in the same way – that you would prefer to consume as just a listener. I know we were talking about the difference between creating a studio-mix versus live. What I'm wondering is how much overlap there is maybe in your listening habits or within genre?

E: I'd say it's pretty considerable. Um, if I had to put an arbitrary number on it, I'd say that 80% of the stuff I listen to I'll then play. And if it's something that's maybe easy to mix – even if it's not a traditional electronic song that's like designed for DJs, I'll try and find a way of working it in. Or I might even try and find a way of remixing it so I can play it in that sense. I tend to very much try and tailor my set towards the vibe of the party and like I said a lot of my events are these Japanese type of things and I will play, like, remixes of anime openings and things like that there. Meanwhile, if I'm getting booked for a drum and bass event, you're not seeing any of those, you're not hearing any of those, and you'd be surprised hearing me play there and then hearing me play at a con, to hear the differences in sound because I am tailoring things towards the audience. And part of my artistic goal is flexibility and, uh, to be able to-to bring out a set that I believe fully is indicative of the party itself. That's my personal artistic goals. And other – some DJs in my scene are about having one sound and just if somebody's booking you for their party, their getting booked for that sound. That isn't me though. I'm very much about flexibility.

A: Just to help me characterize it in my own head, do you have any kind of examples of sounds that you're pulling from?

E: Umm, as I mentioned, I do a lot of – for the conventions – for the anime conventions I do a lot of stuff, you hear a lot of stuff that is anime soundtracks remixed. Do you want names? I figure they might be pretty obscure.

A: Obscure? I can look 'em up.

E: Okay. Like, Jackazuit would be an example, Tanookie, Metamoro, umm, and then you'll hear some stuff like, aahhhhh.... Claris, which is like a Jap – J-pop group that – remixes of stuff like that. Ah, uh, Teddyloid – things that are very prominent in anime because that's what the crowd knows and for somebody that doesn't even like electronic music that much, they can immediately feel comfortable because there is something familiar there for them. And for artists outside of that, like inside hardcore, inside happyhardcore stuff.... I, uhh, still tend to focus a little bit on playing Japanese hardcore artists but they tend to sound a lot like that – the other happy hardcore artists. But I play a lot of like, Darwin, who else.... Umm.... I play, let's say.... I'm having a bit of a brain-fart at the moment.

A: That's okay.

E: Anyways, um.... Yeah. I play a lot of the sort-of more clubby sounding happy hardcore kind of stuff and that tends to be a lot more....

A: And that reflects your listening habits.

E: It does reflect my listening habits. Sometimes, sometimes what happens is I end up playing stuff that I used to listen to very avidly for a crowd because I know that's what they like.

A: Right.

E: And my listening habits overall tend to include all the music I listen to but the frequency of what I listen to vs. what I'll play live can change depending on – yeah, what kind of party I'm going for. I'll try to dive in more into the genres for whatever party I'm playing. Unnh, the only music I really don't play is stuff that's very heavily ambient because, um, that's kind of like relaxation music and I don't get booked to play parties like that. If I got booked to play like a set of very low-key, low-energy music, I would take it but it just hasn't been some thing that –

A: It hasn't come up.

E: Yeah, there's very few avenues in the scene I've networked in to do ambient music.

A: Okay, cool. You touched a little-bit on technique but if you can just elaborate maybe a little bit more specifically for me, kind of your live technique?

E: I personally play with CD-turntables, like, CDJs. they're called. I actually use USBs but they're called CDJs. But, ahh, and a mixer that has 3 bands so like a low cut-off, a mid cut-off, and a high cut-off for frequencies. So, umm, yeah, I tend to play with two. I can play with four sometimes CDJs so like four songs going at once. Usually it's only two. Like, I play one song then overlap it with another song and then slowly transition from one to the other and that tends to be the overall flow of how things work. There's a lot that can be done with that structure and, uh, a lot of – I could talk in a lot of detail about that but, umm, I feel that might not be *as* relevant....

A: No, just kind of in the general sense.

E: Yeah.

A: And then so is that, I guess, pretty more or less typical for your scene?

E: In my scene, yes. Very much so. It's also once you know how to do it, it's very easy to do. It's something that entry level people can do and even most of the professionals do that. That's the way that the crowd tends to prefer to see it. And, uh, I think it's possible to break through with, like, a different style of act; there's some stuff that I've seen very recently which involves sort of having something of a launch pad where they have samples lined up on a pad and people hit buttons and then it makes individual sound.

A: Oh yeah, I've seen some of that.

E: That has a whole lot of potential, I think, to get very big. Um, there's very few artists in the local scene who do that but... Yeah; there isn't one way to do it but there's a way to do it that's normal to do it and most people stick to that because uh, the skill ceiling isn't - is high enough while still being good for entry level people.

A: Right, okay. I understand. So when you say that's what the audience kind of *wants* to see, what do you mean by that?

E: It's what they're used to; it's what they expect. Um, ah, as I said before it's been stigmatized if somebody plays a pre-planned set and when somebody's on turn-tables and their actually doing things – they're actually doing things in-front of the audience – um, they know that the person actually has to put in effort – and I think that the fact.... When, when the artist actually has to put in effort to doing things I think the crowd does appreciate it more. Even when they don't know how it works, it's just the idea that they know how it's done – or, it's the idea that the person doing it is putting in the effort. Umm, even if they don't know how it's done, it just.... They appreciate it. It could be faked and – but, as long as nobody knows, they'd enjoy it! So....

A: That again sounds like that one that I was mentioning before. Everybody thought that it was a real DJ.It was a dude in a costume with no idea what was going on.

E: Yeah.

A: They *loved* it! It was actually a really good track, too. Anyways..... Umm, so, ah, in connection with creating and performing music, do you use any drugs or alcohol?

E: I used to. I don't right now. In fact, I'm pretty much, like – I had a drink at that party, umm, on the weekend but, umm, other than exceeding like pretty much one serving of alcohol, I haven't really done that all year! I haven't really taken any substances at all all year. I did at one point on New Year's, umm, but I usually only take, like, ahh, an illicit substance like once a year

maybe and usually it's some kind of psychedelic substance and I even – I will defend that I don't even consider a psychedelic substances to really be party drugs and I don't think they're place *should* be there. I think they're very good for introspection and personal exploration and sort of more in line with sort of the vision quest usage than the usual current state of affairs. I did, as I said, use them a lot when I was younger – and I don't regret doing them! But, um, I do regret using them in a more part induced environment because I felt that – I didn't get as much out of them as I could have in other places.

A: Right, and were they again psychedelics?

E: Almost all of them, yes.

A: Mushrooms or pure MDMA or....?

E: Mostly for me it was LSD.

A: LSD?

E: Umm.... I did a lot of MDMA during at the beginning as well. Umm, and I did a little-bit more Ketamine than I would have liked to because I found it a bit addictive and so there was a little bit when I was using it because of how I would consider myself addicted, even if not heavily.

A; Right.

E: Umm.... Yeah.

A: Was this in your performing period or when you were still –

E: Before my performing

A: Before you were....

E: – Around the time that I started performing – I probably would have moved away from the scene if I wasn't a performer because that really kept me tied and, like, interested in it. Not

because of any kind of – like, I’m not just there because I just want to play shows or anything, but it’s because I still have a relationship to the audience. Even if I’m not on substances. Uh, I tend to be sober at all the events I’m at and I think that there is a good deal of people who show up and are only lightly inebriated or not inebriated at all. I tend to not ask because I don’t think it really – it – it helps the conversation or anything and I like to not assume.

A: Right.

E: Unless somebody is very clearly on the.... Like, there’s a certain threshold when people, psychologically, you can tell they’re on drugs. But if they’re not at that point I tend to not ask and I don’t question it.

A: Any, do you think, any connection between your tapering drug use as you were beginning to explore DJing? I know you said your DJing kept you tied to the scene but what I’m wondering is about that transition.

E: One could argue that like having a hobby you’re very passionate about kind of supersedes the need to do as many drugs for recreation purposes. Um, I don’t know if that’s how it was for me, though. Um, It might have just been that I was just growing more distant from the – from my music scene and that just happened that I found a way to kind of tying it back in. Because I wanted to be there, but there was a point when after getting sober where things started getting a little bit boring for me because, um, when you’re taking drugs at an event, um, it’s harder to discern a good event from a bad event, in my opinion, because so much of the environment is rooted in your current state of consciousness and I’ve seen a lot of people get away with throwing really shitty events under presumption that their audience is going to be on drugs. Um, and when they’re – there was an –

A: But there are enough audience members on drugs to get away with that?

E: Yeah. There was a – when I went sober I – the first thing that I noticed was that I immediately cut out like 50%, 60% of the events I would be going to because I fou – I realized they were awful! And the other 40%, you f – I could see the passion being put into them. There were the big ones, they were the ones that people were losing a lot of money on but people were still throwing because they felt dedicated towards this, this passion of theirs and those were the ones that I kept in my life and I like, I think it was after that point, after the tapering off that the – and, like, *seeing* the passion of the scene and seeing it without the actual inebriation going on that I think I really *wanted* to be more involved on the organizational side. Because there is, there is something beautiful about like this magic black-box of fun but I think there's something much *more* magical when you see the amount of altruism that goes into somebody sacrificing like thousands of dollars and tonnes of their time for this thing just to see people smile – and that's just.... Fuckin' magic!

A: Nice. So there's almost kind of two tiers of rave then; the kind that are really put on for – with the passion and with the *aficion*, and then there's the other ones where they just kind of throw and hope nobody can tell.

E: Yes. I can definitely say there's a difference in there. There is some – there are some people that have the best of intentions but are just not very good at organization and management and are on a lot of drugs at the party and so they just can't really successfully navigate how to throw a good party because of that. Uh, a lot of those people have stopped because it's been a poor business venture for them and because they haven't had the greatest reception; there's just little incentive for them to continue on.

A: I'd like to ask you a personal question and if you feel it's totally irrelevant you don't have to answer but what, again, what was your motivation then to become sober?

E: I... it was just health reasons for me.

A: Okay.

E: Health reasons – and it was less enjoyable. Like, I was getting diminishing returns. For me, with psychedelics I hit a point where I realized, even though I was doing them in a party environment, it felt like I was doing them for introspective purposes and I hit a point where I realized the epiphanies I'm going to get off of these substances I have experienced and doing them anymore is going to be an excess and purely for hedonistic purposes – and that's not why I wanted to do them. So I cut off most of them. I said the ketamine was a bit difficult for me because I felt that there was a little bit of an addictive side to it but, umm, once I tapered off all of them, I feel like everything else naturally followed suit. The health purposes were important to me but weren't as essential as the fact I was they exhausted their purpose in my life.

A: Okay. So, is it possible for you to think of a set of criteria that determines the outcome of a night? A good night, a bad night, or an unusual or an exceptional night?

E: Okay.... I think, um, a good night requires a lot of people that are friendly, preferably people that you already know, so preferably friends or something like that because you have something to bond over with at the party. But, if not, then at least friendly people that you can immediately befriend and then add to your social network. Um, I mean, the music has to be.... Good. It doesn't have to be great for it to be a good night, in my opinion, but it has to be enough that it doesn't like bring my out of the experience and that's one of the things where DJing is important in that you need to make things flow seamlessly. Like, where if I can notice all the hiccups it does affect the experience. And that is partially me as like the elitist who's been doing this for a while that I am very conscientious of like those mess-ups. But it's the kind of thing where –

A: That you would maybe notice subconsciously, even if you didn't have that –

E: I would notice consciously too, for me personally, because I am a – I have been doing this for so long!

A: Right, right, right – but maybe for someone who didn't – without the expertise?

E: Without the expertise they would *definitely* notice subconsciously and that is the thing where I feel a lot of great DJs are doing things that aren't even noticed but are *felt*. Like, it's a thing that's experienced on a level that isn't even – that sometimes you aren't even aware of; and even now as I'm venturing more into making music, I'm noticing more those subtle little elements that go into a song that I didn't notice before, that actually totally do shape my experience.

A: Really? Okay. Any other, umm....

E: Oh! About the criteria, right: Um, other than those, I think it needs to be in a good setting like the venue is very important for me and I will almost always go to a party that's at a new venue because I want to see how the environment plays out. Umm, there's – there is some physical things there. Uh, the acoustics of the building does enhance the sound of the DJ and everything but I think that is secondary to the overall, just.... how the environment sort of affects the quote-unquote “vibe” and how um that'll correspond to my emotional state and overall party. One of my favourite party organizers um what she did for all of her parties is she tried to find an unusual venue; and then she tried to create an unusual environment around it. One of which I can give an example of is: So The Old Spaghetti Factory – have you every heard of that place?

A: Yeah.

E: – So, they have a little bar area called the Amsterdam Bicycle Club; it has a very Victorian vibe to it. And so she decided to throw a party there. She decided to make it art-nuveau themed so she designed a bunch of art themed deco. So a lot of stain glass window style stuff and things like that in order to create this very unique environment for a one-off party. And that's

something I don't think can really be replicated. To have like a really exceptional party you need to create an environment that is unique to the party and has a sort of *terroir*, so to speak; it needs to have it's own unique vibe and.... something that nobody will throw a party that was exactly the this.

A: Okay. And what about: is there a list of things that basically spell-out a bad night?

E: Umm, if the music's not.... If I don't – if the audience doesn't enjoy the music I can't even say if I don't enjoy the music but the audience is enjoying the music I can still sort of appreciate the vibe and the energy but if the audience in general, at mass, doesn't enjoy the music, that's gonna be a bad night. Um, if things are far-overcrowded I find it kill the energy and if things are undercrowded, it usually can too; like, if there's three people at the part um it can be the most phenomenal set ever but it's really hard to play off the energy of like those three other people....

If I see the audience being very aggressive towards one another, if somebody were to try and sexually assault somebody else in the audience, that's going to kill the energy no matter how

–

A: That's kind of a downer.

E: Yeah. If if.... The audience is kind of.... I don't know how I can exactly say it – not show-offy, but if they're a bit like haughty to each other and they don't really want to socialize with each other because they're the shit and nobody else is, if it's that kind of an atmosphere that's been cultivated in the environment, it's probably not going to be a phenomenal night. The music can be great but it still won't be a night that goes down in my memories because of the fact that um the the whole environment of the event is just not what it should be in my view.

A: So, before going to a gig then, can you describe for me kind of your general state of being or your state of mind?

E: Um, it used to be anxious b-[unintelligible] if I'm doing something beyond my usual sphere of things it still might be like that, almost exhilarated worry, kind of like ahh kind of like I imagine somebody in theatre goes though like feels before the curtains raise on a stage act. Um, nowadays it's become normal enough for me that I'm a little bit more hyped than usual; I'm kind of bouncy in my seat, kinda like this [bounces in seat a little]. But I... It still feels like a normal sort of going out thing. Not like – not quite like daily routine; like it – like I'm going to something fun. Kind of like a - kind of like meeting friends but a little less intimidated and a little more... adreanaliny, I think is the best way I can describe it.

A: Right. Kind of like a positive, anticipatory anxiety.

E: A positive anticipation, yeah. Like I said, that kind of eu-stressy thing is what I'm feeling. But the bigger the event and the higher the stakes are for me, the more I'll feel that. If it's like a local community thing it tends to only be very slight.

A: And what about afterwards?

E: Afterwards?

A: I'm just wondering, I guess both *immediately* afterwards and maybe when you wake-up the next day.

E: To be slightly vulgar, I feel after, after my set itself it feels a little bit post-coital – not to quite that extent but like just that sort of anxious rel – well not anxious but that relaxing release that sort of, ah, a sense of relief but also a sense of joy.

Um, the day after, um, I tend to – I still tend to feel a little hung-over just because of the amount of movement that I'm doing. There's – it's a lot of exercise, just, for me, being onstage because I tend to dance around trying to keep the energy high.and, I tend to be little-bit

achey but still kind of like a hangover after an amazing party while while I feel a bit sore I also feel like “mission accomplished!” kind of thing.

A: Right. Okay. So, between parties, between gigs, do you know, would there be any noticeable difference in your general state, in your state of mind? Or if there was a slightly prolonged period between than what you’re used to?

E: Um.... I have a lot of other hobbies, so I try to – like, my lifestyle becomes more focused on other hobbies if I’m not getting a lot of gigs. But usually the week before the party I start actively thinking about the set a lot more, if there’s anything I can to do change; because, like I said, I try to have a general road-map. SO I try to think about it a lot. Like, maybe this song won’t go that well, maybe this song would, maybe I should tease in this thing? And I start to think about little structural changes I could make to my plan. And I also generally have to remind myself, what am I going to do about these.... Like for example, when I get home, tomorrow and I’m – and – and at the back of my head is, I have to like organize my tracks and everything so.... That’s there. Um, the few days before, like, if it’s really high-stakes, if it’s really big, I’m a bit excited my biggest, my traditionally biggest out of the year is on the weekend and I think I’m a little bit hyped for that right now. Um.... And it’s kind of at the back of my head but other than that it’s mostly the same.

A: Yeah, and what are some of those other hobbies that you like to fill your time with?

E: Uh, I’m writing a novel at the moment, I am, ah, I’m try to produce music so rather than DJ I’m trying to make the music at home.

A: Right.

E: Um, I’ve been getting more into fitness recently; I took up a martial art. Um.

A: Which kind?

E: Capoeira.

A: Oh, nice.

E: Yeah. – Which is *also* kind of music focused!

A: Interesting interesting. I'm a green belt in Gojo-Ryu.

E: I beg your pardon?

A: I said I've lapsed but I'm a green belt in Gojo-Ryu so I know what you mean.

E: Oh.

A: I can't remember if I asked you earlier, but how frequently are you gigging?

E: Giggin? Um, at this point? It can be very inconsistent, for example, I have three this weekend, then I have one in two-weeks, then the week after. But...

A: In the course of month maybe, an average?

E: Average? I'm going to put down to maybe one-and-a-half. SO like, mostly two in like maybe the fall/winter it dips down to one, then it becomes larger in the summer so.... I'm gonna say it averages to maybe one-and-a-half to two.

A:Hmmm. And otherwise organizing, attending?

E: Um, I – organizing tended to be a lot larger a couple years ago but I really wanted to focus more on making music and on like – as I mentioned I have a lot of other hobbies and it was to a point where I thought like organizing wasn't the thing I originally set out to do; it was something I did to help the scene. I never – it was never really my passion so.... I've facilitated some events but..... unh..... that was maybe once a month every other month maybe two years ago but now I don't really do any. Now I'm sort of a co-host on a bunch of events which happen, once again, once every one or two months but I'm not like the – I'm not the mastermind; I'm one the people to help bring things together. I'm one of the people who helps get an in with the anime

conventions but I'm not the one who's like putting together the schedule and everything, so.... Co-hosting's still I guess every-other-month but ah it's less of an intensive role than being the main person.

And, as for attending, unh, not including gigs that I have some kind of staffing with, it would probably be, um, four a year or five a year. But, including staffing, well, I'm out as often as I'm DJing, performing and stuff so....

A: Yeah. So, from a very personal perspective then, what's your role or your mission as a DJ?

E: Um, I like to provide music that's just going to give the crowd a good energy and to sort of give them something very specifically towards what they want. I want to be the DJ that the person came to the party to see just to sort of experience that environment. I want to also, um, like help with the community's cohesion. That's why I've thrown events and that's why I ah, I try to be very interactive in interacting with the crowd while I'm playing so I see partially while I – I – I don't wanna consider myself the glue that holds everything together but I'd like to be one ingredient in the adhesive that does. Uh, I.... also would.... I'd like to expand what I do and make like a, make a like my hobby grow as big as possible in my own sel – for my own selfish reasons as well as for the audiences as well. So I – for me –

A: What are your own selfish reasons?

E: Well, I'd like to get paid to play. I mean, getting monetary reward is not something I scoff at and I do hope to um to still maintain my underground things while branching off to a more mainstream environment where I could hope to make more than just like weekend sort of spending money. So there is that. And that's what I hope to do well sort of making it um the dedication towards the community is important to me as well and I think if I were to get to the point where I'm doing a big commercial thing I would be creating a separate alias where that

one's more of the sort of thing for getting ones for work while my little passion-projects at the local scene would remain unfettered.

A: and – so we've talked a lot about the lead-up so I was wondering if you could give me a sort of snapshot into your state, into how you're feeling right mid-way through a gig, like things are going well, you know, you've been anticipating it at whatever level; what are you like in the moment?

E: Now, what I will just say about that: It *is* way better than drugs and that is part of why I stayed in the scene, because I realized that DJing in front of an audience is, to me, the most phenomenal experience that - it's.... I do have to describe it again: It's almost to the level of sex where it's like um just very very um euphoric, just this sort of dopaminey *rush* [smacks fist into hand noise]. Um, I either just in it – complete flow-state – ahuuum, and um I also get to share that with a crowd and that's what makes it even more beautiful; is that I'm not the only one alone on this experience; they're they're getting some of the euphoric energy from it too.

A: Right. Umm, do you ever run into any tough-spots during a set where you feel like you're losing 'em?

E: Yeah! It's happened before.

A: What would you do then?

E: I try to change things up, usually. Unless I'm doing something really avant-garde where it's kind of difficult to change things but um.... I'll try to like find an environment that fits the crowd again. I also won't try to fret it. Afterwards I'll sometimes feel a bit self-conscious but It's – I don't dwell on it for days....

A: Alright, so you don't let it throw you off too much, just kind of, Ooh! I need – I guess a challenge to be overcome? Versus a catastrophe.

E: Yeah. It's a bummer when it happens, especially if I can't reach the audience again but I do like it then becomes a challenge about finding what they *do* want and giving them *that*.

Sometimes if I'm loosing the audience I'll shift to something entirely different and it'll work but like very few times that that doesn't work its like, well ah, I guess I'm in it to the end and I guess it's not, not unenjoyable but it then just feels that – it no longer feels like this emotional experience, it feels like it's just the parts moving. It's like, I'm pulling this knob, I'm pushing this slider kind of thing. Rather than actually having that intimate enjoyment of it.

A: Last question of the list here: So, if for some reason you couldn't DJ anymore or had to give-up, had to be totally cut-off. Can you think of anything - is there anything – you could do in its place to kind of satiate what you're getting from DJing and, if so, what would that be?

E: Okay, umm.... I really, on a personal level, I consider the performance aspect of uh playing to be a lot about the uh – like I said, I'm a little bit of a stage-person. I was never good at any acting or anything but I'm really somebody who lives for that the crowd is on me and the pressure's on to perform kind of person. So I would try to find something that would involve that as well to some degree. Like, I might try fire spinning? I might do.... That way I could still be at events of a similar nature and like revel in the crowds thing. Um, I would still make music as well because I do enjoy the music aspect of it. But like, you'd see me doing a lot of things but they'd be divided into very separate trajectories, like, I would have to do other things to satiate the same desire.

A: So something – find something else performance-based?

E: I need to find something performance-based, I'd need to find something musically based, and I'd need to find something that also provides me with a sort of elevated social status within the community that I'm a part of. Because, I mean, I do enjoy the fact that um even if it isn't ah,

even if it's still very socially stratified thing I do enjoy the fact that I am put on a pedestal for this.

A: Right so you still need.... There's the musical expressing which you.... There's the, I'm going to say, "role" of being that person –

E: Yep.

A: – And then there's the stream of, just kind of, that performance or giving or that interacting with the audience.

E: Yeah. That's fairly concise; and I like to think that the way that I've been sort of pioneering this thought in my head recently. I haven't actually said it out loud so this is a good chance just to bust it out.

A: Oh good, exclusive scoop!

E: [laughs palely] but um I've been trying to think of this philosophy that um that everybody should have one hobby that involves physical activity, so they can stay fit; one hobby that involves them to express like a creative outlet and something that they can really like grow with; and one that provides them with a social institution within their actual ah hobby itself. SO they can do like a hobby that has a social aspect where people either watch for people participate in. But something that sort of allows you to meet new people. Let's say I was dropped in a new city; DJing really satiates both my creative and my social aspects of this, where ah, I could, if I could pick up gigs inside a new city, I have a very good in for meeting people; it isn't forced because I'm there naturally, it isn't me having to wedge my way into a friend-group. It would occur very organically. And the creative aspect is because I feel everybody wants to be unique in their own little way um at least I do and I think most people with an artistic drive do too. So, DJing satiates a lot of my artistic drive desires too. Like if there's a pressure building to do something original

that gives me like a little bit of – Like I have others too, with righting, but that doesn't provide the social aspect – and then the physical aspect, it's like I said: DJing it's not like to the extent – that's why I picked up another martial art, because I wanted to have something that would get me fit if I was doing it regularly. I would be fit if I was just doing DJing. I wouldn't be – I have a good metabolism so – I would be, I can coast by without exercising and still be healthy I would just be relatively healthy but I feel like I'm in a lot better shape from doing a martial art but – and DJing can't really give you like that exercise alone, even if you – it gives a nice supplement to it because of my dancing around on the stage.

A: Cool. A thing you made me think of with your answer: Could you describe for me how what you do when you do DJing shapes what's going on socially around you during the event.

E: Yeah. Um....

A: What's your impact?

E: I think in a way everybody is looking for the DJ for a – and I think this is some messed up aspect of our Christian society being like a relic of it – but um sort of the way that a dance hall or a club is structured is very similar to like a church where you have the masses of people below and then you have – on a sort of deus – raised up, you have this one person who is sort of preaching. In this case it's music, its performing but.... And I think that's where a lot of celebrity culture comes from is that sort of notion of the one person that you lavish your praise upon at the front. But it also means that people look for.... Look to get permission for what to do from that person at the front. The person up there is the one sort of setting the precedent for sort of "*what is done* here." And, I think that in order to have fun you need to have a DJ who is enjoying himself because – it it it can happen without but it's a lot harder; the people who might be not as into it, the people who are new, who are green to the environment – I think that it's a lot harder

for them to get in if up there it's somebody who's just like stone-faced and just kind of still while he's doing his thing.

This is something that I do think could be automated by computers and I think at some point – I've seen the algorithms! They've been improving *greatly* over the years – and um within a couple years I wouldn't be surprised if they had scripts that could just completely supersede the need for a DJ on an actual being-there level. But um what's still important is that they're the human up there and they're the one who's setting the culture for the next hour and.... Yeah, it's important to have fun with it and to sort of set a precedent for what the environment's going to be.

A: Okay, and then, I guess, on a related note, how – what's your opinion on, let's say,, the iconography of rave culture?

E: Iconography on like a fashion level? On like a the big-players kind of level? Um kind of in what way?

A: Umm.... I guess you can speak to it on whichever strata you're most comfortable – but I guess, what I mean is, kind of, in terms of where there is still some vestigial elements of kind of basic Christian structure – or even, you know, depending on the different groups there's kind of a mysticism sometimes going on, the decorations maybe chosen for a given even, the theme – the theming – kind of that whole play....

E: Okay, um.... I think.... The iconography is one of the things that really drew me to it and the fact that it is trying to create an alternate environment; something that isn't – that you can't really find outside of that little bubble. There was a concept that came from like the really old-school raving that is kind of fallen out of favour but I think it is a very good analogy for what you're trying to do. It is called "The Temporary Autonomous Zone," or the "T.A.Z." and the idea is:

When you step into this environment, you are – you are basically leaving the world around you, you are leaving its laws, its conventions, and you are stepping into an entirely new set of ones that is based around personal expression. Um, how that exactly goes is entirely dependent on the environment and I think that how people treat the music, how people treat the DJs, how people.... Design decorations around are going to shape that over all experience, and it's going to be.... The environment that overall sets the emotional timbre of the evening and of what people really want out of it. As well as it's going to attract certain kind of participants. Part of the reason why I enjoy the kind of events that I do is because it brought in very unique kind of people: the kind of people I want to be friends with! And that's what really started me going and if I had to go to a bunch of events that I felt were.... I don't want to say people that aren't like cool or anything – because I think everybody's cool in their own little way – but people I am *compatible* with. I think that if there was an event where with people I wasn't compatible with, uh, even if it had all the other element, it just wouldn't be enjoyable; and.... it involves creating a very specific kind of environment to create that and to create something [unintelligible. Available? Enjoyable?]....

A: You said that the TAZ is kind of, as a concept, fallen out of favour? Did you say?

E: I think it's one of those things where, it's embedded in the culture, but it's something not a lot of people know about. It's something that actually comes from 90s raving.

A: Yeah, I've heard the term before.

E: and it comes from I think when raving had a lot more of a libertarian renegade slant; I feel like the whole concept of TAZ is very libertarian where it's like um, the laws around me don't apply to me while I'm in here. Kind of a bit anarchic um but I still think it holds true like even in a very commercial events where you are leaving.... When you enter this countercultural space you are

leaving a lot of social conventions behind and coming into new ones which, hopefully, you find favourable. Uh, and you're also um.... There to experience a similar vibe of personal expression so you're vibing off of other people then.

A: Right. So it's kind of become then a tacit factor of the whole setup as opposed to, like, a thing that we *just don't talk about anymore*.

E: I think that it's a part of the philosophy but I don't think it's a thing as many people are aware of.

A: Right – so just slipped into the background, maybe?

E: Right. I mean, in the dominant environmental cue everybody takes is P.L.U.R. – Peace, Love, Unity, Respect – which is awesome! But, I think T.A.Z. is notable as well.

A: Okay! That's all the questions I have; is there anything you would like to add or....?

E: Hmmn.... Um, I think it's hard for me to paint a broad stroke over everything because of the fact that my scenes are a little bit segmented even though there's a lot of carry-over between like event to event.

A: That's alright. I'm just interested in person experience so if you want to speak to your scene, that's fine.

E: Yeah, but I'm saying even *my scene*, there's like a couple of scenes I'm in. I just want to make it very aware that I can talk about one, and I can talk about another; and there is going to be cultural differences between the two. I've tried to point towards parallels between both of them and any of the other events I'm at but um there still are many differences between the two and uh I think it's just important to acknowledge that even in my personal experiences it can differ from event to event.

A: Okay, I will definitely keep that in mind.

Alright, well thank you very much!

E: Thank you!

**APPENDIX C:
ADDITIONAL GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

A.I.: “Artificial Intelligence” computer systems software.

ASC: “Altered State of Consciousness” – any cognitive state that differs from a normal waking state by a significant degree.

Bro scene: a male-centric subculture of sorts, it is more of a phenomenon than a group of its own as it can permeate the qualities of other groups. It is typified by close male friendship (predominately amongst young Caucasians), an almost absurd masculinity that borders on quasi-homoeroticism, and a willingness to engage in irresponsible frat party behaviour. It is associated with white/male/millennial entitlement along with the objectification of women and lack of respect for women’s issues.

Chill: to hang-out alone or socialize in a calm, casual, usually more intimate, fashion – or to “chill-out” is to calm down and cool one’s emotional state.

Clubber: a person who regularly frequents dance clubs and may or may not belong to a set or recognizable group.

Entropy: in thermodynamics, entropy is the measure of unavailable energy in a closed system. It also describes the degradation of energy and matter into an inert uniform state. This loss of available energy can be used to indicate the disorder within a system.

Flow: a conscious state coined by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, characterized by an intense focus and awareness in one’s engagement with an activity, loss of overall temporal awareness, sense of agency, experience of the activity as autotelic, as sense of being totally “in the present,” the sensation of being able to “act with out thinking.”

Gestalt: the quality of something being more or other than the sum of its parts.

Headspace: one’s subjective cognitive environment or state of consciousness.

Meaning: a thing's significant quality; an intended content; a quality of transcendental or existential significance beyond the realm of immediate tangible gratification.

P.L.U.R.: "Peace, Love, Unity, Respect" – the four tenets of the Raver's credo.

Qualia: a unit of information referring to individual specific instances of subjective conscious experience.

Raver: a person who participates in raving and is typically a member of the rave community or one of its subset scenes.

T.A.Z.: "Temporary Autonomous Zone" – a concept for the metamorphosis of the rave venue into an insular space that operates independently of the conventions, expectations, systems, mores, and personal constraints that dictate social relations and self-expression (especially concerning one's emotional modality) in the everyday world of the mainstream culture.

Track: an individual music or sound recording, a track can be of any length or content and is defined by existing as a separate unit on whatever medium it is stored (ex. by a separating gap of silence on an analog medium like tape or vinyl or as individual data files on digital media).