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Gettin' Weird Together: The Performance Of Identity And Community Through Cultural Artifacts Of Electronic Dance Music Culture

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GETTIN' WEIRD TOGETHER: THE PERFORMANCE OF IDENTITY AND

COMMUNITY THROUGH CULTURAL ARTIFACTS OF

ELECTRONIC DANCE MUSIC CULTURE

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The growing popularity of Electronic Dance Music (EDM) on nearly every

continent has given rise to the transition of EDM music from underground raves to large

scale, multiple-day music festivals. Attendance at EDM events, whether at concerts or

festivals, is primarily dominated by today's youth generation. The number of youth

attending these events continues to grow as elements of EDM are being mixed into other

mainstream music genres. This increase in the popularity of EDM has been an area of

research interest in the past decades for a variety of disciplines, such as psychology,

sociology, marketing, and tourism. The present study takes a communication approach to

analyze the youth culture associated with EDM. In-depth one-on-one informant

interviews of EDMC members (18-25 years of age), have been analyzed through

thematic analysis in effort to unveil how the appropriation of commodities found at EDM

events are used to communicate alternative, individual EDMC identities as well as a

collective identity shared by attendees of EDM events. In addition, this study has

attempted to expand upon the postmodernist perspectives of EDMC (Blackman, 2005;

Bennett, 1999; Hesmondhalgh, 2005) by analyzing how members of EDMC use cultural

artifacts to maintain their identifications with the scene within their daily lives.

Keywords: *youth culture, electronic dance music, identity, lifestyle, neo-tribe*

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ELECTRONIC DANCE MUSIC CULTURE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO EDMC RESEARCH

Insomniac, the world-renowned company/producer of the Electric Daisy Carnival,

produces over 250 music events a year for more than two million concertgoers. Recently

Insomniac has brought the popular traveling carnival to the Chicagoland area for the first

time the weekend of May 26, 2013 (Gillers, 2013). Insomniac's Electric Daisy Carnival

had attracted 300,000 attendees to the Las Vegas area in 2012 for the music carnival that

consists of the live spinning of electronic dance music (EDM) from the world's top DJs,

firework shows, circus performers, and carnival amusement rides. The carnival, taking

place in Joliet, Illinois, was expected to generate over eleven million dollars for the local

economy and bring over a quarter of a million participants from around the world to the

festival grounds located at the Joliet Speedway. Yet, despite the economic benefits that

the Electric Daisy Carnival, and other EDM festivals similar to it, bring to the localities

facilitating the events, misunderstandings and stereotypes held about these festivals have

given way to branding these events as youth festivals that are predominantly used to

conceal the drug consumption of the concertgoers. Still, despite the opposing views of

authority figures, Insomniac and other companies charged with the production and

facilitation of EDM festivals argue that the final product is not a youth-wonderland of

escape from the daily grind of real life but, rather, the production of a music culture:

Electronic Dance Music Culture (EDMC). In this thesis, EDMC will be used to describe

the culture surrounding the music, while EDM will refer just to the music. These relate to each other much as rap, a type of music, is one aspect of a much larger culture, called Hip Hop.

The growing popularity of Electronic Dance Music (EDM) on nearly every continent has given rise to the transition of EDM music from underground raves to large scale, multiple-day music festivals. Moreover, with advances in digital recording equipment, more and more geographical regions are creating genres of EDM, each with its own distinctive sound and cultural characteristics. Attendance at EDM events, whether at concerts or festivals, is primarily dominated by today's youth generation, and the number of youth attending these events continues to grow as elements of EDM are being mixed into other mainstream music genres.

The idea as to what constitutes an EDM event has changed over the past few decades just as EDM itself has continually evolved. Initially, EDM events took part as underground, typically illegal, raves that were held in undisclosed locations to the general public where attendees danced to the wee hours of the morning (Myer, 2011). Commonly associated with the idea of the rave scene was the image of the illegal consumption of drugs by participants to help enhance the experience. As the popularity of EDM grew, raves transitioned from the underground and into the dance club culture. Myer states, "Even though unauthorized raves started to decline, larger and more publicized events started to happen. Clubs started to play the music, but still had limited hours. Through the world and the night, the popularity of EDM continued to grow" (p. 11). The largest of these EDM events are known as EDM festivals, which are multi-day music concerts, such as Electric Daisy Carnival, that are produced by EDMC production

companies. At a festival, one can expect to hear multiple genres of EDM and to be

surrounded by thousands of other youth individuals escaping reality and letting loose

over the course of the multi-day event.   Though clubbing is still popular around the

world, in the United States EDM festivals and one-day concerts are more popular for

EDMC members to attend.

This increase in the popularity of EDM has been an area of research interest in the

past decades for a variety of disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, marketing, and

tourism. Montano (2009) credits the explosion in popularity of EDM to the Internet,

which has created a "global distribution network within dance music culture" (p. 51).

Specific types of EDM that were once distinguished as being a part of the underground

music scene have now crossed the mainstream threshold, which has made participation in

EDM festivals one of the most successful forms of pleasure-based tourism for young

adults around the world (Goulding & Shankar, 2011). The popularity of EDM has

allowed for the creation of youth cultures that are interconnected, though geographically

distant from one another, through the sharing and intertwining of new styles of EDM.

What draws young adults from around the globe to participate in EDM events is the

experience felt by those in attendance at these events. More so, the popularity of EDM

and its ubiquitous appearance on nearly every continent has led to an immense amount of

interdisciplinary scholarship in analyzing the composition, consumption, and

communication of EDM as well as the cultural practices of EDMC.

Addressing the public misrepresentation of EDM and EDMC, Hunt, Moloney,

and Evans (2009) advance the idea that there exist two opposing perspectives in regard

scholarship on EDMC. One viewpoint categorizes dance events and the consumption of

drugs as spaces of "excess risk" (p. 602), which are to be controlled and kept in line with other social institutions. Authority figures and governmental institutions, such as police narcotic task forces and legislatures commonly, hold such a view. The second emphasizes the importance of dance, drug consumption, and ritual as mechanisms for youth to identify with one another as well as with EDMC. In this viewpoint, the appropriation of commodities and consumption of drugs as mechanisms of pleasure may be viewed as secondary in importance while attending EDM events.

Hunt et al. (2009) assert that research under these two perspectives of EDMC has been dominated by two methodologies taken by scholars to analyze EDMC and drug consumption:

> The epidemiological research has focused primarily on examining the prevalence
> of club drugs, the problems associated with use, and the characteristics of the
> users. The cultural studies approach acts as a much-needed corrective or
> supplement to the epidemiological research through its introduction of a focus on
> pleasure, subjectivity, and social context and by more fully attending to youth
> perspectives. (p. 602)

These contrasting positions have been barriers to the examination and interpretation of the symbol-laden rituals and artifacts of EDMC and the meanings that these rituals and artifacts hold for the participants. To assess how these cultural artifacts are given meaning and how these meanings are communicated the cultural studies approach is especially relevant to the present study, as it will serve as basis of this analysis of EDMC.

As an example of this approach, Malbon (1999) in his book, *Clubbing: Dancing, Ecstasy, and Vitality*, addresses three underpinnings of the clubbing nightlife as

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experienced by youth clubbers in southern London. First, the involvement and experiences of clubbing are constituted through the practices and emotions of the clubbers themselves and not, necessarily, a product of the music. Second, Malbon addresses how music and dancing have power to affect our experiences of certain spaces, of ourselves, and of others. Third, recognizing clubbing as a form of 'play,' Malbon addresses how the experiences and behaviors of participants significantly contribute to their identities and identifications as clubbers as well as the way clubbing "engenders vitality through its playful practices" (p. 3). Malbon's belief that experiences and emotions associated with EDMC are not a product of the music, itself, but of the surrounding environment, poises EDMC to be understood as a product of commodity consumption. That is to say, various forms of play occur through the appropriation of commodities into cultural texts and artifacts by those with similar music tastes that are significant, not only, in deriving pleasure from the overall experience of EDM events, but also, in identifying with EDMC.

Malbon's (1999) analysis has served as the predecessor for a multitude of research of the clubbing experience, which has gone on to be associated with such terms as rave, dance culture, and EDMC. Youth culture scholars of cultural studies, sociology, anthropology have taken a keen interest in the music consumption practices of youth cultures in constructing identity, collective experiences, and reality. Scholarship has sought to examine how the spatial and contextual factors found within various types of EDM events lead to a sensation of collectivity that is experienced by members of EDMC while participating in EDM festivals (O'Grady, 2012). Research has employed the concepts of liminality (Malbon, 1999; St. John, 2009a, 2009b, 2010; Sylvan, 2013) as

well as the social and spatial dimensions of spontaneous *communitas* (Rill, 2006; Tramacchi, 2000), to address the physical and psychological dimensions of play within the context of EDM event (O'Grady). Yet, these studies, in effort to highlight the significance of space and social geographies in producing collective identities and collective experiences, attribute the consumption of material commodities, such as fashion choices, by attendees of EDM events as being inputs in the process of creating the overall experience of the EDM event.

The present study takes a communication approach to analyze the youth culture associated with EDM. In-depth one-on-one informant interviews of EDMC members (18-25 years of age), have been analyzed through thematic analysis in effort to unveil how the appropriation of commodities found at EDM events are used to communicate alternative, individual EDMC identities as well as a collective identity shared by attendees of EDM events. In addition, this study has attempted to expand upon the postmodernist perspectives of EDMC (Blackman, 2005; Bennett, 1999; Hesmondhalgh, 2005) by analyzing how members of EDMC use cultural artifacts to maintain their identifications with the scene within their daily lives.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research concerning youth culture has commonly been associated the theoretical

concepts of commodities, consumption, and consumerism. Consumerism is a critical

aspect of modern society and is deeply intertwined with the cultural practices that occur

in the social context in which commodities are consumed. To begin to understand how

the relation of youth culture and its relation to consumerism construct social reality for

youth, an understanding of culture and, to a further extent, youth culture is necessary.

Culture

The theoretical concept of culture has been a site of vast contestation among

social science scholars. Contradicting views of culture exist not only as scholars define

what culture is but, also, when they explain the purpose of culture. Grossberg (2010)

provides an alternative way of looking at culture: He suggests "thinking of culture not as

distinct and separable from some notion of social or material reality but as an

organization of distribution of affects (intensities) within and across the social formation"

(p. 170). Affect can be thought of as the bodily sensation, feeling, response, and/or actual

movement in experiencing emotions and engaging in discursive behaviors, such as

dressing a certain way to get a desired reaction from others (Werner, 2012). Culture may

be thought of as that which links the creation and adaptation of shared meanings,

experiences, and symbolic artifacts in the communal construction of reality. It is the

process of defining and training the intellectual side of a society through systematically categorizing and assigning meaning to material artifacts in order to establish the societal norms, beliefs, practices, and traditions, forming a particular culture, reality, and way of life. Culture, to borrow from Hall (1997b) and Storey (2006), is, essentially, not merely material objects and the accumulation of the objects; rather, culture is a process consisting of the production and interpretation of meaning(s) given to these cultural practices. Storey (2003) argues, "Cultures are made from the production, circulation, and consumption of meanings. To share a culture, therefore, is to interpret the world—make it meaningful—in recognizably similar ways" (p. 3). The sharing of a culture is, thus, done through the consumption and appropriation of artifacts. As so, this analysis will adopt this assumption of culture in its exploration of EDMC.

Cultural studies holds that cultural artifacts are multifaceted in meaning and purpose (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). The dominant, ideological meaning of these artifacts and texts are symbolically manipulated by sub-groups of individuals existing within the dominant culture as symbols of meaning, identity, and knowledge distinct to the members of that subculture. Therefore, the use of cultural artifacts not only defines the culture but also works to create and make sense a local reality of culturally based meaning. Grossberg (2010) notes, " Culture is the medium and agency by which the chaos of reality is transformed into an ordered—manageable—sense of human reality" (p. 185). The constant construction of contradictory meanings instilled into cultural texts and artifacts serve as the foundation for cultural studies' theoretical assumption that a physical reality does exist, but it lies outside of representation. In other words,

representation is the discursive construction of meaning for what is being represented

(e.g., texts). Storey (2003) builds upon the constructionist approach to representation:

> It is only through representation that the world can be made meaningful.
> Representation is, therefore, a practice through which we make reality meaningful
> and through which we share and contest meanings of ourselves, of each other, and
> of the world. (pp. 5-6)

Perpetual representation and re-representation of texts lead to a multitude of

simultaneously existing, sometimes disputing, ideologies. These ideologies define what a

culture holds to be moral, just, valued, and so on. The imposition of these cultural rules

and norms goes as far as to the individual, as the individual must manage competing

ideologies in the construction of identity and reality. As Grossberg (2010) states, "To put

it simply, what culture we live in, what cultural practices we use, and what cultural forms

we place upon and insert into reality, have consequences for the way reality is organized

and lived" (p. 24).

The concept of representation gave way to the cultural studies assumption that

reality is the result of cultural practices. A cultural practice can be thought of as a "mode

of by which effects are produced and reality transformed" (Grossberg, 1992, p. 51).

Cultural practices may take the form of either a linguistic, discursive, or performative

behavior produced by the individual with the intentions of representing specific effects

(meanings). This analysis holds these three forms of cultural practices to be mutually

reinforcing. In other words, the performative behaviors produce both language and

discourse that further distinguish the subculture from the broader culture. These effects

are communicated by the individual and interpreted by others in society, resulting in the

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shared production of reality through the creation and interpretation of meanings and the representations of these meanings as cultural practices. These practices take place in contexts of competition of meaning. Grossberg notes, "Cultural practices are places where different things can and do happen, where different possibilities intersect" (p. 28).

An effect, Grossberg (1992) warns, and its connection to a cultural practice may be complex and have a multitude of simultaneously existing contradictory meanings. More so, Grossberg goes on to argue that these effects are 'intereffective' when becoming and transforming into other effects (p. 51). The cultural practices, and the effects they represent, are not only subject to the meanings purposefully communicated by the producer of a message but are, also, subject to the interpretation of these effects by others in society. The variety of effects (meanings) a cultural practice may have has many impacts on society. Grossberg (1992) notes:

> Cultural practices may have economic effects (on the accumulation of capital and money). They can have libidinal effects (on the structure of our desires), political effects (as in presidential debates), material effects (on our physical environment), aesthetic effects (defining the "look" of things), and emotional effects. (p. 52)

Grossberg (2010) asserts that cultural practices are the discursive and expressive behaviors and actions not only of humans, but also in the cultural texts they produce (e.g., modern art or a music festival). The potential of each cultural practice to have the capability to produce a multitude of effects has intrigued cultural studies scholars as a primary area of research. In particular, research on youth culture and consumption practices has provided cultural studies with a wealth of knowledge on cultural practices of youth and their articulation of meaning.

Articulation of Reality and Mediation of Expressions

Similar to the discrepancies regarding the concept of culture, discussions on the nature of reality have led to the formation of contradictory ontological assumptions. One view of reality is what is referred to as essentialism, which is the ontological assumption that reality is the prematurely decided, deliberate act of static relations that make up lived and knowable reality (Grossberg, 2010). Under this ideological lens exists the certainty of guarantees. This position's take on reality is that identities are fixed, and things are the way they are due to the historical and social circumstances in which they have occurred. The idea of a class system where individuals of society are differentiated from one another based on the socioeconomic background into which they are born illustrates the view reality through an essentialist lens. That is to say, an essentialist view assumes that if individuals are born into a middle-class family, they are forever stuck with the identity of being middle class. An individual's identity is something that is prescribed before the individual even exists—identities have a particular "essence" of what they are like—for example, "Blacks" are like this, "women" are like that. Reality, therefore, under essentialism is imposed and static rather than socially created and fluid. "Effects are determined before they are even produced, because all important relations in history are necessarily contained in the very fact that something is what it is, in its very origins" (Grossberg, p. 22).

Another view of reality is that of constructionism: The ontological assumption is that reality is constructed, rather than prescribed, through a complex organization of cultural practices that are ascribed meaning, constantly (Grossberg, 2010). Under a constructionist lens reality is both the result of a physical, material reality and a social,

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intangible reality. That is to say, a material reality does exist apart from the creation of social institutions created by cultures and society. Trees, rock structures, plants, and even human bodies exist as part of the physical nature of reality. Things are the way they are because things just happen that way. But just focusing on the physical reality does not, by itself, explain the realness of objects created by humans, nor is it capable of addressing social institutions, such as music genres, that would not have existed without human creation. For instance, a TV can be viewed as a part of physical reality in that it is tangible object, though created through the result of human invention and innovation, but the programming or content that is played by the TV is intangible and constantly changing as a product of human creation. If a TV continuously played the same image, it would not be a TV but a very expensive picture frame. The meanings of the TV—both in terms of the physical dimensions (e.g., 70" HDTV) one finds one's self boasting to friends about, and of the social meanings drawn from discussing a reality show around the water cooler at work—do not matter if the meanings ascribed to them are not articulated. Storey (2006) notes, " Objects exist independently of their discursive articulation, but it is only within discourse that they can exist as meaningful objects" (p. 67). Constructionism, thus, is concerned with the articulation of meaning through discourse (cultural practices).

Grossberg (2010) adopts the constructionist assumption of reality in his approach to modern cultural studies scholarship: "Constructionism, then, refuses to assume that there are two kinds of modes of being: the real and the discursive or symbolic, which exist on ontologically separate planes" (p. 23). Rather, constructionism assumes that the real and the social planes of reality exist and are continuously intertwined in complex

cultural practices. The communication of these cultural practices is, in itself, a social construction done through the articulation of meaning.

Articulation is cultural studies' spin on constructionism, or the belief that reality is not static, but rather fluid in existence and is the product of ideological struggles between clashing cultural practices. The analytical practice of exploring of these contesting cultural practices is the goal of cultural studies scholars (Grossberg, 2010). Articulation consists of a process of assigning and reassigning meaning as contingent, in both discursive and material forms, upon the contextual forces surrounding the appropriation of the cultural text(s). Cultural practices, therefore, are continuously changing in the ongoing production of reality. Each cultural practice is informed not only by those individuals involved in its construction, but also to the surrounding environment: the context. For example, an individual wearing a cowboy hat in downtown Chicago may be looked at in a weird way; whereas, an individual wearing a fedora to a country music concert may also be judged in a similar fashion. The contextual implications of cultural practices and effects directly relate to the meanings ascribed to them in the production of reality at a particular historical moment in time.

Grossberg (1992) addresses the link between articulation and reality: "Articulation links this practice to that effect, this text to that meaning, this meanings to that reality" (p. 54). Reality, than, is temporary and always evolving:

Reality is constantly producing itself … as the articulation and separation of expression and content. … Reality is itself expressive, but expression no longer assumes the existence of subjects or subjectivity … The world itself does not

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exist outside of its expressions; it is only in expressing itself that reality produces itself. (pp. 190-191)

Expressions, therefore, are the mechanisms in which individuals construct reality with one another. More so, expressions are a form of agency used by each individual to create and assign meaning to their reality, rather than being subjected to an external reality with no possibility altering reality, as essentialism would like to suggest. Cultural groups use expressions as a form of agency to partake in the a process that Grossberg (2010) calls mediation, which can be considered as the movement between events, both physically and mentally, from one set of relations to another. That is, expressions are constantly in a state of becoming something other than what they are, making mediation the space between "the virtual and the actual, of becoming actual" (p. 191). Individuals and the cultural practices they engage in are always within a state of mediation, changing reality and the meanings assigned to it based on the present contextual forces. To help clarify, I will address a common situation I find myself in. Walking to class I listen to music with my headphones, attuned to my favorite jams, walking through the quad, I, myself may believe at that moment in time I am a rock star, but at the same time I am also a student, lugging a backpack of books, racing to class. Though my status as a student may have been unconscious to me, at the time, I somehow find myself sitting down at my desk, instead of catching the next bus to Los Angeles to 'make it big' in the music industry. This example illustrates that contextual factors all play a role in the construction of reality as well as clarifies the fluidity of identity.

Identity as Identifications within Culture

Recent search has provided a plethora of writing on the concept of identity in cultural studies, sociological, and anthological studies. Identity is a term that, as Edensor (2002) states, "has proved to be a potent tool through which to explore diverse social and cultural transformations across political, economic, gendered, ethnic, work and leisure, sexual and local spheres" (p. 24). In modern research the transparency of identity has been a major question of interest. Hall (1990) suggests thinking of identity not as an accomplished fact but as a 'production' that is an ongoing process and constituted through representation. It is Hall's notion of the fluidity of identity that the present analysis will use as its theoretical foundation of identity.

Quoting the work of Sarup, Edensor (2002) defines identity as "a mediating concept between the external and the internal, the individual and society… a convenient tool through which to understand many aspects of our lives" (p. 24). The mediation attribute of identity is achieved through the process of identification, which may be thought of as the process of identity formation. A dynamic process, identification requires the continuous drawing of boundaries between the individual and others (Edensor). Therefore, identity requires individuals to mediate social contexts, using the resources available to them, in the constant process of identity formation. This view relates to Edensor's belief that identity is only conceivable through the practices of identifying the similarities and differences shared between others in social settings.

Cultural practices are used by individuals to mediate the process of identification in each social context, yet identity is not (necessarily) only a matter of cultural practices (the means to a specific effect); rather it should be viewed as the description of one's

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place within a contextualized pattern of relationships. Frith (1998) argues that one can never express her or himself autonomously: "Self-identity is cultural identity; claims to individual differences depend on audience appreciation, on shared performing, and narrative rules" (pp. 275-276). For example, one's claim of individuality is entirely based in the acceptance of that claim by the culture in which the individual lives. To be seen as an individual, one must conform to the qualities associated with being an individual, as dictated by the culture.

Collective identity differs from individual identity in that it can be thought of as cultural identity, which is entirely dependent upon the communication of shared knowledge through cultural practices. Hall (1990) believes there are two ways of looking at cultural identity. "The first position defines 'cultural identity' in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self,' hiding inside many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves'" (p. 223). Hall gives the example of heritage as a form of cultural identity under this view. That is, there is an implied history of ancestors who originated from the same geographical location. This approach often portrays cultural identity as a form of national identity, as it disregards the possibility that multiple cultures might exist within any one society at any given moment in time. Attention is diverted away from specific cultural practices of cultural groups in order to adopt a generalized cultural identity. The same can be thought of as two individuals, strangers to one another, wearing the same jersey of a professional sports team who happen to pass each other in the street. They may acknowledge the shared superficial identity associated with the team, but their cultural identity does not go any deeper than that.

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The second perspective of cultural identity refuses the assumption of an implied cultural identity that exists at superficial levels. Hall (1990) notes: "This second position recognizes that, as well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant *difference* which constitute 'what we really are'; or rather […] 'what we have become'" (p. 225). Cultural identity, under this view, is linked to history but is also in a constant state of transformation. The cultural practices of a specific social setting, though dependent upon the historical implications on which these practices have come to exist, are the inputs in the process of identification with a cultural identity. Individuals in the same geographical and social location communicate similarity to and differently from others through the cultural practices and the meaning assigned to these practices. In this perspective historical, cultural ties initially distinguish people from one another, but these are replaced by the shared accumulation of knowledge accomplished through cultural practices, as individuals foster a new, contextually dependent cultural identity for the duration of a social event. For example, any person who has ever gone to a professional sporting event will attest that even fans of the same team can clash with one another during the sporting event, but when the home team wins all those in attendance can be found celebrating and high-fiving each other, if only for a few minutes after the victory. The collective identity of celebrating the home team's win replaces the segregating differences that may have existed just minutes prior.

For example, individual and cultural identifications with a style of music provide listeners with a way of being in the world, a method for making sense of it. Frith (1998) associates reliance on music as a critical component for the development of one's identity:

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Music is especially important for our sense of ourselves because of its unique

emotional intensity—we absorb song into our own lives and rhythm into our

bodies…Music… provides us with an intensely subjective sense of being

sociable…. It both articulates and offers the immediate experience of collective

identity. (p. 273)

What makes music special in the process of developing one's sense of self is that musical

identity is both fantastic and real (Frith, 1998). It is fantastic in the manner in which it

allows individuals to figuratively place themselves in idealized imaginations, but as it is

enacted in activity, such as the style (fashion) choices and performative behaviors among

members of a particular music culture, it is also real. The exploration of these idealized

imaginations and cultural practices as tied to a style of music has often been associated

with the concept of youth culture. Therefore, the following discussion will address the

concept of youth culture and its relation to music consumption.

Youth Culture

To introduce the concept of youth culture, it is, perhaps, best to start with an

exploration of how youth culture is distinct from adult culture. Sanmarti (2009) clarifies

the distinction: "By 'youth cultures' we will understand … those meanings and practices

specific to young people – that is, that make sense to young people and not to adults or

children" (p. 41). The common example of a parent expressing dislike for the music of

his/her teenage child highlights this critical component of youth culture. The notion of

youth cultures can be understood as collective, cultural practices, which, meaningful to

youths, do not make sense to older generations. Sanmarti notes, "They are subterranean

or 'sub-cultural' to the general population" (p. 41).

Any study of youth culture must initially address the question of how to perceive youth culture and its purpose(s), as the perception of youth culture will determine the research methodologies used by scholars. Typically, according to Sanmarti (2009), the perception of youth culture is done through one of two approaches. The first view of youth culture is one that is focused on the transitory state of youth to adulthood. Scholars who adopt this approach are interested in researching the processes and experiences that individuals encounter as they mature from irresponsible youth into responsible adults. Sanmarti calls this approach the 'structural approach' (p. 40). Structural conditions can be thought of as the social institutions a society uses to classify and segregate youth individuals from adult individuals. Within these social institutions, youth(s) must travel a winding road of physical and mental experiences during the transition into adulthood. For example, the grade-level differentiation used in the education system serves as a social mechanism for easily separating the education of youth not only by age but, also, by the level of knowledge students should have obtained. Grade levels have structural requirements that students must achieve to advance to the next level. These structural conditions may pertain to academic content and/or social content. As individuals progress through the education system they not only learn course content but also, encounter social experiences, such as learning to make friends and beginning to date. Graduation from senior high school, traditionally, has served as the intersection of where youth transition into adulthood.

Methodologically speaking, the structural approach has the potential to incorporate both qualitative and quantitative research in regard to researching the structural conditions of young individual's transitions into adulthood. Scholars adhering

to this approach tend to be more interested in researching how youth become adults through transitional phases, while giving small focus to what it means to be a youth and the cultural practices of youth culture. Modern cultural practices of youth to delay marriage and the starting a family after high school graduation in order to pursue higher education or to experience the real world independent from one's parents pose a challenge the structural approach of youth culture. Scholars face challenges as they address and analyze the new structural conditions of society that are outside of traditional structural conditions of youth, such as education and work/social conditions of youth, as these shape the cultural practices of youth cultures. These challenges suggest second approach to youth culture.

The 'cultural' approach used in the perception of youth culture turns attention away from the transition of youths to adults and, instead, focuses on the cultural practices of youth culture and how these practices serve as identifiers for the individuals with youth culture (Sanmarti, 2009). The structural approach to youth culture looks towards the future by looking at how the youth actually become adults, whereas, the cultural approach seeks to understand what it means to be a youth through the experiences and behaviors of youth. The cultural approach employs qualitative methods in researching youth culture. Research under this approach is focused on not only what it means to be a youth but, also, how the cultural practices of the youth, such as choice of fashion and areas of youthful landscape (i.e. EDM festivals), aid youth in the identification with youth culture.

In either approach, the cultural practices of youth, and how youth make sense of their reality, cannot be separated from consumer culture (Sanmarti, 2009). Commodities,

such as fashion are a mechanism used by youth in creation of identity and the social construction of reality, according to Sanmarti:

> The logic of change of consumer culture through fashions and trends is inherent to what we call 'youth cultures,' as are its differentiation mechanisms. This implies that aspects such as 'coolness,' 'fashion,' 'normative transgression,' 'sex,' 'commercial,' 'underground,' and youth styles in general, all mediated by—and signified through—commodities, are central to young people's identities. (p. 42)

That is, youth cultures use material commodities, such as fashion, to establish similarity among individuals who share the same interests but, also, to exclude and segregate themselves from those with differing ideologies.

If it is to be understood that youth culture is, in fact, is a culture based around the cultural practices of consumerism, then it can be assumed that the consumption of social commodities, such as listening to music, as well as the appropriation of material commodities, serve as the practices that produce the effects of youth identity and social reality. Research under a postmodernism lens has sought to engage issues of youth culture and the consumption of popular music (Muggleton 2000; Redhead,1993), consumerism's creation of cultural capital (Thornton, 1996), and social geographies' production of local identities (Cohen 1991; Shank 1994; Skelton & Valentine, 1998). Therefore, to continue the exploration of youth culture and consumption practices as processes of identification, attention must now turn towards the historical and cultural importance of music and its consumption purposes.

Music as Universal Communication

Music is among the oldest and most widely enjoyed forms of communication. It is used to convey rhythmically beautiful narratives that are aesthetically rewarding and culturally valuable. Frith (1998), quoting the work of John Blackings, chooses to look at the purpose of music in order to explain it: "Music is essentially about aesthetic experience and the creative expression of individual human beings in community, about the sharing of feelings and ideas" (p. 251). This is to say that music creates a cultural community of listeners, and in each music culture exist cultural practices that promote similarity, while at the same time differentiate, a particular music culture as its 'own.'

Commonly, styles of music are tied to the geographical areas in which they were invented, such as southern London Dubstep or Chicago House music. Though it is important to recognize the historical contexts in which particular styles of music have been created, such a categorization of music only limits the concept of music as being a product of a nation or municipality. Viewing musical styles as products of geographical boundaries prohibits the examination of the culture(s) associated with a specific style of music and, more so, the examination of intercultural interaction among different music styles. Chaffee (1985) argues against such a view: "Music is not just the product of a nation, it is a manifestation of a people, an expression of cultural meanings that cannot be communicated effectively by other means" (p. 415). Music is a mode through which individuals, especially youth, are socialized in the dominant ideology as well as a mode through which individuals express identification with similar people in the form of meaningful cultural practices, which are expressed through the use of cultural artifacts.

Rentfrow, Goldberg, and Levitin (2011) acknowledge that "music is multifaceted: It is composed of specific auditory properties, communicates emotions, and has strong social connotations" (p. 1141). Research on music and emotion has exposed that personal preferences towards a piece of music are partly dependent on the type of emotions that piece of music causes the listener to feel and express, such as happiness, sadness, or anger (Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2007; Rickard, 2004; Schellenberg, Peretz, & Vieillard, 2008; Zentner, Grandjean, & Scherer, 2008).   Research on the relationship between music and identity suggests that some consumers prefer styles of music that are associated with specific social connotations, such as rebellion or sophistication (Tekman & Hortaçsu, 2002). Research suggests that musical tastes of adolescents and young adults are significantly influenced by musical preferences of their friends and peers and are a major contributing element in the development of their social identities (Creed & Scully, 2000; Goldberg, Rentfrom, & Levitin, 2011; North & Hargreaves, 1999; Tekman & Hortacsu, 2002).

As an example, Werner's (2012) analysis of teenage girls' music listening preferences and their constructions of gender illustrates that emotions and experiences commonly sang about in pop songs, such as love, are taken up by teenage girls and re-presented into their own personal lives, significantly impacting how they view the establishment of love, gender roles, and healthy relationships. This research leads Werner to two assumptions: 1) The emotions experienced when people listen to music are more than matters of trivial significance—teen girls experience strong emotions when listening to popular love songs; and 2) the sad songs accommodated the circulation of

'love' in this study did, in fact, play a key role in shaping gender and imaginable futures of the research participants.

The ability of music to evoke emotions as well as act as an identification principle in the creation of individual and group identity is not solely based on the music itself. The emotions and identifications experienced with music consumption are also based on the environment or context in which the music is created, listened too, and talked about. Yet music, unlike other forms of communication, poses the best method for the intertwining of music cultures that opens the gateway for new experiences, meanings, and identifications to be communicated across cultures. Frith (1998) clarifies music's potential to bridge intercultural communication barriers: "Music is the cultural form best able both to cross borders—sounds carry across fences and walls and oceans, across classes, races, and nations—and to define places: in clubs, scenes, and raves listening on headphones, radio, in the concert hall, we are only where the music takes us" (p. 276). To locate, exactly, where the music takes us, practices of music consumption must be addressed.

Music Consumption and the Formation of Meaning

The consumption and interpretation of the 'meaning' behind a piece of music is a dual process (Frith, 1998). First, a piece of music must be presented to the ear, but not just any sound may be presented and understood by the listener as music; the sound must convey to cultural scheme that the listener is subject to. This is what Frith (1998) calls "a scheme of interpretation," which he describes as the "knowledge not just of musical forms but also rules of behavior in musical settings" (pp. 249-250). In other words, a song that may be popular in America is not necessarily assured its popularity overseas

because the song was composed and consumed under culturally limiting forces; or rather, the rules of what is and is not music in that particular culture and these "rules of music" vary from culture to culture.

Music consumption, then, may better be explained as an ongoing process of performances that overlap simultaneously, rather than being viewed as a static, means-end behavior. According to Storey (2003), music consumption involves socializing oneself with a particular music that he/she enjoys, which may lead to an individual acquiring more information about the music, the appeal, the meanings, and the culture: "A particular music becomes a way of being in the world" (p. 119). Music consumption is a sense-making tactic used to interpret and assign meaning to reality. Storey states, "Music provides consumers a sense of connection with others, it creates a community of members who share similar tastes in music. It is a community created in the act of consumption" (p. 120). In Storey's opinion, music consumption is a form of cultural consumption, in which listeners who share similar beliefs (musical tastes for this example) appropriate, take as their own, the meaning of economic and political commodities, distinctly interpreting these appropriated commodities as signs that serve as identifiers for a particular music culture. This is similar to Frith's (1998) description of music consumption as the process of placing ourselves in imaginative cultural narratives: "Music constructs our sense of identity through the experiences it offers of the body, time, and sociability" (p. 275). That is, music not only provides listeners with experiences through its auditory properties, but, also, through the social setting (context) in which the music is heard as well as the sensations encountered when people listen, converse about, and experience the music in community. These experiences are the

results of affect, to which Frith pays particular attention in his discussion of music consumption:

> Musical response is, by its nature, a process of musical identification; aesthetic response is, by its nature, and ethical agreement. The critical issue, in other words, is not meaning and its interpretation […] but experience and collusion: the "aesthetic" describes a kind of self-consciousness, a coming together of the sensual, the emotional, and the social as performance. (p. 272)

In this sense, an aesthetic-based self-consciousness may be thought of as a type of identification, which is achieved through the appropriation of cultural artifacts into meaningful symbols of communication.   These meanings are then used to categorize musical styles as being different from one another and are labeled as specific music genres.

Genres as Categorizing Principles

A genre of music, and the culture associated with a particular genre of music, though related, are different from one another. The former refers to the musical properties of music and whether or not a piece of music fits within the preconceived constraints (musical tastes) of what is or what is not music as dictated by the consuming culture (McLeod, 2001). The latter refers to the consuming culture (music culture) and the cultural practices that are associated with a particular music style. A genre, just as is the music that creates the genre, is multifaceted. A genre serves as a sense-making short-cut, similar to a stereotype, used in the organization of the production and consumption of music as well as the cultural artifacts and cultural practices. In their examination of music genres being a classification of the cultures associated with them, Lena and

Peterson (2008) define music genres as "systems of orientations, expectations, and conventions that bring together an industry, performers, critics, and fans in making what they identify as a distinctive sort of music" (p. 698). The number of musical genres is immense, and the number continues to grow. At the same time the classifications of what classifies one genre from another continue blend together as artists borrow from musical genres outside their respective genre.

Addressing the rules of genres, Frith (1998), using Franco Fabbri's concept of genre rules, claims, "A musical genre is a set of musical events (real or possible) whose course is governed by a definite set of socially accepted rules" (p. 91). This means that all similar sounding musical melodies must abide by to these rules to be considered part of that specific style of music. For example, Ska music, popular in the United States from the 1980s-1990s, is made for dancing. The music is an upbeat, quick-paced style of rock n' roll that features similar bass, drums, guitars and keyboards, yet features a dominant section of horns, such as sax, trombone, and trumpet. As the above example preludes, under any one music genre, such as rock n' roll, hip-hop, jazz, or folk, may exist any number of subgenres, each with its own similar, yet distinct sound and specific genre rules.

Frith (1998), defending the purpose of genres, states, "They're also a way of talking about the music, of arguing about what it's for and where it should go" (7). Simply stated, music genres provide consumers a way to interpret the complexity of sounds that are all thought of as music. Genres are reactionary mechanisms that enable consumers to identify personal music preferences in a way that differentiates the individual from others, yet at the same time connects the individual to those with similar

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interests, who then talking about and arguing about the genre distinguish its uniqueness among other genres. These discursive practices as held by cohorts of individuals establish music culture(s) around a music genre. Youth culture research has taken a primary interest in the examination of youth-music cultures, yet has struggled to develop a theoretical concept to define the music cultures.

The examination of different music genres is the first step in the documentation of the culture(s) associated with a specific genre, as Frith (1998) states, "We can begin to document the different ways in which music works materially to give people different identities, to place them in different social groups" (p. 275). This is to say that music, clothing styles, and so on are all both products and catalysts in the formation of meaning and a sense of culture. It is through cultural practices that music is attributed material properties, such as clothing styles, that are associated with a particular genre or subgenre of music. A social group's cultural artifacts are often perceived from outsiders as strange and/or threatening to the dominant ideology in which the society exists, though this may not be how the artifact was intended to be interpreted by its creators: the insiders of the social group. Both insiders and outsiders of a cultural group then assign meanings to the type of music and music-related artifacts associated with the cultural group, not specifically the cultural group, itself. This results in the mislabeling of cultural practices as musical properties of a genre of music, which calls to mind the earlier-discussed notion that music genres and music cultures are two separate, socially produced organisms. Still, just as the mislabeling of music cultures as music genres has become commonplace, youth culture scholars have contested how to label the groups associated

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with youth music movements. Often, EDM and EDMC are at the center of this scholarly

debate.

I Play the Genre Electric

Digital home-recording equipment and computer software have opened the

floodgate of music composition, resulting in the appearance of a new type of music artist,

one independent from the physical and mental complexities of learning to read, write, and

perform (instrumentally) music (though it should be noted that a large portion of these

new composers do know how to play multitude of instruments): the DJ.

Just as the role of the music artist has changed, so, too, has the role of the

audience. The traditional view of the audience as being a body to which music is

performed has been replaced with the belief that today's music is a product of the

performative and communicative behaviors (cultural practices) of the artist as well as the

audience. According to Neil (2004), "In this type of event, the artists are not the center of

attention; instead it is the role of the artist to channel the energy of the crowds and create

the proper backdrop for their social interaction" (p. 389). In another sense, the audience

and performer(s) feed off one another. The performance of a live music event is no

longer confined to the stage, but rather, two separate performances take place: the artist

performance and the audience performance. As the music event progresses, so, too, do

the two performances until the point of collusion, which the result is an authentic,

collective experience.

One style of music that has capitalized on the use of technological sound

production is Electronic Dance Music (EDM). Associated with the mass-consumption of

sensory-distorting recreational drugs, and an even more overwhelming acceptance by

today's youth, EDM is the classification given to any type of music that is heavily based on the use of technology, such as synthesizers and computer-audio production programs. The result is the production of purposefully arranged sounds that classical instruments are incapable of making and the merging of big-band instruments with new electronic sounds, all being produced by the same DJ system. This merging of styles gives way to an experience unlike any other (Myer, 2011).

Perhaps even more absurd than the technological production of music that has distinguished EDM from all other types of music are the unorthodox, material styles and fashions appropriated by members of EDMC. Commodities such as khandi—festival bracelets frequently traded among festival goers—neon-colored clothing, tribal headdresses, and glow-sticks used by members of EDMC serve as identifiers with the culture that are radically different than other commodities produced by the larger, dominant ideology of society and reality.

Reynolds (1999), in his book *Generation Ecstasy*, distinguishes EDM from other genre of music: "Where rock relates an experience, rave constructs an experience. Bypassing interpretation, the listener is hurled into a vortex of heightened sensations, abstract emotions, and artificial energies" (pp. 9-10). Whereas genres such as Rock n' Roll follow the traditional format of narrating an experience through lyrics, EDM's nature of minimalizing or being devoid of lyrics (typically) enables DJs to manipulate sound and rhythm to construct an authentic, psychic utopia as well as allows the listeners to draw emotional experiences from the 'beat of the music' rather than through narrative (Reynolds, 1999).

From an outside perspective, one may not be able to easily recognize the differences between the genres of EDM, but as Reynolds (1999) argues: "EDM has long since ceased to be a monolith. It's a fractious confederacy of genres and subgenres, metropolitan cliques and provincial populisms, purism and hybrids (p. 375). With a little background one can start to recognize the differences between these genres. Some of the most popularized genres of EDM are: Chicago House, Detroit Techno, New York Garage, Drum 'n' Bass, Dubstep, and Hardcore.

Despite diversity among the genres of EDM, the cultures that surround this music share similar stereotypes. Perhaps the most popular stereotype is that EDMC is nothing more than the consumption of loud, senseless music that is accompanied by the mass utilization of psychedelic drugs, ecstasy in particular, and dancing. Others view EDMC in comparison to previous youth-in-revolt cultural movements that have united under a specific genre of music as a form of escape or resistance against current social and political status quos.

The exploration of the culture associated with EDM has given rise to what Reynolds (1999) calls a divide in ideology. Reynolds believes there are two contesting viewpoints of EDMC, as held by participants of EDMC. One is what he calls the 'transcendentalist, neopsychedelic discourse" (p. 10), which perceives EDM festivals as gateways to enlightened, out-of-body experiences, with participants in search of temporary mental states of higher consciousness. Second is what Reynolds calls the 'rush culture' (p. 10). This view is held by individuals who attend EDM events under the pretense of escaping the responsibilities of adulthood in exchange for cheap thrills and adolescent irresponsibility. The latter experience of EDMC presents individuals with the

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same type of emotions and experiences encountered when engaging in extreme sports, such as skydiving. Youths are enabled to participate in these extreme, even dangerous, cultural practices because they, unlike adults, are disconnected from the responsibilities of having to support a family, have a well-paying job, and so on. The consequences for youthful engagement in what may be perceived as dangerous behaviors are less for those with fewer responsibilities and who have no dependents to support. Yet, despite the differences in perspectives about EDMC, teenagers and young adults around the world are flocking from the underground raves to mainstream EDM festivals by the thousands. The efforts of youth culture scholars to conceptualize the vast popularity of EDM have resulted in the creation of competing theoretical concepts of youth culture.

Subcultures vs. Neo-tribes

Over the past few decades youth culture scholars have largely assumed that the study of music is 'intimately' connected with the study of popular music (Hesmondhalgh, 2005). Beginning in post-war Britain, the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) has played a critical role in the exploration and explanation of the context of economic and political struggles under which particular youth cultures, based around music, were created. The CCCS coined the term subculture to label the cultures associated with particular genres of music. Addressing the traditional purpose of the concept of subculture, Blackman (2005) states, "The concept of subculture at its base is concerned with agency and action belonging to a subset or social group that is distinct but related to the dominant culture" (p. 2). This is to say, a subculture is a group held together by ideological principles similar to one another, yet contradictory to the dominant ideology. Differences in ideologies are expressed through the appropriation of

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economic and political commodities, which are reassigned new symbolic meanings by members of the subculture, yet these new meanings are in opposition of the commodities' original intent.

According to Storey (2003), "Subcultural use of music is perhaps music consumption at its most active. The consumption of music is one of the means through which a subculture forges its identity and culturally reproduces itself by marking its distinction and difference from other members of society" (p. 119). Research carried out by British subcultural theorists has framed the cultural practices of youth music cultures as being based around the inequalities faced by the youth, working class in their transition into adulthood. This is to say that subcultures, and the cultural practices associated with them, are the product of the collaborated efforts of like-minded individuals to combat class-struggles that happen within society.

Criticisms of the work done by youth culture scholars under the CCCS are based around the center's reliance on the use of Gramsci's concept of ideological hegemony in order to position the youth cultures against the socio-economic forces in which these groups of youth united under in attempt to repress the socio-economic oppression of the dominant culture. Overall, qualitative fieldwork done by CCCS scholars did little more than to reveal the socio-economic struggles that were already, known to exist. As Bennett (2002) notes:

> The symbolic shows of resistance engaged in by postwar youth culture, although at one level indicative of the symbolic creativity of youth, amounted to little more than a spectacular form of bravado when viewed within the wider context of the social relations of capitalism. (p. 453)

In all, it was the lack of attention paid to individual agency under the CCCS concept of subculture that caused modern scholars to question the legitimacy of the fieldwork done by CCCS scholars as well as the inability of the term subculture to address the role of agency and cultural practices in youth cultures used to assign meaning to their surroundings and create reality.

Alongside the development of the CCCS theory of subculture was the development of an American sociological approach to youth cultures. During the 1970s, American researchers of the Chicago School looked to understand youth cultures through ethnographic fieldwork derived from the urban conditions of social life (Blackman, 2005). Rather than viewing youth subcultures as a body of people, subject to socio-economic oppression by the dominant culture. The Chicago School addressed the concepts of social space, morality, and social bonds in relation to subcultural agency. The aim, according to Blackman, "was to explain the social and cultural context of deviance without reducing young people's actions to symptoms of psychological inadequacy" (p. 3). Cultural texts and artifacts as perceived by scholars of the Chicago School are mechanisms through which youth subcultures distinguish themselves as different from the dominant culture, but not on the same level of inadequacy as held by the CCCS perspective.

Subculture research conducted under a structuralist-Marxist approach has proved to be somewhat useful to address the rebellious behaviors of youth cultures associated around particular styles of music, such as the 1980s punks, yet it fails to account for shifts in cultural membership, from dealing with socio-economic oppression to membership due to reasons of enjoyment, collective identity, and shared experiences. Furthermore,

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the traditional concept of subculture has been contested for its inability to address local

variations in cultural practices of similar groups that are geographically distant from one

another, yet are connected through advances in communication technologies. To address

this concern, youth culture scholars have adopted a post-modernist perspective of

subcultures (Bennett, 2000; Blackman, 2005; Hesmondhalgh, 2005; Jackson, 2004;

Redhead, 1993). According to Blackman (2005), "Postmodern subcultural theory seeks

to move away from models of social constraint and places greater emphasis on agency in

the search for individual meaning in subcultural practice" (p. 8). This greater emphasis

on agency is examined through the cultural practices, texts, and artifacts as used by

subcultures in identity and reality formation, which, as suggested by postmodern theory,

are always evolving and changing based on the social contexts of the experiences

individuals encounter.

In order to address the fluidity of identity and identifications with multiple

cultural groups, and the shift from subculture membership from socio-economic reasons

to collective experiences and affective consumption, youth culture scholars have created

and contested new theoretical assumptions over the concept of subculture. Perhaps the

most explored alternative concept for subcultures, *neo-tribes*, comes from the work of

Maffesoli's concept of 'tribus.' According to Maffesoli, the term tribe is better suited to

label youth cultures:

> The tribe is "without the rigidity of the forms of organization with which we are
>
> similar, it refers more to a certain ambience, a state of mind, and is preferably to
>
> be expressed through lifestyles that favor appearance and form. (As cited in
>
> Bennett, 1999, p. 605)

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The importance of aesthetics and creative expressions is what Bennett refers to as a shift in the nature of youth cultures, as society becomes even more consumer oriented. Bennett explains the term *lifestyle* as the employed sensibilities of the individual in preferred patterns of consumption to articulate personal expression. These patterns of consumption and the individuals' varying modes of personal expression differ from one another based on the social and cultural contexts in which the individual willfully chooses to operate.

The concept of neo-tribe allows for the exploration and examination of constantly changing consumer trends as well as fluidity of membership among multiple cultural groups at any point in time. According to Goulding and Shankar (2011), neo-tribes differ from static subcultures in five ways. First, neo-tribes are multiple in existence and seldom dominate an individual's daily life. Second, neo-tribal membership is freed from long-term responsibilities to the group, allowing neo-tribes to be viewed as 'playful.' Third, due to neo-tribes' inclusion of multiple identities and playfulness, it is expected that neo-tribes emerge and disappear as the tribes' members and resources change. Forth, neo-tribes manipulate and customize consumption resources and market offerings to create their own artifacts and meanings. Fifth, neo-tribes operate under codes and etiquette.

Bennett (1999) believes that the term lifestyle is a better theoretical concept for addressing the agency of the individual in associating with particular cultures in that it allows for the examination of diverse roles of the identifications individuals use in the mediation of identity and reality, but it is limited by the notion that patterns of consumption are only relevant in the specific cultural settings, such as an EDM festival.

If neo-tribes exist only momentarily and seldom dominate an individual's life, it could be assumed that the cultural artifacts used to associate, temporarily, with the neo-tribe do not transcend the disappearance of the neo-tribe itself. That is, after the gathering or event of the neo-tribe, members put their artifacts and markers of the tribe away and return to their other (dominant) cultures. Yet, members of EDMC commonly wear cultural artifacts of EDMC, such as festival wristbands, both during EDM events and in day-to-day life. This challenges the assumption that identification with a neo-tribe disappears once the neo-tribal experience has ended, which leads to the main point of this research analysis of EDMC. Using the qualitative approach of cultural studies and the method of in-depth informant interviews for data collection, the purpose of the present study is not to call for a new theoretical concept to label youth cultures, such as EDMC, but to examine whether or not membership within EDMC transcends the physical location of the EDM event through the use of cultural artifacts by members of EDMC as identifications with the scene in their daily lives. This purpose leads to the following research questions:

Research Question 1: How do members of EDMC use cultural artifacts to communicate alternative, individual identities while at EDM events?

Research Question 2: How do members of EDMC perceive the role of cultural artifacts in communicating a collective identity among attendees of an EDM event?

Research Question 3: How do cultural artifacts of EDMC communicate identification with EDMC outside of EDM events?

Conclusion

The popularity of EDM has labeled it as being the music of today's youth generation. The exploration of the communicative potential of cultural artifacts as used by members EDMC will offer insight into how individuals distinguish themselves from others, yet at the same time assimilate themselves with like-minded people. Furthermore, it is the intent of this research to determine the communicative power of material, cultural artifacts found in EDMC. Such an investigation has the potential to shed light upon how music-based cultural groups communicate ideologies through the use of cultural artifacts. Also, previous research has implied that the congregation of youth at EDM events is only for reasons of enjoyment. Analyzing the communicative meanings of EDMC members' cultural practices may help to diminish the current view of EDMC as one based around enjoyment, and may illustrate underlying themes of political and social agendas hidden within the atmosphere of EDM events. One qualitative approach that has been largely employed across a variety of academic disciplines in order to study cultural phenomena is cultural studies. The following chapter will provide a brief background of the theoretical principles and assumptions held by cultural studies scholars when conducting qualitative research.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

When set with the challenge of researching the communication of cultural identity and reality through cultural artifacts and practices, any researcher must initially address the question of what type of research is best suited to explain the cultural phenomena in its totality. Researchers looking to form generalizations of cultural phenomena at the universal level would hold that quantitative research methods are best suited because any generalizations made can be applied to all cultures, despite differences among cultures. Yet, universal cultural phenomena rarely exist, as each culture has its own specific cultural practices that make it unique. Therefore, when researching cultural phenomena, qualitative research methods have become the standard as they provide a more local understanding of specific cultures. Qualitative research acknowledges that cultural phenomena are tied to the local contexts in which the phenomena take place, thus, suggesting that the goal of research is not to provide a singular answer, but, instead, to provide detailed accounts and explanations of cultural phenomena as well as the differences in cultural practices in order to gain a better understanding of how these practices are manifest in an individual's or group's way of life.

Cultural Studies

The tradition of cultural studies is not a concrete body of theories and methods; instead, cultural studies should be viewed as being composed of practice, institution, and

cultural form (Steedman, 1992). In other terms, cultural studies depends on scholars putting theoretical concepts created within the walls of academia into real-life practice, all within the cultural contexts of any given study. Grossberg (1992) emphasizes that cultural studies is not a single entity, rather it has always been a site of intermingling between the disciplines, sometimes cooperative, sometimes not. Grossberg writes, "Every position in cultural studies is an ongoing trajectory across different theoretical and political projects. Moreover, there have always been multiple practices and sites of cultural studies in every context" (p. 17). The reason for the existence of multiple practices and sties of cultural studies can be found by looking at the term most closely related with cultural studies: culture. If culture, as discussed earlier, is to be understood as a fluid, progressing social creation, than it makes sense that the qualitative methodology concerned with researching culture must, too, be a fluid, progressive collaboration of theoretical thought and cross-discipline research. Simply put, as cultural practices change, so, too, do the research methods used by cultural studies scholars to analyze these changing practices.

Addressing the theoretical origins of cultural studies scholarship, Turner (2003), insists, "Cultural studies is an interdisciplinary field where certain concerns and methods have converged; the usefulness of this convergence is that is has enabled us to understand phenomena and relationships that were not accessible through the existing disciplines" (p. 11). Such a convergence can be seen in cultural studies scholarship of EDMC, which has been analyzed through combinations of sociology, anthropology, tourism, and business disciplines.

The main objective of cultural studies, according to Potter (1996), is examining how individuals interpret culture and how individuals interact through the creation and use of symbols. Therefore, according to Potter, cultural studies scholarship should emphasize the importance of culture as a primary, influential factor on how individuals live and give meaning to their lives. The focus on the individual, rather the individual cultural practices, in which consumers engage, provides individuals a sense of agency in the construction of reality. The expression of the consumption patterns and the effects caused by these expressions create reality, piece-by-piece, and position reality to be something that is constructed rather than something that independently exists outside of human interaction. Therefore, if reality is to be viewed as the result of cultural practices of consumption, cultural studies scholarship must focus on the production, circulation, and interpretation of cultural practices, as positioned within the ongoing contestation of meaning within and between cultural groups (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). The particular attention that is paid to local, cultural practices is the distinguishing factor that makes the use of cultural studies methodology best equipped to address and explain the cultural practices of EDMC and how each locality of EDMC differs from one another around the globe.

Methods

My interest in researching the ability of EDMC artifacts to communicate identification with EDMC and to transcend the physical setting of EDM events has been the product of multiple years of experiencing the EDM scene as well as associating myself with those who identify themselves as members of EDMC. The proposed data-

collection process consisted of in-depth informant interviews of college students

associated with a large, Mid-western university.

Participants

Since EDMC has been associated as a youth culture movement, the target sample

population consisted of men and women who associate with EDMC that are between the

ages of 18-25 years old. This target, sample population was chosen due to its tremendous

presence within EDMC. In order to acquire the sample population the researcher relied

on the grassroots method of snowball sampling. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2011)

to start the process of snowball sampling, the researcher must first locate a participant

who is "willing to serve the dual role of an interview subject and a guide to potential new

subjects" (p. 114). As such, I used my personal interest and connections within EDMC to

arrange, initially, informant interviews, which, connected me with other willing

participants. Twelve individuals participated. In all, ten participants were male and two

were female, ranging from the ages of 18-25 years old. All of the participants were

Caucasian. I analyzed data from the first ten interviews to develop themes, with the

analysis of the last two interviews serving to determine whether I had reached theoretical

redundancy (no further category development with additional data; Lindlof & Taylor). A

limitation of snowball sampling is that is has the potential to produce biased data, as

interviewees are likely to come from the same social circle (Lindlof & Taylor).

Participants received no compensation for their participation, and all participation

was on a volunteer basis only. Prior to participation, participants were presented with a

consent form that detailed the purpose of the research study, participants' involvement in

it, and participants' rights and regulations, most specifically the researcher's promise to

adhere to preserving the confidentially of the participants. Furthermore, at the start of the interview participants were asked to verbally state their willingness to participate in the research study (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

Data Collection

For this research study, participant recollections of EDM and EDMC were preferred, as the purpose of the research was to explain the cultural production of reality through cultural artifacts and practices within a specific social and geographical EDMC: the Midwestern United States. Exploration of this particular context held true to Lindlof and Taylor's chief value of qualitative research: "achieving in-depth understanding of social reality in a specific context" (p. 109).

Lindlof and Taylor (2011) acknowledge that in-depth interviews done by qualitative researchers are "well suited to understanding the social actor's experience, knowledge, and worldviews" (p. 173). For this research study, individual, informant interviews were conducted that lasted approximately 30-60 minutes in length. To address the issue of having moved from the Midwest to the Southwest United States in pursuit of career aspirations, while finishing my thesis, the use of Internet recording technologies, such as Skype, was utilized to conduct the interviews with participants back in the Midwestern United States. Though Internet recording was be part of the interview process, data were only recorded through the use of an audio recording computer application. Video from the interview was not recorded. Once data collection had reached the point of redundancy, transcription of the audio interviews was performed. When transcription of an interview session was complete, the audio recording was destroyed to ensure further data security. My thesis committee chair and myself were the

only ones with access to the interview transcripts. Any use of interview dialogue within the discussion section of this research study has been accompanied by false names to further protect the research participants. The informed consent form that was used for this research study has been attached as an appendix for convenience purposes (See Appendix B).

Interview questions were be based upon Strauss and Corbin's (1998) five types of interview questions: sensitizing, theoretical, practical, structural, and guiding. Sensitizing questions were those that assisted me in identifying what the data may be indicating. Questions of this type sought to explain what is going on in the data set, who were the actors involved, what were the meanings behind the cultural practices, and so on. Theoretical questions were those that aided me in making connections among concepts within the data set. For example, a theoretical question I asked was, "What would happen if you were to remove a cultural artifact form the scene; would the meanings of other cultural practices change?" Practical and structural questions addressed the nature of sampling and helped guide me in developing an evolving theory around the data. These types of questions are not asked to the participants, per say, but asked by myself for myself to answer, in effort of making sure data collection was researching what the research originally set out to study. In addition, practical and structural questions helped the evolving direction of the study and to connect new theoretical questions of concepts that emerged through the data set. Guiding questions were questions that guided the research efforts, data collection, and data analysis. These questions were initially open-ended and evolved into more specific questions as I changed from merely listening to respondents too asking follow-up questions based on the content of what was just said in

the interview.   In sum, the main line of questioning was based around identifying which cultural artifacts of EDMC transcend the social and geographical setting of EDM events and into participants' daily lives. In addition, questions about the overall characteristics of a typical EDM event were asked as well as questions that regarded participant's perceptions of meanings associated with cultural artifacts. (See Appendix A)

Upon completion of the interviews, participants were thanked for their participation and once again reminded of their rights and regulations and then provided with information on how to learn more about the study as well as who to contact should they have any further questions about involvement with the study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted through the qualitative analytic method of thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p. 6). It is characterized by its ability to minimally organize and describe a data set in rich detail as well as allows for the researcher to generate various interpretations from the data set (Braun & Clarke). A theme, according to Braun and Clarke, is a concept generated from the data set that highlights something important about the data by identifying levels of patterned responses or meanings within the data set. Braun and Clarke stress, "The 'keyness' of a theme is not necessarily dependent upon quantifiable measures – but in terms of whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question" (p. 10).   This is to say that just because a theme found throughout the data set, more than other themes, it is not necessarily a predominant theme if it does not pertain to the research question(s) under analysis.

Thematic analysis may be done in one of two ways: inductive or theoretical (deductive). An inductive thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), means that the themes generated from the data set are heavily linked to the data itself. Themes produced from an inductive thematic analysis are not necessarily tied to a specific research question, rather, the themes are interpreted by the researcher using the entire data set to interpret some type of pattern that emerges from the collected data. Braun and Clarke state: "Inductive analysis is therefore a process of coding the data *without* trying to fit it into a pre-existing, or the researcher's analytic preconceptions. In this sense, this form of thematic analysis is data-driven" (p. 12).

Theoretical thematic analysis, on the other hand, is driven by a researcher's analytical interest in a research area and is, typically, more analyst driven. According to Braun and Clarke, this form of thematic analysis does not provide as rich of description of the overall data set, but it does provide a detailed analysis of a specific part of the data.

Furthermore, when using the qualitative method of thematic analysis a researcher must decide if his or her analysis is going to address the semantic themes, or surface level of meanings, found within the data set, or if he or she is going to address the latent themes, which are the underlying assumptions that can be interpreted within the data. The semantic approach, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), involves:

> A progression from *description*, where the data have simply been organized to show patterns in semantic content, and summarized, to interpretation, where there is an attempt to theorize the significance of the patterns and their broader meanings and implications. (p. 13)

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For a latent thematic analysis, theme development consists of interpretative work, not just description, in which the result is a theme that has already theorized (Braun & Clarke).

For the purpose of my research study, I chose to employ the method of a inductive, latent thematic analysis as my interest in analyzing cultural artifacts of EDMC had not been based off of pre-existing expectations set out by previous research. Data analysis was initiated by open coding procedures. Open coding is the process of identifying concepts—their properties and dimensions—as discovered in the data set (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The initial process of open coding the data set examined similarities and differences of responses of participants in the effort to identify trending concepts and phenomena within in the data set. From there, the similarities and differences among concepts were broken down into a system of categories. Strauss and Corbin discuss this process of grouping concepts into categories: "The analyst realizes that certain concepts can be grouped under a more abstract higher order concept, based on its ability to explain what is going on" (p. 113). After I grouped similar concepts under specific categories, analysis then turned attention towards identifying the dimensions and properties of each category. Properties may be thought of as the general attributes of a category that make it distinct from other categories, whereas, dimensions represent the location of a particular property along a range of social contexts (Strauss & Corbin). That is, dimensions place properties of categories within a specific moment of time, such as members of EMDC consuming drugs while only in attendance of EDM events. Distinguishing the properties and dimensions of categories, or defining the categories, within the data set allowed for the development of themes related to the

developed categories. The results of my inductive, latent thematic analysis will be

discussed in the next chapter.

Conclusion

Qualitative research, according to Fitch (1994), is "that which examines the

qualities (attributes, characteristic, properties) of communication phenomena" (p. 32).

Qualitative researchers have incorporated a "cross-fertilization" of methodology in order

to address performative and communicative behaviors of individuals and groups (Fitch).

A methodology is not, necessarily, a formal science but the presumed methods and

procedures scholars use to create a sensible and orderly way of conducting research

(Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). This chapter has provided background information of the

methodology of cultural studies as well as discussed how data was collected and analyzed

through the process of thematic analysis. The next chapter will report the findings of the

data analysis process in regard to this study's research questions.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The previous chapter outlined my study's methodology and how data were to be analyzed through the process of thematic analysis. Throughout the data collection process, twelve in-depth, informant interviews were conducted that lasted approximately 30-60 minutes each. The raw interview data was then transcribed, analyzed, and interpreted into inductively produced categories and themes for each specific research question. In this section, I will discuss the findings for each research question as they pertain to the role of cultural artifacts in communicating individual, collective, and transcending identities for members of EDMC.

Communication of Individual Identity

RQ1 explored how members of EDMC use cultural artifacts to communicate alternative, individual identities while at EDM events. Cultural artifacts, once again, are regarded as non-verbal objects and behaviors. Initially, it was my intention to find specific instances of cultural artifacts, but as data collection went on it became more apparent that data analysis needed to look at role of cultural artifacts as a whole in the communication of individual identity. Although this is the case, some examples used to support my findings will address the role of specific cultural artifacts.

members of EDMC through the use of cultural artifacts while at EDM events. Three major themes evolved, *shredding of 9-to-5 self, the authentic other,* and *storytelling.* In

this next section I will discuss each of these themes as they pertain to the use of cultural artifacts in communicating individual EDMC identities. Data analysis yielded one main category of expression of individual identity through the use of cultural artifacts, identity metamorphosis. I defined **identity metamorphosis** as the physical and mental transformation of individual identities of

The theme *shredding of 9-to-5 self* pertained to the use of cultural artifacts to achieve physical separation from an individual's daily life and the expression of a new identity when in the context of an EDM event. One participant best states the transformation of identity while attending an EDM event: "They say that people have different personas than who they are in real life. It's the same for people who go to festivals. I for sure have a different one." Participants indicated that to achieve this transformation, personal fashion choices, a type of cultural artifact, played a large role in distancing themselves from their 9-to-5 identities. As one participant mentioned, "It's kind of like being put into the atmosphere that this is a party. A cool place where you can kind of get a little bit more creative, let a little bit loose and show that not 9-to-5 style." Participants generally expressed that one could expect to see any type of fashion that is anything but ordinary at EDM events. One participant commenting on what to expect, "everything you can possibly think of in a fairytale land," perhaps best stated this. Participants also cited personal fashion as a way of expressing suppressed inner feelings of the individuals: "Wear whatever you feel that helps you express what's inside that you can't because of the normal barriers of society." Similar to this instance, another participant assimilated personal fashion as a method of self-image swapping, "It's not about who you are, it's about taking the image out of yourself and putting it on you."

The use of clothing to express individual identity was also viewed as an emotional expression of individuality. This was demonstrated by one participants response, "I think it's [fashion choices] how people express themselves, it's their personal choice to wear what they want to events. Their clothing gives off emotions, they are living the event." Other participants noted that a significant part of their style preparation was dressing how they felt, therefore dressing for the identity in which they wish to express. As openly stated by one participant, "In a sense, I plan to dress for how I want to feel." Another participant mentioned something similar to dressing how they felt: "You pick your style, as like, this matches me." In each instance, participants were able to identity the use of personal fashion as a communication channel for communicating whatever individual EDMC identity they decided to create as long as it disassociated them from their 9-to5 selves.

The theme, *the authentic other*, pertained to the attempts of members of EDMC to use cultural artifacts to express themselves as a truly unique individual while in attendance of EDM events. That is to say, that even though EDM events are implied to create a collective group of people, participants, overall, designated an importance of disassociating oneself from others. In each interview it was apparent that the dress code for EDM events played a significant role in the transitioning from an individual's normal identity to his/her EDMC identity, yet there was an underlying assumption that the need to be authentic or original is a major element in expression of individual identity. When asked to comment on the dress code of EDM events, one participant described, "There is definitely a specific dress for these shows, which is really just get as crazy as weird as you can." Another participant commented on how he prepares for EDM events: "I'm

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also dressing like I just ran through a Toys/Kids-R-Us and grabbed all the random shit I could find and put it on my body. Just like anything that is very festive like boas, dressing like an animal, just any sort of crazy style that isn't popular today." The tendency to decorate oneself in fashions not typical of the status quo of normal society was more clearly stated by another participant: "You are just encouraged to be yourself and be different than the status quo, especially, but different from every other person around you." When asked about some of the ways an individual at an EDM event can express his or her authenticity, one participant remarked, "Anything to stand yourself out pretty much. Its just as easy as wearing a color or something that others aren't wearing." Or as another participant stated, "There really is no blanket you can put over it to generalize shit. You find people from all walks of life enjoying anything and everything. That's what is great about it. It adds to the story." The importance of being authentic in a setting that is known for its collectivity illustrates that cultural artifacts are being used by members of EDMC to assimilate themselves with their peers but are also being used to communicate a separate, individual EDMC identity, one that is all too different from an individual's identity in regular life.

The theme *storytelling* was another recurring theme throughout the data that pertained to the public display of a person's experience within EDMC through the use of specific cultural artifacts. Speaking generally about outfit choices for the first day of an EDMC festival, one participant commented on how experienced members of EDMC and can be distinguished from non-experienced members: "You can tell by the clothing on the first day of a three day festival – you know the first day who has done it before, been to these, understands it because you get some people who will wear jeans and a polo on

the first day." Specifically, festival bracelets, given out at each festival, were considered to be the ultimate form for displaying one's track record of experience within the EDMC scene. One participant noted the importance of the festival bracelets, "I am never going to take off my festival bracelets. I am going to try and keep these on pretty much as long as I can. It pretty much shows your track record on your wrist." In each interview, the display of personal experience was seen to be an act of storytelling, rather than an act of status boasting. According to one participant who commented on the use of cultural artifacts to communicate one's experience in the scene: "It can be a status symbol, but it's not like that anymore. It use to, but now it doesn't work like that anymore. It's like oh damn, that's cool as shit." Similar to festival bracelets in displaying an individual's experience with EDMC were concert and festival pins that are for sale at various EDM events. One participant stated, "One of the biggest things, I feel, are the pins, hat pins – yeah pins are huge. The point of the pin is to say that I got this one here and this one here, and this one came from all the way over there." In all, participants perceived the use of cultural artifacts as demonstrations of their overall commitment to EDMC as markers of the previous events they had attended.

In each of the three themes of identity metamorphosis, participants placed a high importance on the use of cultural artifacts to disassociate oneself from their daily lives as well as create a temporary EDMC identity that is rooted in true, authentic expression and tells a story about the individual behind the nonverbal symbols.

Perceptions of Collective Identity

RQ2 sought to analyze EDMC member's perceptions of the role of cultural artifacts in expressing a collective identity among attendees of an EDM event. Data

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analysis generated one main category, **communal performance**, which I defined as the perceived behaviors and attitudes that are collectively employed by attendees of an EDM event to co-create an environment that promotes the sense of a collective identity. Two themes of communal performance developed during data analysis, setting the scene and mindset adoption. In this next section I will discuss both themes as they pertain to the perceptions of the use of cultural artifacts in communicating a collective identity, as held by members of EDMC.

The theme *setting the scene* pertained to the use of cultural artifacts by attendees of an EDM event as personal performances in contributing to the collective experience of the EDM event. Unlike other music events that provide a predetermined experience for the concertgoers, participants noted that at EDM events the attendees are just as much responsible for contributing to the overall experience as are the DJs playing up on stage. One participant, speaking about EDM festivals, stated, "A festival is built on itself." Participants noted that although festivals have predetermined fantasy themes that create a magical experience, attendees are encouraged to add to the fantasy through the use of cultural artifacts and performances of their own. Comparing the scene of an EDM event to a circus, one participant said, " A festival is pretty much a traveling circus. When I go there I want to participate in the circus." Participation in the 'circus' is the means through which a sense of collective identity is communicated; yet, as participants noted, the success of the 'circus' is dependent upon each attendee's contribution to the collective performance. "You are dependent on the goers to add to the experience," said one participant. Another stated, "I don't go there to take a vote on what people want to do. I just go to contribute in a positive way, hoping everyone else is contributing in a

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positive way also." The specific way an individual uses cultural artifacts to contribute to the overall environment in order to "surround themselves with the idea of the scene," as one a participant stated, is not a standardized process. One participant commented on how different individual contributions work together to allow each individual to achieve the feeling of a collective identity:

> How I see it, it's like going to church, not literally, but its like you go to church and somebody has his or her hands in the air going at it. Getting the full attention of what is being spoken to, they are feeling it. Where there are also some people sitting there taking notes, who will look at them when they get home. They are feeling it, too; they are just not showing it the same way.

Participants attributed the use of cultural artifacts, specifically dressing the part, as a major way of collectively setting the scene. As one participant remarked, "In a sense, it (clothing) helps the vibe or the scene because it really unifies people together." Using cultural artifacts to dress the part allows for the individual and collective creation of the scene as "it makes everything more like what you want the scene to be," as mentioned by a participant. Similarly, outrageous fashion choices seemingly create a vibe of collectivity among the attendees as they are intended to express a level of equality and comfort. One participant notes, "I guess that would be an aspect of the scene, everyone wants to be comfortable. When everyone is wearing the same thing, it makes you feel comfortable, makes you feel secure." Clothing was also interpreted to be a catalyst for relationship building, "When you do things like that (dress up) it brings people to talk to you. It's a conversation starter. You get to talking and that's where the community come into it because you make friends so easily at these places," stated one participant. In all,

participants perceived the role of cultural artifacts in expressing a collective identity as important a unifier as the music itself. A sense of collective identity is expressed through the individual performances of attendees that build off of one another to create a sense of community within the scene and express a collective identity.

The theme *mindset adoption* pertained to the voluntary embracing of attitudes and beliefs by attendees of an EDM event to achieve a collective mentality. Throughout the interviews participants designated a variety of shared attitudes, emotions, and beliefs in expressing a collective identity. Among the most mentioned were the feelings of unity and coming together: "I think it is more of coming together mindset. I understand why everyone is there. I'll be accepting of everything that I see there. It doesn't matter about race, gender, anything like that. Everything feels like one there." Perceptions of unity were commonly associated with an overwhelming sense of being happy. One participant stated, "It is an adrenaline rush. It is where everyone wants to have a good time and everyone is happy. It is just a very overwhelming experience to be happy. It's like its own culture. Everyone is feeling the same way, getting along." Participants also expressed an importance in the willingness to accept one another during the duration of an EDM event. In other terms, individual differences that stand us apart in the real world are viewed to have little relevance within the collective scene of an EDM event. One participant's statement best illustrates this: "At the very root of it I'm not interested in anyone's career choices. I am interested in how funny someone can be, how cool of a person someone can be. If they can add onto how funny I am."

In addition, the sense of community participants mentioned feeling while at EDM events was also perceived to be a combination of both the music and the actions of the

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audience. One participant remarked, "It's not all about the music. The music is what brings people together. The reason, not the full reason they are there, it's a music festival. But what also comes with it is a sense of community." In all, collective identity is not a given, nor is it a product of the music itself, but it is the result of each individuals use of cultural artifacts to contribute to the communal performance that sets the scene and allows for a sense of community to originate and be expressed among the attendees of an EDM event.

Scene Transcendence

RQ3 sought to analyze the perceptions held by members of EDMC regarding the use of cultural artifacts in their everyday lives as identification tools with EDMC. This research question was proposed to analyze whether or not the ties to EDMC disappear after the duration of an EDM event, as neo-tribe theory assumes, or if members incorporate aspects of the EDMC lifestyle into their daily lives. The responses for this question fall under the notion of what I define as external assimilations, which incorporated two main themes: functions served and negative perceptions.

I defined **external assimilations** as the use of cultural artifacts by members of EDMC to communicate association with the lifestyle in the daily lives of members. The theme *functions served* pertained to the instances where the use of cultural artifacts where perceived to be beneficial for communicating one's association with EDMC. The use of cultural artifacts as conversation starters with strangers was one major element mentioned by participants. One participant commenting on the conversation starting aspect of cultural artifacts stated, "It starts up conversations all the time. It probably, the bracelet, will spark up conversation with a random person. I mean people are only going to talk to

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you about it if they recognize it." The use of cultural artifacts in the daily lives was also

seen to be a positive signifier of somebody who is heavily involved in the scene, as one

participant mentioned:

> These artifacts can also help you pick out whom to talk to. Grass roots hats. If I
>
> see you wearing that, I basically know what's up. A person, somebody that is not
>
> super involved into the scene, isn't going to sport something like that.

Similarly, the use of cultural artifacts as identifications with EDMC in the daily lives of

its members was seen to be a badge honoring the lifestyle associated with EDMC. One

participant noted, "If I see you wearing that. What's up dude? It's like wearing a badge."

Another commented:

> I saw a guy who has the Tiesto tattoo, the Tiesto bird. He was like, you know
>
> this? You'd be surprised, especially in areas where EDM is more common like at
>
> college. I might spot somebody wearing a DJ shirt or festival shirt or khandi.

Participants also perceived the use of cultural artifacts in the daily lives of individuals to

be a way to bring one's EDMC identity out of the scene and to incorporate pieces of it

into their daily lives. One participant explains how the use of cultural artifacts "is more

just to define who you are and that you are apart of this culture. And for people who

don't know, you want to tell them about it." In all, cultural artifacts of EDMC serve a

variety of roles for members in expressing identifications with the scene in their daily

lives. But as the next theme will point out, not all external assimilations are viewed to be

positive interactions.

The theme *negative perceptions* pertained to the perceived instances when the use

of EDMC cultural artifacts negatively portrayed the individual in an undesirable way in

their daily life. Among these undesired perceptions were issues of stereotyping and failed acceptance by other individuals. Many participants expressed a desire to maintain their identification with EDMC through the use of cultural artifacts, but could not because these artifacts have been deemed unacceptable by other social institutions. Most common were instances of not being allowed to wear bracelets and other identifying objects while at the participants' places of employment. One participant states, "You incorporate (cultural artifacts) in everything. It's always there. I'd wear them with my work uniform if I could." The issue of cultural artifacts being non-compliant with one's daily life was another major perception brought up by participants, as one participant commenting on his use of cultural artifacts states, "I used to (wear EDMC artifacts), but I don't any more cause if doesn't fit my 9-to-5 lifestyle." An underlying assumption held by most participants was that cultural artifacts of EDMC could send out the wrong picture of oneself.

In a sense, participants commented that wearing cultural artifacts in their daily lives makes them guilty by association to the misunderstood stereotypes of EDMC. According to one participant, such stereotypes are far from the truth, "EDMC definitely gets the wrong picture. When people hear EDMC, people think you go to shows and do drugs and get carried away. Just whatever. NO! That does not have to be involved or characterized as that." Being guilty by association through artifacts was also deemed to be a nuisance when dealing with authority figures, such as police officers. As one participant commenting on his interaction with the judicial system states, "If I wasn't on probation, I'd probably have a lot of bracelets on. I save them, though they get dirty. Its like a prison tattoo or something like that." Another participant recalled a situation where

he was pleading with police officers not to cut off his EDMC bracelets when he got into trouble, "I got arrested and the cop tried to cut it (bracelet) off, and I literally got on my knees and begged him not to cut it." Similarly, one participant mentioned how he had to remove his stuffed animal, that goes with him to every show, from the rear window of his car for fear of being stereotyped, "Going back to the stuffed animal, he used to chill in my car but not any more because I don't want to be stereotyped as a hippy, especially if I was pulled over." In all, participants perceived the use of EDMC cultural artifacts as a double-edged sword when incorporating the lifestyle of EDMC into their daily lives. Ultimately, cultural artifacts serve as identifiers with EDMC and such identifications can be viewed as positive or negative depending on who is interpreting the message sent by them.

Conclusion

The preceding section presented the findings of this analysis as they pertained to each research question. In all, participants were able to perceive cultural artifacts as being multifaceted in creating, expressing, and maintaining various levels of identity and identifications with EDMC. The next section will further summarize and analyze the findings of the research as well as discuss the implications of the present research and shed light on how this analysis may be used to help future research analyses of EDMC.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

In the previous section findings from data analysis were presented as they

pertained to the specific research questions dealing with individual identity, collective

identity, and scene transcendence of EDMC. This section will theorize these findings in

relation to previous research on EDMC. Furthermore, after summarizing the findings,

this section will discuss theoretical and methodological implications of the present

research analysis.

Individual Identity

The first research question of this study pertained to the role of cultural artifacts in

the formation and expression of individual identity of people involved in EDMC while

attending EDMC events. Analysis determined that cultural artifacts are used to aid in the

process of identity metamorphosis, in which an individual separates him or herself from

his or her real-world identity and takes on a new, temporary identity. The use of cultural

artifacts to communicate an alternative EDMC identity was determined to happen in three

prominent themes. The first was loss of 9-to5 self, in which participants attributed the

use of cultural artifacts, such as fashion styles, as the primary way of communicating an

alternative identity. Cultural artifacts were reported to allow individuals to express their

inner selves in a way that they are restricted from doing in the real world due to social

norms and what is deemed to be acceptable and unacceptable. Participants also

associated the use of cultural artifacts as a way to physically display emotions that they felt they were unable to do outside of an EDMC context. In addition, participants stressed the importance of using cultural artifacts to dress the way one feels while in attendance of EDMC events. The second theme discovered within the data set was the authentic other, in which participants indicated that they place a high level of importance on using cultural artifacts to express an identity that was truly original and authentic from other event goers. To this end, participants divulged the purpose behind these crazy, unordinary styles found at EDMC events, which was to dress in anything that goes against the status quo of normal society. The third theme was storytelling, which pertained to the use of cultural artifacts, such as festival bracelets, khandi, and pins, as tokens of experience within the EDM scene, rather than using cultural artifacts as status markers to serve some form of social hierarchy within the EDMC scene.

These findings are similar to Kleine, Kleine, and Kernans' (1993) study of social identity theory and consumer behavior, which determined that individuals are capable of expressing various identities through identity-related possessions. They found that an individual could only express different identities through the use of artifacts or possessions that are related to the type of identity the individual is trying to convey. Furthermore, they found that the more identity-related possessions an individual has, the more likely others would give favorable appraisals to the individual as having that identity. Applying this study to the current analysis of EDMC, it can be assumed that individual identities expressed by members of EDMC are also dependent upon the amount of identity-related possessions (e.g., how dressed up in outrageous clothing they

get) individuals have as the main way of expressing individual identity as well as how likely others are to perceive the individual's intended identity.

Collective Identity

Research regarding EDMC has continuously upheld the assumption that EDMC events promote an environment of collectivity at the expense of individuality. The feeling of togetherness, equality, and shared experiences while in attendance of EDMC events is what Victor Turner (1967, 1969) called communitas. The second research question sought to analyze how cultural artifacts of EDMC are used to express a collective identity among all the attendees of an EDM event. Data analysis determined that EDMC cultural artifacts are used to contribute to the communal performance that is the EDMC event. One way in which cultural artifacts are used to add to the experience of an EDM event is through setting the scene. Participants indicated that it is the responsibility of the performers as well as the audience to collectively contribute to theme of an EDMC event. In a sense, EDMC event attendees are dependent upon one another to add to the story of the event. The way in which they do so is through the use of cultural artifacts to create individual performances whether it be, once again, through dressing in outrageous fashions or independently performing side skits, such as holding yoga lessons and drum circles, that were not a scheduled part of the event. Another way participants suggested a sense of collective identity is achieved is through a mental transformation, which I called mindset adoption. Participants mentioned that embracing attitudes such as acceptance, unity, and equality were vital to communicating a collective identity among all attendees.

The individual performances and mindset adoption of each individual work to collectively produce what is known as the Vibe of the EDMC event. Rill (2006) describes the vibe: "That overwhelming wave of positive energy that dissolves the selves of all participants into one collective mind, experiencing the same sensations at peak moments of the night" (p. 649). In relation to the feeling of the vibe, O'Grady (2012) examined the interrelated concepts of space, play, and performativity in relation to the underground EDM scene in the United Kingdom. She argues that play—the term given to express the escape of adults from the real word—happens in an adult playground, such as a club, where clubbers voluntary participate in shared rituals and communicative behaviors as forms of play that separate them from the daily grind and responsibilities of real life. She states: "To experience play, or indeed 'the vibe,' fully, you cannot be located outside of it. You have to participate in it rather than observe from a distance" (p. 102). The findings of the present analysis extend those of these research studies as it has identified cultural artifacts as one of the communication mediums through which attendees participate in the vibe. A sense of collective identity is expressed not only through the music, but also by the communal performances of the attendees. This is to say that cultural artifacts are, in essence, a part of the rituals EDMC uses to communicate meaningful messages about the group as a whole. Rituals, according to Goulding and Shankar (2011) are "a major mechanism for the recreation of society(ies), in which members worship shared objects and shared experiences" (p. 1146). In all, it can be assumed that cultural artifacts constitute a key part of the rituals of EDMC as they allow for the co-creation of the scene as well as the adoption and expression of a collective identity shared amongst the audience of EDMC.

Scene Transcendence

The third research question of this analysis was proposed to examine if and how members of EDMC use cultural artifacts as identifications with the scene in their daily lives. Findings suggested that external assimilations exist in the form of positive and negative aspects. Participants perceived positive identifications to be those that connected them with fellow members of EDMC, such as starting up conversations over a festival bracelet, using cultural artifacts as a personal narrative of their past experiences and proudly communicating that they are apart of EDMC. Negative aspects pertained to the perceived instances when the use of cultural artifacts of EDMC gave rise to situations in which the individual was portrayed in an undesirable way, such as being guilty by association in the eyes of authority figures or that the cultural artifacts conflicted with other aspects of a individuals life like a person's career. This research question solely looked at the use of tangible cultural artifacts as identification tools with EDMC, but it could also be assumed that the mindset members of EDMC adopt while in attendance of events carries over to alter an individual's life style. Such an example is Jackson's (2004) analysis regarding the social and sensual knowledge that arises out of the rave environment. His findings lead him to conclude that participation in rave rituals and adoption of the raver mentality may diffuse into experiences of everyday life, causing the individual to still be in the party long after it is over. The findings of the present analysis along with Jackson's findings suggest that identification with EDMC may be more permanent than what has been typically thought.

Theoretical Implications

Analyzing the communicative potential of cultural artifacts of EDMC in expressing varying levels of identity has been the primary focus of this analysis. This study has been able to determine the uses and gratifications perceived by members of EDMC in the use of cultural artifacts in expressing individual, collective, and scene-transcending identities. Thematic analysis unveiled the hidden and often overlooked meanings of cultural artifacts found at EDMC. The ability of attendees of an EDMC event to express a collective identity first starts at the individual level. At the individual level, members express authentic, individual identities through the identity-related possessions that they incorporate into their dress for EDMC events. Instead of acquiring a new identity, individuals perform new identities that are anything but similar to their identities in real life. Unlike the majority of the research concerning EDMC that invokes the concepts of liminality (Malbon, 1999; St. John 2009a, 2009b, 2010) or EDMC research that focuses on the concept of communitas (Rill 2006; Tramacchi 2000; Turner 1967, 1969), this study took into account the role of individual performances in creating a sense of community within the EDM scene. With that said, the use of cultural artifacts to express individual identity is the first building block in the process of creating and expressing a collective identity. Each individual performance coincides with one another, progressively building the scene itself and creating experience of the vibe that is all too commonly mentioned within EDMC research.

Returning to the question of how to best label the youth culture associated with EDMC, the terms lifestyle and neo-tribe both hold relevance, depending on how one views the purpose of EDMC. As Bennett (1999) has argued, a lifestyle can be defined

through preferred patterns of consumption in the appropriation of commodities to transform the meanings of these commodities into symbolically meaningful artifacts. This analysis has illustrated that members of EDMC, at least those who perceive themselves to be highly involved within the culture, use cultural artifacts to identify with EDMC both in and outside of events. This is contrary to the findings of Goulding and Shankar's (2011) tourism and leisure study EDMC, in which they classified EDMC to fit the five criteria of a neo-tribe. Most important of these five criteria was the assumption that a neo-tribe lasts for a temporary amount of time and seldom dominates an individual's life. In all, the classification of EDMC as a neo-tribe or as a lifestyle depends on the type of research being applied to the culture. The term lifestyle seems to fit better for those who are highly involved within EDMC and is better suited to be used by researchers of youth culture because those who associate themselves as being highly involved within EDMC hold onto their association with EDMC in their daily lives. The classification of EDMC as a neo-tribe by Goulding and Shankar worked better for their research because they were looking at the potential of EDMC to impact the tourism and leisure industries. In all, the inclusion of physical artifacts as well as the mental mindset associated with EDMC into the daily lives of members suggests that EDMC should be considered both a lifestyle for people away from the scene and as a neo-tribe when in they are in attendance of EDMC events.

Another theoretical implication of this study suggests that the findings cannot, and should not, be generalized for the global network of EDMC. Montano (2009) calls attention to the risk of making overgeneralizations of EDMC at the global level: "While contemporary dance music culture is most certainly a global culture, it does not follow

that it is consumed and experienced in a globally shared manner" (p. 56). Based on this,

future researchers must make note of the differences as well as similarities of EDMC that

exist at the continental, national, and local levels of EDMC in any attempt to generalize

findings of future research of the youth culture associated with EDMC as well as

recognize that geographical differences in EDMC are sure to limit any type of

generalizations that can be made about EDMC worldwide.

Methodological Implications

I believe that the methods chosen for data collection and data analysis were

relevant methods for the beginning process of documenting meaningful cultural artifacts

of EDMC. The intention of this analysis was not to create a compiled list of artifacts

categorized in terms of which are the most meaningful, but rather to analyze how artifacts

are used to communicate varying levels of identity within EDMC. However, future

research regarding cultural artifacts of EDMC may also want to take advantage of open-

ended questionnaires, which would allow the determination of whether there are

systematic perceptions of the meanings associated with prominent cultural artifacts. The

thematic analysis of the latent meanings associated with cultural artifacts helped to

identify the role of artifacts in communicating of identity. However, future researchers

interested the formation of identity through cultural artifacts may also want to consider

doing a thematic analysis of the semantic meanings associated with specific cultural

artifacts.

There were some methodological limitations associated with this analysis. First, a

limitation exists in the method used for data collection. Snowball sampling was used

once having conducted initial informant interviews. Informants then provided the contact

information of individuals they personally knew and believed would be interested in the study. Thus, the resulting data are composed of informant interviews of individuals that have a relationship with one another prior to the study. Therefore, an assumption could be made that the resulting data is based in an ethnocentric view of EDMC of the American Midwest. Data only highlight the perceptions of a single, regional EDMC, as opposed to American EDMC as a whole. Another limitation in the data collection process pertains to the context in which the data were collected. In-depth, one-on-one interviews were conducted away from any EDMC event. Thus it can be assumed that participants did not fully recall all aspects that they perceived to be important in the expression of varying levels of identity through cultural artifacts. Future analysis would benefit from fieldwork observation, and conducting data collection within 48 hours after the event for greatest recollection of the elements that create the typical experience of an EDMC event. In addition to fieldwork observations the use of focus groups in the data collection process may also benefit future analyses of EDMC because it would allow participants to once again find themselves collective setting where they would be able to draw of one another statements and collectively relive the experiences of an EDMC event.

In this section of my analysis of EDMC the findings from the data analysis process were further conceptualized in the attempt to uncover some of the underlying assumptions that were not, necessarily, explicitly stated by participants. These implications have been presented in relation to previous research analyses of EDMC. Limitations and strengths of this research analysis were also discussed as well as considerations for future research of EDMC.

Conclusion

The preceding analysis sought to broaden the already accumulated knowledge of the youth culture associated with EDMC as its presence around the globe continues to gain popularity. Over the past few decades, the once underground music scene of EDM has continued to filter into the world of mainstream and has redefined the view of popular music in today's modern age. The findings presented in this analysis have illustrated what so many other researchers, across a variety of disciplines, have already learned about EDMC: That the culture of EDM is a diverse and widely sophisticated collection of youth. This diversity and sophistication further stresses the importance of analyzing the underlying aspects of the culture and the purposes behind it. Though the themes of enjoyment, escape from the real world, and collectivity still hold relevance in the explanation of the culture, this analysis as shown that such a classification of EDMC only scratches the surface of the true purpose and meanings associated with participation in the culture. The concepts of collectivity and community that are often associated with EDMC have been found not to be something that happens out of thin air. It is through the use of cultural artifacts as individual performances that allow the setting of an EDM event to occur, while also co-creating the sense of collectivity so highly sought after by attendees of EDM events. Furthermore, it is through the use of these cultural artifacts that members are capable to staying connected to the scene and the experiences it offers even when members transition back into the mundane reality of daily life. In closing, future research of EDMC should be cautious not to simply overlook the tiny details, such as cultural artifacts, in attempt to gain an understanding of the bigger picture of EDMC, as it is small things that make the biggest contributions.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR ELECTRONIC DANCE MUSIC RESEARCH

Electronic Dance Music Culture

This is a semi-structured interview. The protocol below indicates primary areas of questions and includes probes as additional means to acquire more detailed and focused responses. The exact questions utilized will vary depending on how each co-participant's interview progresses.

Questions About EDMC
Hello and thank you for meeting with me today. The purpose of our meeting is for you to elaborate on your experiences with Electronic Dance Music Culture (EDMC), both during events and in your daily routine. To do so, you will be asked questions about your use of cultural artifacts; those objects and behaviors such as clothing styles and lifestyles, regarding EDMC will be addressed.

Transition: To begin, questions will ask you to elaborate on your background with listening to music, in general.

- First, could you please verify your age?
- What types of music do you listen to, which are your favorite?
- Do you listen to specific genres at any one time, or do you find yourself listening to a variety of music genres throughout the day/week?
- Could you please give an estimate of how many live music events you have attended in your life?
- Tell me about the times in an average day that you listen to music? How much? How do you listen---directly or play in it in the background?

To begin, initial questions will ask you to elaborate on your background with Electronic Dance Music:

- How long have you participated in Electronic Dance Music events and/or concerts?
- Could you provided an estimate as to how many festivals and/or concerts of EDM you have participated in?
- Without focusing on anyone one genre of EDM, in terms of Electronic Dance Music, what perceptions do you have of the music, itself? Could you describe it?
- What genres of EDM are your favorite? If any, and why?

- Could you elaborate on some of the characteristics of specific types of EDM music you favor?

Transition: Now I would like to hear about your experiences at EDM event/concerts:

- Describe the setting of an EDM festival or concert. What is going on?
- Describe, if any, some of the differences between EDM festivals versus an EDM concert?
- Can you comment on the behaviors of participants?
- Explain the emotions of you feel while attending an EDM event.
- In what way, if any, do these emotions relate to the cultural artifacts associated with EDMC?
- Describe some of the clothing choices found at EDM events. Are some more prevalent than others?
- In regard to fashions found at EDM events, could you comment on the differences in fashion as worn by men and as worn by women? Are any of these choices unisex?
- Do any of your clothing accessories carry over from one EDM event to the next? If so, how so, and why?
- Could you please elaborate on the meaning behind these clothing accessories?
- Do you use cultural artifacts of EDM to communicate specific messages or an image about yourself?
- Do these feelings only pertain to yourself, or are some cultural artifacts used between you and your peers?
- Do any of your clothing accessories/cultural artifacts carry over from one EDM event to the next? If so, how and why?
- Are there any parts of your clothing attire, in your daily life, which associates you with EDMC? If so, what are they?
- Have you ever approached someone outside of an EDM event because you saw them wearing something that assimilates them with EDM? Has anyone ever approached you for the same reason? If so, can you comment on the interaction?

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN STUDY

Informed Consent

You are being asked to participate in an interview about the role of cultural artifacts, such as clothing styles and lifestyles, of Electronic Dance Music Culture. This study is being conducted by Andrew Wagner, graduate student, under the guidance of Dr. John Baldwin of the School of Communication at Illinois State University as part of a Master's Thesis.

If you agree to participate, you will answer interview questions, which will take 30-60 minutes. Questions will relate to your experiences with Electronic Dance Music (EDM) as well as membership within EDMC. Your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty for non-participation. Furthermore, you may refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. We would like to audio record the following interview, however you may opt out of being audio recorded.

We believe there are benefits associated with participating in this project. Participants will help extend literature in communication studies, interpersonal communication, intercultural communication, psychology, and/or sociology.

We believe there are minimal risks associated with participating in this project. You may feel some discomfort discussing your experiences and membership with EDMC. If you would like to see a professional to discuss any discomfort, you may, if you are a student at ISU, contact ISU Student Counseling Services at (309) 438-3655. If you are not an ISU student, you may feel free, at your expense, to contact a counselor of your choice.

You may fear privacy loss, and if the participation you describe includes references to illegal activity, you may fear legal action or loss of reputation. We will not ask about such activity, and if you volunteer such information, your comments will be confidential. To ensure confidentiality, we will not reveal names, organizations, or anything else that identifies any participant. You have the right to choose to withdraw from participation at any point in time. Any information obtained will be deleted from withdrawn participants and will not be used data analysis. Further, you may choose to review comments and make decisions on the inclusion or deletion of your comments in the study, as some excerpts may be presented publically for thesis or at conferences. In the presentation of research, participant information shall remain confidential. A pseudonym will be assigned to each participant, by the Co-PI, to protect participants identities. These pseudonyms will be used during data transcription of audio recordings. Data

transcription will be done directly by the Co-PI. All responses will be digitally recorded and all files will be stored in a password-protected file on the PI's password protected work computer located at the School of Communication at Illinois State University (Fell hall). All signed informed consent documents will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the PI's private work office.

Finally, to be a participant in this study you must be at 18-25 years old and identify with EDMC.

For questions about this study, you may contact the following individuals at the e-mails provided: Andrew Wagner: amwagne@ilstu.edu, Dr. John Baldwin: jrbaldw@ilstu.edu.

For questions regarding your rights as a research participant you are encouraged to contact the Illinois State University Research Ethics and Compliance Office: Phone: 309-438-2529, Email: rec@ilstu.edu

By continuing this interview, you are consenting to participate in this research study.

Thank you for your assistance.

_____ _____

Please Print Name   Please Sign Name   Date

Please indicate your willingness for us to audio-record this interview by initialing here:
_____

In the event that you wish to review your confidential comments for inclusion or deletion: Please indicate your readiness for revision by providing contact information and initialing here: _____
Please provide your contact information here:

Phone (Best number to reach you): _____

Email: _____

APPENDIX C

MESSAGE TO PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS

Email Message/Facebook Message to Prospective Participants

Dear Prospective Participant,

As a graduate student in the School of Communication, I'm conducting an interview study about Electronic Dance Music Culture (EDMC). Specifically researching the use cultural artifacts of EDMC, such as clothing styles, in members of EDMC daily lives under the guidance of Dr. John Baldwin as part of my Master's Thesis. We would greatly appreciate your participation in this study.

In order to participate in this study, you must be between 18-25 years in age and self-identify with EDMC. If you choose to participate in this study, please contact Andrew Wagner using the information provided below to suggest a meeting location and time. This interview is expected to last between 30-60 minutes. The interview will be either face-to-face or on Skype (audio recorded only). This interview will ask you to respond to a series of questions relating to your experiences with Electronic Dance Music (EDM) as well as membership within EDMC. Your participation is completely voluntary, and anything you answer during the interview will remain confidential. There is no penalty for non-participation. Furthermore, you may refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

For more information or to move forward with participating in this study, please contact Andrew Wagner by phone at 630.207.5257, or by email at amwagne@ilstu.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration.