# INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

**The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.** Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES OR DELINQUENT
CONGREGATIONS?: A STUDY OF COMPLEXITY AND
CONTRADICTION IN CANADIAN YOUTH CULTURES AND LEISURE
SPACES

By

**BRIAN WILSON, B.P.E., M.A.**

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy (Sociology)

McMaster University

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES OR DELINQUENT
CONGREGATIONS?: A STUDY OF COMPLEXITY AND
CONTRADICTION IN CANADIAN YOUTH CULTURES AND
LEISURE SPACES

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (1999)                          McMaster University
(Sociology)                                          Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Empowering Communities or Delinquent Congregations?:  A Study of Complexity
and Contradiction in Canadian Youth Cultures and Leisure Spaces

AUTHOR:  Brian S. Wilson, B.P.E. (McMaster University), M.A. (University of British
          Columbia)

SUPERVISOR:  Dr. Graham Knight

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:  Dr. Peter Donnelly
                    Dr. William Shaffir
                    Dr. Philip White

NUMBER OF PAGES:  xii, 295

# ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a theoretical and empirical examination of youth culture in Canada. Theoretically, a continuum of youth-related cultural theories was devised, and a framework that integrated critical interactionism, structuralism, and postmodern theory was adopted. Empirically, the need for more qualitative research on youth culture in Canada was identified and subsequently engaged through the presentation of two ethnographic case studies that were undertaken on this topic. The first case was a study of the rave subculture in Toronto -- a "middle class" culture of youth renowned for drug-use, an interest in computer-generated music, and attendance at all-night "rave" dance parties. The second case was a study of youth in an urban recreation/drop-in centre in a low-income area in southern Ontario. These groups were chosen because of their similar and distinct positionings in relation to social class, strategies of resistance, a (relatively) postmodern context, and urban social spaces. Key components of the rave study included: (a) findings that "rave" was defined by its wide range of forms and characteristics – a range that existed simultaneously across the subculture (e.g., in various raver sub-communities), across the careers of individual ravers (e.g., a loss of idealism about rave's potential as a resistant culture), and across the "life" of the Canadian rave scene (e.g., the scene's evolution); (b) the development of "five theses on resistance" as a framework for understanding the multiple, often contradictory positionings of raver youth; and (c) the adoption of Best and Luckenbill's (1994) model of organizational sophistication as means to conceptualize the "local and global" culture. The youth centre study included findings that: (a) despite a broader context of "risk" outside the centre, youth maintained an informal culture of non-

violence by creating "tolerance rules" that allowed diverse groups to coexist; (b) the youth-driven informal culture of the centre allowed youth to maintain a sense of power in an organization otherwise dominated (administratively) by adults; (c) experiences within the centre, while generally positive, were varied and extremely gendered, with female youth being marginalized in the informal, male-dominated sport culture; (d) among female youth, there existed simultaneously a resistance to broader gender/class based limitations on sport participation, and a reproduction of informal power structures. The dissertation concluded with a discussion of the demonstrated importance/implications of being attentive to complexity in the study of youth culture in Canada.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express gratitude to several individuals. Perhaps most importantly, I'd like to thank the ravers and drop-in youth who allowed me to spend time in their worlds. I am also indebted to those who contributed to the 1970s works out of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham, England (particularly Dick Hebdige for his book *Subculture*), whose compelling studies and commentaries influenced my decision to work in the area of youth cultural studies for this dissertation. Thanks to John Ellis, the first of my high school friends to become a punk rocker, and the first person to inspire me to ask "why" as a conceptual question about youth subcultures. To my good friends Mike Atkinson, Peter Berry, James Gillett, and Chris Hawke – thanks for your ongoing support, advice, and humour. To Chris, in particular, for taking me to my first raves in Vancouver and for your shared interest in the topic. Thanks to Eme Onuoha for ever-reminding me of the "mission approach" to achievement in any area. To Jim McKay – thanks for your defining advice about "how to finish a Ph.D. and live to tell about it." To Corinne Jehle – thanks for providing wise and ever-friendly advice about how to maneuver through a sometimes unwise and unfriendly graduate studies system. To Bob Sparks – thanks for the always-thoughtful counsel about most topics pertaining to academia, and for helping me to understand and (somewhat) appreciate the "joy and torture" of writing well. To Billy Shaffir – thanks for enhancing my appreciation of the art of doing and teaching qualitative methods, and for showing how you don't always have to be serious to be a serious

academic. To my supervisor Graham Knight – thanks for your insightful theoretical comments on the dissertation, and even more for your practical advice on getting it done. Your supervision strategy has been ideal for my work style, and your ability to put the Ph.D. process in its proper perspective time and time again was always appreciated. Thank you also for successfully enhancing my appreciation of the bizarre, excessive, and outlandish (e.g., Jean Baudrillard, Georges Bataille, and Jerry Springer). Thanks to Peter Donnelly and Phil White – my earliest and strongest influences in sport sociology. Peter's enthusiasm for the field, his pro-activity and productivity, his sincere encouragement to get involved in conferences and publish research, and his emphasis on "staying balanced" (i.e., Friday afternoon roundtable sessions at the Phoenix) have been inspiring and instrumental in so much of my writing and studies. My work with Phil, as his undergraduate independent study student, and later co-researcher, co-author and co-presenter of papers, has been truly enjoyable, compelling and instructive. His influence on my development as a writer is immense and appreciated, and is reflected in this dissertation (at least the good parts of the dissertation), while his ability to stomach even the harshest chicken gumbo is legendary. I also acknowledge my mother and father who never pushed me, always encouraged me, and emphasized (through example) humility in any endeavor. Finally to Karen Fisher, whose patience during my "out-loud" editorial sessions, and her help with the interviews with female youth, were crucial to the successful completion of the dissertation. I am most grateful for her unconditional support and friendship throughout the Ph.D. process.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

viii

# LIST OF TABLES

# CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE: UNDERSTANDING COMPLEXITY AND OTHER ISSUES IN THE STUDY OF CANADIAN YOUTH CULTURE

## 1.1 – Images of Youth

**Criminal Youth:**
Youth crime is on the rise and something has to be done about it. At least that's the perception of Scarborough MPP Jim Brown, a member of the Ontario Crime Control Commission and one of the authors of the commission's Preliminary Report on Youth Crime. Brown believes the justice system has to begin getting tough on young offenders because the present "slap on the wrist" sentences allow young people to feel they are above the law...(Richelle Forsey, Toronto Star, October 27, 1998, p. F3)

**Self-Destructive Youth:**
They rove city streets in the early hours, groups of teenagers and twentysomethings in sparkly bell-bottoms and lime-green platforms, their faces pale and tranquil-looking. They've probably just emerged from a warehouse basement downtown and a significant number will probably have popped the recreational pill called ecstasy. The drug has become increasingly popular over the last decade, especially among revelers seeking the energy to dance hour after hour at all-night "rave" parties... [However], scientists at the respected Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, have just found that users of the drug ...risk inducing brain damage that may be irreversible. (Steven Edwards, National Post, November 2, 1998, p. D3)

**Misdirected Youth:**
A generation after a great rethinking of gender roles and the forces that classify children by sex, the results are in: girls are behaving more like boys and it isn't always a pretty picture... they are now smoking, drinking and using drugs as often as boys their age. And though they're not nearly as violent as boys, girls are increasingly more likely to find their way into trouble with the law. (Barbara Vobejda and Linda Perlstein, Toronto Star, June 18, 1998, A1)

**Apathetic Youth:**
We live small lives on the periphery; we are marginalized and there's a great deal in which we choose not to participate. (From Douglas Coupland's Generation X, 1991, p. 11)

You over compensate for having what's basically a monkey's job. (From the movie "Clerks", 1994)

They have few heroes, no anthems, no style to call their own (from Time magazine, quoted in J. Cohen and Krugan, 1994, p. 13)

**Victimized/Labeled Youth:**
Lost in the media coverage and in the sea of pop-culture images is the fact that there is little evidence that the kids today are any worse than kids five or twenty-five years ago...If the question is what's wrong with kids today, the answer might be "you." (Katrina Onstad, March 1997, Saturday Night, p. 48)

**Youth as Untapped Resources:**
[T]hose being helped include Sandra Sousa, 21, in first year physical and health education at the University of Toronto. She is the first in her family to attend university and they enjoy bragging about that, she says. She joined the [Boys and Girls] club at age 7 and had volunteered for the

past 7 years... Her choices of studies were influenced by observing adult staff who were her role models, she says. (Pat Watson, Toronto Star, November 6, 1996, p. C8)

**Determined Youth:**
If you sometimes despair that today's youth show little interest or connection to global issues their generation will face, one Toronto teenager's activities reaffirms faith in the determination, ingenuity, and power of young people. Tanya Roberts-Davis is petite and featherweight, just 15. Yet she has already traveled to Third World countries speaking out against child labour. She can move veteran social activists to tears with her heartfelt descriptions of children chained to rug looms nine hours a day. She has personally talked to some of those children whom she has met, now attending factory schools established because of the work of human rights fighters whose ranks she has joined (Ellie Teshler, June 17, 1998, Toronto Star, p. A2)

**'Cool' Youth:**
Fashion plates show up donned in bikini tops with short skits or ballerina's tutus. Brightly coloured huge plastic belts are all the rage, and hair that is anything but its natural hue is worn in baby clips or pig tails. Ravers often carry glow sticks...and wear skin glitter, glow-in-the-dark rings, bracelets and headbands. They dance for hours to the sounds of deejays spinning vinyl records and flawlessly mixing tracks of techno, trance, house and other kinds of electronic records. (Elisa Landale, 1998, Toronto Star, July 14, 1998, p. F1-F2).

**Cutting Edge Youth:**
One of the most valuable new members was a Stanford robotics grad who called himself Pig. The day he moved in he began wiring up the entire [warehouse] with phonelines he diverted from a juncture box on a pole across the street....He had worked on a few award-winning computer games, and gave talks at places like MIT about how to control machines over the Internet. He had a big scar on his forehead that he'd earned while working with guys at Survival Research Laboratories building robots that fired lasers and blew up things...The easiest way to win him over was to approach him looking for an elegant solution to a problem rather than just a quick fix. Pig was well connected in the hacker underground, too, and enlisted his cohorts to help him make a telephone junction box and to divert the ISDN lines to each of our rooms. (Douglas Rushkoff, from the fiction book, Ecstasy Club, 1997, p. 39)

### 1.2 – Complexity and Youth Culture

...knowledge of reality, and therefore, for practical purposes, reality itself, is intertextual: it exists only in the interrelations between all that a culture has written, spoken, visualized about it (Fiske, 1987, p. 115, from Television Culture).

We are in a universe where there is more and more information and less and less meaning. (Baudrillard, 1983b, p. 95, from In the Shadow of Silent Majorities).

The study of subcultural style, which seem[s] at the outset to draw us back to the real world, to reunite us with 'the people', ends by merely confirming the distance between the reader and the 'text', between everyday life and the 'mythologist' whom it surrounds , fascinates and finally excludes (Hebdige, 1979, p. 140, from Subculture: The Meaning of Style).

Youth appear to be many things – criminal, self-destructive, misdirected, apathetic, victimized, untapped resources, determined, cool and cutting edge – to name but a few existing images. Evidence supporting various interpretations of youth provides limited clarification or insight. Statistical measurements of youth

criminal activity that are often cited in mass media and academic reports fail to show the "number" of youth who never commit crime, or the "number" that do not get caught. In many cases, a false link is created between youth *crime*, youth *deviance*, and youth *culture* (Hall et. al., 1978; Schissel, 1993; Visano, 1996). Social commentators who attempt to explain the determinants of youth subcultural activity (e.g., linking a poor economy and deviant youth culture) often fail to provide supportive evidence beyond cursory observations (Acland, 1995). Recent reviews of scholarly research have confirmed that there is an overall lack of in-depth, qualitative research on youth culture in Canada – that is to say, there is relatively little known about the *meanings* that youth give to their cultural activities (Young and Craig, 1997; O'Bireck, 1996; Tanner, 1996). And of course, the mass media offers an excess of images that intertextually exaggerate, create, and possibly reflect "the realities" of youth culture (Acland, 1995).

Despite this fragmented picture, the tendency in both the media and the academy is to talk about "today's youth" in simple terms (as Acland, 1995; Epstein, 1998; McRobbie, 1994e, 1996a and Redhead, 1997b have argued). Frequent attempts are made to tell the "truths" about a problem generation and to make "no-nonsense" recommendations about how to deal with the problems youth present to society (i.e., how to deal with "troubling" youth) and the problems youth experience in their everyday lives (i.e., how to deal with "troubled" youth). For these commentators and for others who more responsibly acknowledge the difficulty of depicting "youth culture" in a cohesive manner, complexity and contradiction are considered *barriers* to understanding, and as a result, attempts are made to resolve these contradictions and clarify these complexities.

What is seldom considered in the study of youth culture is the possibility that these complexities and contradictions should be examined and studied, not avoided, reduced, or "resolved." Lewis (1991) articulated this position:

> The problem with a society that nurtures and guides its citizens towards common meanings is its tendency to suppress not only the ambiguity of things, but the very *idea* of ambiguity. We behave as if the meanings of things were natural and inevitable. The failure to come up with the socially agreed meaning is often interpreted as stupid or troublesome. In many societies, the very act of digression from this semiological control is seen as subversive and, because it challenges the fixity of the sign, threatening. Herein lies the resistance to cultural diversity... (Lewis, 1991, p. 55).

The study of complexity in social life has been underdeveloped in youth cultural studies, only recently receiving research attention for its relevance to 1990s culture (Hebdige, 1988; McRobbie, 1994e; Redhead, 1990, 1997a, 1997b; Young and Craig, 1997).[1] Authors who do *recognize* this possibility by critiquing research that oversimplifies complex youth-related phenomenon (e.g., in Canada, see Tanner, 1996, Young and Craig, 1997), or by assembling studies of diverse youth groups in book collections (Epstein, 1998; O'Bireck, 1996a; Skelton & Valentine, 1998), seldom take the next step – that is, to provide a comprehensive, coherent and rigorous treatment of complexity and contradiction *in youth culture generally*, and, *within specific youth cultures*.[2] Put another way, even the more sophisticated studies of youth culture that focus on the shifting relationship between youth agency and social structure generally fail to effectively account for broader trends toward a "fragmented," mass-mediated culture *and* interpretive complexities within subcultural groups.

Outside of youth cultural studies, though, theories focused on complexity have become popular, some say fashionable (Dawson and Prus, 1993; Prus, 1996a). Postmodernists have theorized the "fragmentation" of culture (e.g., Baudrillard, 1983a, 1988a), feminists have theorized diversity in marginalized groups (e.g., A. Hall, 1996; Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998), communications theorists have examined the ambiguity of media messages (e.g., Barthes, 1973) and audience interpretations (e.g., Lewis, 1991), and various post-Marxist theorists (e.g., the "New Times" group in England) have attempted to theorize complexity in postmodern times while maintaining links with classic Marxist principles (e.g., S. Hall, 1986; Laclau & Mauffe, 1985). However, with the increasing pervasiveness of the "complexity thesis" and the related popularity of postmodern theory, concerns have been raised in many sub-disciplines about the extent to which "real world" issues are reasonably addressed within apparently "abstract" theoretical models (Eagleton, 1991, 1996). For example, critics have argued that postmodern approaches to complexity do not adequately account for the meanings that people give to their daily activities and the ways people actively interpret, negotiate and resist on an everyday basis (Prus, 1996a). Debates have also raged about the extent to which postmodernism can be usefully integrated with other "classic" perspectives – a critique that has come from symbolic interactionists (Maines, 1996; Plummer, 1990; Prus, 1996a; Dawson & Prus, 1993) and Marxists (Jameson, 1984; Harvey, 1989; Witheford & Gruneau, 1993) alike.

This raises questions about the compatibility of theories that are attentive to global trends toward the fragmentation of social life (e.g., postmodernism) with perspectives that theorize the complexities of individual and small group (e.g., subcultural) interpretation (e.g., cultural studies and symbolic interactionism).

When these broader theoretical debates are considered in the context of youth cultural studies, a number of questions arise, including: How can a "fragmented" youth culture that is so complex it (apparently) defies any kind of traditional analysis be studied and theorized in an understandable and progressive way? Is an integration of traditional theoretical and methodological approaches to youth culture (e.g., symbolic interactionism, neo-Marxism, critical ethnography) with theories of complexity (e.g., postmodernism and poststructuralist semiology) feasible – and can such a perspective reasonably maintain its links with classic conceptions of hegemony and ideology? Can such a model simultaneously account for the meanings that youth give to their cultural activities, the structural constraints that frame these meanings, and the postmodern circumstances that envelop this shifting relationship? Can such a theory be applied to the empirical study of youth culture(s)?

This dissertation is motivated by and engages these theoretical and empirical issues and questions, and attempts to speak succinctly about complexity and ambiguity in 1990s youth culture. This task will be accomplished in the following two-part dissertation project. Subsequent to this introductory chapter, **Part 1** (entitled "Theoretical Considerations" – which includes chapters 2 and 3) examines theoretical and methodological issues related to the study of youth culture. In *Chapter 2*, an argument is developed for adopting Kellner's (1995a, drawing on Nietzche, 1968, 1986) "multiperspectival approach" for this study of youth cultural activity. With this context, theories ranging from "culturalist to structuralist"[3] are critically discussed and organized along a "conceptual continuum" – with perspectives that theorize a "passive youth" on one end and perspectives that theorize an "active youth" on the other.[4] The purpose here is to highlight the need to be sensitive to the conceptual richness of individual perspectives along this continuum, while providing a theoretical reference and guide for empirical studies of contemporary youth culture. Chapter 2 concludes with an argument for privileging Willis' (1977) critical interactionist position and Hebdige's (1979, 1987) (post)structuralist position for work concerned with both the intricacies of the

interpretive process and youth group dynamics, and the structural constraints that frame youth

interpretation and activity. In *chapter 3*, these neo/post Marxist approaches are extended to include a

proposal for integrating Willis' and Hebdige's work with postmodern and media studies perspectives on

complexity/"fragmentation" (drawing on Denzin, 1989a, 1989b; McRobbie, 1994e, Redhead, 1990, 1997a,

1997b; Radway, 1988, 1991; and Wilson and Sparks, 1996). This integrated theoretical position that

balances symbolic interactionist, neo/post Marxist arguments with postmodernist and audience studies

concerns provides a compelling and far-reaching departure point for theorizing and studying youth culture

in the 1990s.

Part 2 of this dissertation ("empirical case studies" -- chapters 4 to 9), addresses the "lack of

evidence" issue by presenting two ethnographic studies of youth cultures in Canada – the rave subculture in

Toronto (a "middle class" culture of youth renowned for drug-use, an interest in computer-generated music

known as "Techno," and attendance at all-night warehouse "rave" dance parties) and inner city "drop-in"

youth as they exist in a recreation/drop-in centre. The theoretical and substantive importance of these two

groups is explored in this context. In the conclusion to this dissertation (chapter 10), theoretical,

methodological, and practical implications are discussed and suggestions for further research are offered.

With this background, the remainder of this introduction chapter develops working definitions for

"youth," "culture," "subculture," "world" and "subworld," outlines a specific rationale for studying youth

culture *in Canada* (building on the ideas that introduced this chapter), and offers a justification for the

choice of the "ravers" and "drop-in" youth as empirical case studies.

## 1.3 – Introductions and Working Definitions

Although the terms youth, culture, subculture, world and subworld are developed throughout this

dissertation, because of their historically rich and diverse meanings and usages across disciplines, I provide

a brief overview and clarification here.

### 1.3.1 – Contextualizing and Defining Youth, Teenager and Adolescent

In cultural studies analyses of mid and late 20th century, the term "youth" referred less to any specific age

category and more to the constraining and creative aspects of the "youth life." Hebdige (1988) has

explained how the term "teenager" emerged in the 1950s, a period of relative affluence, as a socially

constructed (and *constraining*) label for a young generation that had become a crucial market segment for

businesses selling leisure items and services such as records, magazines, clothing and dances (see also Hall

and Jefferson, 1976, p. 18; Abrams, 1959, p. 9). On the other hand, Hall and Jefferson (1976) defined

youth as a "metaphor for social change," referring to the capacity for (working class) young people to

respond (*creatively*) to the oppressive social conditions that faced the working classes in post-war Britain.

In both cases, the notion of youth was essentially indistinguishable from the term "youth culture."

In more strictly sociological, social-psychological work, the youth-derived term "adolescence" has

been used to describe a life stage where there is an increased concern with "roles" and "role changes" as

part of identity formation. As Coleman (1992) explained, "there can be little doubt that adolescence, from

this point of view, is seen as being dominated by stresses and tensions, not so much because of emotional

instability, but as a result of conflicting pressures from the outside" (pp. 15-16). As will be discussed in the

theory section of this dissertation, it is in this "tense" process of identity formation, and the related

"alienation"[5] that (some) youth experience during this life stage that leads to the development of youth

cliques and subcultures. This understanding of the 'social process of adolescence' is consistent with

cultural studies understandings of subcultural development, although less focused on external social

determinants such as social class and race.[6]

As Hebdige suggested in the introduction to this section, these definitions are historically-derived.

In fact, the perception of "youth" as troubled and troubling is a relatively recent. Work on pre-industrial

societies has shown that there were not clear distinctions between youth and adult, or an intermediate stage

that is now known as adolescence (Aries, 1962). Moreover, the term "youth" did not hold the same

stigmatized meaning as it does today. As Tanner (1996) explained:

> [In pre-industrial Europe], terms such as youth and adolescence were in currency but corresponded
> more closely to contemporary notions of young adulthood than to an intermediary phase in the life
> cycle. Similarly, in classic antiquity (Greece and Rome) the term "youth" was employed to
> describe healthy, productive persons rather than a category of individuals no longer children but
> not yet adults. In Europe, before the eighteenth century, children entered the world of work and
> leisure at a considerably earlier age than they do in our own time; moreover, the different age
> groups were more closely integrated than they are today. Medieval French children, for instance,
> worked alongside adults from the age of 7 onwards...Children, in effect were treated as little
> adults – indicated by their dress, games and legal status (p. 19)

The transition toward a view of the "troubled" (and "delinquent") youth, according to Tanner (building on Musgrove, 1964), can be traced to the industrial revolution, a time when there was both a scarcity of jobs and a movement toward humanitarian reforms that opposed exploitative work conditions for young people. What this led to was the creation of a class of street youth, that were in some cases forced to 'steal to survive'. In this way a new societal problem known as "juvenile delinquency" emerged (Bernard, 1992; Gillis, 1974; Tanner, 1996). From these seminal journalist and reformer led "moral panics" emerged the Juvenile Delinquent Act of 1908, the official origin of juvenile delinquency in Canada (Best, 1989; Tanner, 1996; West, 1984).

More importantly for this dissertation was the development of discourses surrounding youth during World War Two and in the postwar period. During the war, a time when teenagers (males and females) were either helping maintain industry (which in itself meant that many youth were leaving school very early) or were being left relatively unsupervised at home, concerns were being raised about the inevitability of a "delinquent outcome" for youth who were potentially economically independent and lacked parental supervision. In the postwar period this panic was focused in part on the crisis of motherhood, where working women were urged/forced to leave the workplace and take care of their children who, without proper supervision, were (believed to be) at risk for delinquent behavior (Adams, 1997; Pierson, 1986).

Although these wartime concerns were notable, it was in the postwar period that perceptions of the 'youth problem' were reinvigorated in ways that are centrally relevant today. In particular, there emerged a 'teen culture' that was reinforced/fueled by a commercial industry driven by adults. Unlike in years past when teenage styles and fads were created and maintained by teens themselves, the adult-created commercial culture was now encouraging youth (particularly middle-class youth), a group that now had increased disposable income and leisure time, to buy into the popular culture of the time. In this sense, the youth or 'teen' had become a target group for the marketing of teen magazines, rock and roll, movies, and clothing among other popular cultural items. In essence, the "contemporary teenager" had been discovered, and although "middle-class and working-class young people had unequal access to the products of this

market, and would ascribe different meanings to its products, they were all affected by it" (Adams, 1997, p. 42).

In this sense, out of this history of youth emerged a contemporary framing of youth as troubled and troubling. Teenagers had become distinct from other age groups and because of their links with the evils of popular cultural consumption and with the day-to-day trappings that lead youth – the most impressionable of unsupervised groups – toward a delinquent life, they were a source of public concern. The National Film Board of Canada and other film houses produced educational movies to help explain youth behavior to adults (e.g., *The Teens* produced in 1957),[7] and academics and journalists alike began to develop theories to explain youth behavior and youth culture. Of course, concerns about the ways that youth culture as a highly (perhaps overly) theorized but understudied (at least with in-depth qualitative methods) group have motivated this dissertation's attempt to present a balanced depiction of youth culture in Canada (see also Acland, 1995, p. 10 for a succinct outline of concerns surrounding the notion of "youth" in the contemporary context).

### 1.3.2 – 'Culture and Subculture', 'World and Subworld': Debate and Definition

In the neo-Marxist research conducted at the University of Birmingham's (England) Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in the 1970s, a school of theory and research followed closely in this dissertation, the term "*culture*" encompassed more than the "peculiar and distinctive 'way of life' of the group or class" (Hall and Jefferson, 1976, p. 10, see also Williams, 1977, p. 19) – a classic definition drawn from a long tradition of sociological and anthropological research (Donnelly, 1993a). For these theorists, "culture" was related to class struggle – the struggle between the dominant culture and marginalized groups. Although the focus of the CCCS's work was largely on the resistive capacities of youth cultural groups, this understanding of culture was always part of a larger, more balanced theoretical framework, as McRobbie (1991a) explained:

> Culture is about the pre-structured but essentially expressive capacities of the group in question. The forms which this expressivity takes are 'maps of meaning' which summarize and encapsulate...social and material life experiences. But these cultural artifacts or configurations, are not created out of nothing. Individuals are born into what are already constructed sets of social meanings which can then be worked on, developed and even transformed...the cultural is always a site of struggle and conflict. Here hegemony may be lost or won; it is an arena for class struggle (p. 36).

Building on this explanation, Hall and Jefferson (1976, p. 13) defined *"subcultures"* as "sub-sets –

smaller, more localized and differentiated structures" within the larger cultural class configuration noted

above. In this context, Hall and Jefferson (1976) suggested that youth subcultures are "focussed around

certain activities, values, certain uses of material artefacts, territorial spaces etc. which significantly

differentiate them from the wider culture" (p. 14). Moreover, youth subcultures were specifically

characterized by their "double articulation" – that is, their relationship to their "parent" culture (e.g., a

working class youth's relationship to working class culture) and to the dominant culture. In this way, the

CCCS were interested in both the internal configuration of subcultures and their relationship to the broader

culture.

Acknowledged in this definition are the complexities of subcultural "resistance" within the

dynamic process of struggle in hegemonic relations. Examples of this complexity include: (a) the

incorporation of subcultural style into mainstream culture; and (b) the "range of resistance" from "resilient

and conservative maintainers of tradition to...the most active sites of cultural production" (Donnelly,

1993a; see also Gruneau, 1988, 1981). In essence, this is a working definition that acknowledges

Hebdige's (1979) contention that "the meaning of subculture is... always in dispute" (p. 3).[8]

This dissertation also uses the terms *"social world"* and *"subworld"* in instances where cultures

are examined without any necessary "reference to formal structures and dominant ideologies" (unlike Hall

et. al's "subculture") (Albert, 1991; Crosset and Beal, 1997). "Social world" refers to "highly

permeable...forms of social organization made up of people sharing common interests and sharing

common bonds of communication," such as the social world of golfers (Crosset and Beal, 1997, p. 81,

drawing on Unruh, 1983). "Subworld" refers to a "segment" of a social world, such as the subworld of

female professional golfers.[9]

Although these definitions are essential background for the following discussions of youth cultural

groups, other related concepts including "communities" and "worlds" (drawn from deviance literature – see

Best and Luckenbill, 1994) and "virtual communities," "virtual villages" and "electronic communities"

(linked with communication, globalization, and postmodern theory – see Brook and Boal, 1995; Porter,
1997; Rheingold, 1993) are referred to and developed throughout this dissertation.

### 1.4 – Understanding Canadian Youth Culture: Media Treatment, Theoretical Originals and Current Status of Research

> Downtown Toronto was engulfed by a mob of young marauders who stormed along Yonge St. last
> night in an orgy of looting, vandalism and violence...As hundreds of rioters – of all colours –
> surged north on Yonge, police were pelted with rocks and eggs, hundreds of windows smashed
> and stores looted. (front page story of the Toronto Star newspaper, Duffy et. al., Tuesday May 5,
> 1992)

In developing a rationale for studying youth culture *in Canada*, it seems appropriate to commence with a

discussion of what has been considered the most compelling and visible example of youth frustration and

rage in recent Canadian history (Mathews, 1993). The above noted uprising, coined the "Yonge Street

riots" of 1992, emanated both from an organized, peaceful protest of the acquittal of four Los Angeles

police officers in the trial of the Rodney King case,[10] and from a death by shooting of a black man at the

hands of Metro Toronto police. Many police sources, media accounts and sociologists of youth suggested

that the incident was not only connected to racial issues, but also to restlessness and anger among youth of

all races. More than a mass-mediated moral panic, the "Yonge Street Riots" were widely interpreted as

symptomatic of broader perceptions that for many young Canadians, life in the 1990s is a struggle

(Mathews, 1993).

This landmark incident and apparent statement about Canadian youth reinforced an already

emerging trend for mass mediated and public concerns about "today's youth." However, as noted in the

introduction to this dissertation, these conventional "hard news"/journalistic accounts are often

problematic, particularly when statistical research is cited as proof that youth crime is growing, as Hall et.

al. (1978) explained:

> Statistics – whether crime rates or opinion polls – have an ideological function: they appear to
> *ground* free floating and controversial impressions in the hard, incontrovertible soil of numbers.
> Both the media and the public have enormous respect for 'the facts' – *hard facts*. And there is no
> fact so hard as the number – unless it is the percentage difference between two numbers (p. 9).

Glenday (1996) has similarly argued in the Canadian context:

> exclusive reliance on school and home samples has diverted attention from less protected settings,
> like the street...the link between class and crime is only weakly (if at all) reflected in self-report

analyses based on individual adolescents attending school and this has lead some to call for the complete abandonment of research to link class and crime (p. 152).

Furthermore, official statistics that sometimes show increases in youth crime do not necessarily mean that today's youth have a heightened propensity for deviant activity compared to youth of the past.[11] More likely, these statistics reflect an increased willingness by police officers to lay more charges for minor incidents in a time of social/political concern about youth deviance, and similarly, the public's increased sensitivity to the problem of youth violence which affects their willingness to report incidents that might have been ignored in the past (Empey, 1982; Hall et. al., 1978; Schissel, 1993; Tanner, 1996; Visano, 1996). For example, while statistics on youth crime in 1992-93 taken from the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics "showed a 9 percent increase in violent crime over the previous year," careful scrutiny shows that two-thirds of this increase in crimes "was due to greater reporting of minor assaults, such as fights and scuffles" (Visano, 1996, p. 152, cited in the *Ottawa Citizen*, Dec. 10, 1994). Furthermore, changes in the law (what is legal at one point is illegal at another) over time make direct comparisons difficult.[12]

Moreover, these statistics only provide a "measurement" of youth crime *rates*, and render little to no insight into the *culture* of youth delinquents (including those that do not "get caught"), or into the culture of deviant youth groups that are not law-breakers. On this basis, this dissertation argues that qualitative, ethnographic research is the preferable method for gaining *intimate familiarity* with cultures and setting. Lull (1985) encapsulated the "common sense" argument for this methodological preference when studying youth cultural activity:[13]

> imagine asking punk rockers outside the concert hall how they feel about "slam dancing," for instance, by requiring them to respond to items on a semantic differential. How would they react to a set of Likert type scale indices?...in the administration of the questionnaire the researcher might suddenly become an involuntary partner in his or her first slam dance. This hypothetical turn of events is presented here to illustrate the enormous gap that exists between some of the most interesting things that take place in various cultures and the ability of quantitative methods of analysis to reflect their nature adequately (p. 219).[14]

Overall, evidence supporting claims of escalating youth violence in Canada appear to be ambiguous and largely anecdotal (Mathews, 1993, p. 9-10, see also Tanner, 1996, p. 120). The "new" trend toward a deviant youth culture is challenged by research showing that mediated panics about youth recur in intervals over time – in essence showing that recent articles and reports about "today's problem youth" (vs

the tame youth of years past) are unfounded, ambiguous, and contradictory (see Tanner, 1996, drawing on Vaughan, 1992).[15] Despite this ambiguity, there have been frequent demands to revamp the "Young Offenders Act" in Canada in order to better "crack down" on youth crime, demands that are based largely on the general perception that "youth crime is on the rise."[16] In fact, in March 1999 the replacement of the Young Offenders Act with a "tougher" Youth Criminal Justice Act was approved. This change was motivated, in part, by public opinion polls such as a 1991 *MacLeans* poll where 45% of Canadian adults indicated that "the behavior of young people in the community where they live" has become worse, while 14% thought is was better and 38% thought it was the same (Bibby and Posterski, 1992, p. 303). Clearly, this issue requires theoretical and empirical clarification.

### 1.4.1 — Current Research on Canadian Youth

Although issues related to youth cultural activity have been extensively researched in countries like Britain and the United States, to date there have been few studies conducted in the Canadian context. Some commentators attribute this lack of attention to the social conditions in Canada, conditions that, until recently, were not conducive to the development of oppositional youth subcultures and therefore did not attract attention from the public or research community. These conditions were believed to include: a strong economy that did not segregate classes in ways that allowed resistant "working class" subcultures to evolve and flourish; a relatively sparse population that prevented centralized subcultural traditions such as the "folk devil" tradition of Britain and the ethnically developed subcultures in America to flourish; and long and severe winters that localized youth cultures to shopping malls in the cities, where "collective gatherings are easy to control" (Brake, 1985, p. 145, see also Baron, 1989b, p. 292).

In reaction to this disparity of research, some scholars have attempted to explain why (visible) Canadian youth subcultural deviance and delinquency *has* emerged in recent years. Brake (1985) argued that with Canada's economic decline in the 1980s, youth who lacked the cultural resources to achieve through work and school were marginalized and turned to "unconventional" and sometimes deviant leisure pursuits (Baron, 1989a, 1989b, Tanner, 1996).[17] Others argued that the "postmodern" tendencies of the 1990s', such as the mass development and distribution of media information/technologies, and the related increase in awareness about many physical, social and political dangers (drugs, cigarettes, alcohol,

unprotected sex, violence, ecological disaster), led many youth, particularly those who did *not* lack cultural

resources related to success in work and education, to seek cultures of avoidance and abandonment

(although this theory was proposed in the British context by McRobbie, 1994, 1993, the postmodern

context of her discussion could imply broader, global impacts -- see also Redhead 1997a; Redhead, 1990).

It has also been suggested that because of the increasing globalization of youth culture through television,

film, music and internet, and because of the late emergence of visible youth cultures in Canada, Canadian

youth "borrowed" subcultural styles and resources from other countries, and as a result, Canadian youth

culture was 'less authentic' and 'less resistant' than British and American youth culture (Brake, 1985, p.

145). Of course, what these theorists failed to acknowledge is that "all subcultures, including British

articulations, tend in some way to borrow from the cultural expressions of other groups" (Young and Craig,

1997, p. 177).

While these sociological theories are crucial departure points, many of the above claims are, at

best, upheld by limited research produced by few scholars, and at worst, are based on sensationalized

journalistic accounts of atypical (but headline worthy) youth behavior. Currently, there is a growing body

of ethnographic research on youth culture in Canada, although the literature is quite recent and focuses

primarily on the controversial Young Offenders Act (Young and Craig, 1997). On this basis, many authors

have emphasized the continued need to conduct ethnographic research on Canadian youth culture (Baron,

1989a, 1989b; Tanner, 1992; Young and Craig, 1997). The few existing studies in this area include:

O'Bireck's (1996a) compilation of ethnographic research on youth crime, deviance and subcultures;

Baron's (1997, 1994, 1989a, 1989b) work on youth crime, the punk rock subculture and skinheads; Young

and Craig's (1997) research on skinheads; Solomon's (1992) research on experiences of race in a Toronto

high school; Tanner's (1978) research on youth culture in an Edmonton high school; Frieson's (1990)

work on heavy metal music listeners; Hagan and McCarthy's (1992) study of street youth; Mathews'

(1993) and Gordon's (1995) research on youth gangs; Davies' (1994a, 1994b) research on high school

"drop-outs" in Ontario; Smith's (1997) work on shopping mall culture and the social production of space,

and Wilson and Sparks' (1996, 1999 -- in press, forthcoming) work on adolescent sneaker culture.

In sum, while "moral entrepreneurs" (Becker, 1963; Blumer, 1971) in the media and populist politics make "commonsense" assumptions about the ways that youth contribute to the moral demise of Canadian society, there is a lack of evidence-based knowledge about youth cultural activity. Clearly, the myths and realities of youth deviance and youth culture in Canada require closer examination.

### 1.5 – Studying "Ravers" and "Drop-in" Centre Youth

With the goal of contributing to existing empirical and theoretical work on Canadian youth, and evaluating current theory, this dissertation presents two case studies of youth cultures – the "ravers" and "drop-in" centre youth. The choice of these two groups was purposeful, allowing for rich theoretical and substantive work on many levels.

First, both groups exist in *social spaces* – the rave dance party (e.g., warehouse, dance club, field, house) for the ravers and an urban recreation/drop-in centre for the "drop-in" youth. A concern in this dissertation is the extent to which these groups actively and *creatively use* these locations, and the extent to which they are *constrained, controlled, monitored and manipulated* (e.g., by adults, by themselves, and by media images) in these locations. Furthermore, these groups are both notorious for creating and maintaining non-violent social spaces. The ways that (and the extent to which) these youth create and are constrained within urban "sanctuaries" (of relative non-violence) will be investigated for their theoretical and practical importance.

Second, both groups are simultaneously *resistant to* dominant cultural expectations and *subject to* group norms and the impacts of mass mediated culture. In the rave culture, mass media panics about drug use, dominant youth cultural norms of intimidation and "attitude," and the marketing of "trendy" music and clothes, are generally subverted, although the group's movement away from "underground" status toward "mainstream" has threatened this resistance. In the recreation/drop-in centre, the adult-created rule system is simultaneously subverted and supported by youth – youth who want a peaceful place to spend time, but also do not want to be "told what to do." In both cases, the extent to which practices of resistance actually "make a difference" are also addressed. Further, the different ways that youth groups resist, and more importantly, the different meanings that resistance can take for different groups (and for the researcher who interprets youth activity) requires consideration here. For example, resistance can be viewed as "activism,"

subversion, indifference, disobedience, deviance, and transgression to name but a few. This issue is investigated both for its theoretical and empirical importance in this dissertation.

Third, both groups have adopted *style and leisure preferences* as part of negotiating their identities, although the nature of these preferences is distinct. The rave culture is a *spectacular culture*, akin to the British youth subcultures of 1970s such as the punk rockers, skinheads and Rastafarians. Ravers are characterized by distinct musical preferences, clothing styles, dancing techniques, and by their tendency to use amphetamine drugs for intense weekend parties. This is a conspicuous group that has gained notoriety in the mass media. On the other hand, the "drop-in" centre youth are an everyday culture, a *"common culture"* (Willis, 1990). While generally labeled "at risk" because of the neighbourhood they live in (a more specific discussion of risk factors appears later in this dissertation), these youth play basketball and floor hockey, lift weights, play pool, hang out and socialize. These activities do not make the headlines, although the positive impacts of these sorts of "drop-in" prevention programmes has been discussed in some media reports (for example, see Preface). Tanner (1996) has been critical of the propensity for both media coverage and scholarly research to focus on high profile youth cultures, suggesting that prominent concerns with spectacular youth deflect attention away from "the fact that most adolescent deviance [or in the case of the drop-in youth, non-deviant adolescent culture] is not of this attention-grabbing type" (p. 83). For Willis (1990), the "idea of spectacular sub-culture is strictly impossible because all style and taste cultures, to some degree or another, express something of a general trend to find and make identity outside the realm of work" (p. 16). Although Willis' work failed to acknowledge the distinctiveness of rave culture (or acid house culture as it was known in the late 1980s), his point along with Tanner's lends support to this dissertation's contention that the dynamics of spectacular *and* unspectacular youth cultural groups must be studied together if a balanced understanding of youth culture is to be attained. Furthermore, understanding the ways that spectacular and unspectacular subcultural forms might be significant beyond merely being sensitive to the visibility and conspicuousness of youth groups, and understanding how various symbolic expressions are interpreted by subcultural participants. In this context, it would be fair to consider whether the level of *visual transgression* of mainstream style can be reasonably related to a groups overall alignment with and against mainstream

culture. That is to say, are spectacular subcultures, by definition, akin to *counter*-cultures while less

spectacular groups akin to less resistant or non-resistant "subworlds" – or does such a correlation

constitute an over-interpretation of stylistic expression? Another consideration here is the extent to which

it matters whether spectacular styles are put on public display (i.e., how can spectacular styles that are not

positioned to or meant to shock and appall be interpreted)?

Fourth, these cultures *exist together in (somewhat) postmodern times*. All of these youth have

been exposed to the increasingly pervasive mass media, to a proliferation of youth-focused advertising, to

technological developments such as computers and to the internet (at least at school). However, not all

youth live equally in a postmodern world. The rave subculture has been called the first "postmodern"

subculture (see, for example, McGuigan, 1992, p. 101) because of the group's interest in "hyper-real"

computer generated music – technological music that cannot be produced by conventional instruments, the

"blurring" of conventional social categories in the rave scene (gender and race differences in particular are

de-emphasized by ravers) and their focus on fun, escape, and excessive consumption (instead of

conventional resistance).[18] On the contrary, "drop-in" centre youth could be aptly described within a

classic neo-Marxist framework that theorizes working class masculinity (e.g., subtly and overtly resistant

"macho" norms) or in a Marxist-feminist framework that theorizes the marginalized status of young

females in the drop-in centre. These distinctions also require an assessment of the relationship between the

"rise of postmodern discourse" and the demise of discussions about class and classic indicators of social

inequality. Are class, race and gender, for example, less pertinent to studies of late 1990s culture, or have

these variables, which are "objectively" still crucial indicators of socio-cultural relations but are receiving

less emphasis because of other factors that are overshadowing them theoretically? Of course, these

assumptions and relationships will be critically assessed and clarified in the theory and case study sections.

Finally, and building on the point noted above, *social class* is a defining variable for these

cultures. Many ravers are from *middle-class* backgrounds, while essentially all the youth in the drop-in

centre are from *working-class* backgrounds. The significance of these sorts of (extreme) class-based

differences in youth culture were described in Paul Willis' (1978) study of "bikers" and "hippies":

The motor-bike boys were broadly from the working class, and the hippies broadly from the middle class. They are similar, however, in representing for us the most durable, extreme and creative variants of these class cultures within the youth cultural mode. The motor-bike boys were exploring and extending versions of 'rough' working-class themes. The hippies were exploring and broadening a middle-class tradition of the bohemian intelligensia...It is possible to suggest that all other distinctive lifestyles lie somewhere between these two in terms of their class-cultural nature and location. They can, to some extent be thought out in terms of those extremes (p. 8).

Although Willis' work provides a useful point of departure, the current study is more cautious about the importance of social class in youth culture, considering these class differences to be only part of the complex relationship between and within these subcultural groups. This is not to deny the importance of social class for understanding broader leisure consumption patterns (as Donnelly and Harvey, 1999 and White and Wilson, 1999 have noted), but more to emphasize the *complexities* of both social context and interpretation in the study of youth cultural activity.

Overall then, and drawing on empirical findings from these case studies, two central and candid questions will be addressed: (1) What are sensational youth (e.g., ravers) really "doing" (and how does that compare to what the media says), and (2) What are everyday youth (e.g., drop-in centre youth – a culture we seldom hear about) "doing." In these substantive contexts and in the broader "structure-agency" theoretical context, issues introduced and developed throughout this chapter will be examined.

# PART 1: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

## Summary of Arguments

In the next two chapters a series of interrelated theoretical arguments are made. These are as follows:

*In chapter 2:*

1) An argument is made for organizing theories of youth culture along a "conceptual continuum," with theories that depict an "active youth" on one end of the continuum and theories that depict a "passive youth" on the other end.

2) An argument is made for adopting Kellner's "multiperspectival approach" to the study of youth cultural activity.

3) An argument is made for "privileging" updated versions of Willis' critical interactionist approach and critical ethnographic method, and Hebdige's (post)structuralist approach and semiotic method in this dissertation. It is also suggested that for studies of youth in the 1990s, these approaches need to be informed by postmodern perspectives.

*In chapter 3:*

4) An argument is made for understanding (youth) activity in a postmodern historical context, and for utilizing a critical interpretivist approach (e.g, Willis, 1977) that "makes a difference" (following Denzin, 1989a).

5) A series of theoretical points are examined for their contributions to the "cultural studies-postmodernism" integration debate. These include an examination of the following: (a) the work of Grossberg – who integrated the "articulation" concept (cultural studies) with the "wild realism" concept (postmodernism) and emphasized the notion of "affectivity" for its contribution to cultural studies debates; (b) the work of Chen – who emphasized the importance of considering postmodern notions of power and desire with cultural studies positions on politics, and examined the logic of and inner workings of Grossberg's "affectivity" concept; and (c) the work of Fontana and Dickens – who clarified the

19

contributions of postmodernism to ethnography (that is, the increased emphasis on reflexivity and issues surrounding the "crisis of representation").

6) An argument is made for *considering* both Angela McRobbie's optimistic postmodernism, along with her depiction of a "fragmented, localized" postmodern world, and the Manchester Institute for Popular Culture's (MIPC) ambivalent postmodernism, and their depiction of a somewhat chaotic cultural landscape ("postmodern wilderness") in studies of contemporary youth cultures.

7) Reservations and concerns about the extent to which youth cultures exist (unconditionally) in a postmodern world, and the extent to which theory takes precedence over empirical research in postmodern analyses are outlined in the context of McRobbie's and the MIPC's work.

8) A final argument is made for privileging updated critical interactionist and poststructuralist approaches that are informed by both the postmodern concerns noted above and more localized understandings of the ways that "interpretive communities" of youth perceive their cultural activity.

## CHAPTER 2 — A CONCEPTUAL CONTINUUM: STRUCTURE, AGENCY AND PERSPECTIVES ON YOUTH

> When flies get stuck on flypaper are their efforts to flutter free evidence of struggle and resistance or merely part of a scripted death in which the strength sapping efforts are part of the script? The pessimist will breathe a melancholy "aaahh"; the optimist will shout "people are not flies!" The optimist will point to the few who perhaps escape; the pessimist to the many who don't...the optimist is quite correct; people, of course, are not flies. But they do seem like passive role players much of the time; it's what we call social order and are grateful for it more often than not...Relative autonomy? Active agency? These may reproduce the structure of domination and subordination as often as they undermine it. (Berger, 1995, 148-149)

Many scholars have dealt with this fundamental question of "individual freedom vs structural constraint"[19] by adopting a classic compromise position — where individuals (youth or otherwise) are considered to be "relatively autonomous" or active within certain social constraints. Karl Marx's (1963, p. 15) aphorism "human beings make their own history, but not in the circumstances of their own choosing" is the clearest articulation of this position. Over the years there have been many attempts to provide a more sophisticated framework that bridges the structure-agency gap, including structuration theory, the negotiated order perspective, network analysis and mesostructural theory.[20] The difficulty with many of these integrated perspectives is that they do not adequately theorize the structure-agency relationship in a *critical* way — that is, in a way that acknowledges and theorizes the oppression of marginalized groups. Also, these perspectives are generally not equipped to deal with the increasingly complex and contradictory relationship between social action and social structure in a global/mass media society, and/or fail to adequately theorize the place of dominant and resistant *culture* in this relationship.[21]

This chapter engages this issue and related issues in the context of youth studies, with a specific focus on: (a) organizing existing theories of youth culture in a way that illuminates the extent to which "creativity and social constraint" have been conceptualized in youth cultural studies; and (b) privileging perspectives that are critical of and sensitive to the social conditions of 1990s (Canada). These goals will be accomplished in four stages. First, Stuart Hall's conceptualization of the structuralist-culturalist debates and his linking of Gramscian notions of ideology and hegemony with (post)structuralist theories are shown to be the most appropriate points of departure for work that is concerned with complexity and contradiction

in cultural struggle and structural constraint. Second, and building on Hall's theoretical foundation, an

argument is presented for using a "multiperspectival approach" to studying youth activity -- an approach

initially proposed by Neitzche but adopted by Kellner for the study of popular culture. In making this

argument, the importance of "privileging" the most well-developed and relevant approaches will be noted.

Third, a justification is provided for organizing theories of youth culture along a "conceptual continuum,"

with theories that emphasize youth creativity, activity and resistance on one end of the continuum (the

section is entitled "Perspectives on Active Youth"), and theories that focus on the way youth are passive

and/or constrained in everyday life on the other end (section entitled "Perspectives on Passive, Reactive

and Socially Determined Youth").[22] This is followed by a presentation of these perspectives. Fourth, after

demonstrating the richness, range and theoretical complexity of the "youth culture" construct, an argument

is developed for privileging Willis' critical interactionist position and critical ethnographic method, along

with Hebdige's (post)structuralist approach and semiotic method, as the most encompassing, balanced and

progressive (critical) approaches to studying youth culture. The chapter concludes with the suggestion that

there is a need to consider these CCCS-related positions along with more contemporary postmodern

approaches to youth culture (which leads to Chapter 3).

## 2.1 -- Culturalism, Structuralism and Stuart Hall

For Hall (1980a, 1983), the agency-structure debate was a struggle between the culturalist position (aligned

with neo-Gramscian British work by Williams, Hoggart and Thompson) and a (post)structuralist position

(exemplified by Althusser and Barthes).[23] Although McGuigan (1992, p. 30) and others have argued that

Hall's dichotomy is presently "out of date" because it precedes the "extraordinary efflorescence of

poststructuralist and postmodernist theorizing in the 1980s," I suggest that McGuigan underestimated the

still contemporary concerns and insights that emerged from Hall's work. Hall identified a crucial

distinction between the struggle and creativity of subordinated groups (culturalist position) and the

complexity, contradiction and fragmentation of the structures that that oppress (the (post)structuralist

position). Hall's (1985) adaptation of the "articulation" concept was a momentous theoretical contribution

because it allowed him to explain the "decentring" of power while still recognizing the *concrete* social

practices in the production of dominant structures and the resistance to structural constrains, as he

explained:[24]

> without some arbitrary "fixing," or what I am calling "articulation," there would be no
> signification or meaning at all. What is ideology but, precisely this work of fixing meaning
> through establishing, by selection, a chain of equivalences (p. 193)?

In this sense, Hall (1983) conceptualized a "Marxism without guarantees," an anti-reductionist

argument for the existence of a historical process through which identity and structural unity are produced

out of complex, contradictory and diverse ideological elements such as language, images and symbols.

Grossberg clarified these positions:

> The concept of articulation signals his [Hall's] attempt to rethink the dialectic of determination as
> struggle...For Hall, the meaning and politics of any practice is, similarly, the product of a
> particular structuring of the complex relations and contradictions within which it exists.
> 'Articulation' refers to *the complex set of historical practices by which we struggle to produce
> identity or structural unity out of, on top of, complexity, difference, contradiction* [emphasis
> added]. It signals the absence of guarantees, the inability to know in advance the historical
> significance of particular practices. It shifts the question of determination from origins (e.g., a
> practice is defined by its capitalist or working class genesis) to effects. It is the struggle to
> articulate particular effects in history that Hall seeks to find at every level, and in every domain of
> social life (Grossberg, 1996, p. 154, originally published in 1986).

Building on Grossberg's explanation, it is worth emphasizing here that the concept of articulation

involves a dual process: expression (representing) and connection or combination (relating). On this basis,

articulation should be understood for the ways it emphasizes the slippage of the signifier while

acknowledging that despite postmodernizing influences that might have blurred meaning, the

communicative process is still rule-governed. Although structuralists may have over-emphasized the

rigidity and stability of these rules, they do make a crucial argument against a "cultural chaos" theory.

With this in mind, creativity can be viewed as a process of combining language and/or cultural artifacts in

novel ways.

Moreover, Hall's approach has limited explanatory power for more focused studies of cultural

groups because it is too broad and encompassing to adequately theorize the richness of *local* (youth)

cultural activity.[25] Simply put, perspectives intended to characterize broad social trends cannot do justice

to *the specificity of approaches intended to theorize constraint and creativity in human action (or, for this

dissertation "passivity and activity" in the lives of youth) at different "moments" along a continuum.*

Furthermore, articulation, by itself, cannot explain which combinations of symbols succeed and which fail, why some meanings last and others do not, why certain signifiers resonate with some groups in some places at some times, but not others. Yet these are precisely the kinds of questions that sociologists pose for themselves: why punk or glitter in the 1970s and rave in the 1990s?

## 2.2 – A Multiperspectival Approach to the Study of Youth

On this basis, this dissertation adopts Kellner's (1995, drawing on Neitzche, 1986) "multiperspectival approach," an approach that supports the use of various analytic procedures in order to attain the most comprehensive and balanced understanding of social phenomenon. Kellner (1995) provided the following rationale for using this approach in critical cultural studies:

> A perspective...is an optic way of seeing, and critical methods can be interpreted as approaches that enable one to see characteristic features of cultural artifacts. Each critical method focuses on specific features of an object from a distinctive perspective: the perspective spotlights, or illuminates, some features of a text while ignoring others. The more perspectives one focuses on a text to do ideological analysis and critique — genre, semiological, structural, formal, feminist, psychoanalytic, and so on — the better one can grasp the full range of a text's ideological dimensions and ramifications. It therefore follows that a multiperspectival approach will provide an arsenal of weapons of critique, a full range of perspectives to dissect, interpret and critique cultural artifacts...(pp. 98-99).

Emerging from a critical assessment of a variety of approaches will be perspectives that are, individually, most insightful, and in combination, compatible and analytically powerful, as Best and Kellner (1997) suggested in their examination of Neitzche's original theoretical proposal:

> while arguing for a perspectival way of seeing, Neitzche is also aware that sometimes a single strong hypothesis is valuable [and illuminates]...features missed by those who restrict their focus to specifics and particulars of objects. Indeed, Neitzche had his own strong and privileged perspectives that he believed provided unique insights that were of utmost significance for human life...Contemporary postmodernists therefore sometimes mistake Neitzche's perspectivism for an "anything goes" type of relativism and irrationalism. But this is precisely the type of intellectual indolence that he despised (p. 71).

Finally, these readings must be located in socio-historical context if a responsible and informed critical analysis is to take place. This argument for historically located research has been reinforced by neo-Marxist work on the evolution of subcultures in post-war Britain and micro-sociological work on deviant organizations that examined the historically situated "day to day ties between the deviant world and the straight world" (Brymer, 1991, p. 178; see also Willis, 1977). In fact, Brymer (1991) has argued that even the neo-Marxist approaches that espouse the notion of "historical specificity" rarely provided an

ethnographically informed basis for discussing the historical *emergence* of subcultures (only the *maintenance* of them).

Of course, Kellner's approach raises some important issues, problems and questions. In essence, underlying the multiperspectival approach is an assumption that "the more viewpoints we include the closer we get to the truth." The problem is, this can only be an assumption. What about viewpoints that are false, misleading, or ideological fronts for particularistic interests? Why does including more perspectives necessarily reveal ideological ramifications rather than reinforce and mystify them further? At what point do perspectives cancel one another out rather than build on and extend one another? Although these concerns cannot be resolved, what researchers can do is be explicit about the unifying logic which lead to the choice of perspectives and their strategic combination. In this dissertation, the perspectives were chosen as part of creating a framework for providing an empirically-informed critique of power relations. This approach is developed throughout this and the following chapter.

### 2.3 -- A Continuum of Perspectives: Theories of Active and Passive Youth

The following conceptual continuum illustrates the ambiguities of structuralist and culturalist strands of youth-related theory while providing a reference point for work concerned with approaches to freedom/creativity and structure/constraint in youth cultural theory. This active-passive continuum shows how youth have been positioned in diverse ways -- as "social dupes," as reactive "problem solvers," as proactive "bricoleurs," and as intersubjective, negotiating, accomplishing individuals. By understanding the positioning of different perspectives along this continuum, the relative location of these approaches can be better conceptualized. Most often, these theories are understood only as they relate to different countries or schools of thought, or to their chronological order, not for how youth can be understood in the broader context of the structure-agency debate (see, for example, Davies (1995) genealogy of resistance as it exists in mainstream and critical traditions).

This use of a "conceptual continuum" is akin to Messner and Sabo's (1990) "nonhierarchical theory" that was developed in their work on gender and sport. Messner and Sabo (1990) used the metaphor of a "theoretical wheel" to illustrate the ways that a range of theories can be understood for their distinct yet interdependent contributions to the (critical) understanding of a social phenomenon (Messner and Sabo,

1990, pp. 10-11). Although their model was flawed because it oversimplified the extent to which "all forms of social oppression" can be understood with this metaphor (as the authors themselves note, see Messner and Sabo, 1990, p. 247), it is a useful departure point for understanding the interdependent relationship between approaches to, in this case, youth culture.

## 2.4 — Perspectives on Active Youth

### 2.4.1 — Symbolic Interactionism and the Study of 'Everyday' Youth

> Symbolic interaction rests in the last analysis on three simple premises. The first premise is that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings they have for them...The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters (Blumer, 1969, p. 2).

A Chicago School interactionist approach to the study of youth (sub)cultural activity is concerned with the emergent (as opposed to determined) character of the lived experiences of youth. In a recent paper, Prus (1996b) outlined a research agenda for the study of "adolescence as lived experience" and proposed a revised version of "generic" interactionist approaches to the study of group life — approaches emphasizing the "perspectives, activities, identities relationships, and commitments" that distinguish each subcommunity, subculture, or group within the broader community (p. 17) and the multiperspectival, reflective, negotiable, relational and processual aspects of everyday life for youth (see, for example, Fine (1987) for a similarly process-based study of little league baseball). This position is consistent with Prus' focus on the trans-situational aspects of life worlds known as "generic social processes." This approach to the study of youth is rooted in the notion that "the processes...involved in the adolescent 'struggle for existence' are exceedingly parallel to those characterizing other people in other settings," despite some inevitable content variations between adolescent life worlds and the community at large (Prus, 1996b, p. 24).

Although Chicago School interactionism is a useful approach for research concerned with attaining rich, process-oriented understandings of youth cultural groups, the approach is overly focused on everyday experience and, as a result, does not provide a balanced understanding of both creativity and constraint, despite the claims of some interactionists (in particular, Maines, 1988, 1989; Prus, 1999).

Similarly, interactionist research does not acknowledge the ways that dominant, "commonsense" ideas are constructed/exerted *intertextually*, at all levels of society.[26] As Prendergast and Knottemus (1990) have argued, interactionist ethnographic studies that "merely refer to a 'structural context' or 'history of negotiations' while keeping their analytic focus on the interaction-at-hand can not be considered solutions to the astructural bias problem" (p. 176).

Most importantly for this dissertation, symbolic interactionism (in isolation) does not address the possibility that the "cultural" is a "site for struggle and conflict" (McRobbie, 1991a, p. 36), as Donnelly and Young (1988) argued in their research on sport subcultures:

> such focused views of specific processes within subcultures should not lead researchers to consider subcultures in isolation from their structural, historical, and geographic contexts... Without such contextualization, subcultural research will remain an interesting appendage to more mainstream patterns of social development (p. 238).

### 2.4.2 – Critical Interactionism and (Post)Structuralism: Youth Subculture Research at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies

It was these structural, historical, and geographic contexts that guided the classic research on youth subcultures conducted at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in Birmingham, England in the 1970s.[27] Although there were two diverse methodological and related theoretical strands that characterized the CCCS's approach to studying youth, all the researchers were interested in how youth, particularly working class youth, creatively find "solutions" (what were referred to as "magical" solutions) that allow them to symbolically resist and (temporarily) escape from their marginalized class and occupational positionings (Hall and Jefferson, 1976).[28] For these youth, according to Hall and Jefferson (1976), it was through leisure activities and subcultural style that dissatisfaction with the normative social order was expressed. Aspects of culture such as clothing, hairstyle, music, language, dance, and drug use took on heightened meaning for these youth – resistive meaning. Of particular significance was the CCCS's use of "homology" and "bricolage" as concepts to explain practices and patterns of youth consumption. "Homology" refers to the way the structure and content of cultural commodities "parallel and reflect the structure, style and typical concerns, attitudes, and feelings of the social group" (Willis, 1978, p. 191). For example, Willis described how the motorcycle in "biker" culture was a symbol of freedom, power and risk – values homologous with the central perspectives of bikers. Clarke (1976) defined Levi-Strauss' concept

of bricolage as "the reordering and recontextualisation of objects to communicate fresh meaning, within a total system of significances, which already includes prior and sedimented meanings attached to the objects used" (p. 177). Hebdige (1979) used the concept in his analysis of the punk rock subculture to show how "unremarkable and inappropriate items - a pin, a plastic clothes peg, a television component, a razor blade, a tampon - could be brought within the province of punk (un)fashion" (p. 107). So, for these spectacular youth cultures, discontent and disenchantment were expressed through stylistic attempts to appall and offend mainstream culture. While not all of the research at the CCCS was focused on spectacular youth perse (c.f., Willis, 1977; McRobbie, 1977; and Corrigan, 1979), the centre is most well-known in youth studies for their theoretical treatment of overt stylistic displays of resistance.

The CCCS's resistance thesis was grounded in the neo-Marxist, Gramscian notion of "hegemony." Hegemony is domination that is consented to by subordinate groups, or as Joll (1977) suggested, it is when the dominant class has "succeeded in persuading the other classes of society to accept its moral, political and cultural values," such that the ruling class does not have to rely on coercive force to maintain power (p. 99). A preferred method used by the dominant group for securing consent and maintaining this hegemonic relationship is to control the distribution of ideas (i.e., maintain the dominant ideology). When discourses are assembled in ways that make the subordinate group's status appear "natural," then the subordinate group will often consent to and contribute to the continuation of existing social conditions. Jameson (1979) and Hall et. al. (1978) have shown how popular cultural forms such as television work symbolically to establish dominant ideological meanings that reinforce the oppression of subordinate groups.[29] Gramsci also recognizes that there is an emotional component to hegemony, what he called "feeling-passion," which is centrally related to making history and forming a new historic bloc (i.e., securing hegemony). The relationship between emotion (or "affectivity") and power relations as developed by Grossberg (1984, 1996) and Chen (1996) is outlined in the next chapter's discussion of postmodernism and ideology

However, and crucial to this discussion, is Gramsci's (1971) suggestion that dominant groups *make concessions* to subordinate groups — concessions that are meant to make the subordinate groups "feel better" about their situation, but are not meant to fundamentally alter or threaten the status of the dominant group. Gramsci (1971) explained:

The fact of hegemony presupposes that account be taken of the interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain compromise equilibrium should be formed – in other words, that the leading group should make sacrifices...(p. 161).

Unclear in this account, as Gramsci recognized, was the extent to which these concessions are "given by" the dominant groups, and the extent to which subordinate groups "take back from" the dominant group.

Hall and Jefferson (1976) described this dubious hegemonic relationship:

Hegemony, then, is not universal and 'given' to the continuing rule of a particular class. It has to be won, reproduced and sustained. Hegemony is, as Gramsci said, a "moving equilibrium," containing "relations of forces favourable to this or that tendency." It is a matter of the nature of the balance struck between contending classes: the compromises to sustain it; the relations of force; the solutions adopted. Its character and content can only be established by looking at concrete situations, at concrete historical moments. The idea of 'permanent class hegemony', or of 'permanent incorporation' must be ditched (pp. 40-41).

It is this "imperfect hegemonic relationship," in the form of youth subcultural resistance, that was the conceptual foundation for the work done at the CCCS.[30]

Out of this shared understanding and adoption of the hegemony concept emerged two strands of research and theory at the CCCS. These strands were embodied by the work of two of the CCCS's most prominent theorists, Paul Willis and Dick Hebdige. On one hand, Willis developed a critical, reflexive ethnographic approach to the study of youth culture that integrated aspects of classic "Chicago style" symbolic interactionist ethnography (Becker, 1963; Polsky, 1969; Whyte, 1943) and a less prolific British tradition of ethnography (Downes, 1966), with a "macro" neo-Marxist analytic model.[31] Willis examined how the lived experiences of youth in everyday contexts were located within the broader capitalist political economic background of 1970s Britain. In doing so, Willis developed what has been termed a "critical ethnographic" method and a "critical interactionist" approach to social research.

In his research on working class male youth, Willis (1977) examined the emergent patterns of activity in twelve youths' day-to-day lives at school (an interactionist analysis), and subsequently argued that although the group's "masculinist" attitudes and activities (e.g., sexist humour, vandalism, horseplay) were fatalistic attempts to resist oppressive social conditions, these behaviors simultaneously reinforced class hegemony (a critical, neo-Marxist analysis).[32] It is important to note that while Willis' approach was an attempt to integrate culturalist and structuralist positions, his work was clearly culturalist in its focus on the experiences of youth groups and the meanings that youth groups give to their activities.

In more strictly methodological papers and in appendices to his books, Willis provided valuable

insight into and refinements of ethnographic methodology. For example, he provided the following

innovative articulation of the theory-qualitative method relationship:

> ...to maintain the richness and authenticity of social phenomena it is necessary, certainly at the early stages of research, to receive data in the raw, experimental and relatively untheorized manner...However, we must recognize the ambition of the participant observation principle in relation to theory. It has directed its followers towards a profoundly important methodological possibility – that of *being surprised*, of reaching knowledge not prefigured in one's starting paradigm. The urgent task is to chart the feasibility, scope and proper meaning of such as capacity (Willis, 1997, originally published in 1976, p. 248).

Although the ethnographic methodology[33] endorsed by Willis is generally considered to be the

most applicable "tool" for understanding human experience (see, for example, Blumer, 1969; Prus, 1996a),

it was on this issue that Hebdige's work departed from Willis'. Hebdige (1979, 1987) used "semiology"

(see Barthes, 1973; De Saussure, 1966) – a method for studying signs and sign associations – in his

research on youth culture and style. Semiologists separate the "sign" into two components: the "signifier"

and the "signified." The "material vehicle" of meaning (such as the word "rose") is the signifier; the

signified is the intended meaning (e.g., the rose might mean "romantic").[34] When "decoding" youth style,

the semiologist attempts to link the cultural object (such as the black T-shirt worn by a youth that says

"Cause Stone Cold Says So" on it) to the cultural knowledge of the youth "using" the object (many youth

would be aware that "Stone Cold" is the nickname of professional wrestler Steve Austin, a man renowned

in his wrestler role for "not taking crap from anybody"). In this way, decoding requires more than looking

at individual objects – it requires an understanding of the ways these objects work together to create a

message and the way these messages might be integrated into individuals' lives (e.g., the appeal of the T-

shirt to the youth's peer group).

So, instead of studying youth culture in a classic ethnographic sense, like Willis did, Hebdige

drew from various sources (e.g., interviews that appeared in popular music magazines, mass media reports,

record albums, music lyrics), piecing together cultural artifacts from various relevant genres and times and

producing "readings" of style and culture. While Hebdige's adaptation of the classic "resistance thesis"

was aligned with a structuralist position (cultural Marxism), his "play" with youth-related signifiers (e.g., in

music, in clothing styles) was poststructuralist, as McGuigan (1992) suggested in his review of Hebdige's

book *Cut 'n' Mix*:

> The title of [Hebdige's (1987)] book, *Cut 'n' Mix*, captures the sense of cultures combining and
> recombining, of bits and pieces plucked from various sources and then put together in novel
> combinations, such a typical feature of black music from the time of slavery to rap and hip-hop,
> and which is emblematic of the postmodern supersession of cultural 'purity', the blurring of
> boundaries between different forms and styles (pp. 101-102).

Hebdige further clarified how his semiotic approach to the study of punk culture was heavily influenced by

an "updated" poststructuralist position – an explanation that foreshadowed later developments in

postmodern cultural analysis:

> It would seem that those approaches to subculture based upon traditional semiotics (a semiotics
> which begins with some notion of the 'message' – of a combination of elements referring
> unanimously to a fixed number of signifieds) fail to provide us with a 'way in' to the difficult and
> contradictory text of punk style. Any attempt at extracting a final set of meanings from the
> seemingly endless, often apparently random, play of signifiers in evidence here seems doomed to
> failure...And yet, over the years, a branch of semiotics has emerged which deals precisely with
> this problem. Here the simple notion of reading as the revelation of a fixed number of concealed
> meanings is discarded in favour of the idea of *polysemy* whereby each text is seen to generate a
> potentially infinite range of meanings. Such an approach lays stress on the primacy of structure
> and system in language, and more upon the position of the speaking subject in discourse. It is
> concerned with the *process* of meaning construction rather than the final product...One of the
> effects of this redefinition of interests has been to draw critical attention to the relationship
> between the means of representation and the object represented, between what in traditional
> aesthetics have been called respectively 'form' and 'content' (Hebdige, 1979, pp. 117-118).

Despite these poststructuralist innovations, Hebdige's research should not be considered a complete break

from the traditional British neo-Marxist model – his work was clearly about social class, race and

resistance.

The divergence of Willis' and Hebdige's theoretical and methodological work was magnified in

the 1980s and beyond. With the "crisis of cultural theory" posed by postmodernism (next chapter), Willis

(1990) continued to emphasize the importance of ideology and everyday experience, while Hebdige (1988)

engaged and incorporated postmodern thought into his existing poststructuralist understanding of the play

of indeterminate signifiers.

### 2.4.3 – Shortcomings of the CCCS models

There are several weaknesses with the early CCCS model (Frith, 1985; 1978; Laing, 1985; McGuigan,

1992; McRobbie, 1987; Tanner, 1996). First, and most importantly, there was little empirical evidence

standing behind the theoretical positions taken by the subcultural theorists, and in fact, the "resistance thesis" was more a reflection of the theorists' political preferences/hopes than actual youth motivations (with perhaps the exception of Willis, 1977). Cagle (1989) and Brymer (1991) have contended, for example, that the CCCS's claim that working class youth subcultures in Britain emerged in reaction to the oppression of the working class in Britain was an analytic leap with little empirical basis. Similarly, and ironically considering the CCCS's research on the social construction of youth in the media (the creation of "moral panics"), the theorists have been justifiably accused of using the same media sources that they critiqued as sources for their own theoretical interpretations. Second, these theories focused on "spectacular" youth subcultures, but, with few exceptions, passed over the "common cultures" of everyday youth who are *not* members of visible, controversial, subcultures. Third, there is no *necessary* connection between youth style, youth deviance and youth resistance, contrary to CCCS claims, and furthermore, membership in a subcultural group, which is often a short-term phenomenon, does not *necessarily* mean that youth are committed to the resistant political stances apparently represented by the particular group.

Davies (1995, 1994a) and Tanner (1996, 1990), for example, are two Canadian theorists that have taken issue with Willis' notion of resistance in their work on youth and education. Tanner (1996, 1990), drawing on his empirical studies of high school drop-outs, articulated these concerns in the following way:

> Edmonton [Alberta, Canada] drop-outs do not condemn book learning, reject white collar jobs, or anticipate and celebrate that masculinist culture of manual labour. While they had not liked school very much, their complaints and criticisms did not cumulate in an inversion of school culture. By my reckoning, the accommodations they made did not count as "resistance," at least not in the way that term has been used in British subcultural theory (1996, p. 115).

Similarly, Davies (1994a) explained that the resistance he found in his research on Ontario high schools was only weakly correlated with class background, a finding also at odds with the British subculturalists. More general assertions that resistance has been overestimated have been supported by other research in Canada (Elkin and Westley, 1955; Bibby and Posterski, 1985, p. 23-24), the United States (Adelson, 1979) and Britain (S. Cohen, 1972). Young and Craig (1997) outlined the irony of the resistance thesis in their research on Western Canadian skinhead culture:

> Even in the cases of subcultures whose members strategically use "bricolage" to self-identify, shock and to elicit a deviant status...the potency of any resistance implied by the group is considerably mediated by its often rather conservative value system and what seems to be its

inevitable co-option into mainstream society...In other words, what on the surface looks like a significant form of resistance to dominant culture actually contains as much potential for social reproduction as for social transformation (p. 180).

Fourth, with the exception of Angela McRobbie's (1991) work, female subcultures were treated as marginal to a masculine youth subcultural scene (see McRobbie, 1987 for an extensive critique). Similarly, the theoretical formations of the CCCS were denounced for their deterministic class-based focus:

> ...it is worth recalling the functions served by the theory when it was developed by a group of *marxist* sociologists in the early 1970s. It both tied the activities of youth to a specific social class (thus attacking the 'myth' of the classless youth life-style) and also validated the apparently aimless activities of mods, skinheads and others in terms of class struggle: even when they seemed to be mere consumers or delinquents, these kids were acting out a proletarian destiny, reacting against capitalism (Laing, 1985, p. 123; see also McGuigan, 1992)

Lastly, the "acid-house" or "rave" phenomenon of the late 80's and 90's (examined in the empirical section of this dissertation), a youth subculture which, according to many theorists, is premised not on overt symbolic resistance, but on fun, warehouse dancing and 'peaceful' psychedelic drugs (McGuigan, 1992; McRobbie, 1993; Redhead, 1990), is evidence that the CCCS's resistance thesis requires updating to better account for the complexities of a "postmodern, post-punk sensibility."[35]

### 2.4.4 — Updated Versions of British Subcultural Theory: Subtle Resistance

In a more contemporary version of the "resistance through rituals" thesis, McRobbie (1993) attempted to overcome these limitations of the original class-based model, suggesting that:

> the fundamental class meanings underpinning these formulations [e.g., the CCCS's resistance thesis] are no longer the rationale for cultural analysis. We can (now) afford to be more speculative, more open to the meanings of those other than those of class. It is not so much that these meanings can now be recognized as including questions of gender, sexuality, race and identity, but rather that what is significant is how in different youth cultural 'venues' there are different permutations of class, gender and racial meanings being explored (p. 407).

In this way, McRobbie located the cultural responses of contemporary youth within the oppressive context of Britain in the 1980s and 1990s by acknowledging the different (local) "cultural venues" where youth negotiate identities. McRobbie's updated version of the resistance thesis was, therefore, less focused on class struggle and more concerned with resistance "at the more mundane, micrological level of everyday practices" (McRobbie, 1994e, p. 162, see also Willis, 1990).[36]

Willis (1990) also theorized (a celebratory view of) how "unspectacular" youth are symbolically creative in everyday life — constructing subtle meanings through popular cultural practices such as music, fashion, and media. In his expansive ethnographic study of youth in Britain, Willis showed how youth (re)produce and (re)create meaning with music, particularly through home-taping, mixing and re-recording.[37] Willis responded to the traditional critiques of the CCCS's deterministic focus on class, explaining that in this updated model social locations such as race, class, gender, age, and region are simultaneously determinations and "resources to be explored and experienced" (Willis, 1990, p. 12). In these ways, Willis' "common" youth react creatively to uncertain futures, economic dependence, and feelings of marginality (albeit in less visibly resistant ways than spectacular youth).

Overall, and while sometimes criticized for not theorizing linkages between creative resistance and structures of oppression, a critique often associated with symbolic interactionism, Willis' and McRobbie's "updated" perspectives on youth culture illustrated how everyday youth "make do" in the cultural landscape of the 1990s, as McRobbie (1994e) explained:

> If, for the moment, we deconstruct the notion of resistance by removing its metapolitical status (even when this exists in some disguised, magical, or imaginary form, as it did in CCCS theory), and if we reinsert resistance at the more mundane, micrological level of everyday practices and choices about how to live, then it becomes possible to see the sustaining, publicizing and extending of the subcultural enterprise (p. 162).[38]

Resistance in this sense lacks the "in your face" rejections of mainstream culture associated with some manifestations of youth rebellion. Instead, these youth innovatively and successfully negotiate their life positioning within and despite larger oppressive everyday circumstances. In this sense, youth do not have to "appall" society with offensive music, outlandish hairstyles, or distinct fashion statements in order to construct and maintain their identity. Youth subcultures then, according to McRobbie and Willis, while sometimes defined by the "semiotic guerrilla warfare" (Hebdige, 1979, drawing on Eco, 1972) of spectacular subcultures, are more often defined by subtly nuanced cultural activities.

Similar notions of subtle resistance or "soft subversions" (Guattari, 1996) have been outlined by de Certeau and Fiske, theorists from outside the CCCS who also optimistically celebrated the resistive capacities of the consumer. In his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau spoke of the "tactical"

maneuvers that take place in everyday practices such as walking, talking, cooking, or shopping. He

referred to the ways that the ordinary person "succeeds in 'putting one over' on the established order on its

home ground" (de Certeau, 1984, p. 26). He used the example of a secretary writing a love letter on

"company time" to describe the "disguised" (de Certeau used the term "la perruque") tactical resistance, or

the practice of "poaching" that people engage in at the expense of the existing social order (de Certeau,

1984, p. 25).[39] Fiske (1989a, 1989b) applied a more extreme version of de Certeau's resistant

consumerism, seeing youth and others to use sites like the mall to exercise their "trickery and tenacity."

### 2.4.5 — Critiques of the "Subtle Resistance Thesis"

Critics have argued that "subtle resistance" theorists "seem to have discovered resistance virtually

everywhere" (Gruneau, 1988, p. 25). Fiske's work in particular has received criticism for going "as far

over the resistance pole as anyone could be" (Bee, 1989, p. 357), and for making massive analytical leaps

by equating youth resistance to lunch hour window shoppers or old age pensioners who walk in the warm

mall during the cold winter (see Moores, 1993). More generally, critics have argued that there is

problematic side to research that celebrates resistances that do not "make a difference" (beyond allowing

individuals to "cope"). For example, McGuigan (1992, pp. 1-2) adapted the term "populism" from political

discourse (referring to the "reckless and unscrupulous demagogy" that politicians are accused of when they

make promises they cannot keep) to cultural studies research, to show how popular uses of culture have

been celebrated for their resistive potential *at the expense of more informed and sophisticated critical work*.

While noting the positive aspects of an "appreciate, non-judgemental attitude toward ordinary tastes and

pleasures," McGuigan (1992; see also Frith and Savage, 1993, 1997) suggested that this movement toward

the 'uncritical' study of popular culture does not adequately grasp the "historical changes in the experiential

conditions of ordinary people" (p. 5) or adequately theorize people's reactions to these historical

conditions. Gruneau (1988) provided a related warning about research that uses the hegemony model as a

departure point for theorizing "subtle" resistances:

> there is a significant danger that critical studies designed to seek out and analyze the wide variety
> of apparent popular cultural forms of resistance to hegemony will be drawn into a theoretical
> position that loses sight of the importance of political economy and capitalism's powerful forces
> of containment. It is also extremely easy to exaggerate or misrepresent the oppositional character
> of any set of cultural forms and practices and to examine these forms and practices without due

regard either to questions of morality or the likelihood of any long-term counter-hegemonic consequences actually occurring. The moment of resistance always needs to be understood both in the ways it opposes hegemony and [in the ways it] is often contained by it (p. 26).

Although theorists such as Cagle (1989) and Crosset and Beal (1997) have responded to these sorts of critiques, arguing that, in fact, "the lived perspectives of subcultural participants" are often lost in the dense political discourses of cultural studies (Cagle, 1989, p. 312), Gruneau and McGuigan's critiques require serious consideration for work that is concerned with understanding "real" resistance as it relates to social progress.

## 2.5 — Perspectives on Passive, Reactive and Socially Determined Youth

### 2.5.1 — American Sociology, Delinquency and "Reactive" Youth

Unlike the "proactive" youth depicted in British subcultural theory, American theorists tended to characterize youth as "reactive" to the dominant culture.[40] For example, Robert Merton's classic formulation "strain theory" explained how society's set of culturally approved standards and goals (the middle class "measuring stick") is not attainable for people from lower classes who do not have the occupational or educational opportunities.[41, 42] Merton argued that people respond to this situation or "innovate" by attempting to attain the economic means to "measure up" through criminal activity. The major problem with this theory, particularly as it related to youth, was that it failed to explain "random" deviance or delinquent behavior that has nothing to do with "stealing money" (e.g. breaking windows and running away) (Tanner, 1996).

Albert Cohen (1955) addressed these difficulties by synthesizing "differential association" (Sutherland, 1937) and "cultural transmission" (Shaw and McKay, 1942) theories with Merton's (1938) "strain" theory.[43] For Cohen, deviant youth subcultures develop when the struggle to attain middle class definitions of success are met with "status frustration" and "social strain," ultimately resulting in the communication of these frustrations with similar others, which in turn leads to the creation of an alternate value system within the group. This solution is "cultural because each actor's participation in the norms is influenced by his perception of the same norms in other actors" (A. Cohen, 1997, p. 51, originally written in 1955). Cohen explained this formulation of "subcultural solutions to status problems" in the following way:

Status problems are problems of achieving respect in the eyes of one's fellows. Our ability to achieve status depends upon the criterion of status applied by our fellows, that is, the standards or norms they go by in evaluating people. These criteria are an aspect of their cultural frames of reference. If we lack the characteristics or capacities which give status in terms of these criteria, we are beset with the most typical and yet distressing of human problems of adjustment. One solution is for individuals who share such problems to gravitate towards one another and jointly to establish new norms, new criteria of status which define as meritorious the characteristics they *do* possess, the kinds of conduct of which they are capable. It is clearly necessary for each participant, if the innovation is to solve his status problem, that these new criteria be shared with others, that the solution be a group and not a private solution ...Such new status criteria would represent new subcultural values different from or even antithetical to those of the larger social system (1997, p. 51).

Cloward and Ohlin (1960), while generally agreeing with this formulation (although their focus was more on the street and the workplace than school), argued that youth need more than deviant motivation — they also need opportunities to be part of deviant subcultures. They suggested that, depending on who lower class youth "have a chance" to interact with, they will end up becoming part of either: (a) "criminal" subcultures focused on material gain; (b) "conflict" subcultures focused on the application of violence in order to gain personal status and reputation; or (c) "the retreatist" subculture, organized around the possession and consumption of drugs (see McCarthy-Smith, 1991).

Although Cohen's (and Merton's and Cloward and Ohlin's) idea of a "reaction-formation," or "delinquent subcultural solution" was the basis for most youth subcultural theory that followed, there were notable flaws in this formulation. Miller (1958) argued that this theory *underestimated the connection between working class culture and deviant youth subcultures*, suggesting that Cohen wrongly assumed that middle class values are the standard by which working class youth (and society in general) measure success. On this basis, Miller saw working class youths' cultural activities to encompass values, concerns and behaviors similar to their parents' (and delinquency to be only intensified versions of these same values).

Tanner (1996) pointed out that *all of these theories failed to explain why there are considerable numbers of "adolescents who grow up in working-class neighbourhoods (but still) avoid serious subcultural involvements of any kind"* (p. 65). Miller's formulation was no different than Cohen's in this sense because "it does not matter whether group delinquency is a reaction to middle class culture (Cohen), or a continuation of working class cultural concerns (Miller), both approaches failed to explain the varied

responses of working class adolescents" (Tanner, 1996, p. 65). These concerns foreshadowed more contemporary developments (e.g., post-CCCS work) that focus on common, "unspectacular" forms of resistance in both working class and middle class youth cultures.[44]

David Matza's (1964, see also Matza and Sykes, 1961) theory of delinquency drift was in some ways a break from the other traditional American subcultural theories because of its emphasis on both the blending of conventional culture with deviant youth subculture, and the (relatively) free will of the actor (a contrast to the deterministic functionalist approaches of other American theorists). For Matza, delinquent youth are not committed to a deviant belief system. Delinquent behavior is a result of "drifting" into circumstances where this behavior "happens to occur," and is largely a matter of "bad timing."[45] However, Matza's framework still emphasized the impacts of social circumstances "on youth" and the *reactions* of youth to these circumstances, a view consistent with other American perspectives.

Overall, and while this account is not exhaustive, suffice to say here that the these approaches are generally understood for their interpretation of delinquent youth activity as a discrepancy between social goals and the opportunities to reach these goals, and for their characterization of a "reactive" youth (see Tanner (1996) for a comprehensive and insightful overview and critique of the American delinquency tradition).

### 2.5.2 – No Choices for Youth:  The Embodiment of Culture, Subcultural Distinctions and Socially Determined Youth

In a departure from the "reactive" youth depicted by the functionalist American theorists, Pierre Bourdieu (1984) viewed the consumer (youth consumer or otherwise) to be somewhat active *within very rigid structural boundaries*. Bourdieu theorized the relationship between individual "taste" (for example, in music, in food, in sport activities) and class position (social structure), and examined the ways that social differences are manifested in these tastes and the ways that variations in taste help reproduce class domination and subordination. Key terms in Bourdieu's "distinction" model were "economic capital" (income, wealth, spare time), "cultural capital" (family background, education, occupation) and "social capital" (connections, acquaintances, associates). These concepts were embedded in Bourdieu's notion of "habitus," which means a system of socially learned dispositions, attitudes, preferences, and activities that

are "internalized" by individuals, and that differentiate individuals according to their lifestyle preferences.

In this context, the process of reproduction of inequality occurs on a number of levels, as Featherstone

(1987) explained:[46]

> for Bourdieu taste in cultural goods functions as markers of social class and in *Distinction*
> [Bourdieu's book] Bourdieu seeks to map out the social field of different tastes in
> legitimated 'high' cultural practices (museum visits, concert going, reading) as well as taste
> in lifestyles and consumption preferences (including food, drink, clothes, cars, novels,
> newspapers, magazines, holidays, hobbies, sport, leisure pursuits)...the oppositions and
> relational determinations of taste, however, become clearer when the space of lifestyle is
> superimposed onto a map of the class/occupational structure whose basis is the volume and
> composition (economic or cultural) of capital that the groups possess (p. 57).

Sarah Thornton, in her recent book about youth in the English dance club culture/rave scene,[47]

adopted Bourdieu's conceptions of "taste" and "cultural capital" as a means to distinguish between the

"'hip' world of the dance crowd" and the "perpetually absent [and] denigrated other – the mainstream"

(1995, p. 5). In the world of club culture, the "hip" crowd (of youth) holds "*sub*culture capital" (e.g. social

status related to knowledge of and practice of the "acceptable" way to dance, talk, dress etc.) that is

"distinct" from the masses. According to Thornton (1995), subcultural capital is both objective and

embodied in the club scene:

> Subcultural capital is objectified in the form of fashionable haircuts and well-assembled record
> collections...subcultural capital is embodied in the form of being "in the know", using (but not
> overusing) current slang and looking as if you were born to perform the latest dance styles (pp. 11-
> 12).

Thornton suggested that the increasingly diverse media and commodity production of the late 80's

and early 90's, which were put to use in the club scene through micro, niche and mass media sources (e.g.,

to advertise dance parties),[48] are evidence of a culture that is incorporated into mainstream media and

commerce and whose authenticity is derived from (and NOT resistant to) commercial forces (1995, p. 165-

166). These forces apparently "create" a hierarchy of high and low (youth) cultures (akin to Bourdieu's

social class-based hierarchy of tastes).

Thornton emphasized the way that youth "clubbers"[49] reinforce and reproduce existing social norms

– struggling to acquire their "symbolic share" and maintain their "distinctive" character. She went on to

explain the broader implications of her distinction thesis:

> Youthful interest in distinction is not new. One could easily reinterpret the history of post-war youth cultures in terms of subcultural capital. In a contemporary context, however, dynamics of distinction are perhaps more obvious for at least two reasons. First, unlike the liberalizing sixties and seventies, the eighties were radical in their conservatism...unlike Young's hippies and Hebdige's punks, then, the youth of my research were, to cite the cliché, "Thatcher's children". Well versed in the virtues of competition, their cultural heroes came in the form of radical young entrepreneurs, starting up clubs and record labels, rather than politicians and poets of yesteryear (Thornton, 1995, p. 166, see also Thornton, 1993).

Thornton's point is that youth in the 60's and 70's celebrated "difference" as part of a politically motivated social movement (albeit a symbolic movement at times), while the "distinctions" sought by youth in today's "finely graded social structure" are ambiguous, and NOT progressive or resistant (symbolically or politically). Thornton argued that the negative media responses, considered a mark of resistance for previous youth cultures, actually confirm the hierarchical, "hip"[50] cultural status of the club culture by creating a "thrill of censorship," and therefore, "confirming transgression." Thornton's focus on the influence of the media and her understanding of the hierarchies of "hipness"/subcultural capital effectively reversed previous subcultural analyses that were overly focused on the sovereign, resistant youth consumer.

However, some critics argued that Thornton went too far and ultimately neglected the creativity and resistance that are part of any youths' negotiation of personal and historical circumstances, especially in political circumstances of 1980s and 1990s Britain. Slater (1996) supported this position in his critique of Thornton's work:

> These were times when anti-trade union laws, new laws on affray and trespass, the crackdown on football fans, and more lately the Criminal Justice Act demonstrated a 'tendency towards the prevention of sociability'...Just because ravers didn't express themselves in mainstream political terms cannot be used as a means to belittle the experience of coming together, especially in light of the growing constriction of social space (p. 3).

Moreover, Bourdieu's and Thornton's structuralist positions (that emphasized the power of the commodity *producer*) were correctly criticized for leaving "little or no room for the chance of radical social change" (Moores, 1993, p. 123). Jenkins (1992) was particularly dissatisfied with Bourdieu's "habitus" concept, suggesting that it is difficult "to imagine a place in Bourdieu's scheme of things for... the meaningful practices of social actors in their cultural context" (p. 82). Although Bourdieu's and Thornton's work at times went "too far," their sophisticated understanding of the cultural positioning of

consumers and the pre-determined character of individual "tastes" is crucial to this discussion of culture and consumption.

### 2.5.3 – The Frankfurt School and the Mass Culture Thesis: Youth as Passive "Cultural Dopes"

Horkheimer and Adorno, two of the most prominent Frankfurt School theorists[51] depicted individuals (youth or otherwise) with even less capacity for active thought than the "reactive" youth described by American delinquency theorists or the "somewhat determined" youth depicted by Bourdieu and Thornton. The Frankfurt School emphasized the ways that commodity producers indirectly but forcefully manipulate consumer desires (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972; Marcuse, 1964). Horkeheimer and Adorno (1972) saw ideology to operate within the "culture industry," the industry of technologies, commodities and entertainments that imposes wants and needs for material satisfaction on the "passive" consumer. In this process, industrialized, mechanized and standardized cultural products are given an individual character, which (ideologically) hides the reality of mass production, and, in turn, manipulates and subjugates the individual. Horkheimer and Adorno (1972) suggested that "in the culture industry the notion of genuine style is seen to be the aesthetic equivalent of domination" (pp. 129-130).

In this way, the culture industry creates a homogenous culture of "social dupes," who have been lulled into an uncritical acceptance of present conditions. Since the "concepts of order which it [the culture industry] hammers into people are always those of the status quo" (Adorno, 1991, p. 90), the masses are deceived into conformity and a loss of consciousness. This work filled a gap left by classical Marxism through its emphasis on the importance of culture in ideology, and the positioning of profit motives in cultural forms.[52] In relation to youth, Horkheimer and Adorno's framework would emphasize the ability of, for example, television programming, video games, and advertising to "dupe" youth into a passive existence driven by uncritical consumption.

Although Horkheimer and Adorno's ideas on homogeneity and non-identity are considered precursors to post-structuralism, there are important differences, as Poster (1989, p. 26) explained:

> [the] *Dialectic of Enlightenment* [Horkheimer and Adorno's project] is a product of disenchantment and despair with the universalizing values of reason...poststructuralists move a step beyond this negative reversal: the problem for poststructuralists is not that reason has "turned into" domination but that discourses are already implicated in power.

.

The mass culture thesis has been critiqued from both a culturalist and postmodern perspective. On one hand, culturalists argue that Horkheimer and Adorno did not adequately acknowledge the ability of youth (audiences) to actively and critically choose and assemble cultural resources in creative ways (Willis, 1990; Wilson & Sparks, 1996). On the other hand, postmodern critics such as Angus (1989, p. 99) asserted that Horkheimer and Adorno's work "must be reformulated to account for a new postmodern stage of mass culture." Angus (1989) argued that Horkheimer and Adorno[53] did not adequately capture the "simulation"[54] of authenticity in fully industrialized cultural production:

> Mechanical reproduction is not the same as technical production...when the cultural world is completely pervaded by "copies" without originals, it is impossible to regard them as copies any longer. We are faced with a plurality of images that are not simply identical but refer to each other. The many images of Mickey Mouse refer to each other, but we will not find the original at Disneyland, or at Disneyworld either. Even in the case of the supposed original, the self-referring set of images precedes it...the experience of originality is not declined, but *simlulated* (p. 102).

Moreover, in contemporary society, it appears that a cultural homogeneity due to uniform *production methods* (the mass culture thesis) "has been displaced by a diversity of cultural identities focused on *consumer choice*" (Angus, 1989, p. 101). These observations provide evidence for a new postmodern era of mass culture where the "plurality of image-sets sets the stage for 'authentic' experiences; commodities are produced for individuals who define themselves through their loss of difference from other consumption groups" (Angus, 1989, p. 101).[55]

Overall, and while Horkheimer and Adorno provided an extreme portrayal of the passive (youth) consumer (Modeski, 1986), their arguments are crucial reference points for more balanced analyses of the relationship between youth consumers and commodity culture (e.g., Wilson and Sparks, 1996).

### 2.6 – 'Privileging' Willis and Hebdige: A Theoretically and Methodologically Balanced Approach to Critical Youth Studies

The individual perspectives in this active-passive continuum that tend toward both the structuralist and culturalist positions are extremely rich and deserve specific *acknowledgment* in this comprehensive treatment of youth culture. Examined in this encompassing framework, it becomes evident that theories of youth subcultures are about both power relations and normative relations – that is to say, *about the underlying positioning of and fusion of hegemony and ideology*. With this said, it is also clear that some of

these approaches are too extreme to be useful in a balanced critical analysis. For example, the Frankfurt School's "mass culture thesis" does not account for the everyday activities of youth, while Bourdieu's deterministic model of distinctions and American functionalist depictions of "reactive" youth do not adequately demonstrate youth creativity or agency. Similarly, symbolic interactionist approaches cannot adequately theorize structure from an exclusively "micro" perspective.

Acknowledging the contributions of these perspectives, I argue that the post-CCCS perspectives of Hebidge and Willis, together, embody the potential for a powerfully diverse "culturalist-structuralist-poststructuralist" analysis. Willis "critical ethnographic approach" and Hebdige's semiotic analytic method are compatible and encompassing methods for attaining both "thick" descriptions of the everyday lives of youth, and for understanding the complex and contradictory aspects of cultural activity. These approaches satisfy this dissertation's concern with being critical, being attentive to the ways that everyday activity is both creative and constrained, and emphasizing social, geographical and historical context.

In arguing for a "post-CCCS" position instead of a CCCS approach, I am distinguishing between early formulations of resistance, which emphasized spectacular resistance, and more recent formulations that include more subtle forms of resistance. *However, I acknowledge that the postmodern circumstances of the 1990s and the related complexities surrounding and within (Canadian) cultural groups need to be directly accounted for in a way that these approaches are incapable – despite their commitment to historically located research.* This need for a (post-CCCS) perspective that is informed by postmodernism has been debated by Willis and others who suggest that postmodern positions do not adequately account for the everyday experiences of youth. The next chapter examines this debate about the utility of postmodern analysis in the study of youth culture in the 1990s and establishes the final theoretical position taken in this dissertation.

# CHAPTER 3 – BACK TO COMPLEXITY: INTEGRATING POSTMODERNISM INTO YOUTH CULTURAL STUDIES

The postmodernistically inclined violate basic notions of an intersubjective/ethnographic social science to the extent that they: (a) layer their agenda with secondary agendas such as emphasizing cultural (Marxist) studies...; (b) use ethnography as a basis for moralizing about...life worlds of the ethnographic other; (c) fail to respect the life-worlds...as instances of paramount reality in struggle for human existence, and treat these instead as meaningless, valueless fictions and myths; (d) ignore, reject, or try to circumvent firsthand observations and interviews with those whose life-worlds they are purporting to analyze; (e) argue that their 'deconstructions' of the life worlds of others are not less viable than the actual accounts of those whose life worlds they proport to analyze; (f) use their text to develop self-enchanting representations rather than attempt to represent the other in careful, thorough fashions; (g) exploit ethnography to shock, entertain, and dramatize human conditions...People engaging in these practices may define their works as postmodernist, artistic, expressive or in any other terms they desire, but if those in the broader academic community are to maintain a reasonably viable notion of a social science that attends to the study of human lived experience in a careful, thorough manner, then they ought not to feel obligated in any way to recognize this type of work as constituting "ethnographic research" or representing contributions to an intersubjective social science (Prus, 1996a, pp. 226, 227).

So Bob Dylan was prophetic. The times have changed; the old theories and the old methods no longer work the way they once did...we need new pragmatic ways of confronting this constantly changing, postmodern, postcolonial world (Denzin, 1996, p. 352).

The debates about the proposed integration of postmodern theory with cultural studies are plagued with defensive, intolerant and unbalanced arguments. While advocates of an integrated perspective have argued, for example, that "mainstream" perspectives (e.g., symbolic interactionism) are *incapable* of adequately theorizing cultural life in postmodern times (e.g., Denzin, 1993, 1992, 1989a, 1989b), those against a merger often point to postmodern theory's "over-emphasis" on textual production, and its *inability* to tap into the emergent, processual realities of everyday life (e.g., Dawson and Prus, 1995, 1993; Prus, 1996a). Underlying these debates are not only differences in perspectives, but also inconsistent definitions of postmodernism and cultural studies – two notoriously ambiguous concepts.

In this chapter, I attempt to present a balanced account of both positions while providing conditional support for the postmodern-cultural studies integration project in the context of youth cultural studies.[56] In taking this stance, I argue that *aspects of the postmodern theory*, when integrated with the post-CCCS approaches "privileged" in the previous chapter are not only useful but necessary amendments if progressive and historically informed understanding of youth culture in the 1990s are to be attained. This

examination and proposal is developed in four parts. First, definitions of postmodernism and cultural studies are provided along with a brief discussion of the relationship between these concepts. Second, the postmodern integration project is discussed and evaluated. The focus of this section is on the 'postmodernism-cultural studies integration', although at times this debate is inseparable from the 'postmodernism-symbolic interactionism' debates. Third, two prevalent approaches to the study of youth in postmodern times are described and critically evaluated – Angela McRobbie's "optimistic" (neo)marxist-based postmodernism and Steve Redhead's (and the Manchester Institute of Popular Culture's) "ambivalent" (post)marxist-based postmodernism. Lastly, a proposal for a post-CCCS approach to the study of youth culture that is informed by postmodern theory is outlined and some final amendments and considerations are discussed.

### 3.1 – Postmodernism and Cultural Studies: Definitions and Debates

Although vague definitions of "postmodernism" and "cultural studies" have plagued both fields (see Chen, 1991; Harvey, 1989), by establishing working definitions for these concepts and suggesting how these perspectives can be usefully integrated, a progressive and informed departure point can be established for this study of youth culture. On one hand then, the term postmodernism relates to: an artistic style (e.g., an architectural form); an epoch (social life in the late capitalist, globalized, 1990s); a method (e.g., a subjectivist, multitextual, critical method); and, more generally, to a social theory (Rail, 1998). A succinct depiction of postmodern social theory (which, in part, describes the postmodern epoch) was provided by Hebdige, who identified three categories that encompass the central tenets of postmodern theory: a) *against totalisation* – referring to the "crisis of representation" and the problems associated with individuals or political parties speaking for a diverse "social group"[57]; b) *against teleology* – referring to a skepticism about the idea of "decidable origins/causes" (Hebdige uses Baudrillard's work on the elevated signifier/disappearing signified in the order of the *simulcra*[58] as an example); and c) *against Utopia* (similar to against teleology) – referring to a postmodern skepticism of any "collective destination, global framework of prediction" and also to a "refusal of progress" (Hebdige, 1988, p. 196).[59] More specifically, postmodern social theorists attempt to explain the domination of global information technologies and the related "blurring" of conventional boundaries such as race, gender, politics and nationalism. Others have

argued that mass mediated symbols and images have become "better than reality" (e.g., mass media portrayals of idealized lifestyles and products replace "first-hand" experiences and understandings) – what Baudrillard (1983b) has termed "hyper-reality." Denzin (1990, drawing on Althusser, 1971) argued that in this postmodern world, individuals can never "measure up" to these mass-mediated images:

> in the postmodern system, human being constantly confront pressures to become ideological constructions, or subjects who have particular needs, desires, feelings and beliefs which conform to the new conservative political ideologies concerning health, the body and its desires (Denzin, 1990, p. 146).

Cultural studies, on the other hand, is an interdisciplinary movement that, at times, encompasses postmodern concerns. The focus of cultural studies is on the production of cultural meanings, textual analysis of these meanings, and the (critical) study of lived cultures as they relate to these meanings. As outlined in chapter 2, this dissertation focuses on *Marxist* cultural studies – a version that emerged in early British work by Raymond Williams (1965) and E.P. Thompson (1968) and was later embraced and developed at the CCCS in studies of youth culture.

Despite the apparent overlap of postmodernism and Marxist cultural studies, debates have raged about their compatibility for sociological analysis. Grossberg (1996) explained this ambiguous relationship:

> Both cultural studies and postmodern theory are concerned with the place of cultural practices in historical formations and political struggles. But marxists are often reluctant to acknowledge the historical differences that constitute everyday life in the contemporary world and too often ignore the taunting playfulness and affective extremism (terrorism?) of postmodernists, while postmodernists are often too willing to retreat from the theoretical and critical ground that marxism has won with notions of articulation, hegemony and struggle (p. 164).

### 3.2 – The Case Against Postmodern Integration

The idea of integrating neo/post-Marxist cultural studies perspectives with postmodern theory has been vehemently resisted and criticized from various perspectives. Culturalists such as Willis (1990) suggest that it has become "fashionable" in postmodern debates to claim that the connection between signs and what they signify have been broken, that "symbols and symbolic communications do not connect with anything real and that realities cannot be spoken about" (p. 133). Willis rejected the tenets of postmodernism, especially those held by "the high priest of post-modernism, Jean Baudrillard" (1990, p.

152), suggesting that "broken connections" do not logically require that "meaning" can no longer be taken from cultural materials.[60] Willis (1990) went on to explain that:

> Current notions of 'post-modernism' seem singularly ill-equipped to catch [the] potentials of everyday cultural response and symbolic production in cultural modernization. Postmodernism has declared as defunct precisely those modernizing forces which continue to engulf and revolutionize modern ways of everyday life in ever heightened ways...Common culture is not (as 'post-modern' culture is held to be) chaotic or meaningless even it is meaningless and baffling to outside formal eyes. (p. 139)

Willis argued that in youth cultural studies, more attention must be paid to the creative uses of cultural resources by youth, something that, according to Willis, postmodernism is unable to do.

Similarly, a criticism often made by symbolic interactionist theorists is that postmodernists seldom acknowledge that "not everybody lives in a postmodern world," and that existing proposals for a postmodern integration project might be, at times, too extreme. Plummer (1990) encapsulated this position in his critique of Denzin's (1988) argument for integrating postmodernism and symbolic interactionism:

> [There is] an important distinction between postmodernist thought and postmodernity itself, between a theory and a method, and a newly evolving empirical social world...The former [postmodernist thought] has been around for most of this century; emerging through semiology and popularized substantively through architecture and art, its intellectual foundations have much affinity with interactionism. In looking at life stories, it encourages a method which deconstructs, decenters and destabilizes the life, suggesting the complex links between reader, text and producer...Denzin clearly recognizes all these exciting affinities, and wants to clarify and extend such connections. So do I. *But I am...much more cautious than Denzin...We are post history, post epistemology, post politics, post Fordist, post everything! I am afraid I cannot go for that. A more cautious approach is needed, at least until such times as the postmodernist approach is needed* (emphasis added) (Plummer, 1990, p. 157).

Although structural theorists emphasize constraints to human creativity, a position that is in contrast with the symbolic interactionist critiques noted above, they also have been critical of postmodernism.[61] Baudrillard's work in particular, and his proclaimed "end of the real" has met resistance from authors such as Morris (1988), who argued that Baudrillard is "absorbed by the mystery of correspondences between discourse and the world" (p. 191), and Smart (1992) who stated:

> One might well ask of Baudrillard 'when was the real?' Before the advent of electronic simulation? Surely not, for then there was already mechanical reproduction. Even if we move further back to the first order (of the simulcra) constituted by Baudrillard, that of the 'original' and the counterfeit', we encounter problems, for we remain in an environment of language, words, and speech...in brief, Baudrillard's 'real' has always lacked a clear referent and in consequence it has continually constituted a dilemma (p. 139).

Similar critiques have been lodged by Marxists (Jameson, 1984; Harvey, 1989) who suggest that

"postmodernism" is actually part of the logic of late capitalism – not "the end of history," and New Times

theorists (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) who have been critical of postmodernism's lack of concern with the

individual's *experience* with objects and commodities (see McRobbie, 1994e for an examination of these

critiques).

### 3.3 – The Case For Postmodern Integration

*3.3.1 – Denzin's Interpretive Interactionism: Making A Difference in Postmodern Conditions*

In response to these critiques, postmodern theorists have argued that there is a need to be sensitive to

(radically) changing social circumstances at the end of the century. Denzin, drawing on Mills' (1959, p.

165) classic maxim that "all classic social scientists have been concerned with the salient characteristics of

their time," argued that if mainstream theories are to develop in ways that adequately account for the

culture and politics of a postmodern world, postmodern theories must be considered. On this basis, Denzin

(1989a) proposed an "interpretive interactionist" approach that attempts to link:

> classic interactionist thought, with participant observation and ethnography, semiotics and
> fieldwork, postmodern ethnographic research, naturalistic studies, creative interviewing, the case
> study method, the interpretive, hermeneutic, phenomenological works of Heidegger and Gadamer,
> the cultural studies approach of Hall and recent feminist critiques of positivism (pp. 7-8).[62]

Two contributions deriving from Denzin's project require specific consideration here. First,

Denzin (1989a) showed how this critical interpretivist position (akin to Willis' critical interactionism) must

be understood in a *postmodern historical context*, which he described as follows:

> The postmodern age is one in which advertising, the mass media...and the computer have gained
> ever greater control over human lives and experience...an age in which problematic experiences
> are given meaning in the media. Social objects have become commodities. Human experience
> and social relationships have also become commodities, as anyone who scans the travel sections of
> the Sunday newspaper...can quickly confirm. Interpretive interactionism in the postmodern
> period is committed to understanding how this historical moment universalizes itself in the lives of
> interacting individuals (pp. 138-139)

Second, Denzin theorized a critical postmodern approach that *that makes a difference*:

> Theoretically, (the roots of a critical interactionist perspective) will extend into critical, feminist
> traditions that presently exist in the human disciplines. These roots will be anchored in the
> bedrock worlds of material existence that shape human consciousness. At the level of practice,
> this perspective will...(work) at the level of political resistance...Such efforts should help to
> construct a politically critical interactionism which would make a difference. It is not sufficient,
> as Marx argued so many times, to just understand the world; the key is to change it...If the

dramaturgical, postmodern society is to be unraveled and made more humane, then the masks we all wear must be pulled off. This is what critical interactionism aims to do (Denzin, 1992, p. 167).

The position taken in this dissertation is that Denzin's call for a theory of interpretation that is political, critical, and historically located (in a postmodern world), and for a more flexible position on methodology *are both useful amendments to more descriptive analytic approaches and to neo-Marxist positions* — not "fashionable" movements toward contemporary European theory and method, as some critics suggest. Times have changed, and although postmodern theory does present some problems, an updated, integrated approach is not as radical or impractical as some critics would have us believe (see Andrews (1998a, 1998b) argument presented in the next section).

### 3.3.2 — Postmodernizing Hall, Stabilizing Postmodernism: Articulation, wild realism, and desire

Unlike Denzin's "catch-all" framework of sociological analysis (which was built from symbolic interactionist principles), Grossberg (1996) proposed a more specific theoretical integration of Hall's (1980a) cultural studies based notion of "articulation" with postmodernism's "wild realism" — suggesting that the articulation concept can usefully theorize the relations between different levels of abstraction (*including* an ideological level), while "wild realism" recognizes that "discursive fields" ("hidden" ideological discourses) are organized affectively as well as ideologically (Grossberg, 1984; 1996). Put another way:

> Postmodernism's lack of a theory of articulation results in the flatness...of its analysis...In cultural studies, no articulation is ever complete or final...This is the condition of possibility of its dialectic of struggle... Speaking metaphorically, a theory of articulation augments vertical complexity while a theory of wild realism augments horizontal complexity (Grossberg, 1996, p. 171)

Central to this formulation is Grossberg's (1997) understanding of the term "affect" — a term he connected with the "emotive" aspects of Stuart Hall's (1960) classic argument that "the task of socialism is to meet the people where they are — where they are touched, bitten, moved, frustrated, [and] nauseated" (p. 1).

Elsewhere, Grossberg (1997, see also Deleuze and Guattari, 1977) defined "affect" as:

> the plane on which any individual...is empowered to act in particular ways at particular places. Affect is...the observable differences in how practices matter to, or are taken up by, different configurations of popular discourses and practices – different alliances...Affect is both psychic and material [and on this basis] I am interested in the various ways popular discourses can empower and disempower specific groups and practices, in the ways different cultural alliances operate in and produce different 'mattering maps' (pp. 228-229).[63]

Chen (1996) expanded Grossberg's version of affectivity while emphasizing the importance of

considering postmodernist notions of "power" and "desire" along with cultural studies positions on politics:

> [Grossberg's] theorizing practices revolve *around* the space of the affective...[however], he has
> yet to pinpoint the working 'principles', or what I call the inner logics of the affective...Here,
> then, is where cultural studies can take off from postmodernism. Power as relations of forces, the
> immanent logics of desiring production and the effects of symbolic seduction and fascination may
> precisely articulate and historicize such inner mechanisms of the affective economy...With
> Foucault, one has to realize that just as domination is always present, resistance is always possible.
> With Deleuze and Guattari, one has to learn there is always a danger of sliding from...democracy
> to fascism. With Baudrillard, one has to be sensitive to the changing historical conditions which
> shift the dominant (affective) logic of hot seduction to that of (cold) fascination...from the mood
> of explosion (of a rock concert) to implosion (of MTV). What postmodernism has to learn from
> cultural studies is to localize the inner logics of the affective, or to sociologize the inner working
> logics within specific groups...In underlining the 'fluid' nature of micropolitics, postmodernism
> ought not to abandon but rather ought to incorporate specific, local politics of gender, race and
> class (1996, p. 315).

As well as developing and sociologizing Grossberg's notion of affectivity, Chen argued that "postmodern

cultural studies" should not be framed as an "either/or" position, suggesting instead that both the

"ideological, signifying and representational" (cultural studies) and the "discursive, asignifying, and

affective" (postmodernism) all require consideration, but on different levels. This is a more sophisticated

and theoretically specific case for integration than the "multiperspectival approach" argument presented in

the previous chapter – although both positions are valuable and convincing on different levels.

Finally, in order to advance to an integrated theory that usefully integrates Hall's articulation and

Baudrillard's hyperreality (and moreover, to respond to the postmodern critics), it is crucial to emphasize

that Baudrillard's work, and proclaimed "end of the real" should not be read literally and should be read in

the context of his metaphysical theoretical (non-sociological theoretical approach). As Andrews (1998a)

explained, reacting to the "reactionary critiques" made by Bauman (1992), Callinicos (1990) and Clarke

(1991):

> Baudrillard's metaphysical sojourns into postmodern culture are purposefully constructed like
> vertiginous and metaphorical thought games, as opposed to empirically grounded and structured
> examples of modernist social theorizing. Despite the intriguing results of his innovative approach,
> Baudrillard's metaphysics are vulnerable to the charge of self-indulgent, un-grounded, and under-
> theorized descriptive narratives...[However], while Baudrillard's playful hypertonology
> overstated the importance of hyperreality, it seems equally troubling to deny any relationship
> between the hyperreal and the real...Within the postmodern mediascape, the consumption of
> hyperreal images can and does have real effects; images, visual texts, and signs continually shape
> people's everyday relations and identities. As a consequence, it is necessary to deessentialize both

Baudrillard's hypermetaphysical discourse, and the reactionary critiques fabricated around an intentionally literal, and hence ultimately futile, reading of his project (Andrews, 1998a, pp. 189, 190, see also Andrews, 1998b)

The crucial problem deriving from discussions about and arguments for the compatibility and utility of these diverse approaches as it relates to this dissertation is 'how neo-Marxist conceptions of ideology, resistance and reality can be usefully integrated with postmodernism's emphasis on relativity and plurality'. While this issue has been partially resolved in the above arguments for a multiperspectival "postmodern cultural studies" as it relates to the notion of affectivity, what is requires is a more succinct statement about the ways that power relations are played out in social contexts. This dissertation adopts Andrews' succinct and balanced position that espouses the benefits of "historicizing and localizing" Baudrillard's "indeterminate logic of symbolic seduction." Andrews (1998a, building on Grossberg, 1989) outlined his stance in the following way:

> While cultural studies can benefit from postmodernism's recognition of the non-signifying vector of effects that can determine the conjunctural articulation of cultural practices, Baudrillard's cybernetic determinism similarly needs to recognize and confront the multiplicity of determinate relations and effects that map the conjuncturally contingent social formation. Baudrillard conflated postmodern existence as being cybernetically determined by indeterminate hyperreal simulations. A conjuncturalist postmodern cultural studies, whilst never denying a sense of determinacy, would adhere to a more diverse, and substantively contextualized theory of determination...This approach represents a bridge between the overt ideologism of Hall's articulation theory and Baudrillard's theory of cybernetic seduction. Such a postmodern cultural studies involves the historicizing and localizing of Baudrillard's affective, but indeterminate, logic of symbolic seduction. According to this hybrid schema, the articulation of cultural practices, which determine the limits and possibilities of social existence (the potential for human agency), is a product of the complex relationship between conjuncturally specific ideological, political, economic, cultural, and affective vectors of effect: which are increasingly, but not always, communicated through the electronic media (Andrews, 1998a, p. 194).

In essence, this integrated theory of "postmodern cultural studies" endorses a *contextualized ideology* (as opposed to the end of ideology/reality/resistance*), an ideology that leaves room for neo-Marxist notions of agency/resistance and a context that acknowledges the importance of and social impacts of postmodern developments*. This position is an implicit rationale for the continued examination and evaluation of resistance theory in a framework of power relations that is relatively anchored in a reasonably defined postmodern world that tends toward (but is not encompassed by) issues of relativity and difference. In this sense, cultural studies and postmodern theories can be understood for compatibility in a way transcends the more straightforward (and less integrated) multiperspectival approach.

### 3.3.3 — Critical Ethnography and Postmodern Methods

The integration of critical and postmodern *methods* have also been addressed in recent symbolic

interactionist journals and related books (particularly, Denzin and Lincoln, 1994), although these

publications are seldom clear about what postmodern methods can add to mainstream ethnographic

approaches (instead focusing on why mainstream approaches are inadequate). Fontana (1994, 1993, see

also Dickens and Fontana, 1996, 1994), however, has provided a succinct outline of the postmodern

ethnographic project and clarified how the postmodern approach is, for her, an integrated perspective that

simply emphasizes different aspects of the research and analysis process (but does not *necessarily* exclude

or criticize other methods). She explained this approach as follows:

> first, postmodern fieldwork emphasizes the problematic status of the ethnographer as the
> subjective author of ethnographic accounts. This type of fieldwork relies on the heightened
> awareness of problems in the field but still bases its observations on everyday data gathered from
> the "natives"...second, multitextual ethnographies, make the object of "everyday life" to
> encompass films, television, fiction, dreams, and other types of data not commonly included by
> traditional ethnographers as part of their field inquiry...third, feminist ethnographies, focus on the
> elimination of paternalistic biases in ethnography and sociology (Fontana, 1994, p. 213-214).

On this basis, Fontana argued that the researcher's interpretations of "the words and deeds of his or her

ethnographic subjects" has been a concern of ethnographers from various perspectives for years (see

Clifford and Marcus, 1986 for an overview), but for the postmodern ethnographers it is the central concern.

Postmodern ethnography "does not imply the impossibility of representation, but rather a heightened

sensitivity to it", or, put another way, "the phrase 'crisis of representation' does not mean the impossibility

or 'death' of representation...rather it refers to the notion that representation in ethnography is more

problematic than conventional ethnographers have recognized, or admitted in public" (Dickens and

Fontana, 1996, p. 187). This is an optimistic, progressive, and useful view of the postmodernist

methodological project that complements the critical angle produced by cultural studies ethnographers like

Willis.[64]

### 3.4 — Evaluating the Postmodernism Integration Debates

In a mundane way, these debates consistently entail symbolic interactionists dismissing

postmodern/cultural studies related theory and method because of its lack of grounding in lived experience

(Best, 1995; Faberman, 1991; Dawson and Prus, 1995, 1993, Maines, 1996, Prus, 1996a; Saunders,

1995), and a response by a postmodern/cultural studies supporter that: (a) clarifies how the postmodernist

project has been misunderstood, (b) shows how postmodernism and interactionism are similar, (c) argues

that an integrated perspective can make substantial contributions, (d) wonders why interactionist theorists

are so defensive about cultural studies and postmodernism adopting and revising interpretivist theory and

methods (e.g., Clough, 1992; Denzin, 1996; Dickens and Fontana, 1996; Fee, 1992).

In defense of the integration critics, cultural studies and postmodernism have suffered from

ongoing "identity crises," a problem that accounts for the limited support for the integration of these

theories with each other and with symbolic interactionism (Wilson, 1999, forthcoming).[65] However, and

despite existing ambiguities and disagreements about definitions, there are several moments of clarity in

this integration project, and to generalize and dismiss postmodernism because 'all postmodern thought is

textual or linguistic idealism', or because 'postmodernist ethnography is relativist, and therefore,

meaningless', is irresponsible. If what Dawson and Prus (1995, 1993) have contended about

postmodernism was unconditionally accurate, their argument would be convincing (e.g., if their critique

was only of, for example, Baudrillard's (1988c) wild ethnographic adventure in *America*). However, the

position represented by these critiques is overly pessimistic. The stance taken in this dissertation is that

Paul Willis' critical interactionist approach and Denzin's interpretive interactionism (which extends

Willis's work into postmodern times while rationalizing a semiotic analysis reminiscent of Hebdige) are

progressive expansions of the interactionist approach into cultural studies,[66] while Grossberg, Denzin,

Chen, Andrews, and Fontana provide useful and progressive links between postmodernism and cultural

studies concepts and methods.

### 3.5 — Postmodern Perspectives on Youth Culture: McRobbie's (optimistic) neo-Marxist Postmodernism and the MIPC's (ambivalent) post-Marxist Postmodernism

In the youth studies literature, attempts to understand youth cultural activity in postmodern times have

reflected the various interpretations of the postmodern project. Work by Angela McRobbie and Steve

Redhead represent the most prominent readings of postmodern youth culture. On one hand, McRobbie

(1994e), in focusing on the resistive and creative capacities of youth in postmodern contexts, maintained an

optimistic link with post-CCCS Marxism. On the other, Redhead and certain other theorists working out of

the Manchester Institute for Popular Culture (MIPC) in the early 1990s were concerned with both the

optimistic aspects of postmodernism and the more restrictive, oppressive, and chaotic side of youth activity

in a postmodern world. In this section, these positions are examined for their distinct positionings outside

the conventional "structure-agency" continuum, and are critically assessed for their contributions to the

"privileged" post-CCCS approach and to the broader study of youth culture in the 1990s.

### 3.6 – Angela McRobbie, Youth and Postmodernism

*3.6.1 – Implosion, Informationalism and Consumption in a Postmodern Context*

In the introduction to her book *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*, McRobbie optimistically described

the value of postmodern analysis for the study of popular culture and youth, providing an answer to Willis'

(1990) criticisms cited earlier in this paper:

> I suggest that the superficial does not necessarily represent a decline into
> meaninglessness or valuelessness in culture. Analysis of the so-called trivial should not
> remain at the level of the semiotic reading. In this sense postmodernism...[allows]
> cultural critics to shift their gaze away from the search for meaning in the text towards
> the sociological play between images and between different cultural forms and
> institutions (1994, p. 4).

In essence, McRobbie argued that understanding social life in a postmodern context requires sensitivity to

both the characteristics of a postmodern world (the various methods that are required to study this world)

and the lived experiences of people in this world. For McRobbie, this does not require scholars to "give

up" looking for meaning, as some critics suggest. On the contrary, it requires scholars to be concerned with

how the superficial, trivial and multitextual nature of the postmodern world can be understood

sociologically – or put another way, it requires an understanding of the impacts of postmodern conditions

on youths' lives.

Elaborating on this claim, McRobbie clarified her depiction of the postmodern context and her

view that postmodern conditions are unavoidable for youth (and for this reason, unavoidable for those who

study youth). Underlying this argument is McRobbie's emphasis on the postmodern context of media

consumption and the impacts of social and media "implosions" that characterize 1980's and 1990's culture:

> the mass media continues to capture new outlets, creating fresh markets to absorb the high tech
> communities. Symbolically the image has assumed a contemporary dominance. It is no longer
> possible to talk about the image and reality, media and society. Instead of referring to the real

world much media output devotes itself to referring to other images, other narratives. Self-referentiality is all-embracing, although it is rarely taken account of (McRobbie, 1994e, p. 17).

This view of the "implosion" as a totalizing, all-immersing process resulting from "an outburst of energy which is none the less controlled and inclining inwards," that results in a loss of transcendental space between the subject and object, seeing and seen, cause and effect (McRobbie, 1994e, p. 21) builds on Baudrillard's original argument that:

> nothing separates one pole from another, the initial form from the terminal: there is just a sort of contradiction into each other, a fantastic telescoping, a collapsing of the two traditional poles into one another: an IMPLOSION -- an absorption of the radiating model of causality, of the differential mode of determination, with its positive and negative electricity -- an implosion of meaning (1983a, p. 57).

McRobbie amended Baudrillard's conception, suggesting that a "shattered implosion" would better account for the "new associations and resistance which have come into prominence by way of these processes in the last fifteen years" (McRobbie, 1994, p. 21). To illustrate her point, McRobbie used the example of youth involvement in the creation of "an egalitarian avante garde," referring to the black urban culture's "assertive resembling of bits and pieces... noises, debris, technology, tape image, rapping, scratching and hand-me-downs" (McRobbie, 1994e, p. 22). McRobbie also applied this concept in her work on the rise of second hand clothing, suggesting that the implosionary effect of the mass media have lead to an "instantaneity" of youth style and fashion trends that replaced the "old period of subcultural incubation" (1994c, p. 146), or put another way, the implosion concept helped explain not only the rapid movement of styles from "underground" and alternative status to "popular," but also the uncertainty and ambiguity surrounding this status.

McRobbie (1991b) examined 'lived experiences in a mass-mediated postmodern world' in her study of young females' reactions to popular teen magazines. Her focus was on the intricacies of empowerment in the reading practices of girls, as she explained:[67]

> they (the girls) display a pleasure in seeing the rules of the narrative operate the way they are supposed to. The happy ending provides the girls with an expected pleasure and thus fulfills their expectation of enjoyable reading. At the same time their reading routines vary enormously according to time, place and other available activities. They flick through *Jackie*, they read it in segments, they read it voraciously to cut off from the family noise around them, and they read the same issue again when they have nothing to do. *Jackie* makes sense to them as a weekly ritual. It punctuates the end of the week and thus creates a feeling of security. This is reinforced by its repetitions and its continuity. The stories seem

to go on forever and the features which are the same over the years fulfill this function of reassuring sameness (p. 142).

For McRobbie (1991b), the girls' fragmented reading practices, the girls' ability to tune in and out of various media modes simultaneously and the girls' familiarity with the narrative codes against which magazine features are measured for success and failure can be best understood by locating these competencies within a multi-media universe akin to the one Baudrillard has depicted:

> we no longer partake of the drama of alienation, but are in the ecstasy of communication. And this ecstasy is obscene. Obscene is that which eliminates the gaze, the image and every representation....there is a pornography of information and communication....it is no longer the obscenity of the hidden, the repressed, the obscure, but that of the visible, the all-too-visible, the more-visible-than-visible; it is the obscenity of that which no longer contains a secret and is entirely soluble in information and communication (Baudrillard, 1988b, p. 22).

Similarly, McRobbie observed that the "glossie," attractive and everpresent youth magazines and their "garish, multicolour layout(s)" promise an ecstasy of communication that disguises a deeper logic of consumerism. McRobbie concluded her analysis by suggesting that contemporary girls' magazines are "an almost perfect microcosm of postmodern values including the dominance of the visual text over the written text, retro dress, joky tones, a love of the swift and slick fast-turnover images of pop consumerism, pastiche, and an overwhelming emphasis on 'informationalism'" (McRobbie, 1991b, p. 184).

McRobbie has continued to emphasize the implications of a hyperreal, multi-mediated environment in her recent work on the "moral panics" and youth culture (McRobbie and Thornton, 1995; McRobbie, 1994b), youth fashion (McRobbie, 1994c), and youth dance (McRobbie, 1993, 1991c). In all cases, McRobbie reinforced the need to *rethink traditional models of consumption in favour of a theory that accounts for diverse forms of media and the "complex realm of reception"* that encompasses readers, viewers, listeners and various social groups.

Building on this argument, McRobbie suggested that Lyotard's (1984) postmodern wariness about the "big pictures" of progress (meta-narratives) evident in Marxist thought and other foundational sociological perspectives should 'keep us attentive' to the assumptions which underlie and shape social theory while alerting us to "what exactly is being excluded from or included in the fields of knowledge which are now part of the information landscape of contemporary culture" (McRobbie, 1994e, p. 5).[68] *In this way, the postmodern project (when integrated with cultural studies concerns about social difference)*

*"forces" uncertainty onto the research agenda and allows researchers to conceptualize the "multiple*

*[instead of monolithic] realities of social insecurity."* For McRobbie, a feminist researcher, it allows and

encourages a "respect for a difference" that "includes the experiences of young women, for whom

feminism...is not necessarily the political space they use" (McRobbie, 1994e, p. 9).

### 3.6.2 – Pleasure and Escape in the Postmodern 'Rave' World

McRobbie (1993) used the rave subculture (also known as the "acid house" subculture) as a case study to

demonstrate both the intricacies and characteristics of a postmodern subculture and youth reactions to the

broader postmodern circumstances. Specifically, McRobbie outlined the importance of "pleasure" and

"escape" as concepts to explain the contemporary "rave" youth subculture while arguing that rave culture

appears to defy conventional (neo-marxist) analysis and thus "overturns many of the expectations and

assumptions we might have about youth subcultures"(McRobbie, 1993, p. 418). On this basis, McRobbie

highlighted the significance of (and the difficulties of) a postmodern cultural politics, and the shortcomings

of "big picture" theories of progression (again, building on Lyotard):

> it reminds us of the dangers of looking for linear development or 'progression' in, let us say, the
> sexual politics of youth...it is precisely the unexpected social relations and cultural practices which
> give the subculture its distinctive character. For example, just at the point at which class has
> receded as the conceptual key for understanding what subcultures are really about, and as the
> questions of race, gender and cultural and aesthetic practice have come to the forefront, suddenly
> there appears from some unspecified site in the symbolic landscape, a subculture which rescues
> working-class youth from the distant memories of sociologists...there is an ever increasing
> atmosphere of unity, of dissolving difference (McRobbie, 1993, p. 418).

In this way, the rave was shown to exemplify the contradictions and problems associated with discussing a

cultural politics of youth in the 1990's. Although McRobbie's analysis reinforced the need to view young

people as active negotiators and producers of culture, she admitted that youth, as an unstable and diverse

category, are difficult to locate in a cultural politics that is, by definition, unified.

In other instances not pursued here, McRobbie implicitly alluded to the Baudrillardian (1975)

notion of "excess"[69] (the "excessive masquerade" of unemployed drifters (1994c, p. 152)), to Jameson's

"gloomy prognosis of the postmodern condition" in the style of nostalgia (the consumption of "outdated

styles" from past subcultures (McRobbie, 1994c, p. 147)) and to the "hyperreality" of girls' magazines

(celebrity portrayals that reinforce a "culture of narcissism") (McRobbie, 1991b, p. 144). Although

McRobbie offers simplified, user-friendly and optimistic versions[70] of the more in-depth theoretical work

outlined earlier (e.g., Grossberg's and Chen's work), her contributions should not be underestimated. Not

only has McRobbie usefully employed postmodernism into youth culture literature, but she did so in a way

that effectively maintained links with neo-Marxism and with grounded interactionist views on the

interpretive process (although her more recent work only touches on these interactionist issues).

Specifically, McRobbie effectively linked the "wild style" of cultural studies and postmodern analysis with

the "material steadfastness" of ethnographic research as part of her "new sociology of youth" (McRobbie,

1994e, p. 194) – a suggestion akin to both Denzin's interpretive interactionism and Grossberg's

articulation-wild realism integration.

### 3.7 – The Manchester Institute for Popular Culture: From Subculture to Clubculture

Recent work on youth culture out of the Manchester Institute for Popular Culture (MIPC), particularly

Redhead's (1997b) edited book The Clubcultures Reader (a compilation of essays by various authors

affiliated with the MIPC) and his single-authored book Subcultures to Clubcultures (1997a), is

characterized by an oscillation between somewhat pessimistic adaptations of Baudrillard's work and more

optimistic (post-Marxist) adaptations of Foucault's work (positions akin to McRobbie's).[71] This section

outlines the prominent trends that emerged from this Institute, with a focus on Redhead's depictions of a

postmodern youth culture and "postmodern world," and on the Institute's approaches to resistance, style,

regulation, pleasure and space in the postmodern 1990s and beyond (drawing on works by Best,

Muggleton, Stanley, and Redhead).

### 3.7.1 – Post-Punk Youth in a Postmodern World – Celebration and Pessimism at the MIPC

> What I proclaimed as 'Popular Cultural Studies'...builds on the rich legacy of Contemporary
> Cultural Studies – and especially the 'Birmingham School' – but also repairs some of the
> theoretical, political and methodological problems generated by that previous body of work.
> Specifically, the notion of 'subculture'...is seen to be no longer appropriate – if indeed it ever
> was...to explain pop music culture's developments since the publication of Hebdige's major book
> in 1979. The late 1970s and the early 1980s marked the start of an extended free-market
> experiment in New Right government in the UK, the USA and many other countries, which forms
> the political, economic and cultural conditions for what some writers have called
> 'clubcultures'...If the moment of 'subculture' was the punk spirit of 1976, the moment of
> clubcultures was probably 1988 – the second 'summer of love' [the origins of rave culture]
> (Redhead, 1997a, pp. ix-x)

Redhead's and Stanley's work, in particular, emphasized the impacts of the reconfiguration of time, space

and technology (e.g. "a speeding up of time between points of authenticity' and 'manufacture'" (Stanley,

1997, p. 45)) on youth cultures.[72] These scholars theorized an increasingly postmodern, post-punk, post-

youth time period and world characterized by a "loss of meaning" (e.g. a loss of resistance), nostalgia (e.g.

a return to music/clothing styles of the past), and unoriginality.

It was these trends that inspired Redhead (1990) to proclaim "the end of youth culture" (i.e., the

end of the "subcultural resistance" model), and to argue for a movement from Hebdige's and the CCCS's

conception of "subculture" to a radically updated notion of "clubculture" (Redhead, 1997a, 1997b).

Redhead (1991, quoted in Stanley, 1997, p. 45) outlined this movement from neo-Marxist models to a

postmodern (pseudo-Baudrillardian) model in the following way:

> Previous theories of postwar popular music, youth culture and deviance...have tended to look
> beneath or behind the surfaces of the shimmering mediascape in order to discover the 'real',
> authentic subculture, apparently always distorted by the manufactured press and television image,
> which in turn becomes 'real' as more and more participants act out media stereotypes. This 'depth
> model' is no longer appropriate – if it ever was – for analyzing the surfaces of the (post)modern
> world, a culture characterized by shallowness, flatness and 'hyperreality.'

It is crucial to note that Redhead refused to go as far as Baudrillard, instead arguing that 'the social

has not disappeared' and that Baudrillard's notion of "passive resistance" is not only false, but potentially

dangerous:

> Baudrillard argues that the relationship of the 'masses' to the media has changed so that the
> masses fail to respond, other than passively, to the media messages. This radical subversion of the
> social for Baudrillard is a cause for celebration, since it is a way of seeing the masses playing,
> jokily, with the media. But...it is politically debilitating to engage in this kind of brinkmanship
> since this theorisation supposedly encompasses the 'end' of subjectivity, prompting the
> widespread notion that postmodernism inevitably transforms the subject into a mere 'screen'...A
> theory of the politics of pop which does not entail the destructive potential of Baudrillard's
> theorisation of the media needs to take seriously the 'refusal of citizenship'...without elevating it
> to the status of fatal strategy as Baudrillard would do (Redhead, 1990, pp. 94-95).

Although Redhead's pseudo-Baudrillardian position is the most acclaimed of the MIPC resistance

theses, two other (polar) views of resistance emerged from the MIPC's work that, together, characterize the

ambivalence of the MIPC as a school of postmodern thought. On one hand, Best (1997), drawing on

segments of Foucault's (1980) and Fraser's (1989) work, argued that (mundane) social practices and

relations in private and domestic spheres (i.e., the politics of everyday life) must be considered for their

potential to "widen the arena" whereby people can change the character of their lives. By taking issue with critics of commercialized, manufactured and inauthentic popular culture, Best (1997, p. 31) suggested that mass media, mass culture, and high technology can be used *constructively* in postmodern societies. For example, she described the way that the implementation of popular cultural studies into academic course curricula could legitimize popular culture as worthy of critical reflection, while validating the relevance of students experiences as producers and receivers of popular culture. Best also made a more conventional argument for the progressive use of popular cultural texts (such as alternative music) as forms/sites of political confrontation. In this way, Best's (1997) reconceptualization of resistance (through Foucault) resembled McRobbie's optimistic notion of "micro-resistances," although this link with McRobbie is not explicitly made in the "clubcultures" literature.

On the other hand, Muggleton (1997) presented a more cynical view of postmodern subcultural and stylistic resistance, arguing that "if modernist subcultures were defined in terms of a series of theoretical oppositions to non-subcultural style, then postmodernity dissolves such distinctions" (p. 200). Muggleton suggested that the collapse of "grand narratives" should not logically lead to celebratory interpretations of resistance at the local level — a position similar to Gruneau's (1988) critique of neo-Marxist celebrations of micro-resistance. Instead, Muggleton (1997, p. 200, drawing on Gitlin, 1989) challenged scholars to consider "alternative, apocalyptic scenario(s)," such as a postmodern (sub)culture[73] that is "anarchistic, nihilistic and seditious," or a cynical consumer "who neither embraces nor criticizes, but beholds the world blankly with a knowingness that dissolves feelings and commitment into irony."

### 3.7.2. – Pleasure, Desire, Social Space and Youth

These sorts of depictions of apolitical, escapist and over-consuming youth were also evident in MIPC work on *pleasure, desire and social space* in postmodern culture. Redhead (1997a, p. xi, drawing on Marquand and Seldon, 1996) argued, for example, that "the phase of post-war society in Britain from the mid-1980s to the 1990s was one of 'hedonistic individualism'." Stanley (1997, p. 43) showed how hedonism and desire manifested themselves in the "nomadic, disruptive, disordered, [and] deregulated" uses of social space in computer hacking, joyriding and raving. According to Stanley, these activities are played in the "wild zone" – a deregulated, alternative space of consumption – a "postmodern wilderness." A central

contribution of Stanley's essay was his attempt to link Foucault's positions on both power and space to youth cultural "transgression." Stanley's reading of Foucault was akin to Best's in that it celebrated the subversion of regulated social spaces, although the subversion Stanley discussed takes place against a more ominous backdrop of 'coexiting chaos and (over)regulation' -- the "tame zone" (mainstream space). Stanley's positioning was evident in his adaptation and inversion of Stevie Smith's poem "Not waving but drowning" to theorize the symbolic importance of an album cover by the band "Prodigy" (a band linked with the techno music of the rave movement):

> [on the album cover] a rope bridge crosses a ravine: on one side stand an angry police force against a background of industrial pollution and urban decay [the tame zone]; on the other side, complete with gigantic sound systems, are ravers [the wild zone]. One of the ravers is cutting the rope bridge while 'giving the finger' to the police. The territory of the ravers is sunlit and green: not drowning but waving (1997, pp. 36-37).

Stanley located this analogy of spatial subversion within a Foucaultian framework:

> This is a space as a counter-site of power relations: not a space which is beyond, but rather a parallel space or interstitial space which Foucault names heteropia...There is a correlation between Foucault's reading of space and counter-space and his reading power and counter-power: both are constituted as sociopolitical relations of production. This includes the production of desire in the relationship between Law and transgression. A site of regulation has a corresponding site of deregulation...In spatial terms, there is a tension between centre and margin (1997, pp. 37-38).

Again, like Best's (1997) work, this is a somewhat optimistic reading of Foucault in its focus on the inevitability of resistance, although Stanley's subversive youth culture exists in an obscure, perplexing postmodern world (something Best does not depict). This is a distinct and novel conception in the study of youth culture because it problematizes *updated* versions of the resistance thesis (e.g., McRobbie's "micro-resistance" model, or de Certeau's "tactical resistance" – both of which were contemporary alternative to the more extreme CCCS's resistance thesis) by offering a perspective on power relations that is linked with both Deleuzian view of desire and a Foucaultian approach to the study of social space. What is also strikingly relevant is the ambivalent tone of this analysis – a clear departure from the "optimistic and pessimistic" dichotomy that characterizes conventional theories of structure and agency, and other postmodern theories that maintain stronger ties with neo-Marxism.

While the MIPC also produced more conventional cultural studies analyses of social space that incorporated issues related to 'space and gender' (e.g., Miles (1997) integration of McRobbie's feminism

and Lefevre's theory of social space to study females and punk rock), and to the 'commercialization of social space' (e.g., Straw's (1997) analysis of the 1990s music stores), it was Redhead's update of the subculture concept and Stanley's balanced adaptation of Foucault that most convincingly advance the field.

### 3.8 – Critical Interactionism, (post)structuralism, postmodernism and youth: Final proposals for theoretical integration

The work of McRobbie and of MIPC associates share many characteristics. Both works acknowledge the potential for "mini" resistance in postmodern circumstances – including the importance of social spaces as sites of creativity and subtle subversion; both consider the "ecstasy of communication" in understanding the mass-mediated context of youth consumption and leisure; both are critical of big-picture theories of youth cultural development; and both acknowledge the complexity and blurriness of youth cultural groups (and related popular cultural "scenes"). Although these similarities might be expected because of the shared theoretical underpinning of both works (postmodernism), if we consider the diversity of the postmodern project and the various perspectives held by postmodern theorists who work in cultural studies frameworks, these alignments should not be assumed or trivialized.

There are also crucial differences between these works. McRobbie's optimistic links with the neo-Marxism of the CCCS (and with the subculture concept), while aligned with some of the MIPC's work, contrasts Redhead's decisive movement from "subculture to clubculture." MIPC theorists were concerned with the regulation (and deregulation) of youth cultures (Redhead, Stanley) while McRobbie was concerned with the ways that media texts are creatively used, integrated and appropriated into youth cultures. MIPC theorists adopted a Foucaultian position on resistance (Best, Muggleton) while McRobbie maintained an updated Marxist view of resistance (although her position was similar to Best's reading of Foucault). Moreover, and unlike the MIPC's work that focused largely on the postmodern *context* (space) of consumption, McRobbie focused on the *experiences* of youth consumers within these contexts. More generally, work out of the MIPC succinctly conceptualized the relationship between affectivity, desire and pleasure, while McRobbie focused more on the ways that sensual pleasure (e.g., in dancing, in reading glossy magazines) was a resistive and empowering means of escape.

In making these distinctions, I am not suggesting that these approaches are incompatible – on the contrary (and consistent with Kellner's multiperspectival approach), the purpose of this section was to highlight important postmodern studies of youth culture, and to "privilege" aspects of these studies for their compatibility with the post-CCCS approaches privileged in the previous chapter. On this basis, I suggest that the postmodern worlds depicted in both the MIPC's work (the postmodern wilderness) and McRobbie's work (fragmented, localized sites of cultural activity in a mass mediated culture) are, together, useful for understanding both the everyday consumption patterns of youth and the more diffuse characteristics of and context for this consumption. While I am not suggesting that both approaches accurately depict 1990s youth culture, I am arguing that both approaches should be *considered* in research. From this perspective then, the task for sociologists researching "post-punk/generation X" youth life-worlds is to *acknowledge and account for* emerging desires and boredoms in an increasingly deregulated and chaotic cultural landscape, while being attentive to *complexity* in studies of youth culture.

### 3.8.1 – Intimate Familiarity, Interpretive Communities, and Staying in the Real World: Some Considerations and Amendments

Despite their varied and somewhat balanced contributions to the youth cultural studies project, aspects of McRobbie and Redhead's adaptations of postmodern theory require clarification and emphasis. First, in depicting and theorizing postmodern contexts and youth cultures, it is crucial be attentive to *the extent to which different youth groups actually live in a postmodern world*. This means acknowledging the experiences of real youth, while remaining sensitive to the shortcoming of research that *over*emphasizes postmodernity:

> The case that advanced capitalism expunges all traces of 'deep' subjectivity, and thus all modes of ideology, is not so much false as drastically partial. In a homogenizing gesture ironically typical of a 'pluralistic' postmodernism, it fails to discriminate between different spheres of social existence...It repeats the 'culturalist' error of taking television, supermarket, 'life style' and advertising as *definitive* of the late capitalist experience, and passes in silence over such activities as studying the bible, running a rape crisis centre, joining the territorial army and teaching their children to speak Welsh...No individual life, not even Jean Baudrillard's, can survive entirely bereft of meaning...(Eagleton, 1991, p. 39, see also Eagleton, 1996)

On this basis, this dissertation is committed to gaining intimate familiarity with youth cultural groups by providing rigorous empirical examinations *and* maintaining sensitivity to the emergence of themes surrounding and within youth cultures.[74] This stance is consistent with both Prus (1996a), who has

argued for a method and theoretical approach that is respectful of the ongoing, emergent nature of human

group life, and Featherstone (1991), who takes a more "postmodern-friendly" position on the sociological

study of postmodern phenomenon:

> If postmodernism points to a rise in the significance of culture – here one thinks of Baudrillard's
> assertion [in his 1983 book *Simulations*] that today everything is cultural – then we should not just
> understand this as an extension of the logic and technology of commodity production but also
> inquire into the modes of transmission and consumption, the practices of symbolic specialists,
> cultural intermediaries and audiences which have dispositions which make them receptive to those
> sensibilities designated postmodern (p. 64).

Second, the importance of recognizing *complexity* in a postmodern world requires attention not

only to the intricacies of a mass-mediated, increasingly globalized culture, but also to the complexity of

interpretation *within* cultural groups (something that is not necessarily a postmodern concern). Although

Redhead and McRobbie acknowledge broader issues of complexity, seldom is complexity in the

interpretive process (i.e., the existence of "interpretive communities" within complex scenes) examined in

ways that would satisfy the analytic concerns of interpretivist sociologists like Willis and Prus. For this

reason, I refer to previous work on youth media audiences that borrowed from cultural studies to theorize

the ways that different interpretive communities (Fish, 1979; Radway, 1991) of youth react to media

content:

> [the interpretive community framework] has specific potential for advancing research on
> interpretive strategies and codes, particularly if used in combination with a research tradition such
> as the study of *youth subcultures* that already has a well defined theory of social position and
> meaning construction...Radway's framework lends itself to this sort of adaptation and could
> extend youth subculture research by providing a tentative bridge with interpretive
> practices...According to Radway, similarities in a group's "reading" strategies and interpretive
> codes can be attributed to specific cultural competencies that are acquired as a consequence of the
> group's social location. This understanding of the "interpretive community" can be used to
> examine how youthful audience "tastes" in media texts and "interpretations" of these texts relate
> to their social and cultural context. By maintaining this intersection between "taste" and
> "interpretation" within youth groups, we seek to avoid the determinist and reductionist pitfalls that
> result from grouping audiences into "interpretive communities" based on research criteria such as
> ethnicity, age, gender, social class, occupation (Wilson and Sparks, 1996, p. 404-405).

My argument here is that studies of youth culture (not only audience studies) should "borrow

back" from media studies (in this case, Radway's interpretive community framework) to theorize the

complexities of taste, interpretation and cultural experience.[75]

With these amendments, with a theoretical commitment to a post-CCCS approach that is informed by postmodern analysis, and with a sensitivity to complexity and contradiction within creativity and constraint, I proceed to discuss the worlds of two Canadian youth cultures.

# PART 2 – INTRODUCTION TO CASE STUDIES AND ETHNOGRAPHY

## Preliminary Notes About the Two Case Studies: Differences in Scope

The following two case studies are each organized into 4 parts. In the first part (the "introduction"), the substantive and theoretical background for the case is presented. In the second part ("methodology"), the research methods used to carry out the study are outlined. In the third part ("results and analysis"), the findings from the research are presented, with a focus on describing the subcultural processes that characterized the group under study – or put another way, the transcontextual processes related to group perspectives, identities, activities, relationships, and commitments are used as an analytical guide. (i.e., a symbolic interactionist guided presentation and analysis). In the fourth part ("discussion"), a rigorous examination of the study findings in relation to previous research and broader (post)structuralist concerns is provided. In other words, the emergent themes outlined in the "results and analysis" section are considered for their relevance to broader conceptual issues related to, for example (and depending on the case study), resistance, community, gender-class-race, globalization, and postmodernity (i.e., a critical neo-Marxist/post-CCCS analysis informed by postmodern concerns).

Within this presentation framework, though, clear distinctions emerged between the groups that impacted the ways the case studies played out. In particular, the more encompassing rave case study, which examined the dynamics of a loosely defined, fast-evolving, historically significant, cultural group was reflected in the more broad-based treatment that the group received in the case study. For example, the rave case study includes a global and local history of the culture, an examination of media treatment of the group, and a critical examination of the small but recent surge of work on rave culture. On this basis, the rave case study emerged as a major undertaking which, for this reason, received more lengthy and detailed treatment in this dissertation. This is compared to the more clearly defined study of the social organization and space of the youth centre.

A series of complexities related specifically to gender and resistance emerged out of this research on the drop-in centre. This relatively compact study of an essentially stable group and space did not require

either a discussion of youth centres in relation to globalization or postmodern debates or an extensive

examination of resistance theory (i.e., in the youth centre, resistance was not played out in ways that

required attention to the "postmodern resistance" debates). However, the study did include a discussion of

youth drop-in/recreation centre culture in relation to recent work on gender, class, and leisure. Overall

then, these differences in scope provide a basis for understanding the ways that youth cultures are

characterized by their distinct levels of organizational complexity (i.e., loosely defined and wide ranging vs

compact and spatially/socially stable) and related theoretical and empirical research requirements.

### Ethnographic Research: Background, Rationale and Issues

Underlying these case studies is a methodological (and related theoretical) commitment to ethnographic

methods and semiotic analysis (both qualitative methods). While the examination of the quantitative-

qualitative debates (alluded to in chapter 1) and the discussion of Willis' and Hebdige's influential

methodological positions (chapter 2) are useful points of departure, there are basic terms and concerns

within qualitative research (related to, for example, reliability, validity and generalizability) that require

clarification and attention before proceeding to discuss the case studies. These topics, discussed below,

will act as reference points for more specific methodological discussions in the case study chapters, and,

more broadly, for the presentation and analysis of data.

Although the theoretical position developed in chapters 2 and 3 underscore all aspects of the *data*

*analysis*, the methods used to carry out this study followed closely with classic and recent statements about

ethnographic research as a procedure for *gathering data* (Blumer, 1969; Lofland, 1976; Prus, 1996a;

Shaffir and Stebbins, 1991, Willis, 1978). Ethnographic research (also known as "field research,"

naturalistic inquiry," "qualitative research," "interactionist research," "Chicago school research" and

"participant observation") is concerned with the study of the way of life of a group (Prus, 1996a, p. 103).

Blumer (1969) has argued that ethnographic methods are the only methods that adequately enable the

researcher to respect the nature of human group life, achieve intimate familiarity with persons in their

social world, and develop sensitizing concepts from data (see Glaser and Strauss' (1967) "grounded

theory," "inductive approach"). Shaffir and Stebbins (1991, drawing on Blumer, 1969; Taylor and Bogdan,

1984; and Webb et. al, 1981) summarized the central characteristics of this method:

Fieldwork is carried out by immersing oneself in a collective way of life for the purpose of gaining firsthand knowledge about a major facet of it...Adopting mainly the method of participant observation...the researcher attempts to record the ongoing experiences of those in their symbolic world. The research strategy commits the observer to learning to define the world from the perspective of those studied and requires that he or she gain as intimate an understanding as possible of their way of perceiving life. To achieve this aim, the field researcher typically supplements participant observation [the primary methodology used by ethnographers] with additional methodological techniques in field research, often including semistructured interviews, life histories, [and] document analysis. [76] (p. 5).

There are several issues and problems related to aspects of ethnography (particularly participant

observation), as Willis (1978) suggested.

In the preconceptions of the observer, in the artificiality of the observer/observed situation, in the decentration, partiality, inversion or distortion of self-knowledge in the observed, lie many possible sources of error in the participant observation method. Furthermore, replication and proof are impossible and a scientistic concern with technique can never conceal, only impinge and obstruct – the proper workings through of participant observation in its own form of production and work on human meaning (p. 194).

Embedded in Willis' statement and in other work on methodological considerations in participant

observation are concerns with the internal validity ("truth" value), external validity (generalizability) and

reliability (replicability) of research findings (see Erlandson et al., 1993; Hammersley, 1992; Lincoln and

Guba, 1985). Shaffir and Stebbins (1991, p. 13-14, drawing on McCall and Simmons, 1969, p. 78)

organized some of these concerns as they relate to "doing" participant observation into three categories:

(1) reactive effects of researcher presence on the phenomenon being observed (e.g., when subjects act

differently in the presence of the researcher, loss of trust between researcher and subject); (2) distorting

effects of selective perception and interpretation (e.g., "going native," types of relationships with subjects);

and (3) limitations on the ability of the researcher to observe all phenomena relevant to the group (e.g., how

the sex, age, or race of researcher might limit access to certain types of information).

The following table, adapted from Erlandson et.al. (1991) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) but

revised using Willis' (1978), outlines the strategies that can be used to deal with these issues. Several of

these suggestions will be referred to when the specific methods used in the two case studies are rationalized

in the following chapters.

**TABLE 1: DEALING WITH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL VALIDITY ISSUES**

| INTERNAL VALIDITY | EXTERNAL VALIDITY |
|---|---|
| *Prolonged Engagement* (to overcome researcher impacts on context and effects unusual or seasonal events) | *Thick Description* (see below) |
| *Persistent Observation* (to help distinguish which events/activities are most relevant/central) | *Purposeful Sampling* (unlike random sampling, purposeful sampling is guided by emerging insights about what is relevant to the study and is focused on providing rich detail about issues most relevant to the study of the group) |
| *Triangulation/Crossgridding of evidence/Clustering* (Denzin, 1970; Donnelly, 1985; Willis, 1978) (to help elicit potentially diverse interpretations of group experience, help confirm similar interpretations, provide broader context, alternative explanations) | *Reflexive Fieldnotes* (see below) |
| *Peer Debriefing* | |
| *Check Data* with Research Subjects | |
| *Reflexive fieldnotes* (see below) | |

A few aspects of this table require clarification here. First, the notion of *external validity*, in the context of ethnographic research, is not concerned with generalizability or representativeness in the traditional statistical sense (i.e., where representative samples are selected and generalizations across populations are made within specific probabilities of error). As noted in chapter one, statistical methodological applications "break down" when more complex meaning/interpretation-based understandings of group culture are sought. In ethnographic research, external validity is satisfied by developing generic social processes that allow comparisons of social life in all its forms across contexts, as Prus (1994b) explained.

> *generic social processes* [original emphasis] refer to the trans-situational elements of interaction; to the abstracted formulations of social behavior. Denoting parallel sequences of activity across diverse contexts, generic social processes highlight the emergent interpretive features of association. They focus our attention on the activities involved in "doing" or accomplishing group life...When researchers are mindful of generic, or trans-situational concepts, every piece of ethnographic research in any realm of human behavior can be used to generate insight into any other realm of human behavior (p. 395, see also Berger and Luckman, 1971; Garfinkal, 1967; Lofland, 1976; Prus, 1987, 1996a).

Similarly, the use of "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) in ethnographic research (or, more accurately, in writing up fieldnotes and research reports based on fieldwork) can effectively allow

researchers to assess the potential "transferability" of findings from one setting to another. Denzin (1989a)

encapsulated the importance of thick description as a tool in interpretive interactionist research as follows:

> A thick description...does more than record what a person is doing. It goes beyond mere fact and
> surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that
> join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts
> history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or a sequence of events,
> for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and
> meanings are heard (p. 83).

On this basis, thick description "permits a willing reader to share the experiences that have been captured"

and to "naturalistically generalize his or her experiences to those that have been captured" (Denzin, 1989a,

p. 83).

Also, adopting a *reflexive* approach to field research is crucial for establishing both internal and

external validity. The position taken in this dissertation (following Lincoln and Guba, 1985 and others) is

that "objectivity" in the traditional "hard" sciences sense is a myth, and that reality is socially constructed

(Berger and Luckmann, 1966). On this basis, the ethnographies presented in this dissertation are concerned

with the meanings that individuals give to their experiences, while acknowledging that the researcher is

partial and subjective when studying groups and interpreting these meanings. Willis (1978) insightfully

discussed the way this sort of openness in the research process is beneficial:

> I argue for the use of naturalistic comparative techniques [ethnography] to specify more precisely
> what is the scope and meaning of the essential problematic of the method. Instead of being
> 'problems', the final and 'unresolvable' difficulties of the method are its specific resources. These
> moments concern the ability of the researcher to reflexively analyze the intersection of his own
> social paradigms with those of the people he wishes to understand. Such an intersection speaks, of
> course, as much to the researcher and his world as it does of any other world...Usually thought of
> as unavoidable costs, the 'problems' of field work can be more imaginatively thought of as the
> result of a fine intersection of two subjective meaning constructions...Although the researcher can
> never experience another experience – the romantic notion of 'empathy' – he can feel how his own
> experience is minutely locked into another's: how his own experience is disoriented. The
> problems of this method always ask questions. If the researcher feels threatened at certain points,
> what is it that threatens him? If the researcher is not able to join in group activities, what is
> stopping him (pp. 177-178)?

Willis is not arguing that "hard," "irrefutable" forms of data are attained from this self-reflexive technique,

but is instead suggesting that by identifying and examining various contradictions and problems in the data

"more substantial understandings can be developed" (Willis, 1978, p. 198). It is interesting to note that

Willis' seminal formulations reflect the more contemporary emphasis that postmodern ethnographers (at

least Fontana and Dickens) have put on the importance of considering alternative data sources and

reflexivity.

Many of these same issues also apply to the use of social semiotics. In essence, interpreting media

"texts" (or other texts, such as clothing styles, hairstyles, or webpages), the most common focus of semiotic

research, is the same as interpreting interview data or fieldnote data – all are texts that the researcher

interprets.[77] In all cases, it is crucial to acknowledge one's own social positioning and potential biases in

interpreting data and texts, while acknowledging that there are multiple potential interpretations of data.

However, this should not exclude the possibility of progressive, meaningful readings of cultural texts, as

Duncan (1990) explained:

> Responsible textual studies do not assert with absolute certainty how particular texts are
> interpreted. But they suggest the kinds of interpretations that may take place, based on available
> evidence, and likely interpretations of a particular text. Ultimately these interpretations must be
> judged on the basis of the persuasiveness and logic of the researcher's discussion (p. 27).

This reaction to the potential methodological and theoretical problems related to a "relativist

interpretivist" position are consistent with Hall's argument that despite a "perpetual slippage of the

signifier," social texts, identities and practices are always "relatively anchored" (Hall, 1985, p. 93, see also

McKay, 1995, p. 192, Wilson, 1997, p. 178) – a position drawn from "articulation" theory . Cowie's

(1977) summary of this position encapsulates the stance taken in this dissertation on semiotic analysis:

> The endless possible signification of the image is always and only a theoretical possibility. In
> practice, the image is always held, constrained in its production of meaning or else becomes
> meaningless, unreadable. At this point the concept of anchorage is important; there are developed
> in every society decisive technologies intended to fix floating chains of signifieds so as to control
> the terror of uncertain signs (p. 22).

## Critical Ethnography and Writing Critical Narratives

Elaborating on these hermeneutic debates, two further points related to doing and writing critical

ethnography are elaborated on here. First, the theory-method connection initiated in Willis' early critical

ethnographic work requires emphasis because of the underlying issues related to "power" that are examined

in this dissertation – issues that underscore the interpretivist and structuralist *theories and methodologies*

utilized in the following case studies. Although this dissertation in concerned predominantly with neo-

Marxist, structuralist perspectives on power, I acknowledge Prus' (1995, 1999) recent work done in the

symbolic interactionist tradition that views power as "intersubjective accomplishment." These

micrological concerns about power are considered in the results and analysis sections of the following case

studies. With this background, I adopt Donnelly's (forthcoming) position on the crucial link between

method and theory (in macro and micro analyses):

> methodological concerns overlap with theoretical concerns precisely in the issues of theoretical
> assumptions and interpretation...[and] because of the critical nature of much hermeneutic work,
> an assumption is made that media messages [for example] are designed to maintain an unequal
> status quo in society [and hermeneutic analysis can be progressively used to deconstruct those
> messages] (p. 14).

Second, the issue of how critical ethnographers represent the realities of individuals and groups

under study (i.e., in ethnographic writing) requires consideration (as a logical extension of Willis' argument

for a reflexive method). Denzin's previously noted statement about "thick description" is one presentation

strategy that is useful for ethnographers who intend to make comprehensive, empirically informed,

historically-located, and *critical* statements about the relationship between social structural constraints and

human lived experience. Donnelly's (1985) argument for a broader definition of ethnography "that goes

beyond traditional forms" is an implicit challenge to ethnographers to access and draw on multiple and

various data sources when (re)presenting the group under study in a written text. Specifically, Donnelly

(1985, pp. 568-569) suggested that ethnography should include the analysis of publications put out by

subcultural groups, biographies, introductory or how-to-do books, general books, magazine articles written

by group members and journalists/freelance writers, fiction, poetry, songs painting, sculptures, cartoons,

and films (and I will add websites, internet newsgroups and chatrooms).[78]

Foley's (1992) paper on "writing critical sport narratives" summarized the dilemma (the 'crisis')

facing sociologists who attempt to write ethnographies that are accessible and fair to those who these

ethnographies represent, *and* are compelling for academic readers who demand the "conventional"

methodological rigor that characterizes naïve realist ("scientific") ethnography. Foley's argument builds on

the critical ethnographic tradition represented by Willis (1977, 1978) and later Foley himself (1990) who

wrote their ethnographies in two parts. "Part 1" in these studies were written as a personal, reflexive

account of and descriptive ethnography of the group under study, or as Foley (1992) put it, "written in a

language that expresses my voice and uses metaphors, irony, and comedy" (p. 44). "Part 2" of these

studies were written as a critical-theoretical examination of "Part 1," using "the academic dialect that social theorists speak" (Foley, 1992, p. 44). "Part 2" also included a more conventional discussion of and reflection on methodological procedure.

Expressing some dissatisfaction with this relatively unintegrated solution to the problem of presenting more authentic ethnographic accounts without losing academic voice, Foley argued that there is a need to find a "middle ground between the extensive poetic experimentation advocated by some postmodern ethnographers" (p. 45, building on Rose, 1990; Tyler, 1986) and "new, more accessible and quasi-literary versions of the old scientific realist narrative" (p. 45). On this basis, Foley (1992) made three suggestions intended to move toward a more open, relativistic tone in nonpositivistic interpretive narratives:

1. Reduce the amount of "generic omniscient ethnographic narrative" and include more impressionistic tales [referring to the use of specific characters and actual events instead of typifications and generic events]. Foley argued that these types of accounts make the researcher more visible and allow for more character development than "bland generic typifications" (p. 45).

2. Do not exclude the theoretical voice of the social scientist. Foley suggested that "there is nothing wrong with sprinkling...more impressionist narratives with some well-marked digressions into the author's theoretical view...[although] given the somewhat underdeveloped storytelling skills of many social scientists...these shifts to theorizing mode will be difficult without overwhelming the story being told (p. 45).[79]

3. Authors of ethnographies must be up-front about their theoretical and personal assumptions.

Although I have adopted some of Foley's recommendations in the following case studies, particularly those related to the integration of personal accounts and "storytelling" with more generic analysis, and those that support general principles of reflexivity, I am less willing to abandon the style of Willis' (1977) and Foley's (1990) original "two-part" ethnographies. This two-part approach allows for rich (thick) descriptive presentations of ethnographic data – presentations that adopt aspects of the postmodern ethnography (although clearly these same principles are advocated by researchers who would not claim affiliation with postmodernism) endorsed throughout this dissertation *while maintaining a commitment to sophisticated critical analysis and theoretical development*. The stance taken here is that the 'specificity of the analysis' (analysis that often surrounds and develops underlying conceptual themes) risks being lost or de-emphasized in ethnographies that utilize "too many sprinklings" of theory at the

expense of a rigorous data examination outside of the data presentation. This stance is reflected in the

presentation of the following "two-part" ethnographies of youth culture.

# CHAPTER 4: EXPLORING RAVE CULTURE IN CANADA

## The optimistic...

The venue was spacious and well ventilated. The music was the usual Techno, although not as harsh as some, and I tried to follow a friend's advice to move with the bass and ignore the rest. I got into dancing in my usual self-conscious way, keeping an eye on what other people were doing and well aware that I am older than most. Then, imperceptibly, I gradually relaxed and melted into the ambience, and knew I was part of it all...I experienced a feeling of belonging to the group, a kind of uplifting religious experience of unity...It was as though I was surrounded by fellow members of an exclusive tribe, bonded by some shared understanding, yet full membership was mine for the $15.00 ticket and $22.50 tablet.

> Drug activist/revolutionary/expert, Nicholas Saunders, describing his first rave
> (Saunders, 1996, p. 3)

This whole scene – now over a decade old – has helped bring together so many different kinds of people who would otherwise have nothing in common. The creativity and constant growth of the scene amongst people worldwide who are now as passionate about clubs and music as I was aged sixteen, surely make this the first youth culture to go truly global.

> Internationally renowned DJ Billy Nasty (quoted in his introduction to Harrison, 1998, p. xi)

When I go to raves and use Ecstasy it breaks down barriers. It breaks down preconceptions, it makes it easier to meet people... you think about how it changes you and how you feel while you're on it as opposed to how you feel when you're not and you try and take the feeling that you get when you're high and relate it to your own life. Do you really need social barriers, do we really need the defenses that we have and would life be better off if we didn't have some of the defenses that we have? Would it be easier to meet people, easier to communicate? It all comes down to communication because there is a lack of communication obviously in our society.

> interview, male raver, Toronto, 1995

I have come to really enjoy it. There's hope in that community, there's very little violence. I saw the way people came closer together and the way you could expand your mind.

> interview, female raver, Toronto, 1995

## The pessimistic...

When the rave scene first started here there was only one promotion company called *Chemistry*. They were great. It was cheap. They had parties with swimming pools, soap suds, crazy stuff. Once the scene got publicized, they had one last great party and then got out. They were great parties. People weren't getting baked and running around like madmen. When *Chemistry* folded, I think it was the beginning of the end for the rave scene. As for the future of the rave scene, if it keeps going the way its going, the scene is gonna be sickly. Black-eyed 14 year olds sniffing powders and going home to the wrong address under the guise that they're having a good time.

> interview, male raver/jungle and trip hop DJ, Toronto, 1995

Rave is dead, or so the pundits say. Yet there's a sense in which it's bigger than ever. Not only is the spectrum of nineties culture dominated by the ever widening delta of post-rave scenes...but it also seems obvious that more people are involved in the weekender/ecstasy lifestyle than ever, as veteran ravers hang on in there, while each year produces a wave of new recruits. But as for the rave myth, the ideal of love, peace, unity, positivity – well, that's been smelling funny for quite a while.

> Simon Reyolds, music journalist and critic, quoted from Steve Redhead's edited book The Clubcultures Reader (Reynolds, 1997, p. 102)

### and the ambivalent...

...labour market conditions have also been used to explain the (brief) flowering of less predatory youth cults such as the "rave" culture...From small beginnings, rave culture has attracted the more Bohemian members of "Generation X"...While rave seems to be a more ephemeral and less desperate kind of subculture than those associated with delinquency, those who participate in it see it as an outlet for disaffiliated youth...As with other subcultural solutions, there is an emphasis upon the search for community...[However], youth cults like the rave culture have been primarily the subject of media reports and speculation rather than actual research.

> From Julian Tanner's book Teenage Troubles: Youth and Deviance in Canada (Tanner, 1996, pp. 144, 145)

Ravers, it's not hard to notice, like to play with toys. Their cultural aesthetic is one of playful innocence, and yet one out of every three ravers I met claimed to be an ecstasy dealer. This underlines the central paradox of rave culture: the tension between innocence and experience.
(from the Globe and Mail national newspaper, Mclaren, 1998, D2)

Despite the obvious disparity of views about the state of, the broader significance of, and the direction of the rave scene, ravers as well as journalists and academics often state their positions unequivocally. I want to make two theoretical points about this. First, and drawing on W.I. Thomas' (1923, p. 81) adage that "if men [and women] define situations as real, they are real in their consequences," I argue that the various interpretations noted above *are* the realities of the rave scene – a scene that is threatening, dangerous, excessive, enlightening, beautiful, resistant and so on. From this perspective, the complexities of rave exist in the diverse ways that people understand the scene. On this basis, the goal of research on rave culture should be to arrange these views, interpretations and experiences in a coherent way, without privileging one view over another. As Collin (1997) suggests:

> The story of Ecstasy culture [a.k.a. rave culture and "acid house" culture] is itself a remix – a collage of facts, opinions and experiences. Differing outlooks and vested interests combine to deny the possibility of a history that everyone can agree as truth; some things are forgotten, others are exaggerated; stories are embellished, even invented, and the past is polished to suit the necessities of the present. Behind one narrative are hundreds of thousands of unwritten ones, and who is to say that any one of them is not equally important (p. 8)?

In the context of rave cultural studies, Collin's social constructionist argument requires serious

consideration because of its explicit respect for the realities and interpretations of those who are part of a

diverse and highly complex culture.

Second, I want to emphasize the need for a balanced, historically-located, and critical theoretical

position. More specifically, I suggest that research focused *exclusively* on the meanings that people give to

their (rave) activities is "too narrow," and does not adequately address questions surrounding the broader

social significance of rave culture (a common criticism of largely descriptive, Blumerian, symbolic

interactionist work). For many analysts, rave culture is *the* major youth movement at the end of the

century. With this in mind, it would seem that trivializing the historical significance of rave in favour of a

"non-partisan" evaluation that is overly guided by a concern with gaining insight into social process is not

very progressive. Following this argument, it makes sense to consider both the temporal location of rave in

the "postmodern 1990s" and the geographical location of the scene both globally (spreading from its

origins in Britain and New York) and in offspring locales such as Canada.

Underlying both of these points, and consistent with the arguments made throughout "Part One" of

this dissertation, is the suggestion that there is not only a need to amend unbalanced (usually journalistic)

statements about rave by examining and theorizing the complexities of the scene/group, but there is also a

need to make empirically and theoretically informed, critical evaluations of existing academic work on rave

culture and 1990s youth culture generally.[80] In other words, the symbolic interactionist (social

constructionist) and critical/structuralist positions are both important for this study. What follows then is

both a rigorous micro-analysis of the intricacies of the rave subcultural group (in Chapter 5), and a macro-

discussion of the socio-cultural positioning/significance of the rave scene in 1990s Canada (in Chapter 6).

The background for these analyses, presented in this chapter, is reported in the following sections. First, the

history of the rave scene abroad and in Canada is outlined. Second, an overview and critical assessment of

academic work (empirical and theoretical) focused on the development of rave culture is provided. Third

and finally, the research methods used to study rave culture in southern Ontario are outlined, discussed and

justified.

## 4.1 — History of the Rave Scene: Globally and in Canada

The roots of the rave scene can be traced back to four somewhat related movements: (1) the New York City dance scene of the 1970s (a predominantly gay, Black and Puerto Rican scene); (2) the Chicago "house" music scene as it existed in the late 1970s to the early 1980s; (3) the Detroit "techno" music scene of the early 1980s; and (4) the British "acid house" scene of the mid-late 1980s that grew out of dance clubs in the holiday-sun location Ibiza, Spain. Underlying these developments is the evolution of MDMA or "Ecstacy" culture (the drug scientifically known as methylenedioxy-methamphetamine) and its movement into dance culture. Below, these movements are summarized and examined for their significant to the development of the contemporary rave scene. The emergence and evolution of rave culture in Toronto is then outlined and analyzed. Particular attention is paid to the ways that Toronto's scene was potentially influenced by the global rave phenomenon while modified in its local, socio-cultural context.

### 4.1.1 — "Pre-Disco," New York City and Underground Gay/Black Club Culture

The New York dance scene emerged and evolved from a series of early gay and black clubs that were linked to a tradition of DJs who founded and refined an innovative version of technologized "soul" music, now known as "house" music. The "disco music" scene (which lasted from the mid-late 1970s until around 1980), the most well-known of early electronic dance music, while central to these developments, was only a part of a larger movement that preceded disco and continued evolving after disco.[81]

In 1970, one of New York's first "flamboyantly out" gay dance clubs, called *Salvation*,[82] opened in the Hell's Kitchen district of the city. From Goldman's (1978) and Collin's (1997) descriptions, it appears that *Salvation* was a significant precursor to the rave scene in both the 'content and form' of the movement that was developing at the club – a club that symbolized and allowed for a sense of defiance and escape. In making this argument, it is important to note that in the year before the opening of *Salvation*, a historic clash took place at an after-hours gay bar called the *Stonewall Inn* located in Greenwich Village.[83] In reaction to a routine harassment raid by eight plainclothes police officers (Garratt, 1998, p. 8), the patrons of the club retaliated – a retaliation dubbed the "Stonewall Riots" that is now considered by many to be the roots of the gay liberation/gay power/gay pride movement (Collin, 1997; Garratt, 1998; I. Young,

1995).[84] It was in spaces such as *Salvation* and other similar clubs that this movement was embodied and solidified through the development of the gay and black music and dance scene.

The post-*Stonewall* development of the gay club movement was widely interpreted as a reaction to and escape from mainstream "straight, white" society (Collin, 1997; Garratt, 1998).[85] While for many clubbers, it was a once a week "party," for others like the "Stonewall rioters," broader social consequences were pursued. Collin (1997) powerfully encapsulated the marginalized positioning of those attending gay-black clubs at the time, the importance of the clubs in this context, and the broader influences of these clubs:

> The almost devotional intensity of the atmosphere in the black gay clubs of New York created an ideological template that has been employed, knowingly or not, in dance cultures ever since. It was euphoria born out of necessity: as black people, they excluded from the economic and social benefits of mainstream America; as homosexuals, they were excluded from its moral universe; as black homosexuals, they were even prevented from expressing their identity within their own communities. This contributed to the powerful, pent-up frustration which found its release in the clubs, the only place they could truly be themselves and play out their desires without fear or inhibition. The explosion of energy, therefore, was enormous; the bonding too...You can hear it in the music: disco [which closely followed this movement] and house both mix the secular, the invocations of orgy and sexual abandon, with the spiritual, the wistful utopian yearnings for a "better day" when "we will all be free" (p. 17).

The movement's message of resistance through 'escape, consumption, excess, decadence, and unity' cannot be separated from the spectacular *forms* of the movement (i.e., the ways that the gay-dance philosophy was expressed *symbolically* and *homologously*). For example, the club *Salvation* was constructed as a template for excess, consumption, and sensation, as Collin (1997, drawing on Goldman, 1978) described:

> [At Salvation nightclub, the décor included] a huge painted Devil flanked by a host of angels, genitals exposed and locked in sexual communion; drinks were sold from chalices and pews arranged around the walls, while the DJ, Francis Grasso, would preach from an altar above the dancefloor (p. 11).

Moreover, the culture that developed in these early clubs had long-standing influences on music-making and music-performance that extend to the contemporary rave music/DJ scene. For example, Francis Grasso invented what was known as "slip-cueing" (now known as "beat-matching") where one musical track would be "mixed" with another track without stopping the songs (and still keeping the same beat). As Goldman (1978) wrote (quoted in Garratt, 1998):

His [Grasso's] *tour de force* was playing two records simultaneously for as long as two minutes at a stretch. He would super the drum beat of Chicago's 'I'm the man' over the orgasmic moans of Led Zeppelin's 'Whole Lotta Love' to make a powerfully erotic mix (p. 9).

This style of playing, and the celebrity that DJ Grasso received foreshadowed 1990s DJ culture.[86]

Although peoples' experiences in these clubs were clearly enhanced by amphetamines and Quaaludes ("uppers" and "downers") (according to dance music historians like Reynolds, 1998), this early connection between drugs and dance was not considered to be of the same magnitude as it was for the early rave scene, a culture that was, for many (particularly the mass media), *defined by* drug use. This is not to say that drugs were not central to the emerging Disco scene – they absolutely were according to Collin, Garratt, Goldman and others – but they were viewed as only part of a homological relationship between dance, music, style, attitude, and emotion.[87] Again, though, the importance of the mass media's emphasis on and creation of drug-related concerns and panics should not be underestimated for their influence on these perceptions. For example, the mass media's ability to selectively "forget" the long history of drug-music relationships for the sake of articulating a new, spectacular story about Ecstasy-rave culture should also be considered here (Thornton, 1994 – this point is elaborated on later in this chapter).

### *4.1.2 – Saturday Night Fever, Disco, and the commercialization of the Scene*

The movement of the underground dance scene to mainstream has been linked to the appearance of (computer-produced) dance music tracks in the US Top 40 charts (e.g., Donna Summer's track "I Feel Love") and to the opening of dance clubs like New York's *Infinity* which were increasingly attended by a straight crowd attracted by the spectacle of "intoxicating music and flashing lights" (Garratt, 1998, p. 10).[88] The transition to mainstream "Disco" status was completed with the release of the 1977 movie *Saturday Night Fever*. The film portrayed working class youth whose identities were defined by their weekend excesses (dancing, drinking, drugs) at a "disco" nightclub. The social message of the film symbolized the movement from the 1960s hippie era to the realities of the 1970s recession, a theme reminiscent of McRobbie's "escape" theory of 1990s rave culture — that is, "kids could no longer run away from home, drop acid and drop out...instead they worked hard to support their families, escaping into the fantasy world of the disco on Saturday nights" (Garratt, 1998, p. 20). The film had other far-reaching consequences beyond turning disco into a successful industry. As Collin (1997) suggested, it caricatured and effectively

flattened the depth and complexity of the dance scene, ultimately shedding its "its gay and black context"

(p. 14). Perhaps most importantly, it transformed the underground dance scene from a social *movement* into

a maintream, commercialized *fad*. Garratt (1998) explained Disco's development and its fall/death:

> Codified, commercialized, disco began to stagnate. Middle-of-the road-crooner Andy Williams
> made a disco record. Middle-aged America hummed along to a tune like the Salsoul Orchestra's
> 'You're Just the Right Size' without dreaming what it implied, and the US Navy almost adopted
> the Village People's 'In the Navy' for a recruitment campaign until its camp subtext was
> explained. Reduced to a formula and severed from its black soul roots, the music was considered
> production line fodder, mechanical and soulless...By 1980...bored of the formula, mainstream
> America had retreated from the dancefloor too. Disco was considered over, a finished fad, and
> many of the major labels closed down their disco departments or modified them into more general
> dance departments (p. 21).

The underground music and dance scene continued to creatively develop in other directions after

the "death of disco" in the early 1980s. "Garage" music (a combination of gospel voice and uptempo dance

music) and other mixed genre musical experiments were being played at *Paradise Garage*, a former truck

garage in Soho, New York where arguably the most well-known and celebrated of the early dance music

DJs, Larry Levan,[89] played music on weekends from 1975 to the club's closing in 1987. It was in the

*Paradise Garage* where the combination of music and drug use was being further explored. Collin (1997)

described how these developments at *Paradise Garage* were part of an ongoing "sensual experiment":

> Levan was a scientist who mixed as if he was trying to work the drugs that were percolating
> through the dancers brains – trying to play their body chemistry – creating a homology between
> sonic texture and the chemically elevated cortex....At the Garage, the drugs that raised the spirit
> were Ecstasy, mescalin, cocaine and LSD; although drug taking was far less open than it would
> become at the British clubs, an astounding pharmacoepia of substances was being consumed in the
> name of pleasure...the club buzzed with energies of all kinds: sexual, spiritual, musical, chemical
> (p. 16).

*Paradise Garage* remained an alternative to the mainstream post-disco dance movement. The

clientele were still predominantly gay, black and Puerto Rican and the music was "more hedonistic...[and]

more underground than the playlists of other New York clubs" (Kempster, 1996, p. 14). The underground

status of *Paradise Garage* (with its particular focus on musical experimentation as well as drugs)

contrasted the renowned *Studio 54*, which had become a Mecca for high-profile socializing, with the music

being a relative afterthought (according to Kempster, 1996; see Haden-Guest, 1997 for a detailed

examination of *Studio 54* culture, its legacy, and its relationship to Disco culture).

### 4.1.3 — Chicago and the Two Strands of House

Underground scenes were also developing in other cities in the post-disco era. A friend of Larry Levan's, fellow DJ Frankie Knuckles[90] (his real name), is most well known for his elevation of the Chicago "house" music scene – a scene to which he introduced the 'electronic soul music'[91] at a club called *The Warehouse*.[92] In fact, it is from "the Warehouse" that the original name for electronic dance music – "House" music – was derived.

A key development in Chicago's 'house music' culture (which reflects a current trend in the Toronto rave scene, explained later) was the emergence of two distinct 'music consumption communities'. While Frankie Knuckles attracted a (usually older) crowd that was interested in more 'cleanly mixed and soulful' dance music, those interested in 'less sophisticated', 'raw', energetic music attended nights at a rival club called *The Music Box*, where DJ Ron Hardy played. Kempster (1996, see also Garratt, 1998) explained this dichotomy:

> By 1983, Knuckles had moved from the Warehouse to a new venue, The Power Plant. But on Chicago's south-side another club, The Music Box, opened with Ron Hardy...behind the decks. Hardy was a mercurial talent, addicted to heroine and a heavy user of a varied selection of hard drugs. While the Power Plant offered a polished, orderly experience, Hardy unleashed a repetitive onslaught of rhythms and grooves, dropping hot records like Blue Magic's "Welcome to the Club"...into a Dionysian frenzy of Philly soul and Euro-disco (pp. 14-15).

A distinction could be drawn here between the types of "house" music played by these two DJs – the variation sometimes called "deep house" played by Knuckles,[93] and the more upbeat, 'raw', purposefully unpolished house played by Hardy. Even the drugs used by the respective audiences reflected these differences (again, foreshadowing later developments in the rave scene). The "sophisticated" crowd who followed Knuckles were, for the most part, taking (relatively more expensive) experiential and sensual drugs such as acid and MDA (a compound similar to but less effective/"ecstatic" than Ecstasy/MDMA to enhance their time. In the *Music Box* (where the usually younger crowd went to see Hardy), the drugs were less expensive and intended to induced a state of hyperactivity, an effect which allowed users to 'keep up with' (and stay up all night for) the rampant music sets that Hardy was playing. Although the Chicago scene continued to evolve into the late 1980s (see Garratt, 1998), it was these music and drug cultures

associated with Knuckles and Hardy that are the most notable developments for the purposes of the current study of rave culture.

### 4.1.4 — Detroit "Techno" Music

> House [music] still has its heart in 1970's disco, we don't have any of that respect for the
> past...[Techno music] is strictly future music. We have a much greater aptitude for experiment
> (Detroit techno music innovator Derek May, quoted in Kempster, 1996, p. 19).[94]

While Chicago house DJs were creating updated genres of disco, three young musicians in Detroit — Derek

May, Juan Atkins and Derek Saunderson — were developing an electronic and "futuristic" sound that was

less influenced by the New York and Chicago black-gay scenes (although Hardy's raw, high speed,

"electric disco" was a departure point) and more influenced by "new wave" electronic music that was

coming out of Europe (e.g., Kraftwerk, the Human League, Gary Numan, and Devo). Considered

sociologically, these musicians produced music that, for them, was a reaction to the existing social

conditions of their home city Detroit. In the early 1980s, Detroit was in recession and had become both an

industrial wasteland and the murder capital of the world. "Detroit techno" both embodied the urban decay

(e.g., reflecting both the obsolescence of modern forms of industry and the increasingly technologized

forms that were emerging, by making predominantly technological music) and looked beyond it (the music

was futuristic sounding, inspired by science fiction, and generated by computers). As Trask (1996) and

Collin (1997) noted, these musicians, who were inspired by video games and by futuristic movies like

Ridley Scott's Blade Runner, saw the "other worldly" character of the future to be a better alternative to the

racisms and ghetto life of present and past.[95] These seminal developments are the basis for many of the

themes underlying the contemporary rave scene (e.g., in Toronto and elsewhere, the names of record labels

and rave parties often integrate terms and slogans developed originally in Detroit) and provided an

experimental basis for other DJs who realized how, through technology, music-making was becoming an

increasingly accessible and democratized artistic form. This trend is most evident today in the distribution

of music-making software with techno music magazines.

### Aside: Kraftwerk and German Techno: The Melding of Humanity and Technology

Although the technological advancements made by the DJ innovators in New York and Detroit were key, it

has been argued that the German band Kraftwerk most succinctly predicted and influenced the future of

modern electronic music (Sinker, 1996).[96] According to Sinker (1996), Reynolds (1998), and Collin

(1997), the band's vision of a synthesis between man and machine was extremely influential for black

American dance music, leading black artists to rework some of *Kraftwerk*'s original electronic music by

adding "rapped" lyrics – thus creating a new genre of dance music called "electro." Although this fusion of

"soul" music and electronic music is the basis for contemporary genres of rave music, some commentators

suggest that *Kraftwerk*'s influence can be viewed as a reflection of broader social and artistic trends.

Sinker (1996) discussed two theories about *Kraftwork's* melding of "humanity and technology" that pertain

to two prevalent and contradictory interpretations of computer-generated music. These interpretations are

especially relevant in the context of the 1990s, where electronic music has become a dominant musical

form and the centre of debates about the (positive and negative) impacts of technology on (post)modern

cultural life:

> The first [theory] suggests that their [Kraftwerk's] genius lies in their ability to edit the soul out of
> modern music. By stripping the emotion from it (and any subtexts which that might carry) they
> have created pure music from their machines. Music which demands to be listened to on its own
> terms, with its own internal reference points and logic. Modernist music taken to its ultimate
> conclusion. The second, and almost diametrically opposed theory is that the music which
> Kraftwerk makes is, in fact, pure electronic soul. The brilliance is located in an uncanny ability to
> invest those same machines with emotion and feeling. Their music is not modernist but post-
> modernist. What they do, in fact, is to drag the Beach Boys and Karlheinz Stockhausen and the
> Velvet Underground, kicking and screaming through micro-chip filters and circuit boards in an
> alchemical flurry of eclecticism. They polish it up and make it all new again for our late 20th
> century tastes (Sinker, 1996, p. 94).

Clearly these theories reflect contemporary understandings not only of technological music, but, as I will

show, the (arguably) "postmodern" rave scene as well, particularly in debates about the extent to which a

pro-technology culture should retain links to the 'humanity' of (early) electronic dance/*soul* music.

### 4.1.5 – Ibiza and Britain

Although the rave movement came to fruition in Britain, the roots of the movement can be traced back to

Ibiza, Spain – an inexpensive holiday-sun location for bohemian British working class youth in the early

1980s (Collin, 1997; Eisner, 1994; Garratt, 1998; Reynolds, 1998). The influx of tourism to Ibiza at this

time coincided with the import of house music to the island's night clubs from America and the increasing

availability of the drug Ecstasy (LSD, mescaline and cocaine were the stimulants of choice until this time),

creating a stage for a radical adaptation of the American dance club.

The original "pre-rave" parties were held at an Ibiza club named *Amnesia*, where DJ Alfredo

Fiorello, "a former journalist who'd fled the fascist rigors of his native Argentina for the laid-back

bohemian idyll," began to "spin" and "mix" imported house music from New York and Chicago (Reynolds,

1998, p. 58). DJ Fiorello gained a loyal audience of British youth whose background and activities were

described by Collin (1997) as follows:

> Most of them originated from the southern fringes of the capital, the stretch of London where
> inner city and suburbs meet...This area – completely unremarkable to the eye – had continually
> been influential in nurturing cultural movements through the seventies and eighties. The
> bohemian milieu that spawned David Bowie was centred around Beckenham; the original punks
> and the first followers of the Sex Pistols were the Bromley Contingent...[In Ibiza, on holiday,
> groups of these youth] would meet at bars...head out...to Amnesia where they would take Ecstasy
> and carouse until sun-up...The summer became an extended vacation in an alternate reality (p.
> 51).

This following of young British youth included Paul Oakenfold, a British DJ who had been to

Larry Levan's *Paradise Garage* in New York, and had unsuccessfully attempted to open an *Amnesia*-style

club in Britain in 1985.[97] In hindsight, according to Oakenfold, the missing element in the 1985 attempt

was the drug Ecstasy. After his first Ecstasy experience in 1987, Oakenfold and his business partner Ian St.

Paul opened up an after-hours club called *the Project* where "Ibiza veterans" would come sporting an

"Ibiza look and attitude" that was a "weird mix of Mediterranean beach bum, hippie, and soccer hooligan –

baggy trousers and T-shirts, paisley bandannas, dungarees, ponchos, Converse All-Stars sneakers – loose

fitting because the Ecstasy and non-stop trance dancing made you sweat buckets" (Reynolds, 1998, pp. 58-

59). Following *the Project*'s opening, a series of "house music nights" at other locations – particularly in a

club named *Shoom* – emerged and an exclusive "pre-rave" scene now existed. Reynolds (1998) explained

the irony of these origins, an irony that foreshadows current debates in the late 1990s Canadian rave scene:

> The Shoom ethos was love, peace and unity, universal tolerance, and we-are-all-the-same. It was
> supposed to be the death knell of clubland's [conventional dance clubs or bars] snobbish
> exclusivity, but there was an essential contradiction in the way that the Shoom experience was
> restricted to the original clique and their guests, plus a few minor celebrities (p. 61).

Despite its origins that supported a privileged "in" crowd, rave culture (known at this time as the

"acid house" culture) soon began to spread, as did the importing of the drug Ecstasy into Britain. Other

"acid house" nights began taking place and the scene was becoming almost too popular for the previously

"alternative" Ibiza originals. However, for the broader British youth population, the discovery of "acid

house" music and community (along with the drug Ecstasy) led the rave movement to its peak in summer

of 1988 – what has been called the second "summer of love."

This climaxing music-dance-drug movement was characterized by the integration of different

classes, races and sexual preferences at the same parties. Perhaps most notably, these "raves" (as they were

now known) appeared to transcend the well-established city territories that were previously defined by

soccer team loyalties. Reynolds (1998) described this surprising scene:

> Almost overnight, the box cutter-wielding troublemaker was metamorphosed into the 'love thug',
> or as Brit rapper Gary Clail later put it, 'the emotional hooligan'. 'Football firms' (warring gangs
> who supported rival teams) were going to the same clubs, but to everyone's surprise, there was
> never any trouble. They were so loved up on E [Ecstasy] they spend the night hugging each other
> rather than fighting (p. 64).

Sociologically, Redhead (1997a, 1997b), Reynolds (1998) and others have drawn parallels between British

football (soccer) and the rave movement, arguing that in 1980s Thatcherism, the "soccer match and the

warehouse party offered rare opportunities for the working class to experience a sense of collective

identity" (Reynolds, 1998, p. 64). Of course, like any subcultural movement, its "incubation period" was

rather short, and as Reynolds (1998) noted, soon after the "summer of love," the "love thugs" turned back

to "their old, tried and true techniques of getting a rush" (Reynolds, 1998, p. 64).

### 4.1.6 – The Aftermath and the Present: Moral Panics and Club Culture

According to most commentators, the end of the summer of love was as abrupt as the beginning. People

were becoming immune to Ecstasy's effects, and, of course, what is "too popular" (e.g., Disco) becomes

passé very quickly. As Redhead (1997a) argued, "the summer of 1988 was over when, on 1 October, the

*Sun* signaled the dawn of acid house as 'cool and groovy'" (p. 57). Moreover, an "anti-rave law" was

passed (the infamous Criminal Justice Act of 1994) and other mainstream media were creating "moral

panics" about the rave scene (e.g., sensationalizing high profile Ecstasy-related deaths – see Thornton,

1994, 1995). Redhead (1997a) memorialized the 'summer of 1988' in the following way:

> The 'summer of love 1988', itself a reworking of another mythical summer – the summer of love
> 1967 – looks set to take its place in the hallowed halls of pop legends. While the 1960s once
> slipped lazily into the early 1970s, pop time has now accelerated with a vengeance – as if
> reclaiming borrowed time – according the public phenomenon of acid house little more than a
> long weekend... (p. 56).

What evolved, according to many, is what Thornton called "clubculture."[98] As noted in the

overview of Thornton's work in chapter 2, this was a culture governed less by "peace, love and

togetherness" and more by a subcultural class system – akin to Becker's (1963) hierarchy of "hipness" in

the jazz musician community. According to clubbers (in Thornton's research), it matters what you wear,

how you dance and how you talk. Although this "evolved rave" was similar in some respects to the scene

in the summer of 1988 (e.g., dance, electronic music, and drugs), commentators argue that people's

interpretations of rave-related activities in 1988 were radically different from the "post-rave" scene (i.e.,

"be free" in 1988 vs "be cool" in the mid and late 1990s). These theorizations are investigated further (in

the context of Canada) in the empirical section of this study (chapter 5).

### 4.2 – A History of Toronto's Rave Scene: Incubation, Fluctuation, Commercialization, and Fragmentation

The origins and early development of the rave scene in Toronto are reminiscent of the scene's history

generally, although the timing of the Toronto movements and, moreover, the local modifications,

innovations and personalities are distinct. With this in mind, I have summarized the development of the

Toronto rave scene into five stages. Although parts of this historical development are well known by some

"veteran" ravers and others, it is not well-documented to date. For this reason, the data for this section is

drawn from a combination of local/underground dance music magazines/webzines (particularly a column

named "Bricklayers" in a zine/webzine called Klublife), reputable websites (that is, websites put together

by established individuals in the Toronto rave party/dance/music scene), and from interviews with key

individuals who have been associated with the scene from its beginnings.

#### 4.2.1 – Stage 1: Early Dance Club Scene

> In 1983, I was standing in line with my future partner at the Diamond Club, the first New York style nightclub in Toronto. It was the first time I experienced something different in Toronto, notorious at the time for using lots of brass and mirrors in their venues. I liked what I saw, it was exciting. We were into it so much we made plans right away to open our own place right away (underground club innovator Charles Khabouth quoted in webzine Klublife, issue 8 – see www.klublife.com)

Club Z, a venue owned by now renowned Toronto club owner Charles Khabouth, was one of the first

Toronto clubs to feature "house" music. In a Klublife magazine interview with Khabouth, he described

how Club Z was a safe place for a diverse crowd which included "a lot of oriental, black, white and gay and

other ethnic backgrounds" (Khabouth quoted in Klublife). *Club Z* was followed by other after hours clubs

(as well as periodic warehouse parties) that were featuring house music tracks. These clubs included *Stilife*

(also owned by Khabouth), *Twilight Zone*, and *Klub Max* (Klublife, issue 2). This style of dance club still

exists today, although the emergence of the "rave scene" in Toronto led to at least a partial split between

those who continued to attend the (often gay) clubs, and those who became part of the rave movement.

This issue is elaborated on in Chapter five.

### 4.2.2 – Stage 2: Chris Shepperd, Dance Radio and the Imported Rave Scene

> After the 'Summer of Love' in 1988, Richard [Norris] and I wanted to create that vibe in Toronto. It was October 1988 that we threw our first party trying to create the 'love one another...be free carnival vibe' that was so apparent in this scene (radio DJ and music producer Chris Shepperd, quoted in Klublife, issue 6)

Chris Shepperd (his rave DJ name is "Dogwhistle") has long been one of Canada's premiere personalities

in the alternative music scene. Responsible for Canada's first "rave" on October 23, 1988, he continued to

import ideas derived from various trips to New York City and England into the Toronto and Canadian

dance music scene. Shepperd (along with another Toronto entrepreneur known in rave circles as "Happy

Dog") opened the first "rave" club (akin to the "acid house"/rave clubs of Britain) called *23 Hop* – taking

its name from the date of Shepperd's first Canadian rave performance.[99] The impacts of *23 Hop* on the

rave scene were acknowledged by interviewees in the current study and were described as follows on

Shepperd's website (which is called "Pirate-Sounds 2000"):

> From its inception the original "23 Hop" was widely acknowledged as the birthplace of rave culture in Canada and the launching pad for the country's first two rave companies, *Exodus* and *Chemistry*. Although Dogwhistle wasn't the only DJ to spin at the new club, he was without question the most influential, especially after returning from his many trips abroad (quoted on the website http://piratesounds.com/index.html).[100]

It was during this early period that Shepperd was introducing "acid house"/rave music to Toronto

on CFNY radio, then on Energy 108 (Toronto's first "all dance" music station) and then into a nationally

syndicated "Pirate Radio" show. His exalted on-air persona included "Shepisms" such as calling Toronto

"the city of love," referring to his listeners as "brothers and sisters," and describing his show as "often

imitated, never duplicated." It is worth noting that as Chris Shepperd has become more well-known to

mainstream dance crowds (and since he begun to produce mainstream dance music CDs), his "stock" in the

"underground" rave community dropped dramatically as came to increasingly be perceived as a "sell out" (although his early contributions to the scene are still generally recognized). Don Burns (rave DJ name Dr. Trance), another innovator in the Toronto scene, made a similarly successful transition from alternative music on CFNY to "rave music" (various genres of rave-related music were emerging at this time – this is discussed later) on Energy 108, Hits 103.5, and now CHIN 100.7 – the late night "global groove network" (these are all Toronto-based stations).

### 4.2.3 – Stage 3: Promotion Companies, Competition and the Growth of the Scene

Following Shepperd's first rave in 1988 and the opening of 23 Hop, rave promotion companies emerged in the Toronto rave scene. These companies were responsible for organizing the initial "rave warehouse parties," the classic rave event (with perhaps the exception of outdoor raves) according to "rave lore."[101] In the late 1980s and early 1990s, raves were infrequent but much anticipated, occurring approximately once a month. According to those interviewed, promoters of the early parties (e.g., Exodus and Chemistry) were most concerned with "providing a good show and a good time," and less with making money. As the popularity of this still "underground" culture began to rise, other rave companies, such as Nitrous, Pleasure Force, Atlantis, and Better Days formed. Although the rave parties were still taking place in warehouses, old clubs, and outdoor locations, interviewees who were part of the scene during the "early rave days" suggested that promoters were increasingly "in it for the money," unlike the earlier days when it was more about the music. This tension continues to the present. Of course, this key difference between the "early days of rave" and the present might be, at least in part, attributable to the selective memory of those nostalgizing the "good old days" of rave. These issues are examined further in chapters five and six.

### 4.2.4 – Stage 4: The Rise, Fall and Transformation of the Scene

In the years from 1992 to 1996, the rave scene in Toronto was becoming increasingly "above ground" and popular (particularly with younger teens), with the parties becoming easier to find and larger. There were regular locations and nights for some raves (e.g., the Destiny promotion company held weekly events called "Destiny Fridays" just off of Yonge St. at an old club location called Club Generation – my first Toronto rave fieldwork session took place here). According to many ravers, an increasing number of people were coming to raves because "it was cool" and because of the drugs, not because of the community aspect of

rave culture (this tension is also elaborated on in Chapter five). According to many of the "veteran" ravers, the scene appeared to be getting "dark and dangerous," with only some promoters throwing "safe" parties that were intended to promote the music and the positive "vibe." Stories emerged about some promoters turning off water in the washrooms so that dehydrated ravers would be required to buy overpriced bottled water. Some ravers talked about a "new element" of people (those interviewed would not call them "ravers"), usually referring to males, who attended the parties with the intention of "picking up" rather than enjoying the music and dancing. These ravers were called "toxic ravers" by some of those in the scene. Of course, this "downward spiral" was referred to usually by veteran ravers who nostalagized about the early rave scene. Many ravers spoke positively about rave companies that are intent on creating and maintaining a "positive vibe," and using their flyer-advertisements and websites to promote the education of ravers (i.e., education about the rave philosophy and responsible drug use). Non-profit raves (usually smaller parties) put on by some promoters characterized this movement to maintain/save the scene (e.g., former promotion company *Transcendence* was revered for these "positive vibe" parties). These themes and varying perspectives are elaborated on in Chapters five and six.

### 4.2.5 – Stage 5: Mainstreaming and Fragmentation of the Scene

The movement toward larger raves and the commercialization of rave culture followed a relatively long incubation period for the Toronto scene (arguably from the late 1980s until about 1996), compared to Britain, for example. Regardless of the exact timing, the mainstreaming of the rave scene in 1996 and beyond was characterized by the emergence of several "rave nights" and locations (e.g., like "Destiny Fridays"), as well as after hours clubs featuring known DJs from the Toronto area. The rave "product" was now available virtually every night of the week. This mainstreaming coincided with the increasing fragmentation of rave music genres. Although different types of rave music always existed in the Toronto rave scene and abroad, distinct camps of ravers who preferred one type of music over another were becoming increasingly separated with the variety of club options – a separation that changed the nature of the rave subculture from *a* mid-sized community to *a series of* mid-sized communities (i.e., a larger, more fragmented scene). Having said this, there was still significant interaction between these scenes since ravers seldom limit themselves to just one genre of electronic music (see Chapter five).

The ages of those attending various parties were also becoming notably differentiated. On the one hand, more traditional raves parties that were committed to a non-alcoholic policy, high energy techno music, and to a distinctly "rave" décor and etiquette (see research setting for an elaboration on what a "traditional" rave party usually entails) often attracted a younger (~15-21) crowd. On the other hand, more "dance club" oriented venues catered more to older ravers (~19-27) who want to drink and listen to more soulful dance/house music. For example, Toronto now possesses a world-renowned "rave club" called *Industry Nightclub* that sells alcohol (legally at a bar), and brings in famous DJs (again, often "house" music DJs for the older crowd). This dichotomy is reminiscent of the early Chicago house music scenes – where the older "more sophisticated crowd" attended Frankie Knuckles' nights at the *Warehouse* (and later the *Powerplant*) for his more "soulful" mixes of house music, while the younger crowd attended Ron Hardy's more frantic, fast-paced house music parties. In the same way, the less expensive drug "Crystal," believed by many to be a more dangerous version of Ecstasy (I have been told "that Crystal is to Ecstasy what Crack is to Cocaine") has often been associated with the younger parties in Toronto (and Ecstasy with the older).

Both types of parties have become extremely well-publicized. The tradition for rave locations to be "secret" which existed in the early 1990s and to a certain extent in the mid-1990s, has all but disappeared, although locations are often kept quiet until just before the party as part of keeping an (artificial) mystique around the rave. This is, in part, because most of the raves are now held in legal locations because illegal party locations put promoters who might have significant amounts of money invested in bringing high profile DJs in from Europe or the US, at risk to take a big loss if it were shut down.[102] Most promoters who I spoke with indicated that they had learned at least a few "hard lessons" about the financial risks of promoting parties (attributable to various factors, such as poor marketing, bad weekend choice for rave, etc.) and were less willing to take chances than in the past.

In reaction to this mainstreaming, some ravers have continued to (occasionally) throw smaller raves with only "word of mouth" invitation list (according to a few "in the loop" interviewees). This return to more intimate rave parties can be interpreted as either: (a) resistance to the commercialization of the rave – a resistant move back to "the original vibe" of the early parties where only those who supported the

rave values of community, peace and love attended; or (b) the creation of an exclusive, contradictory

subculture that attempts to maintain the original values of the rave at the expense of one of the central

values – inclusiveness. Of course, examining the meanings that the ravers give to these smaller parties is a

crucial step in attaining an informed understanding of these historical developments (Chapter five).

Overall, and although this history of the Toronto rave scene has been brief and cursory, it

highlights important movements and trends while identifying central issues and tensions to be elaborated

on later.

### 4.3 – Themes in the Study of Rave Culture

> I have a theory that there is an inverse relationship between the vitality of a pop genre and the
> number of books written about it. Compared with the thousands of biographies, essay collections,
> and critical overviews that clog up rock's arteries, only a handful of tomes (academic efforts
> included) have addressed the dance-and-drug culture – despite the fact that it has been the
> dominant form of pop music in Europe for nearly a decade. I guess this theory makes my own
> effort here one of the first nails in the coffin (Reynolds, 1998, p. 390).

The lack of research on rave culture in Europe and America, while significant, pales in comparison to the

disparity of research on the rave phenomenon in Canada. Only recently has rave culture been taken

seriously as a Canadian youth subcultural movement (in some newspaper articles), and to date there is

essentially no existing academic work that has examined the group with *empirical and theoretical* rigor.

Even Tanner's (1996) influential and comprehensive book on youth and deviance in Canada had only mass

media reports to inform his cursory discussion of ravers – a group that still exists in the "subcultural

shadows" of punks and skinheads in Canadian youth culture literature (seldom receiving mention in most

literature reviews on the topic). Of course, this lack of attention might be perceived as a sign that this

group has effectively maintained its underground status, as Reynolds noted above. However, considering

the mass media attention the group has garnered, the culture's clear movement from underground status to

a major player in Toronto's youth entertainment scene (e.g., rave-related events take place almost every

night of the week, major raves attract thousands), and the somewhat substantiated claim made by

academics outside of Canada that rave is the "first postmodern youth subculture" (McGuigan, 1992;

McRobbie, 1994e), it would seem that a major youth cultural phenomenon has been overlooked in

Canadian research circles.

With this background, the following section critically examines the central movements in the study of rave culture generally, and the limited existing work on rave in Canada. While this review will identify most of the major areas of research in rave cultural studies, the focus will be on two general thematic categories (building on and clarifying Redhead and McRobbie's earlier noted rave-related works). These are: (1) community and identity in rave culture, (2) rave and resistance.

### 4.3.1 — Rave, Community and Identity

Research on rave culture has examined the ways that raver identities are constructed and developed, and how this is related to conceptions of the rave community. In particular, studies have focused on the following topics: (1) the significance of the "sense of togetherness" that people experience in the rave environment; (2) the transitory nature of the rave community; and (3) the related makeup of rave culture as a series of fragmented sub-communities.

Regarding the first topic, ravers have been celebrated for valuing connectedness, togetherness and acceptance, and for effectively transcending gender, race, class, and age barriers in their gatherings and attitudes (Pini, 1997; Tagg, 1994; L. Tomlinson, 1998). While conventional dance clubs and bars are associated with (masculinist) intimidation-based norms of interaction, raves are considered by many to be communal experiences characterized by a *sharing* of music, drug and dance induced feelings – a "euphoric community." Pini (1997) defined this breakdown of social barriers as a "text of sameness," referring to the rave's "non-oppositionality, its accessibility to everyone and its potential to breakdown social barriers" (p. 161). Pini (1997) went on to argue that:

> [the] 'unisex' clothes [of the early British rave scene] and the whole 'dress to sweat' emphasis of the scene are important factors in the perceived erosion of [for example], sexual differences...Although this perceived erosion of social differences is related to the empathetic effects of 'E', many enjoy raving without this. For this reason it becomes implausible to attribute the emergence of this theme solely to the drug – the drug is just one part of the ensemble (p. 161).

Similarly, L. Tomlinson (1997, drawing on Tagg, 1994) suggested that rave music itself, with its emphasis on background sounds and deemphasis on melody, symbolically prioritizes the group over the individual.

As noted in the theoretical section of this dissertation (Part 1), these understandings were contradicted by Thornton's (1995) work that emphasized the subcultural distinctions within the rave/club culture (see chapter 2), where the "cool" "in" crowd was distinguished from those who are outside of the

scene (the "out-group") within a social hierarchy (see also Frith, 1987). It is important to note, however, that Pini's work was focused more on the early British rave scene where parties were held in illegal warehouse and field locations, unlike Thornton's work which focused more on the club-based youth culture.

Furthermore, and as Pini (1997) herself has argued, despite its tendency toward social integration, openess and acceptance, the rave is still a gendered space, evident from the preponderance of males in the primary "rave occupations" of DJ and promoter (see also McRobbie, 1993 for feminist commentary on rave culture). Overall then, Pini's position that rave culture is a culture that is "subtly gendered" but has still effectively transcended many traditional socio-cultural boundaries (and Thornton's contradictory "distinction" model of rave) will be evaluated and discussed in Chapter six.

### 4.3.2 – The Transitional, Tribal, Rave Community

In his research in London, England, Malbon (1998) argued that in contemporary club culture (post-rave culture) it is preferable to examine the ways that youth use the social space of the club to negotiate their identity, explaining that:

> Relatively diverse elements (groups) and individual identities are subsumed within the wider and much more fragile identification present within that space. Uniformity and unity are still apparent in certain strands of clubbing. But unity of identity, and in particular an identification with a specific sub-cultural grouping, appear to be far less significant (Malbon, 1998, pp. 277-278).

On this basis, Malbon adopted the notion of "neo-tribes" or "transitory tribes" (building on Maffesoli, 1995) to theorize and emphasize the ways that youth move *between* groups or communities – with the critical aspect of these "tribal" identifications being the "*spaces* of identification" (p. 280) (as opposed to identifying with stable peer groups). This is an innovative reaction to more traditional ways of understanding the complexities of subcultural membership. In essence, Malbon replaced the standard notion of "unity" (a term linked with deterministic descriptors of communities, such as class, race and gender) with *unicity* – "a much more open and heterogeneous condition" (Malbon, 1998, p. 284; see also Gore, 1997 for a similar application of Maffesoli's notion of tribalism as it relates to rave dance).[103]

This position is akin to Straw's (1991, 1997b) distinction between "music communities" and "music scenes" in the Canadian context (see Irwin (1977) for an extensive examination of scenes). Straw's

"scene" is actually akin to Malbon's "tribal community." Straw (1997b) differentiates between community

and scene as follows:

> One may posit a musical scene as distinct, in significant ways, from older notions of a musical community. The latter presumes a population group whose population is rather stable – according to a wide range of sociological variables...A musical scene, in contrast, is that cultural space where a range of musical practices coexist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation, and according to widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilization...At one level, this distinction simply concretizes two countervailing pressures within spaces of musical activity: one towards the stabilization of local historical communities, and another which works to disrupt such continuities, to cosmopolitanize and relativize them...the point is not that of designating particular cultural spaces as one or the other, but of examining the ways in which particular musical practices 'work' to produce a sense of community within the conditions of metropolitan music scenes (pp. 494-495, drawn from Straw, 1991).

For Straw (1997) then, the unity of the dance music scene in the Canadian context is "grounded more

fundamentally in the way in which...spaces of musical activity have come to establish a distinctive

relationship to historical time and geographical location" (p. 497).

### 4.3.3 – Fragmentation, Disunity, and Rave

In a departure from Malbon's depiction of a "*relatively* unified" rave culture (that is characterized by an

unstable membership in a stable culture), Reynolds (1997) described how rave has evolved into a number

of "scenes" that are still loosely defined by class, race, region, and taste, arguing that the "rave myth of

transracial, cross-class unity remains in tatters" (p 104). Drawing on a historical analysis of music scenes

and related drug scenes in various countries, Reynolds (1997) made the following observations:

> Just as the Woodstock convergence gave way to the fragmentation of seventies rock, just as punk split into factions based on disagreements about what punk was about and what was the way forward, so too has rave E-sponsored unity inevitably fractured...Each post-rave fragment seems to have preserved one aspect of rave culture at the expense of the others. House music, in its more song-ful, hands-in-the-air, handbag form, has reverted to mere disco...Progressive house and garage is just your pre-rave metropolitan clubland coked-out elitism back in full effect. Techno, ambient and electronica strip rave of its, well, raveyness, to fit a white student sensibility...Jungle...[is] the post-rave offshoot that has most thoroughly severed itself from rave's premises. You could call it 'gangsta rave,' in so far as jungle has taken on hip-hop and regga's ethos of masked self-containment and controlled dance moves, and shed rave's abandonment and demonstrativeness (p. 103).[104]

Reynolds perspective is at least tentatively confirmed by various other historical examinations of dance

music (e.g., Kempster's (1996) work on house music), particularly those that have focused on the

development of more specific sub-genres of house music, such as James (1997) work on jungle music.

*4.3.4 — A Critical Assessment of "Community" Perspectives*

Crucial factors in assessing Pini, Malbon's and Reynold's formulations is the timing and location of their research. While Pini was studying the early rave scene in Britain (~88-92), and Malbon was studying British club culture in the mid-late 1990s, Reynolds' work (1998 in particular) is longitudinal, and follows broader trends in the music scene, unlike the focused ethnographies of Malbon and Pini. Despite these explanations, it is also clear that the authors' theoretical preferences/alignments also account for at least some of these disparities. A related problem is that there is no apparent dialogue between these authors or their positions (e.g., acknowledgements of and/or reactions to contrary perspectives in literature reviews) except for those embedded in Reynolds broader theoretical ponderings of authors like Deleuze, Guatarri and Adorno (which *are* insightful). Also, these researchers provided little insight into scenes besides the British one (although Reynolds briefly alludes to similar trends in Scotland, U.S.A., and the Netherlands). For these reasons, it is important to remain cautious about the applicability of these perspectives in other social and geographical contexts, and to focus on providing a more balanced theoretical discussion of study findings.

*4.3.5 — Cultural Significance, Resistance and the Rave*

Remembering also the comparison between McRobbie's optimistic neo-Marxist interpretation of the rave scene (that theorized rave as a form of "subtle"/micro resistance) and the MIPC's ambivalent view (that theorized rave as a somewhat chaotic, shallow culture),[105] this section examines how these themes related to subcultural resistance are played out in Pini's, Malbon's and Reynolds' work.

Pini (1997) has argued with optimism that "the rave dance floor...is one of the few spaces which afford – and indeed, encourage – open displays of physical pleasure," and that these pleasures "do not clearly 'fit' standard, patriarchal definitions of sexuality, and eroticism" (p. 167). Pini (1997) suggested that with its emphasis on dance, physicality, affection and unity, rave might be a step toward "a general 'feminization' of 'youth'" (p. 168). Similarly, Malbon (1998), in an updated and reinterpreted version of de Certeau's (1984) subtle resistance model, emphasized the temporary, fleeting, and apolitical character of the rave scene and the ways that resistance is played out on a micro-level:

in the dynamic and exciting combinations of musics, in the fleeting pause before the DJ drops the bass in, in the semi-visibility of a darkened dance floor, in taking Ecstasy (in not taking Ecstasy), in dressing in a certain way, in the emotional and empathetic effects of close proximity to hundreds of others, not necessarily like yourself, but sharing, at the very least, a desire to be tight there, right now (Malbon, 1998, pp. 280-281.

On this basis then, Malbon (1998) argued that "the resistance is found through losing yourself, paradoxically to find yourself" (p. 281; see also Chambers, 1994, p. 16). This position is akin to the popular (romantic) argument that raves are "temporary autonomous zones" (from Bey, 1991), "power surges" against normality, "as opposed to doomed attempt[s] at permanent revolution" (as explained by Reynolds, 1998, p. 245).

Reynolds pointedly disagreed with these kinds of optimistic interpretations, although he acknowledged the pleasures of rave culture's "desiring machine" *when it's running smoothly* (Reynolds, 1997, p. 104, drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Instead, Reynolds suggested that the high speed of the desiring machine is little more than a subculture of youth "going nowhere fast." He follows the Deleuze and Guattari metaphor noted above, arguing that there comes the inevitable point at which rave's desiring machine turns "fascist," "when the single-mindedness turns to tunnel-vision, when getting high becomes getting out of it" (p. 104). Reynolds (1997) encapsulated the position that rave has moved from "a way of life" to "get a life," and exposed the fallacy that rave is a positive form of apolitical resistance in the following way:

> Rave culture has never really been about altering reality, merely exempting yourself from it for a while. In that sense, rave is really a sort of dry run or acclimatization phase for virtual reality; it is adapting our nervous systems, bringing our perceptual and sensory apparatus up to speed, evolving us towards the post-human subjectivity that digital technology requires and engenders...Computer games and rave culture seem, in this dystopian view, to be creating a subjectivity geared towards fascination rather than meaning, sensation rather than sensibility, creating an appetite for impossible states of hyperstimulation, they are to virtual reality what crack is to cocaine...The avante-garde/postmodern nihilism of rave music is signalled by the metaphors that it seems to demand – all connotative on enthrallment, of loss of control...but also to utter futility – like the metaphor of the rollercoaster (going round in circles, going nowhere fast) (p. 109).

In his sophisticated analysis of the various rave music genres (and related music "scenes"), Reynolds also identified the (self) destructive tendencies related with both the high speed, explosive, "psychotic" types of rave music such as 'gabba' and 'dark hardcore' (which he argues are symbolic forms of retaliation against reality) and with complex, futuristic, technological, implosionary, "autistic" forms

such as 'trance' music (which he considers to be a symbolic secession from reality). Clearly, Reynolds'

description of the fragmented and often mutated/bastardized scenes that evolved from the "original" rave

scene, the negative consequences of "losing yourself" in any scene, and the linking of a "dead-end" drug

culture with music culture, provides a powerful counterpoint to the pro-rave positions espoused by Pini and

Malbon.

### 4.3.6 – Assessment of Resistance Perspectives and Links with McRobbie and MIPC

Reynolds provides the most sophisticated, historically informed and perhaps the most balanced and honest

(critical) assessment of the rave scene (Pini and Malbon, like many ethnographers, appear to "side with"

ravers, defending them from media and public scrutiny). However, Reynolds general commentary on the

scene is not clearly supported by any in-depth, rigorous qualitative (ethnographic) analysis (although his

work was well informed by interviews with high profile DJs and various other high profile "insiders"

affiliated with the development of rave and electronic dance music). His writing is obviously well-

informed by cultural theory and, as noted, a superior understanding of dance music history. However, his

work provides little insight into the (multiple) meanings that ravers in the scene give to their experiences.

For this reason, and while his sophisticated theoretical position clearly deserves attention in any subsequent

analysis, it should be viewed with caution because of his seeming tendency to overstate the negative

aspects of the rave scene fragmentation.

Pini's and Malbon's works are more straightforward. Although their "pro-resistance" stances are

open to criticism (e.g., some commentators would argue that Pini and Malbon have effectively found

resistance everywhere they looked), their work still provides useful insights into the ways that the rave can

be a space for empowering experiences. Moreover, both authors brought innovative, updated theoretical

positions to their analyses (Pini's postmodern-feminist position and Malbon's "tribal" spatial analysis),

both of which are underscored by subtle resistance frameworks. The most significant contributions of their

work lies in the ethnographic data which they draw upon to make these theoretical comments – data which

allows the reader to make more informed judgements about their theoretical assertions (unlike Reynolds

work, which requires 'too much faith' in the author/theorist/commentator's view of raver perceptions).

These readings of rave culture were presented here with the intention of solidifying, complicating, building on, and clarifying the more general theoretical points that McRobbie and Redhead have made about youth culture in the 1990s (although rave culture was central to their arguments). Although I would argue that there are still two interpretive camps – the optimistic "subtle resistance" camp (McRobbie, Malbon, Pini) and the ambivalent/pessimistic camp (Redhead, Stanley and Reynolds) – the intent here was to critically examine the "state of the art" rave literatures as part of developing an adequately comprehensive and responsible departure point for the following empirical study.

## 4.4 – Approaching the Canadian Rave Scene

### 4.4.1 – Current Research

Evident from this outline of current research is both the need to clarify existing theoretical work (e.g., by providing balanced discussions that acknowledge existing explanations of the rave phenomenon), and to inform existing theory with in-depth qualitative (ethnographic) research. Moreover, though, it is crucial in the context of this dissertation to consider how the Canadian (and specifically Southern Ontario) rave scene is located in and relates to these British-based theories of rave culture. To date, the only rigorous research that has examined aspects of rave culture in Canada was conducted by Tim Weber (formerly) of the Addiction Research Council of Toronto.[106] In a preliminary report (Addiction Research Foundation, 1998; Weber, 1999), Weber identified important background characteristics of the Toronto rave scene, which included the following:

- The majority of those who attend raves are Caucasian, middle-class and between 15-25 years old
- People attend raves because they like the non-judgmental atmosphere compared to clubs or parties and they enjoy dancing and music
- The most frequent drug used was cannabis, although several others are available and being used including: cocaine, crystal, ecstasy, GHB (commonly known as the "date rape" drug), Ketamine, LSD, Marijuana, and Psilocybin
- Most drugs were considered acceptable to use with the exception of crack cocaine and intravenous drugs – it was generally agreed that alcohol does not belong at raves
- Trends over time include: age of raves has decreased; raves are now larger and more commercial; raves are attracting a more diverse following; more people looking to buy drugs

In addition to Weber's research, the Addiction Research Foundation has consistently been attentive to the drug-related activities in the Toronto rave scene. The Ontario Student Drug Use Survey conducted in 1995 showed that 1.8 percent of students said they had used Ecstasy in the past year (an

increase in use of 0.6 percent from the 1993 survey) and 13 per cent said they had attended at least one rave

in the same period (Dubey, 1996). More generally, the links between rave culture and drug use/abuse

(Drake, 1995), the dangers of tainted (impure) Ecstasy at raves, and the increased use of other types of

potentially dangerous drugs (such as Ketamine, also known as "Special K") have been identified and

discussed (Chen, Monkman and Dubey, 1996).

Although drug use and abuse are not the focus of the current study (at least not to the same extent

as the Addiction Research Foundation's work), the positioning of drugs in rave culture and people's

experiences with drugs as they relate to the other rave activities are central. More comprehensive work on

these aspects has been pursued outside of Canada by Saunders in particular (see Saunders, 1996 for an

exemplary overview of current research).

### 4.4.2 – The Canadian Media and Rave Culture

In Canada (as well as in the UK and elsewhere – see McRobbie and Thornton, 1995; Thornton, 1994), rave

culture has received rigorous attention in the mass media. These journalistic accounts adopt two, often

contradictory, perspectives on rave culture. On one hand, articles tend to focus on rave as a social problem,

usually emphasizing the "deadly" use of drugs at raves. The drugs most often referred to are MDMA

("Ecstasy or "E") and crystal methamphetamine ("Crystal"), which induce euphoria and "energize" users

for all-night dancing, and ketamine hydrochloride ("Special K"), which is a hallucinogenic . These reports

describe explicitly how "Ecstasy" and "Crystal," when combined with non-stop dancing in hot, crowded

spaces can lead to heat stroke, "blood-clotting, muscle breakdown, [and] kidney failure...while [leading to]

structural brain damage in those who take the drug regularly for as little as two weeks" (Roberts, 1992, p.

4H; Drake, 1995). Others focus more on the moral issues surrounding a culture of youth that attends all-

night dance parties each weekend 'to escape from reality' (Wright, 1993) and still others were concerned

with the noise problems that rave parties create in residential areas. The following headlines found in

Canadian newspapers demonstrate these trends:

> *Death and Crystal Meth* – cover of Hamilton's View magazine (December 23, vol. 4, 50, 1999).
>
> *Drug called ecstasy remains pillar of 'rave' dance scene* – The Record (Kitchener/Waterloo),
> March 9, 1996 (Ditchbum, J., 1996, p. D4)

*Rave Drug GHB doesn't mix well: T.O. club goers increasingly end up in hospital* — National Post, Tueday March 9, 1999 (Cudmore, J., 1999, B4)

*Richmond turns down volume on raves: Complaints from Vancouver residents led councillors to draft tough new regulations* — Vancouver Sun, September 17, 1998 (Bellett, G., 1998, B4)

*UBC [University of British Columbia] calls an end to all-night rave parties: A party on the weekend ended with four overdoses and a home invasion* — Vancouver Sun, June 2, 1998 (Culbert, L., 1998, p. B3).

*Drug chic hits the mall: The buzz at Eatons — Ravers and marijuana aficionados are reading a lot of nudge, nudge, wink, wink into the latest advertising campaigns such as Eaton's, Roots, and the Body Shop. The companies say it's a non-issue. Whatever.* — National Post, December, 29, 1998 (Raphael, M., 1998, pp. B5-B6).

*Study says ravers risk memory loss and other brain damage if they take ecstasy* National Post, November 2, 1998 (Edwards, S., 1998, p. D3).

Alternative media, and more recently mainstream media (often articles written by young

journalists who go to raves themselves — e.g., Landale, 1998) are at times supportive of the rave movement,

focusing on the "peace, love, unity, respect" based philosophy that characterizes the subculture. Some

describe how raves, rave music, and rave dance help one achieve a meditative state where social barriers

disappear and a connection is made "with a larger community" (Lehmann-Haupt, 1995, p. 78). The drug

Ecstasy is described as "a capsule of Zen, promoting a state of open-minded receptivity" (Reynolds, 1994,

p. 56). Headlines (in Canadian-based and North American wide publications) generally highlight the "hip"

and inviting aspects of the rave, while others emphasize the positive contributions/aspects of this often

stigmatized group:

*And the beat goes on, and on, and on — 'Sharing!' 'Hugging!' 'Back Rubs!' 'Fun!'* — The Globe and Mail, June 6, 1998 (McLaren, L., 1998, pp. D1-D2)

*Rave New World* — High Times Magazine, vol. 17, 1992 (West, R., & Hager, S., 1992, p. 8)

*Raves are all the rage* — Winnipeg Free Press, July 18, 1994 (Bradley, B., 1994, p. 5)

*Rave Culture all the rage to "connect" — Raves a convergence of love and music* The Toronto Star, July 14, 1998 (Landale, E., 1998, pp. F1-F2)

*Raving: Techno-hippies preach peace and love amid clandestine party scene in warehouses and farm fields* — The Toronto Star, March 27, 1993 (Wright, L., 1993, pp. K1, K10)

*Sacred raves — These all night dance marathons look like hedonistic escape, but raves may just be the defining spiritual expression of a new generation* — Yoga Journal, May/June 1995 (Lehmann-Haupt, R., 1995, pp. 76-81)

These headlines demonstrate how the media tend to simultaneously commercialize/glorify the same group they stigmatize (for similar evidence in the British context, see Redhead, 1997c; Saunders, 1996; Thornton, 1994). Recent research has also shown how subcultural groups 'fight back' against these mass-mediated labels/ideologies in alternative media forms. This identified resistance-media movement highlights the need to rethink conventional ways of understanding the relationships between youth and the media. As McRobbie and Thornton (1995) argue:

> every stage in the process of constructing a moral panic [as outlined by media scholars], as well as the social relations that support it, should be revised...We argue that 'folk devils' [e.g., deviant youth subcultures] are less marginalized than they once were; they not only find themselves vociferously and articulately supported in the same mass media which castigates them, but their interests are also defended by their own niche and micro-media (p. 559).

Of course, journalistic portrayals are only part of the intertextual story that has been told about rave culture to Canadian audiences. Ravers and rave have been featured in other media too. A televised 20/20 report shown during prime time on a Saturday night on ABC included a segment where a hidden camera picked up and focused on a drug deal in a parking lot outside of an American rave. A fiction movie called "Loved-Up" described the problems experienced by a young woman who started spending time with an Ecstasy user, and subsequently became part of the rave/club culture – the movie ending with the woman breaking off her relationship with the Ecstasy user who appeared destined to continue his life focused on drugs and parties.[107] Other popular accounts of the rave scene have appeared in a recent wave of popular novels about rave cultures and amphetamine drugs cultures (Champion, 1998; Rushkoff, 1994, 1997), the most notorious being those by Irvine Welsh whose book Trainspotting was made into a popular movie (with a cult following), the soundtrack from which has found its way into many clubs and raves (see also Welsh, 1997a, 1997b). There are several dance magazines, both popular (e.g., the acclaimed Britain based publications MixMag and Future Music) and underground (e.g., the Toronto rave publications Tribe and Klublife) that provide pro-rave depictions/discussions.

Although this dissertation does not focus specifically on media portrayals, an underlying goal of this empirical research is to inform what are often considered to be unbalanced and somewhat uninformed (that is, uninformed by rigorous ethnographic study) mass media portrayals of youth culture.

### 4.5 – Summary and Departure Points

In both the Canadian and British literature on rave culture, the *range* of interpretations made by those in

and around the rave scene are seldom addressed or examined in any depth. With the exception of

Redhead's brief (1997a) overview in his book from Subcultures to Clubcultures and aspects of Reynolds'

(1998) and McRobbie;s (1996a, 1994e) work, commentators rarely provide theoretically balanced

arguments or pointed discussions of other researchers' positions. Moreover, few authors (with the

exceptions noted previously) adequately acknowledge the complexity of cultural groups on a macro (using

structural analysis) *and* micro level (e.g., drawing on ethnographic research). Similarly, and more

generally, there is currently a relative lack of empirical "testing" of rave-related theory through field

research. In this case study of rave culture in Toronto, I attempt to be attentive to these issues while

informing broader arguments related to youth cultural theory and research.

### 4.6 – Methodological Considerations and Research Settings

Data collection for this case study took place over a three and a half year period, starting September 1995

and continuing up to March 1999. The research was conducted in various Southern Ontario locales

including Hamilton, St. Catherines, Kitchener and Guelph, although Toronto was the focal point. The

following section summarizes and justifies the research design and method. Underlying this approach is a

commitment to using what Willis (1978, p. 196) called a "cluster" of methods. These methods are outlined

below.

### 1. Participant observation

Participant observation was a primary means of data collection. This research took place, for the most part,

during two research phases. Phase one was from September to December of 1995 (at which time I attended

7 raves) and phase two from December 1997 to April 1998 (when I attended 6 raves). In addition to

attending raves, I also spent time at rave record stores in Toronto, sat in on "rave radio" sessions at two

campus radio stations (I was part of an on-air discussion about the state of the rave scene at one station),

and attended a "community meeting" in North York (a part of Toronto) that was focused on drug issues

related to rave culture (this was attended by health-care professionals, police, parents, educators, and a few

members of the rave community). All rave participant observation sessions took place in Toronto, the

centre of the Southern Ontario rave world (although increasing numbers of rave parties are taking place in surrounding cities as the scene has become more commercialized and widespread).

The "state of the Toronto rave scene" in September of 1995 (as it appeared to me and as it was explained to me by those interviewed at the time), when the first phase of my research began, requires further context beyond that explained in the history section. For the most part, there was one major "rave party" each weekend (the promoter of this rave usually varied from week to week). Although on special occasions (e.g., New Year's Eve, Halloween) these parties might attract a thousand people or more, turnout usually ranged from 100-800 people depending on the popularity of the DJs who were playing at the party, and the extent to which the event was publicized. At this time, raves were announced on weekly rave radio shows (at the time Dr. Trance had a show on dance music station Energy 108), and appeared in "underground"/niche rave magazines. Rave flyers, the most common form of advertising, could be picked up in music stores in Toronto that sold "techno" music. At this time, raves were seldom advertised in popular media, although in recent years this has become common practice. The rave parties were generally held in warehouse locations and other unused industrial spaces (often former bars or club spaces).

I found out about my first rave party in September 1995 through an advertisement in a monthly publication known as <u>Club Scene Magazine</u>, a magazine that focuses on the night club scene in the Toronto area.[108] This free magazine was being distributed outside a cafeteria at McMaster University. At my first rave, I picked up several flyers which advertised upcoming raves. I had no trouble locating rave parties after this time.

Since these earlier raves were often in smaller venues, I was able to move around and observe the entire party space without difficulty. My approach to participant observation in the rave party usually involved hanging out in different areas at the rave party. Usually I would find a place to sit near the dance floor, enjoy the music, and watch what was going on. Often conversations would develop with whoever happened to sit next to me. Discussion were usually about "who the DJ was," and about the quality of the music (these discussions sometimes became more in-depth and particularly useful for study purposes).[109] Since I was new to the rave scene at the time (I had just moved to the Toronto area from Vancouver), I also used my "novice Toronto raver" status as a means to find out more about the local scene. Usually I would

contribute to the conversation by talking about my perception of the Vancouver scene, which I knew a little

about from my time living there (I came to learn that comparing stories about different "scenes" is a

favourite pastime of many ravers). My feeling is that I was able to easily integrate into the rave setting

because: (1) my appearance as a 26 year old white male with shoulder length hair, wearing comfortable but

not overly "stylish" (in the conventional sense) clothes, was not threatening; (2) my interest in and ability

to discuss the music made conversation natural; and (3) being friendly and starting conversations was part

of the culture at the more intimate parties in 1995 and meant that I was often engaged in conversation by

others just because I "was around."[110]

As noted in the "history of rave" section, the Toronto scene in late 1997 and early 1998 (when I

was conducting phase 2 of the participant observation) was in some ways different from the culture of

1995. Most importantly, the types of rave-related parties had expanded dramatically and fragmented. Even

the conventional raves, like those attended in Phase 1, were taking place more frequently (usually twice per

week). These events were often much larger than in the past, and were held in more mainstream venues

(e.g., parties were frequently held at two adjoining clubs in Toronto called the *Warehouse* and

*Guvernment*). Perhaps more importantly, "rave-related" events were now taking place in mainstream

"dance-club" locations. Although I attended both raves and rave clubs during the research, "raves" were

the basis for much of analysis.[111]

During the latter stages of the research, I looked perhaps older and more conservative (having a pony

tail rather than long, shaggy hair). Also, because effective ethnography requires an attentiveness to not

being a "try-hard," (that is, acknowledging and accepting your sometimes "outsider role"), I might have

been less approachable than during stage one at rave parties (although the later parties were believed by

many ravers to be less "open/friendly" than the earlier ones anyway). However, my in-depth interviews in

the latter stages might have been more successful as my researcher role might have come to be more

apparent and respected. Overall, I found ravers at all stages of the study to be very interested in the

research, and once trust was gained, very open with their experiences and opinions.

Other changes that took place in the rave scene from "Phase 1 to Phase 2" (from 1995-1999)

included:

1) In phase 2, key internet sites provided all the details of upcoming raves, while in phase one I had to call an information line the day of the event to find out about location. On this basis, flyers that were my guide to upcoming parties in phase one previously were less crucial for distributing information in phase 2, holding more of a "collector's appeal" at this time (although I still collected them for research purposes).

2) Rave radio shows have become more common. In particular, the Toronto station CHIN FM "the Global Groove Network" runs a block of programming 6 nights each week that plays variations of rave-related music and includes discussions about the Toronto rave scene (this has been running since 1997). Campus radio, and dance music station Energy 108 also publicize the music and rave-related events.

3) The types of drugs were changing. "Special K" and "GHB" (see Canadian research section) were being used more often, drugs that are more hallucinogenic and less about "staying up all night dancing" like the amphetamine drugs. For some ravers, these developments are intricately related to the "fall" of the rave scene (i.e., to a less friendly, "lower energy" scene).

Although these two phases are important to note methodologically, I do not want to overstate their importance as they relate to research results. The underlying themes of interaction, the social processes that characterized aspects of the rave movement and the subculture, while underscored by some complexities related to the evolution of the rave scene, were for the most part consistent over the course of the research. This issue is revisited throughout Chapters five and six.

## 2. Interviews

Over the course of the research I conducted semi-formal interviews with various members of the rave scene (n=37 — 10 females and 27 males). Most of those interviewed had occupations outside the rave scene. These included: (predominantly) students (several college and university students were interviewed and some high school students), tattoo artists, a journalist, a graphic designer, a nurse, coffee shop workers, record store workers, and an investment banker. The amount of background information I attained from the interviewees varied according to the type of agreement that was reached prior to the interview (although in all cases the interviewees were guaranteed anonymity). The interviews varied in length from 45 minutes to 4 hours. Six in-depth follow-up interviews were also conducted, while ongoing E-Mail discussions continued with several of the respondents following interviews. The interviews were held in various

locations, including coffee shops, during breaks at respondents' work places, university cafeterias, campus

radio stations, in respondents' homes, and at rave-related functions. Less formal interviews took place with

ravers in record shops, or on Queen Street in Toronto (a high-traffic raver area) where I would sometimes

run into people who I had interviewed previously. These individuals were not counted as "official"

interviews, but still provided important data. Of course, these interviews are in addition to the various

discussions that took place at rave parties. However, I emphasize that this sample is not meant to be

"representative" in the traditional positivist sense since the purpose of the research was to study the various

*forms* of raving, the types of involvements, and to assess generic concepts, or as Atkinson (1997) argued

(drawing on Corbin and Strauss, 1990) in his study of ticket scalpers:

> by pursuing a methodology [ethnography] in which generic concepts and processes are
> representative of a particular life world, ethnographic research does not concern itself with
> forming conclusions supposedly generalizable (through rates, statistics, incident numbers,
> percentages) to all social life. In this way representativeness is achieved by studying the forms of
> ticket scalping. Therefore I did not seek to achieve a representative sample of ticket scalpers as
> some form of generalizable population. Instead, the aim is oriented toward representing ticket
> scalping by investigating and exploring its many forms. This perspective indicates that
> representativeness is achieved through fully investigating the actors and interactions that bring
> about the phenomena in all their forms and varying situations. As an integral component of the
> process of achieving representativeness, proper sampling is essential. In ethnographic research,
> sampling particular processes or interactions (such as ticket scalping), and not people in a larger
> population, is the key. To study ticket scalping then, I went to *where* the ticket scalping goes on,
> talked to *who* "scalps" and *who* are scalped, and watched *how* and *when* scalping occurs (or does
> not) to achieve a representative sample of *what* ticket scalping involves. This in essence is the
> core of ethnographic research (pp. 41-42).

This argument for studying forms and processes is not intended to preclude being attentive to the

demographic characteristics of ravers, but to suggest that for research focused on gaining insight into rave

*culture* (as well as attending to some aspects of the characteristics/histories of the individuals involved),

studying these forms/processes (i.e., the what, where, how and when of culture) are crucial.

Contacts were made both through personal acquaintances (which lead to a snowball sample of

interviewees), through a newspaper article that was written about my research that led some interested

ravers to contact me, and through a Toronto "rave" internet newsgroup which I was a part of. The contacts

made through the newsgroup (which had about 40 active participants and 100 total members) seem

particularly relevant for two reasons.[112] First, I was able to meet and talk to people who's newsgroup

contributions/posts I had read for months before and after the interview, providing a new sense of validity

to the newsgroup data. Second, the strategy I used to successfully recruit 17 people from a group that is admittedly concerned about being monitored by police or other "outsiders," seems notable. The newsgroup is set up so that each letter that is sent by a participant is relayed to all members by an E-Mail message. In an attempt to recruit people who "skim" their E-mail messages and delete messages that appear uninteresting or "too long" (without reading them), *and* those who would be interested in a detailed explanation of the research, I sent two messages. The first, which targeted those wanting a "quick and to the point" explanation, was a shorter E-mail that briefly outlined the research I was doing and what the interview would involve (see Appendix A). For those interested in more detail (or those whose interest was piqued by the first message), I sent a longer and more extensive follow-up message immediately after (see Appendix B). In the shorter message, I refer to the longer message "for those who want more detail." By all accounts, this method was extremely successful. Except for the "loss" of two unsuccessful E-Mail recruits who were concerned about being identified from the interview (despite my assurances of anonymity – see Appendix C for information and consent form that was used in this process), most others were very interested in the research and extremely responsive to and appreciative of the efforts I put into explaining the project (and putting them at ease). As noted above, this lead to several contacts and interviews with various members of the rave scene.

As another methodological note, the initial formal interviews were conducted *after* I attended three raves. The background knowledge I gained as a participant observer at these events allowed me to establish a rapport with the interviewees that would have been impossible otherwise. In most interviews *I* was asked how many raves I had been to and which ones. Usually the interviewee would have been to one of these raves or had heard about one that I had been to, giving us common ground and a basis for comfortable, casual conversation. This methodological insight illuminates the already convincing arguments made by Becker and Geer (1957) regarding the utility of participant observation as a supplement to interviewing. In terms of interview questions, I wrote a list of topics areas before most interviews that pertained to the type of involvement of the interviewee had in the rave community (e.g., DJ, promoter, raver). Although I "formally" referred to these lists only sometimes during the interviews (I found it interrupted the flow of the interview), the exercise of writing these up was helpful for organizing my own

pre-interview thoughts. See Appendix D for samples of these interview guides. See also Appendix E for a copy of the formal interview guide used for the E-Mail interviews with those from newsgroups who were unable or unwilling to meet in person.

## 3. Internet Newsgroup Analysis

As noted above, data was also drawn from three internet "newsgroup" discussion groups. My focus was on two of the newsgroups where I had recruited several ravers for interviews and had come to personally know several of the participants (I only recruited from one of the newsgroups, although these individuals were often simultaneously members of both newsgroups). It would be fair to say that these newsgroups were characterized by a *lack of anonymity* for two reasons: (1) many of the DJs and promoters (as well as some ravers) on the list were relatively "high profile" in the rave world; (2) newsgroup members often held "identifying E-Mail accounts" (i.e., university accounts or business-related accounts as opposed to more anonymous "hotmail" free E-mail addresses). In this way, the rave newsgroup community was unlike the anonymous chatrooms that are often studied in other research. This made the data more seemingly valid (compared to many other newsgroups and chatrooms) because people's "real" identities were often known (i.e., people would be less likely or able to or interested in "fabricating" stories, experiences and identities).[113] Despite this, I still assured anonymity to those interviewed by E-Mail, and only identified individuals making newsgroup posts when the post was intended to be public (this will become clearer in the results and analysis section). Although the "public" nature of newsgroup forums did not require me to assure anonymity for the data drawn from the newsgroup discussions, for the above reasons I felt compelled to do so.

Furthermore, these newsgroups also acted as a forum for planning in-person get-togethers (or what were called "net-meets"). Two of the three Toronto-based newsgroups I was part of met semi-frequently (the third one, the techno group, was in part made of up friends who were also part of the other newsgroups anyway). The one group discussed places they would meet at raves *every* week. As noted above, I met several of those who were part of the newsgroups for in-person interviews and established more ongoing contact with a few of the ravers who I "hit it off with" in the interview. Newcomers to the scene would also use these groups as places to find out more about rave culture and music.

Although debates surrounding the usages of internet discussion groups are becoming more prominent, Mitrano (1999, see also Markham, 1998 for a more general methodological discussion about studying on-line experience) gives a useful rationale for using groups (and E-Mail interviews, such as those noted above) as a source of data in his study of "virtual" fan reactions to Hartford's loss of their NHL hockey franchise:

> The internet was a particularly intriguing gathering place [for fans] and a valuable source of information on the topic. Participant postings on sites tend to be unedited and participants have the opportunity to think and reflect on their responses before sending them to be posted (pp. 136-137).

For the above reason, newsgroup data is drawn upon liberally in this study to complement and inform other data sources. This issue of internet and method is revisited later in this dissertation.

## 4. Document and Video/Audio analysis

Underground magazines created "by ravers-for ravers" were analyzed as part of the research (these were also places where I attained much information about the history of the scene). Subterrane, Tribe, and Klublife zines/webzines were the most often referred to sources. The earlier magazines (Subterrane in particular) were often printed on photocopy paper and had more of an "underground/independent" appearance to them. More recently, glossy-looking (usually "on-line") magazines have become the norm.

Rave flyers (advertising future raves) that were handed out at events, in rave record stores, and scanned onto rave promotion companies' websites, were also analyzed. Flyers often include statements about the promoter's (usually pro-rave) "philosophy," and described the theme of the upcoming rave party. Flyers are explained in more depth in the next chapter. See also Appendix F for a "short essay on rave flyers."

Fiction books by various authors which portray rave culture, as well as movies and television shows related to rave were also considered. I purchased and examined several live recordings of rave parties that were sold independently in rave record shops in Toronto (which often included interesting comments made by DJs/MCs to the raver-crowd). I also was a frequent listener to (and recorder of) several local "rave radio" shows that usually came on after midnight during the week. These shows usually included rave-related discussions and interviews with prominent DJs.

**5. Transcript from on-line ("virtual") rave**

A recent trend in the rave scene is to have "virtual raves" that take place over the internet. Using internet software, ravers can listen to the music played by a DJ, see the DJ on a video feed, and talk to other people in a chat-room about the music and other rave-related topics. I "virtually attended" two of these raves that were held in a university residence room in Toronto (where many people from the newsgroup I am a part of attended "live"). I downloaded the "chatroom transcripts" for analysis. The intricacies of the "virtual rave" are outlined in more detail in Chapter five.

**Summary**: Together, these data sources provided an almost overwhelming source of information to draw upon for the following study. Although I have emphasized the "first-hand" data (from interviews, participant observation, and from newsgroup discussions among known ravers) in reporting my findings, the other sources are crucial for providing the necessary richness to represent such a diverse and multifaceted group.

### 4.7 – Research Setting(s)

In many respects, a rave party is akin to a large nightclub or dance bar. There is a dance floor full of people; there is loud music with a heavy beat; there are flashing lights; there is a place to get refreshments; there is DJ (disc jockey); there is a cover charge to get in; and it is nighttime.

However, a more attentive look reveals notable differences that are fundamental to the unique character of the setting of my participant observation. The *people* at a rave are often males and females ranging from 14-25 years old for the most part (much younger than at a typical club). The people are *dancing*, but not like people dance at a night club where they are facing other people in "social circles." At a rave, people often face the DJ, making sure that each person has their own space to dance in. The *music* at a rave is much louder than at a typical club, so loud that talking to the person standing beside you if you are anywhere near the speakers is difficult. In the rave, there are usually two rooms with different kinds of music. In one room, the music (known as "techno") has a beat that is much faster than the kinds of music played in typical clubs. It is entirely electronic and played at a frenetic pace of up to 200+ beats per minute. In the other room, the music (known as ambient) is typically slower than the "techno" room, and is characterized by a meandering, meditative sound, and few lyrics, also unique from popular club music that

has a medium beat and significant lyrical content. Although in recent years, raves have been known to have several "music rooms" to accommodate ravers with diverse tastes in electronic music, the scene in 1995 (the first phase of my research) generally had only these two rooms.

The flashing lights typical of clubs are often complemented at a rave by other spectacular props, such as lines of television screens showing colourful computer generated forms, or a mini Ferris-wheel. The "refreshment area" does not serve alcohol, but instead serves what are called "smart drinks," which are made in blenders right at the bar, and are full of high calorie ingredients. If you know what to look for, you might see a drug dealer, sometimes wearing a hat with an "E" on it (more common at early raves according to some interviewees), selling hits of MDMA ("Ecstasy") to ravers. The DJ at a rave is usually "mixing" records, unlike at most clubs where the DJ plays Compact Discs, adjusts sound levels, and introduces songs. The cover charge at a rave is as high as $30 dollars and rarely lower than $10 dollars. At a bar, cover charges are seldom more than $5-10. The rave party is usually just "starting to roll" at about 3:00 am and ends as late as 12:00 pm (not including the "after-party" that sometimes continue into the following evening at another location). The nightclub "starts to roll" about 10 pm and is rarely open later than 3:00 am. Furthermore, the nightclub is a specific location, whereas the rave location changes each week. Common locations include: abandoned warehouses, former nightclub locations, and secluded fields. Of course, over the course of the research (from 1995-1998), there was an increasingly hazy distinction between the rave and dance club (e.g., rave locations have become more stable and predictable). This is addressed specifically in the next chapter.

Although this description of the setting will be amended as the results are presented, it is important to understand the holistic dynamic of the rave before breaking it down processually for analysis.

# CHAPTER 5: THE LIFE WORLD OF THE RAVE SUB-CULTURE: RESULTS AND (MICRO)ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I provide a dense description of the processes of involvement that define rave culture while remaining attentive to the multiple experiences, contexts, complexities, and contradictions that underlie these processes. The presentation is organized around themes that emerged in the research as they related to the perspectives, activities, identities, relationships, and commitments that characterized the group.

## 5.1 — The Rave Doctrine: Ideals, Philosophies and Youth

This section examines the rave doctrine – the set of *ideals and philosophies* that underlie all aspects of the rave scene. Although ravers in this study did not all equally subscribe to these views (and ravers' interpretations of these views often changed over time), this doctrine at least tentatively and conditionally guided the actions of most ravers, promoters, DJs, and others associated with the scene.[114] Moreover, and while many of those interviewed held no illusions that the ideals espoused by rave doctrine supporters are empirically attainable, many still aspired to uphold rave-related principles on at least a micro-level, both within the rave scene and in their everyday lives outside the scene. With this background, the following section outlines these ideals and philosophies, shows how they were expressed homologously in the styles and actions of the ravers (see also activities section), discusses the ways that different ravers interpreted these views, and shows how these views were acquired and dispersed. The existing tensions and disagreements surrounding these philosophies are also examined in depth.

Overall, the philosophies and ideals that underlay the rave scene can be grouped into three broad and usually interconnected categories: (1) to support a society that is concerned with upholding values related to "peace, love, unity and respect" (a.k.a, the "PLUR" ideal); (2) to support the use of high-technology as a means to gain pleasure and empowerment; (3) to emphasize the importance of "pleasure" as attained through various excesses often associated with uninhibited, PLUR-related, rave "partying." These themes were clearly reflected in discussions/interviews with ravers, in observations of rave parties, in rave zines, in rave flyers that advertised parties,[115] and on the rave websites where the (usually self-

proclaimed) spokespeople for the rave movement summarized and expressed what they perceived to be the rave philosophy. These themes are outlined below.

*5.1.1 – Theme 1: Peace, Love, Unity, Respect (PLUR)*

It's all about breaking down barriers, losing preconceptions, expanding the mind and feeling the vibe (interview, male raver, university student, 1995)

The unity of good people is the only scene that exists (interview, male raver/DJ and tattoo artist, 1995)

I don't give a fuck who you are or what you're wearing. I only care if you're here for the music or here to dance or here for the vibe. That's what an E-Party is ["E" party refers to the name of the rave promotion that organized the rave], that's what this is, it's real. You can feel it, you can't buy it. (DJ S.O.S. talking to the crowd at a New Years Eve rave called "E-Nuff" 1997 – quote taken from an independent recording made of the rave that was sold in limited numbers at some Toronto rave music/clothing shops)

The MC kept saying, "Peace, love and ecstasy. There's no attitude with us here. We are good vibes." (fieldnotes, Nov. 4, 1995 words of MC at rave party talking to the ravers).

The essence of the rave movement (and it is a movement on not only a global but cosmic scale) can be well summed up in four simple letters; PLUR. For those who haven't already heard, PLUR stands for Peace, Love, Unity and Respect. The way I see it, Peace, Unity and Respect stem from the comprehensive feeling of Love. (newsgroup discussion, anonymous, November 13, 1995)

We are all connected. and do you know what connects us all?...It's called PLUR. No it's not a dishwater detergent, its an acronym that stands for Peace, Love, Unity, and Respect. These are big words and may be difficult to define but here are some ideas: Peace: the calmness you find with those around you, and also inside of yourself. it's tough, we often have to work at it but when you're at peace with others, with ourselves and with our planet only good can come of it. Love: the caring you feel for friends, for strangers, for those in need and also for caring you show for yourself. It's symbiotic, it's about sharing whatever energy you put into something will be returned to you! Unity: this means we all share alot of common things, regardless of our age, gender, race, orientation, whatevah! we are all human beings, we all need other people, and we're all in this for the happiness experienced being around others. though we may have differences, we all arise from the same source. Respect: this may mean respect for others, their ideas, their music, and their lives. It's also respect for one's self: one's body and the needs that it has (food, sleep). educating yourself on the substances you ingest shows love and respect for your body; passing on the knowledge to others shows respect and love for your fellow person. (from Peace Love Rave Magazine, quoted on website http://www.hyperreal.org/raves/spirit/plur/PLUR.html – an often referred to resource for information about rave culture)

The "peace, love, unity and respect" (PLUR) based *ideals and philosophies* noted above were evident in all areas of my data collection. On the most subtle level, this cultural view emerged in the "rave language" (argot) that was used during interviews, in internet discussions, in raver-produced literature, and on "rave radio." Common words and phrases included "peace," "chill" (relax) and "props" (respect to).[116]

These views were also expressed succinctly in flyers advertising rave parties. Since these parties were

often organized around certain rave-related themes, the flyers offer insights into widely consumed

versions/symbols/interpretations of the rave doctrine.[117] Often included in these flyers would be

descriptions of the rave philosophy as articulated by someone from the promotional company who

organized the rave (see Appendix F for a short essay on "rave flyers and raver perspectives") and a rave

"party title" that reflected these views (and the party's theme). At times, ravers and promoters referred me

to these flyers to help explain what rave culture is all about (or should be all about). The following are

examples of the names of some of these rave parties:

> *Unification of a Peaceful Nation* (Rave put on by *Aqua* promotion company, November 4, 1995)
>
> *Outer Limits* (Rave put on by *Bass Oddessy* promotion company, October 25, 1995)
>
> *Love, Peace, Unity, Hope: Take an Oath to Your Essence* (Rave put on by *Eden* promotion company, October 27, 1995)
>
> *Good Vibes* [good feelings](Rave put on by promotion company *Good Vibes*, November 4, 1995)
>
> *All Good* (Rave put on by rave promotion company *Better Days*, June 21, 1997)

Many ravers described explicitly *how these philosophies (i.e., PLUR and related ideals*

*associated with "expanding the mind" and "breaking down barriers") are related to the "real world"* and

how they can be operationalized in everyday life. One raver (and university student) referred me to

excerpts from an underground rave magazine article (that he was co-author of) to help explain these ideas:

> It [raving] is learning about the nature of the environment around you, which includes everything from paying attention to your body to learning to care for the planetary environment...It's up to us to pick up the pieces of a post communist/capitalist, us/them "dominator" culture world and transform it into a "partnership culture world" of global unity with respect for cultural diversity. It can be done, but it will take work, most likely all of our lifetime. But when all is said and done we will leave to our children an intact planet which will be on the road back to prosperity...The choice is ours now, as we gather together in our dance ritual to build the feeling of togetherness, instill courage and breakdown emotional and mental barriers. (from *Subterrane* magazine[118])

Other interviewees referred to how the rave experience and the feelings associated with it can be applied

outside of the rave:

> It [the rave] introduced me to alot of new people who take this "vibe" from the rave and they exercise it as a practice in their life. Where they try and avoid preconceptions of people on the street and they try to generally be nicer to people...I think that is the real good that can come from raves (interview, male raver, university student, 1995)

> When I go to raves and use Ecstasy it breaks down barriers. It breaks down preconceptions,
> it makes it easier to meet people... you think about how it changes you and how you feel
> while you're on it as opposed to how you feel when you're not and you try and take the
> feeling that you get when you're high and relate it to your own life. Do you really need
> social barriers, do we really need the defenses that we have and would life be better off if we
> didn't have some of the defenses that we have. Would it be easier to meet people, easier to
> communicate. It all comes down to communication because there is a lack of
> communication obviously in our society (interview, male raver, university student, 1995)[119]

I saw evidence of these views at the raves that I attended as a participant observer. At no time did

I feel physically threatened at a rave, a phenomenon that is almost unheard of at a nightclub or in other

large group party situations. Often people would smile and/or offer me a cigarette. When people would

bump into me accidentally (which is inevitably at a rave party) they would say "sorry" and smile (as

opposed to ignore me, stare me down, or threaten violence – all renowned nightclub norms). There was

one raver who gave away marshmallows to people as a friendly gesture, another gave away cotton candy,

and another gave away stickers he had made with "rave characters" on them. My experience entering and

paying for a rave was further evidence of this "vibe" (collective feeling of "positive energy") as ravers

describe it:

> The group of people at the door seemed very friendly. The person I bought the ticket from was a
> smiling female who looked to be in her early 20s. I had trouble pulling the exact change out of my
> pocket for the rave (it was $18) to get in and she joked with me, laughing and saying "come on you
> can do it." The other people at the door were of a similar age, male and female, and told me to
> "have a good time." They were smiling the whole time. What impressed me the most was that
> these people who were hanging around the door, for the most part , did not appear to be working or
> trying to "keep my business." They just greeted people, perhaps while they were cooling off from
> the rave. It was very pleasant and a far cry from the macho, confrontation bar culture dealt with so
> often. I'm curious to know how Ecstasy plays into this. (fieldnotes, October 14, 1995)

I did not sense that this "vibe" was present at all the raves I went to. It seemed to depend on the

extent to which people who were attending the rave were actually "ravers" (for example, sometimes people

would come to the raves because the bars were closed and they still wanted to "party," not because they

wanted to be or were part of the rave community).[120] As noted later in this section, existing tensions (e.g.,

related to "outsiders" attending increasingly commercialized raves) in the rave scene clearly impacted the

extent to which ravers (continued to) operationalize these perspectives, both in and outside the rave context.

This "negative vibe" was particularly evident in the latter stages of my data collection when I attended the Toronto "rave-club" *Industry* (the club is renowned for bringing in some of the world's top DJs and crowding in ravers and non-ravers alike at high admission prices):

> I was standing by the dance floor watching the line-up by the bar. People were pushy and impatient. One woman came up behind another woman (who was blocking her way) and said, "Excuse me" in a really impatient and insincere voice. This was certainly different from the smiles and politeness I had seen at my earlier raves. I was thinking about how alcohol had really changed this rave-related space because it made it more like a conventional bar. Many of the raver types appeared to hang out in their own spaces near the DJ and on the dance floor, dancing and chilling out. Things were more "ravey" when 3 am rolled around (and the bar closed, and many of the conventional bar crowd left and more of the rave crowd entered), and really peaked at about 4 (this is when the top DJs come on anyway). However, the vibe was never really present like it is at non-alcohol parties that were designed with the vibe in mind (fieldnotes, January 10, 1998).

These sorts of tensions related to the popularization of the rave scene underlie most aspects of the rave culture in Toronto, as other sections in this chapter show.

### 5.1.2 – Theme 2: Technology and Futurism

Underlying the rave doctrine was a reverence to and celebration of *technology*, and an implicit and explicit belief in "progress through technology." Rave music is computer generated. Rave parties are advertised over the world wide web. Rave flyers often include references to futuristic concepts defined by high-technology (e.g., names of raves included "Progress Forward" and "Knowledge in a New Dimension")[121] and usually included "high-tech" and futuristic-looking computer images. Perhaps the best example of the rave as a "pro-technology culture" is the increasing occurrence of "virtual raves" that are taking place on the world wide web. Virtual raves take many forms, but they usually include live video of DJs playing music (that can be viewed on the event's webpage using special easily downloadable computer software), and an accompanying chat room (again, on the event's home webpage) where "virtual ravers" can interact. One of the innovators of virtual rave events in Toronto is a DJ who goes by the name "Mental Floss." Mental Floss (who is also a university student) invited people from the newsgroup I am a part of to either attend his event "live or on the internet" (newsgroup comment from January 1998):

> Well, I'm doing it again. In the summer I did a live-to-internet "concert" of sorts from my basement. I'm doing the same thing this Saturday, but from my residence on the Ryerson Campus. Marty McFly [well-known Toronto DJ] is spinning [DJing], as well as "Tim Jones" and (I think) "Phil Smith" (are you still coming?). I'll be playing a live set from about 11:00 to 12:00. The whole thing is going out via Real Audio [a computer software programme for audio-downloads – the programme can be downloaded for free off the internet], and my entire residence

is invited as well, although from historical experience they're pretty apathetic about expanding their music tastes. If you're interested in coming, send me an email. If you can't make it out, then you can tune in online. Visit http://www.io.org/~andrewm/pots to find out the details, what software you
need, etc.

He went on to explain the event in more detail:

POTS [the name of the event] is a series of Real Audio, live-to-net concerts organized by Mental Floss. The term POTS is a Telecommunications Industry term meaning "Plain Old Telephone System" (not marijuana). The idea comes from *Future Sound Of London*'s album "ISDN," where they broadcasted music to radio stations all over the world using ISDN phone lines. This is the same idea... [The last POTS event was] held in conjunction with a party in my residence (Pitman Hall at Ryerson University in Toronto) with public terminals setup so that people at the party in residence could chat with people online. About 120 people listened online, with about 200-300 people through my livingroom during the night. (quoted from the now defunct POTS website)

In addition to virtual raves, there are an increasing number of rave internet newsgroups where

ravers discuss issues related to the rave scene, and exchange news about upcoming parties. One Toronto-

based newsgroup in particular, known simply as "techno.ca" is one of the more explicitly "pro-technology"

lists (in fact, technology issues at times take precedence over the techno-music and rave-related issues in

the Toronto scene).[122] The newsgroup was described on its home-webpage in the following way:

The technolist was originally conceived as a forum for discussion of techno music [a genre of rave music] and its related culture. There were no restrictions placed on what should or shouldn't be talked about on the list, in an experiment to see how discussion unfolds and to see what topics would be of interest to list members. Once the list had matured somewhat, it was put forward that it should be a place to discuss not only the music and culture that we love [rave culture, electronic music], but also pretty much anything pertaining to technology, its influence on our lives, and its role in changing the face of humankind...This isn't a rave discussion list, nor is it really meant for debating merits of one religion over another or the perpetual drugs discussion that inevitably comes up. Use your own discretion when posting, but keep in mind that there are a number of very opinionated people on the list who love a good argument and will back it up with intelligent debate. Be prepared to defend yourself and your arguments... (introduction to the "techno" discussion group, from www.techno.ca).

One of the creators of the list discussed how his group of raver/DJ/promoter friends came to start a

website that built on the "techno.ca" concept:

"Tom," and "David" and myself [well known raver/DJs in the Toronto area], started out the chatroom basically, where you send messages back and forth, and we decided we wanted to expand on it by making a webpage. He purpose of it is basically to connect people. We found that there's companies and people that are doing things that benefit themselves, we decided we wanted to get friends together, there's a lot of talent in the scene...I've been pretty lucky to make some contacts but not everybody is...[On the webpage] will be distribution of records, an on-line radio station, [and we will] have people sponsor our show...The main thing is to get people connected...we are also going to have real audio capability so if you want to listen to a record or

mix tape before you buy it [through the work access of this raver at a Toronto record store] then you can (interview, male DJ and record shop worker, 1998).

For many ravers interviewed in the study and participating in newsgroups (including "rave culture" newsgroups that were not about technology per se), (high) technology appeared to be a way of life that was sometimes only indirectly rave-related. These various activities included: listening to music produced by local and international DJs through the internet; buying music overt the internet, and (promoters) booking DJs over the internet.

Rave-related fiction writing, which was read by some members of the rave scene who I interviewed and was sometimes discussed on raver newsgroups (books I bought were recommended by other ravers), often include story-lines focused on the positioning of rave-related culture (e.g., cyberpunk culture as described by Kellner, 1995b) in futuristic societies. For example, Disco 2000 (Champion, 1998) is a book of short stories about rave-related culture at the millenium, stories that often include descriptions of an "end of the century party" (rave) that will take place on New Year's Eve 1999. Champion's book includes short stories by cyber/pop/youth-culture authors such as Douglas Copeland (who wrote the renowned novel about disillusioned youth Generation X) and Douglas Rushkoff (author of other recent "rave books" such as Ecstasy Club (1997) and Cyberia: Life in the Trenches of Hyperspace (1994)). The back of the book jacket included the following description:

> [The book DISCO 2000 is] an anthology of cult fiction set in the final hours:
> The party starts here...with a cast of crazy scientists, nomadic DJs, fetish queens, conspiracy theorists, killer ants, graffiti artists, gangsters, convicts, cult leaders, Netheads, replicants, religious maniacs and ballroom dancers...It's the last night of the millenium and anything could happen...Around the globe, TV broadcasts [of the] end-of-the-world predictions of crackpot professors and in every city parties are going out of control (Champion, 1998)

This quote demonstrates Champion's (and the short story authors') likely understanding/interpretation of the connection between technology, futurism, and excess (and its relationship to hedonism and chaos). It is important to note in this context that "pleasure through excess," which is intricately and purposefully related to technology cultures in these literatures, was the third philosophical theme that emerged from the research (and is examined in the next section).[123]

It was clear from this study, though, that pro-technology and pro-future views were not equally integrated into the everyday lives of all ravers. Although only some ravers *actively and vehemently*

supported these views (such as the "techno.ca" raver group), none of those interviewed pointedly expressed

anti-technology views (except in some discussions about the "loss of soul" in overly technology-dependent

DJing and music production – explained later in the "tensions" section). Some ravers emphasized aspects

of rave culture that had little to do with technology when discussing "why they raved" (e.g., a portion of

those interviewed focused exclusively on the "pleasure" aspect). *Despite this, ravers, whether they were*

*conscious of it or not, were inextricably linked to high-technology in the music they listen to, the*

*"designer" drugs they take, the images they are exposed to, and the themes of the parties they attended.*

Similarly, images of the future were a central and inescapable part of the culture (e.g., the name of a 1998

rave put on by the promotion company PHYRL was named "Progress"; a long-time rave company is called

*Alien Visitation*) and contributed to the "technological progress" perspective that was implicitly and

explicitly adopted by the culture.

This focus on technology in the Toronto rave scene is also inseparable from *global* developments

in the scene and the history of the scene (consider the origins of Detroit techno and the values espoused by

German techno band *Kraftwerk*). For example, interactions on this "rave world level" were evident

through a website called "hyperreal" (web address http://www.hyperreal.org/), a site that was often referred

to by ravers when they were explaining the various aspects of the rave scene. This "global information

source" (which includes contributions from ravers worldwide)[124] provided insight into rave culture that was

consistent with the data I was gathering *locally* (in interviews, local zines, local websites, and newsgroups).

Not all ravers I interviewed were necessarily informed by this site (some ravers, such as "techno.ca" ravers,

were likely more "web-savvy"/web-reliant than others – although this issue was not specifically examined),

although at least indirectly this "global site" appeared to be an important reference for understanding rave

philosophy as it existed *in Toronto and abroad.* This connection was explained on the hyperreal website as

follows:

> [Through] online connections; information is exchanged, a loose community evolves. Technology
> fosters communication: Interacting on the internet helps bring us together (from
> http://www.hyperreal.org/raves/spirit/plur/PLUR.html).

A Baltimore-based rave promotion company known as *Ultraworld* advertised what they perceived

to be the final step toward a "virtual rave world" on one of the Toronto raver newsgroups. Although the

site was not yet "up and running" at the time of this study, the vision of a communication, business, and

pleasure-oriented environment for those from the electronic music community is an extreme version of the

pro-technology perspective espoused by some ravers in Toronto. *Ultraworld's* concept is explained the

following way on the company's website:

> We are creating a virtual world dedicated to the electronic music community. In this world you will find individuals and businesses that have some relation to the growing worldwide electronic music scene. This is an interactive 3D virtual environment, in which you can have an identifiable character. We are just getting this off of the ground, so right now it is just a plain of grass, but you may still go into the world and walk around a bit. Eventually, and hopefully very soon, we will begin to create a virtual city, complete with buildings, streets, parks, and of course, people! As an individual, when you "immigrate" to the Ultraworld, you will be able to choose an avatar [an on-screen symbol] to represent yourself...Once you are in the Ultraworld, you can walk around, perform actions, engage in live chats with those within "hearing distance" (in a virtual sense). There will be apartment buildings and houses that you may reside in, and this will have different levels. In the simplest form, clicking on your "door" will allow someone to send you email, or access your website. In its most complex form, you (or our designers) can create a virtual house, in which other people from all over the world can visit to hang out and have a chat. We have programmed the world so that walls block out conversation, so in other words, you have the same privacy you have in your own real home.
> From the business end, we will be populating the Ultraworld with anything and everything that is relevant to electronic music, or anything that we think is cool enough to be in the world. There will be record stores, DJ booking offices, clothing stores, theatres where visual artists can show their work, etc... There is no limit to what we can do. Here again, the setup can be simply a link to a businesses' website, or they could have a virtual store where customers can come in and browse. Imagine this scenario: You log into the Ultraworld, and the virtual world appears on the screen. You choose your avatar (unless you've loaded a custom one), and you're ready to go. The onscreen display tells you that there are over 400 people worldwide currently logged on! From the list you see 10 people that you are friends with, and you send them all a letter: "Hey, I just logged on, meet me in front of the Ultraworld Visitor's Center as soon as possible." You go to the street where the Visitor's Center is, and one by one your ten friends show up. You all want some privacy, so you decide to walk out to a little spot you found in the woods to have a private chat. After that, you want to do some record/CD shopping, so you walk to the street where record stores from all over the world are located.
> You then go to one of your favorite hangouts, which is a virtual coffee shop where they transmit streaming audio of DJs from around the world. Maybe you go to the Velocity site (Dara's live drum 'n' bass show), maybe you go to Urban Outfitters website to check out some new threads, maybe you go to "Optical Delusion's" movie house to see a video of their projections, maybe you just hang around to see who passes by...
> We hope you are interested in the unlimited possibilities of the virtual Ultraworld, and we hope that this will grow to truly be a worldwide link for the electronic music community (from http://www.ultraworld.net/virtualworld.htm).

Despite this widespread movement toward an almost entirely "technological culture," many

interviewees emphasized that *being pro-technology should not mean "losing humanity."* As one male DJ

suggested:

When I spin records and put together my sets, doing things that a band couldn't do, I acknowledge that all I'm doing is arranging their hard work. They made the music. I mix it. Realizing this, DJs shouldn't get their heads too big (interview, male raver and DJ and tattoo artist, 1995).

Similarly, a female raver interviewee used an excerpt from a rave flyer to explain this need to

"keep humanity in the technology":

Becky (a female raver and university student) came to the interview with a pile of flyers for a rave party that one of her promoter friends were putting on...She used the flyer to help explain what the rave meant to her, something she had tried to do in a previous interview, but was obviously still thinking about. Becky said, "Read this, this is what I mean." She then read to me a line out of a short story that appeared in the pamphlet for a party that was being put on by rave promotion companies *Destiny* and *Effective* called "Emotional" (which took place on March 28, 1998 in Toronto). I read the entire story after Becky left – it was about urban decay in a futuristic world of domed cities – cities that were controlled by machines. The machines had previously transmitted sound-waves through an underground speaker system as part of maintaining control of the city. However, the machine malfunctioned, failing to continue making the sounds. The story explained how what was needed was a man-made system. The story concluded with the moral (this is what Becky read to me) that *"no machine can make music without the emotion of the human heart."* Becky explained: " I had to read the first part about 3 times before I understood exactly what it meant, but the last line, if they only had the last line on there, that would have been enough (fieldnotes, February, 1998).

There was also (mild) controversy in the Toronto rave DJ community about whether the *exclusive*

use of computer technology to make music (instead of mixing records using "real" turntables) is "too

removed" from the roots of DJing and music-making. For example, a recent article in WIRED computer

magazine called "Two Pentiums and a DJ" (Knapp, 1999) about a "laptop DJ" in Britain who pre-

programmes his sets onto a portable computer and then feeds his sets into a soundsystem at the rave/club

that he is "working" at, led to significant debate on one of the newsgroups I was a member of. The

substance of these debates is less crucial here than the ongoing issue of "where to draw the line" between

technology and humanity, an underlying philosophical tension for some members of the rave scene (this

debate was not exclusive to the actively pro-technology/"techno.ca" ravers).

*5.1.3 – Theme 3: Pleasure and Excess*

The best [rave] that I've been to was the Science Centre rave [a rave that was held in Toronto's Science Centre]....We smoked on the way there. I know we did shrooms in the parking lot. I was doing good on that for awhile. And then I did acid, a couple of those, and that took me up until about 6:00. It was so much fun. I can't even express to you how much fun it was. It was the best night of my life and I've had a lot of good nights. It was everything, everything was there. Like when I think of drug use I think it brings you back to childhood almost. Everything seems simpler, everything seems brighter and so good. Going there [the science centre] you had a chance to play on all the exhibits, and that was a lot of fun cause you're so messed up and

everything seems so interesting…It's so friendly. They had a Lego land, that was so cool. I can't even express how much I jumped around…The music was really good, there were like four different rooms, a ton of people. But the things that's best about raves [like this one] is there's no "attitude" [meaning "bad attitude" focused on confrontational and aggression]. Like if you go a bar, there's so much attitude, you've got your little honies and their trying to pick up and the guys are horny as hell looking to pick up and their testosterone's going and they're thinking 'Let's get in a fight tonight'. There's none of that [at a rave]… (interview, female raver, university student and varsity athlete, 1998)

According to all interviewees, the rave is an extremely conducive space for excessive "partying." Although many of these same ravers discussed the problems with "hedonistic raving" (a "too extreme" form of raving that undermines aspects of the rave doctrine – explained later) the rave party was commonly viewed as a safe place for using (usually illegal) high-energy drugs, for uninhibited dancing to frenetic, floor shaking music, and for experiencing related feelings of euphoria. This emphasis on the joys of unrestrainted, excessive "partying" was evident in discussions I had with many ravers about their favourite raves and typical 'good rave' nights. As one female explained:

First, [we would] pre-party at someone's house…This would include getting dressed up as fun as we could, smoking weed and listening to music…Then at around 12 or so we would go to the rave…we always drove so shuttle buses [that take rravers from a central meeting point to a rave party] weren't in the agenda. We would scope out the party, find our crew and whoever they were with…do the introductions (there were new people coming in every weekend the family we had grew weekly). We usually already had our E and other substances but if we didn't we would find one of our dealers and get what we needed and then we would take our drugs and dance the night away into the morning light. Usually we would judge how good the night was by how much "rug we cut" [how much we danced]. Then we would go to an after party and do more drugs and if it wasn't any good we would think of something to do like go to the airport and feel the natural bass the airplanes would make as they flew over the car…or hang out in front of a huge religious building and discuss whatever topics came to our minds…deeply. Depending on who we were partying with, we might go to their house and chill there until we came down. There was also a period where we would go home, shower and then go to the Sunday night party at the Subway Room and do more drugs till Monday morning…It's weird to think how much I actually did now that I look back at it (interview, female raver and university student, 1998).

Others focused exclusively on how the rave was a place for (excessive) drug use (this theme is explored later in the "activities" section):

[On a typical rave night] meet my friends early and try and be at the party around midnight or so, ingest psychedelic drugs immediately before entry if possible. Listen and enjoy the music until: a) I get so tired and I want to leave; or b) wait until my ride or friends I'm with leaves (interview, male raver, campus radio DJ, university student, 1998)

I basically got involved in raving because I like drugs a lot. I still see it as a place where I can do drugs and not worry about things (interview, female raver and university student, March, 1998).

For the most part though, ravers I spoke with suggested that the pleasure/fun aspect was only part

of the broader philosophy behind raves. Excessive partying for many ravers was a sensual escape that

symbolized (for them) a subtle resistance against the "*un*PLUR" aspects of everyday living (see data from

PLUR theme). I was referred to a statement from the "hyperreal" website which described this *tentative*

connection between rave as a social movement and rave as a "party."

> Raves are like *Temporary Autonomous Zones* (TAZs) - separate, self-governing events that take
> place between the cracks of society's fabric... As we open our minds and transcend our limits, we
> can explore links to things *beyond the rave* where new ideas and information await our
> discovery... Whether you believe that raving is a spiritual revolution that is going to change the
> world or just a chance to dance to some great music, the one thing we can all agree on is that
> raving is FUN! (from http://www.hyperreal.org/raves/spirit)

Although for many ravers, the rave party is, in fact, interpreted to be a "temporary autonomous zone"

(where PLUR, technology, and uninhibited partying can be melded and experienced), it was clear from the

interviews that other ravers focused almost exclusively on the pleasure and hedonistic aspect of raving.

### 5.1.4 — Learning to Rave: Acquiring Perspectives

For the most part, people I spoke with seemed to *acquire rave related values (PLUR, in particular)* from

people they knew or people they had met in the scene. Although not all ravers acquired or adopted these

values (see "tensions in the scene" section), according to the "mature" ravers I spoke with, neophytes to the

rave community are *ideally* educated by more experienced ravers.[125] Some ways to educate ravers and

spread the word were explained to me by "mature" ravers in the following ways:

> If you are educating, as a mature raver, you could tell them your experiences as a mature
> raver, as a person who has done it and as a person who understands...you talk about the vibe,
> you talk about the social differences between the clubs [no violence at raves, not the same
> cliques]. It's not just the music, it's the magic, the magic of a rave. I can think of several
> parties where I have simply walked into a room and been overcome with a feeling of total
> abandon, "all right, go out, have a good time, it doesn't matter." (interview, male raver, rave
> underground zine publisher, university student, 1995)

> You tell the people what it's about. You tell them to try and leave people their space at the
> raves and go and dance and you can be in your own little world if you want to but try and go
> out and meet people because maybe you will meet a mature raver and he will greet you and
> it will start a snowball where you go out and you talk to more people and you know more
> people and eventually you lose some of your preconceptions (interview, male raver,
> university student, 1995)

The internet and newsgroups were also common places for neophyte ravers to seek information

about "what it means to be a raver" and about proper rave etiquette. Below appears a newsgroup

commentary by a Toronto raver/promoter about 'rave etiquette in the scene'. This exposition usefully

outlines renowned "rave traditions," emphasizes which traditions are "good and bad" (and why), and which

ones have become (fortunately or unfortunately) lost or de-emphasized:

> When I first started partying I tried E right off the bat, It wasn't necessary it may not have been
> right but at the same time I was taught about the messages and the hugs and the candy and about
> bringing a blanket to sit on and about dressing the way you feel like... Along the way I think I
> forget to tell others about PLUR and what not and I stopped bringing candy and I stopped offering
> messages and I became a dirty ol man but maybe it's time to revert back to the happiness of
> yesteryears traditions....I think its time to look at our rave traditions and see which ones have a
> place and which ones we shouldn't be teaching the newcomers. [For example]:
>
> **[1] Bringing Candy**
> - Gives you sugar and energy
> - More sociable then a smoke and your breath don't stink afterwards
> - Comes in cool packages and shape and sizes
> - Great for sober people and people on heavy drugs too!
> - Cheap to give away and makes you and the receiver feel good when you do Tell your friends to
> bring more and more and always bring some yourself give them away
> ie GOOD TRADITION
>
> **[2] VICKS Inhalers**
> - THE JOKE IS ON YOU HA HA
> - VICKS used to contain ephedrine (i.e., speed) in Canada and the smell was there to prevent the
> gag reflex when snorting the shit, heating them up with lighters was to get more of a speedy hit,
> basically they've been a placebo for years already and we're just crack heads for using them.
> i.e., Maybe the time has come to drop them.
>
> **[3] Soothers**
> - GRINDING
> ie after a few years of raving you can't imagine what your dental bills will be!!!!!!! GOOD
> TRADITION!!!!!!
>
> **[4] Running Shoes**
> - Comfy easy to wear and dance in and when you step on someone's toes they don't hurt like
> fucking combat boots
> i.e., GOOD TRADITION
>
> **[5] ROAR [Right of admission refusal] [usually on flyers for parties where the promoters
> are attentive to drug dealers or "dangerously high/drunk" individuals who might try and
> attend]**
> - A sign to all that trouble is expected
> - Redundant if you have big security dude(tte)s
> ie BAD TRADITION maybe we're giving ourselves a bad rep by advertising this one
>
> **[6] HUGS**
> - Relax you
> - Feel Good
> - Great way to be introduced to someone
> i.e., GOOD TRADITION
>
> **[7] WET NAPS**
> - Relax you
> - Feel Good
> - Great way to be introduced to someone
> i.e., GOOD TRADITION

(male raver and promoter, quoted from newsgroup discussion, October 20, 1998)

*5.1.5 — Learning to Rave: Introductions to the Scene*

Interviewees gave several reasons for their initial interest in attending raves, including: it was perceived it

to be a safe place to do drugs; it is a place where the drug experience is optimal; a boyfriend or girlfriend

was already involved and influenced the decision to "try it out" (in my interviews, it was always a male

who was involved first) and they were looking for some sense of "community" and they heard the rave was

welcome place for "outsiders" (in most cases, this meant people who were on the margins of social groups

in high school – according to many ravers though, this has changed in recent years since the rave became a

"cool" place to go – this is discussed later in this chapter). One raver discussed the dynamic of rave

recruitment in high school:

> In a high school it's easier also to get people to go, because you're in classes with them, you
> trust them, you're on a different level with them. There are a lot of people recruited into
> raving through high schools and I think that has produced an element where there's younger
> and younger people going to raves. (interview, male raver, 1995)

Some ravers indicated that they first came to be involved in rave culture only because they liked

the music, but found themselves swept up by the feelings that they had, and on this basis decided to adopt

the "raver attitude":

> I have come to really enjoy it. There's hope in that community, there's very little violence. I
> saw the way people came closer together and the way you could expand your mind.
> (interview, female raver, 1995)

Interviewees appeared to *find out about* raves from other ravers often because of common interests

in music, dancing, or drugs (the *process* of "seekership" according to Prus, 1994b), as one raver explained:

> Initially I was listening to dance music...because I love to dance, I've always loved to and I
> met a friend, who is now my best friend, and we had a common interest in drugs. We
> smoked drugs the first time we met, and we got along great ever since, and he introduced
> me to the style of music, the techno music that they play there, and then ...he took me to a
> smaller event that happened during the week the first time I went, and it was called
> "Explode,"...I went a couple of times and I liked it so much that I wanted to go to the real
> thing and I went to my first rave on October 28 [1994], and it was a great time and I went
> ever since (interview, male raver, university student, 1995).

Still others are exposed to it by the ever-increasing media promotion of rave events that draw them

in ("recruitment"):

> Don Burns [whose radio name is Dr. Trance and had a rave based radio show on popular
> radio station Energy 108 at the time of the interview – as noted in the history of rave section,

he now DJs on a Toronto based radio and internet radio station called the "Global Groove Network"] the reason he has his radio show was because he wants the people to hear the music, he wants to expose as many people as he can. It's not his position to educate the people about the rave scene. Alot of people go to raves because of that. (interview, male raver, 1995)

A crucial issue underlying these processes of *getting involved* is this last issue of rave commercialization, one of the central tensions in the rave scene (discussed below).

### 5.1.6 — Tensions in the Rave Scene: A Popularized Scene and a "Maturing" Raver

Although the "rave doctrine" (the PLUR ideal) appeared to be widely *known* among mature/long-time ravers and relative neophytes, there were several *disagreements and tensions* surrounding the application of these perspectives in the rave scene. According to several interviewees (usually those who considered themselves to be "mature," experienced ravers), too many people are coming into the scene (i.e., attending rave parties) too quickly, and these rave-neophytes are not receiving the proper education about rave philosophy and rave etiquette. For example, although the interviewed ravers believed that it is important to be inclusive, "inclusiveness" was considered problematic when those who are included do not understand the philosophy:

> I feel two things, I feel its bad that there are so many people coming into the scene now so quickly that there is not time for the mature ravers, the people who have been doing it for a long time, to take them under there wing, and teach them what it's all about. And they come and they create their own culture, "vibeless" if you will and it's like a big club, a big dance party, it's not a rave anymore. And there's a lot of people out there, like the mature ravers that feel lost, and they feel like they have been robbed. At the same time if those people who are going to these parties are there for the right reasons, not just to do the drugs but for the music, then that is good, because that is the point...It's kind of like a double edged sword. (interview, male raver, university student, 1995)

Raver perspectives were mixed on this issue. Some ravers felt that with more people in the scene, there is a better chance to effectively disseminate the PLUR philosophy. These ravers felt that there is incredible potential with this many people, and this much "energy." Two of the ravers that I spoke with were involved in witchcraft and indicated that the energy created at raves, if channeled, could lead to some positive global changes:

> I'm a witch. I do rituals with large groups of people. We raise a bunch of energy and we send it to something. We use that energy for something...whether it's to heal a particular person or place on the planet to try and create something to happen, in a larger political context. I see all these people at raves and they have this intention of community, they're raising all this energy. If

somebody could just take that a step further and that could be really powerful.[126] (interview, female raver, nurse, 1995).

Most other ravers were less tolerant of this influx of "uneducated" outsiders who attend raves for the "party" and not for the "community."

> I like everything about it [the rave parties] except the increase of bad attitude and the "fear" that I sense at parties when hard-hittin, gangsta style ginos[127] show up lookin for a piece of ass and maybe a fight. (from internet discussion group, anonymous, 1995)

> I hate gino club kids when they come to raves! I guess it's the commercial radio stations telling em about the raves! Here in Toronto, Mark Spoon [a rave music producer] from Jam And Spoon [production group] is coming, well they are advertising it on the bloody morning shows! So that the grade eights can come! (from internet discussion group, anonymous, 1995)

Interviewees suggested that people (e.g., promoters, DJs, radio personalities) who publicize rave parties too often over-emphasize the "party" and music aspects while ignoring the rave philosophy. This "vibeless" publicity was evident in a popular magazine (ironically, the same magazine that I looked in to find out about my first rave party for this study) called *Club Scene* that had a "rave report" column.[128] The following is an excerpt from this column that is an example of this mass recruitment:

> Those of you who already experienced the rave scene know exactly what I'm, talking about. For all the rest who do not, I make it my personal goal to introduce and inform you about the existing Toronto rave companies, what to expect from them and encourage you to attend. Now, I myself have overheard all the crazy rumours circulating about raves. I would like to assure everyone that raves are not completely composed of crazy freaks that only come out after midnight. In fact, ravers are mostly people who have a deep passion for underground music, good clothes and are generally looking for something to do on a Saturday night. (Kinga, 1995, p. 14)

Many ravers I spoke with were critical of this sort of publicity because it appeals to people who go to night clubs and are "looking for something to do on a Saturday night," not necessarily those who are looking to "expand the mind" and unite. This concern about people "doing things for the wrong reasons" was embodied in discussions about drug use at raves, a topic which is discussed in more depth in the "activities" section of this report.[129] For many interviewed ravers, *a scene that is "too open" becomes cliquey* and populated by individuals who are not educated about or interested in the PLUR philosophy. For all ravers I spoke with, a cliquey, uneducated scene is a "vibeless" scene.

The difference between what I saw to be "authentic" ravers[130] who have learned to "feel" and

contribute to the "vibe" at raves and the people who went to parties for other reasons was sometimes

noticeable at the raves I attended:

> I looked around the outside of the dance floor in the room that played the fast heavy-beated
> dance music. Many of the "authentic looking" ravers (those with Adidas clothes, loose
> clothes, distinct tee shirts, or those who looked really "into it" but weren't necessarily
> dressed in any distinct way) sat beside or in front of the speakers. It appeared they enjoyed
> the beat, or the feeling of the vibrating speaker. The rest of these "authentics" seemed to be
> dancing – in the really loose and flowing method I talked about before. It also seemed like
> there was also a fairly large contingent of youth who were dressed in club-related "brand
> names" (clothes such as Gap or Guess or Tommy Hilfiger) [over the course of the
> interviews, these "preppy" ravers were actively criticized for bringing club values to raves
> and for "killing the vibe"]. While the authentic ravers were dancing or mellowing out
> because they were tired of dancing (or perhaps were "chilling out" and listening to the
> music), the preppy looking youths appeared to be content hanging around the side of the
> dance floor, watching or walking around. The preppy youth were most often hanging out
> with what appeared to be friends, which made them seem more comfortable. It occurred to
> me that this subgroup of the rave culture was not as interested in the dancing aspect and
> more the watching, hanging out and just "being there" (maybe "being cool"). The more
> authentic ravers appeared to be comfortable dancing by themselves and spending time with
> friends only when they felt they needed to (they didn't seem compelled to "be with a crowd"
> all the time) (fieldnotes, September 28, 1995).[131]

Other problems associated with the mainstreaming of rave culture were embodied in discussions I

had with ravers about the opening of the now-renowned rave-club *Industry* (on King Street in Toronto).

"Rave clubs," which are distinct on a number of levels from conventional raves (e.g., conventional raves

are not in stable locations and are not held regularly, while "rave clubs" have weekly events, are often not

"all ages" and usually sell alcohol at a licensed bar until the legal bar closing time), were a source of

tension for many ravers who I spoke with – some of whom felt that these clubs exemplified *the (negative)*

*movement from an underground rave culture/movement to a mainstream, sell-out, dance culture* (having

lost any links with rave philosophy). However, other ravers were more upbeat about rave clubs, arguing

that they are a great place for "mature" ravers to continue to enjoy electronic music and a friendly (if not

quite "ravey") atmosphere, having become cynical about and tired of what they perceive to be a "young,

drug infested, inauthentic/try-hard" rave culture.

Following this argument, many interviewees proposed that *Industry* is not a rave at all, but a club

with rave DJs. I addressed this issue, the underlying tension about "club" raves vs "real" raves, and more

general issues about "authenticity and rave" in the following fieldnote excerpt from a data collection

session where I attended *Industry* and a conventional rave in the same night (Industry until 4:30 am, the conventional rave from 5:00am until 9am).

> Chris [a friend of mine who had been in the rave scene in the early 1990s] and I went initially to *Industry* and then to the "Clockwork" rave party put on by the promotion company PHYRL at the Masonic Temple (an abandoned temple that was now rented for events – acknowledged to be a great venue)[this venue has now been turned into offices and a studio for the Canadian Television Network, a change which was disappointed for many ravers]. Both of these venues were high energy. However, *Industry*, where we stayed until about 4am, still had a bar feel to it. People were facing the DJ (Robert De La Gautier, a well known international DJ was playing that night) dancing like at a rave, but few people were really lost in the dance beyond cheering at a good song (many people were drinking which no doubt played into this). There were only a couple of people I noticed doing the "flowy" rave dancing which I've only seen at "authentic" raves. People were still enjoying themselves – a "vibing bar" as opposed to a "vibing rave." At the Masonic Temple, where we arrived at about 6am, there was a place where people could paint pictures and put them up on the wall, there were psychedelic projections on the wall behind the DJ, even the music was more ravey (the name of the DJ was *Neuromancer*, a DJ in from Sweden, playing hard techno), and people were obviously "feeling the music," dancing in that fluid, almost break-dance style. Chris suggested that the difference between the places was likely a combination of atmosphere and venue, but also underlying drug use. Chris was quite clear in explaining that "really fluid" dancing at 7am is usually an indication of being wired on Ecstasy. Chris also said that this party was almost exactly the same as the parties he used to go to a few years ago in Toronto (in almost every way), and for him the lack of development and change actually symbolized a lack of authenticity. The idea that the "real' raves appeared to be the same as they used to be, but because it's 4 years later, it CANNOT BE THE SAME as it used to was the point I took from that. I've heard this kind of sentiment before from older ravers who appear to be "on the way out" of the scene and were disillusioned by the scene's loss of authenticity (fieldnotes, December 20, 1997).

Crucial here are the complex and overlapping issues of rave politics, authenticity, subcultural evolution, and raver interpretation. The tensions surrounding the loss of authenticity in the scene which are played out in both the "club vs rave" debate and in the concern that "rave culture is too stagnant" are interestingly mediated by the *interpretations* of ravers who, depending on the relationship to the rave scene at any given time (i.e., their "rave career status") give usually cynical but contradictory meanings to subcultural evolution-authenticity relationship. *A vicious circles emerges where, for some ravers, rave parties cannot change to "rave clubs" or they lose authenticity, and yet for other ravers, rave culture generally cannot stay the same, or it loses authenticity (and becomes a "try hard" culture).*

Another significant concern expressed by most ravers, related to the ways that the popularization of rave culture appeared to have *created political tensions associated with the business side of the scene* (i.e., in the promotion of raves, DJs getting "gigs" at raves). One raver explained how the politics have "killed" the vibe for him:

> Once you've lost the magical, the "wow" of raving, then you start to understand the politics and there are politics. And that's because at the same time people are in there having a good time there's people making money from it. And so long as somebody's making money, they're getting power and politics and power go hand I hand I guess. Right now in Toronto if I were to speak specifically, there is a rave company called *Pleasure Force* that was the staple of raving for a long long time and every party they'd throw, just put their name on the flyer, 2000 people guaranteed. And they started to raise the ticket prices and that created a price war where other companies who wanted to throw parties would either have to match or lower their prices I guess. Then, with the expansion of raving, there's so many more people now, you can have two parties every weekend. There's alot of different companies, some that are big, some that are small. If someone plans a party on a specific date they'll say "we don't like those people, we'll throw a party that weekend to spite them and that has happened a couple of times." (interview, male raver, university student, 1995)

Other ravers expressed similar sentiments:

> The second money comes in, it sucks the spirituality right out of it. (interview, female raver, tattoo artist, 1995)

> The politics generate alot of animosity between certain people especially in the scene and it reflects in the attitudes of the ravers. When the big people are having problems that compounds the little people feeling bad that the big people are having problems. (interview, male raver, university student, 1995)

Over the course of the study, the topic of rave politics became more frequent in interviews and newsgroup discussions. Respondents often voiced their concern that "money-hungry" promoters were putting "pro-rave" promoters out of business (e.g., by throwing a rave on the same night as another company in an attempt to bring the pro-rave promoters an insurmountable loss, since these pro-rave promoters were often "student-ravers" without any surplus money). These sorts of tensions were particularly evident in newsgroup discussions between (sometimes rival) Toronto rave promoters. Some promoters have been accused of starting rumours that other promoters are "lying" about "which DJs are playing" at an advertised party (i.e., suggesting that a big name DJ who has been advertised is not actually DJing -- implying that the promoter is trying to "rip off" raver consumers). The following letter posted to the Toronto rave newsgroup I am a part of, written by a promoter for the *Destiny* rave promotion company, is a response to a series of "public" accusations (spread through newsgroups and other rumour mill places in the Toronto rave scene) made by another promoter about a rave that was to take place on New Years Eve:[132]

> Dear Rob [ASIDE: Rob is the promoter for the company who is accusing *Destiny* of misrepresentation and deceit]:

I am writing this letter to you in an attempt to find out why you find it necessary to continue your "con" job on the party people of Toronto. I told [you] from the outset that I was not interested in getting involved in mud slinging or low-ball tactics when it came to our events this New Year's, but you continue to make these your main focus of your marketing campaign.

1. [the following is a response to an accusation that *Destiny* promotion company advised Skydome not to rent to the "accuser's" promotion company] You know as well as I do that we NEVER attempted to book Skydome and NEVER even spoke to them regarding your party in any way. I'm sure if you had any sort of relationship with them at any time you could easily confirm this fact.

2. [the following is a response to an accusation that the advertised DJs for *Destiny*'s New Year's Eve event are not actually performing at the event] If you have spoken to the various agents of our DJs as you say you have, then you know for a fact that we have purchased flights for Eric Davenport and Anne Savage for New Year's. Anne is playing Ottawa and Toronto the same night and Eric is doing the same with Montreal....[and] 3. You know that Czech [a well known DJ from Vancouver] is playing our afterparty (as stated on the flyer)...[and] 4. You know Mark Oliver is exclusive to us on New Year's, not you. Mark has been attempting to remove his name from your line-up ever since you placed it on your pre-flyer without his knowledge.

5. [in response to the accusation that the rave promotion company is linked with the sale and promotion of drugs] Finally, any attempt to link our event with crystal [a less expensive drug perceived to be a more dangerous version of Ecstasy] or any other illegal substance is the most ludicrous thing I have ever heard. If you had been in the scene from the early years as you claim to want to take it back to, you would know that Destiny led the way with anti-crystal information on our flyers, in our mail-outs and even in newsletters handed out to all those who attended our events. Maybe you should look at your own financial backing before making suggestions in this direction.

I hope that you take what I have said to heart and don't assume it is some sort of attack on you or your company. This is not my goal. I only hope that you decide to remove yourself from spiteful and hurtful marketing practices that help nobody and only damage a scene we have all worked hard at creating and maintaining for so many years.
Thank-you & Sincerely,

Ryan Kruger
*Destiny* Productions (public letter posted on newsgroup December 17, 1997).

Despite this promoter's insistence that the accusations are blasphemous, there was more general evidence to suggest that *some promoters* do deceive and defraud. A well known instance was a rave that was being advertised for May 1999 at *Canada's Wonderland* entertainment park (in Toronto) called "Ravestock," where tickets could only be purchased over a website. Follow-up by other promoters in the Toronto rave scene (who telephoned *Wonderland*) who were suspicious of this "unknown" promoter revealed that this was a money-making hoax. Ravers were subsequently warned by radio (on the "Global Groove Network" in a commentary by Don Burns/Dr. Trance) and newsgroups to not buy tickets.

More accepted "deceptive" advertising practices that are widely used by promoters include hiring international DJs, particularly from Europe but at least from outside the Toronto area, who are inexperienced and/or not prominent artists in their home country/city (i.e., so they will often play for a low

wage so as to get exposure). These DJs are then marketed as a "big name coming to Toronto" since there is inherently more "capital" associated with (attending raves with) DJs from other countries, particularly when the DJs are from Britain (because of the country's links with the origins of the rave scene). Since this practice occurs in other cities and scenes as well, some local DJs talked (and joked) about how it was sometimes easier to "get a gig" outside of Toronto or internationally (although this was an exaggeration, the politics of getting a "regular gig" in Toronto were a common discussion topic for many DJs).

Other tensions were outlined by DJs who talked about raves where promoters would "disappear" (i.e., leave Toronto and not return) part way through the party and not pay the DJs. A New Years Eve rave held on the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) grounds called "Skyhigh" (put on by the promotion company KIND, now dubbed, "unKIND") gained notoriety for this. Below appears a brief newsgroup discussion about the incident (including a comment from a DJ who did not get paid) (all comments from January, 1998 newsgroup discussion):

> Well, go figure...After a great party (albeit, not as well attended as some individuals would have hoped for) and a number of fantastic performances (Alx Patterson's set was mind blowing) it seems the inevitable has happened. All those that performed at SkyHigh, New Year's Eve have been stiffed. I'm not (and won't) go into detail as I refuse to feed the rumour machine -however it is extremely uncool (and unKIND) to issue everyone bum cheques because "investors took the money at the door and disappeared." I'm sure you'll all be hearing more about this in the days to come...

> [Response to above note] Guess what I found out recently? That Rob Heydon, promoter of KIND, has done exactly the same thing in his past business ventures as he did this New Year's Eve. That is, get in a business, make some money, then fuck everyone else around him... The cheque that I was paid with (and every other DJ/act) was for an account that was closed. And the bastard gave it to me with a smile on his face....he even looked me in the eye. I guess he has a lot of practice in lying...Anyway, if anyone ever runs into Rob Heydon, or knows him (he has somehow 'disappeared') kick him in the shins for me....

> [Response 2] I find it hard to believe that people are not saying much about KIND....do they realize that these promoters STOLE from you the ticket buyers? I think that is what you should call it when they take money and instead of giving it to the performers as is supposed to happen, they keep it themselves. Ah well, I guess we just have to wait until the next money hungry bastard comes along and does the same thing, it happens every year, I think Utopia and Ministry [past rave parties] were last years...

## 5.1.7 — The Waning of Idealism

Overall, the various tensions surrounding the popularization of the rave scene have contributed to the *changing perspectives*, or more accurately, a "waning of idealism" (Haas and Shaffir, 1991) for many

"mature"/experienced ravers. A comment by one raver who has been raving in the Toronto scene since the early 1990s (who described his cynical view of the rave scene's evolution) exemplifies this sentiment:

> When the rave scene first started here there was only one promotion company called *Chemistry*. They were great. It was cheap. They had parties with swimming pools, soap suds, crazy stuff. Once the scene got publicized, they had one last great party and then got out. They were great parties. People weren't getting baked and running around like madmen. When Chemistry folded, I think it was the beginning of the end for the rave scene. As for the future of the rave scene, if it keeps going the way its going, the scene is gonna be sickly. Black eyed 14 year olds sniffing powders and going home to the wrong address under the guise that they're having a good time (interview, male raver/DJ, tattoo artist, 1995)

Similarly, a female interviewee talked about how her perspective became tainted as she gained more knowledge about the scene:

> When I first started going to raves I was on top of the world. I insisted that everyone I knew who hadn't experienced it were missing out and had to do it in order to find true inner peace. It was a purely spiritual release for me (the drugs were a major part of that) and I loved the people and the whole philosophy that went along with it...the music was like I've never heard anywhere in my life and the way it made me feel was so intense that I had trouble describing it but was constantly trying. It was fresh and new and very exciting and I wanted to be a part of it. Now I think that my ignorance was bliss. I know a lot more about the politics of the scene and I have seen many people who seemed like amazing people at the rave when they're on all kinds of E but have turned out to be very different outside. I saw a lot of hypocrisy and bad people feeding bad drugs to innocent young ones. I found that as it was turning into a fad people were losing the meaning of the ritual and it was being tainted by those who were trying to make a profit out of it. I became more attached to the musical aspect of it and stayed away from the "scenesters and partiers." Now raving does not mean much to me at all. I care only about the music and few parts of the scene...I do believe there are still some very special parties that still go on with the same philosophies that were present in every person (or so I thought) that is in attendance...but they are few and far between (interview, female raver, university student, 1998).

This dominant "waning of idealism" theme was underscored by a more generic trend toward the "changing of perspectives over time." This finding highlights the importance of being sensitive to the various ways that ravers interpret and use rave culture at any given time (relative to and regardless of the subcultural evolutionary process) and throughout their rave career. In other words, it is important to be attentive to the ways that interpretation is mediated by social location and social context. As one raver explained when asked "what he likes about going to raves":

> I cannot really explain much about the feelings of going to a party because my views and experiences of going to a party are in change. I use to go and dance for a majority of the night. Getting lost in the music. But now as I focus more and more on the music, I'm more observing it. Trying to understand the energies of the songs and the crowd. So as a DJ I'm looking and learning. Using the time at a party as a lab session to both enjoy the music and understand the natural or un-natural flow of energies between the space/music/DJ/crowd (interview, male raver, DJ, former university student, trying to "make it" as a DJ, 1998).

Just as some ravers interpreted the rave cultural evolution in more cynical ways, this raver's change in

perception and identity (from raver to raver/DJ) was neither positive or negative. The most prevalent

perspectival changes, though, were related to interpretations of drug use. Many experienced ravers

explicitly described the process of "getting involved" in Ecstasy use and other drug use, becoming "caught

up" in the drug, and then becoming disillusioned with the problems associated with overuse (their own

problems and others' problems – usually related to over-dependence on Ecstasy for "a good time" at raves

– this issue is pursued in the activities and commitments sections). In sum, this overview of the tensions

surrounding the rave scene and the reactions to these tensions are consistent with Prus' (1994b) processual

view of the subculture as a place for dealing with ambiguity, for resolving contradictions, for extending or

improvising formerly held viewpoints, for rejecting formerly held viewpoints, and for adopting new

viewpoints.

### 5.1.8 – Summary of Perspectives

The reported data showed that the "rave doctrine," while widespread and revered in the rave community

and world, was undercut by various tensions. Findings also showed how this philosophy was undermined

by the "natural" evolution of an underground culture to a popular phenomenon, [133] and the ravers' changing

interpretations of the scene (e.g., a "waning of idealism"). However, the allegiance to the rave philosophy

held usually by relative neophyte ravers (who are "educated" but not "experienced") and to the overarching

belief in a positive, constructive energy that can be guided by music and dance (as part of the rave ritual)

has prevented idealism from (completely) disappearing. However, and without dismissing the centrality of

the identified "perspective themes" in this section, it seems fair to suggest from these findings that the

*"raver philosophy/doctine" is an abstract concept that is interpreted and practiced in multiple ways.*

While this would seem to be common sense, this notion of multiple realities has been lost in much of the

writing about rave culture (e.g., in journalism and academia – see chapter 4). Practically then, the rave

philosophy is a series of perspectives that vary according to a raver's "social location" in the rave (loosely

defined by taste and life experience related to drugs, music, friendship groups, and "stage of progression"

through the raver career). So, while raver perspectives, for the most part, related to the underlying PLUR theme, they varied in distinct and important ways.[134]

### 5.2 — The Symbolic Use of Dance, Music and Drugs: Activities at the Rave

For me, listening to the music is the single most important thing. For example, if you take away the drugs and the dancing , people would keep on loving the music. People who love the music would keep on raving without the drugs. And if you took away the flashy lights, people would still go. If you took away all the weird clothing and perhaps even all the good feelings and good vibes associated with raving people still would go because they love the music. I like the music and I think that is the most important thing. But I like the other things too, don't get me wrong. (interview, male raver, university student, 1995)

This analysis of "what ravers do and how they do it" shows how raver perspectives are played out in the following rave activities: dancing, listening to music, and doing drugs.[135] The focus of this discussion will be on how people learn about these activities, how these activities are performed, how these activities are related to each other, and how these activities are viewed and evaluated by both those doing these activities and by others in the setting (Prus, Deitz and Shaffir, 1994).

### 5.2.1 — Music

Once in the rave, listening to music (or at least hearing music) is the one activity that never stops. People listen to the music in several different ways, depending on the desired mood. At many of the raves I went to (all of the 1995 raves), there were two different rooms playing different types of music where people seemed to be "using" the music for different reasons.[136] The slower "ambient" music (in one room) was associated with relaxing and "chilling out," and faster "techno" music (in the other room) with intense dancing:

I walked into the "chill-out" room. There was a black cloth hanging down over the entrance to the room. The music was what is called Ambient — it is akin to some of the "New Age" music that is very popular. Ambient still has a strong beat, but it is much slower and more flowing, not intense and heavy-beated like Techno music. In the room, the smell of drugs (marijuana) was strong. The room was filled , but not with people dancing. People were all sitting on the floor or on easy chairs or couches that were dispersed throughout the room. The people were alone or in circles. Basically everybody was smoking something, either a cigarette or a "joint"...After buying an Evian at the smart bar [137] I spotted an easy chair that I strolled over to and sat down...Also in the chill-out room, in full view of my easy chair, was a unit of televisions. When I say unit, I mean that it looked like a solid structure which had several TVs built into it. There was a total of 6 televisions, 2 across and 3 down. There were computer-generated images on the screen. While the movements were mechanical, there appeared to be a certain smoothness to them. They were really cool to look at.[138] (fieldnotes, October 14, 1995)

The music in the straight ahead room (the "hardcore" room) was hard techno or a variation thereof (characterized by a heavy and fast beat). Although the beat was always very fast, there were a couple of "mixes" where the beat picked up to a frenetic pace. These were crowd favourites [what I found out subsequently was that *this build up was often meant to help the raver get a euphoric feeling or "rush" from the drug Ecstasy*]. The music was very very loud, pumping out of large speakers that surrounded the dance floor. People were dancing all over the place – the dance floor, beside the dance floor, everywhere. (fieldnotes, September 21, 1995)

At other raves I attended, there was a large contingent of ravers who simply stood in front of the

DJ area and watched the DJ mix records. In interviews with these "trainspotters" as they were called, I was

told that those who are intent on watching the DJ were either DJs themselves assessing/admiring the

performance, or aspiring "basement DJs" (i.e., DJs who practice mixing records at home in hopes of getting

hired to play a rave one day) who were trying to learn some tricks. In my experience, trainspotters were

almost exclusively male – as were the DJs themselves. I spent time "trainspotting" (and "trainspotting

trainspotters") at later raves, particularly at one party where I watched DJs in the "jungle" music room:[139]

The jungle room was the smallest room at the party (which was held at the *Warehouse*, a massive building and club space well-known for its rave parties in Toronto). It was extremely crowded. Against one wall, at ground level, was the DJ. There was a small barrier in front of him and his turntables. There were two other guys behind the barriers who appeared to be the DJ's friends. His friends appeared to be both hanging out and helping get records together for the DJ to mix. The DJ had a small light attached to his finger to help him see what he was doing while mixing records (because it was dark). In front of the barrier there were about 30 people (almost exclusively males, I can't remember any females who were in the "front row" watching the DJ) who were watching intently to see the DJ mix records. Although periodically during a really good "mix" (often when a melody would be mixed in with the fast, sometimes erratic beats that characterize types of jungle music) someone would suddenly start dancing really fast. There was a guy standing in front of me near one of the speakers who was wearing a hood (I couldn't see his face) who stood and watched most of the time, but would make some space and dance every now and again, and then go back to watching (fieldnotes, January 24, 1998).

The music also appeared to be most intricately related to dictating the mood of the party, as the

following ravers explained:[140]

Some DJs can play a perfect emotional set. I remember at one rave where the DJ was so in tune with the music and the DJ was so in tune with us, my heart opened up and I had a string of cathartic tears. I reached the next level. The energy moved to my heart. (interview, female raver, university student, 1995)

The music is amazing, alot of people blast it [put it down] because it is technological and it is not produced by live musicians and that it takes away from the talent involved. But technology can do things to the music, make things that people can't make...Some of the melodies and baselines that are intertwined are above the human level, they have a consequent effect on the people who listen to it, a really intense effect. (interview, male raver, university student 1995)

Many of these music genres have evolved and become segmented into "sub-categories" of music. For example, techno has segmented into a more melodic electronic genre known as "trance," and into a faster type known as "hardcore" (or even faster types known as Rotterdam techno, or gabba). In fact, most rave parties now bring in DJs that specialize in one type of music or another. In this way, different "sub-scenes" of the Toronto rave community emerged around different music types. These distinctions are akin in many respects to the developments in Chicago in the Frankie Knuckles, Ron Hardy days (see chapter 4). In Toronto however, the "sophisticated crowd" was most often associated with listening to more "soulful" house music and more complex/subtle techno music (e.g., "minimalist" techno popularized by world renowned Canadian DJ Richie Hawtin), and with Ecstasy use. Members of the "techno.ca" newsgroup were often linked with this (sometimes self-proclaimed) sophisticated group. The (arguably) less refined and usually younger crowd (14-18) were often associated with listening to "happy hardcore" music (fast-beated, loud, straightforward) and using the ("more intense," "more dangerous") drug Crystal. Experienced ravers explained how, over time, one learns to appreciate the nuances of "less raw" techno music styles, that are more about subtlety and less about speed and pounding beats. Clearly though, the "sophisticated" and "less refined" groups were not empirically this distinct and/or divided. Usually interviewees acknowledged that these are simple labels for complex groups. In fact, many ravers I spoke with crossed-over between scenes, and often enjoy various genres of rave music.[141] This issue is elaborated on in the upcoming "identities" section.

Overall, the activity of "listening to music" cannot be separated from dancing, or doing drugs, or even from socializing. Ravers generally danced to the fast "hardcore techno music," and "chill-out" (usually sit down, often smoke) to ambient music. These connections are elaborated on below.

*5.2.2 – Drugs*

Clearly, *drug use* is intricately connected to music consumption. As noted in previous sections, smoking "pot" (marijuana) to "mellow/chill out" was preferred by many ravers who are listening to slower, "ambient music." Ecstasy (as a "high energy" amphetamine) and Crystal[142] were the drugs of choice when it came to fast dancing. Certain techno music tracks were apparently and at least subtly structured around

drug-effects. For example, these tracks (usually styles melodic "trance" music and more heavy-beat

oriented "hardcore" in particular) would be structured so that there is a "build-up" stage (where the beat

gets fast and faster) followed by a "plateau" stage – a structure that is apparently conducive to an optimal

euphoric feeling (a "rush") for those on Ecstasy. In a live audio-taped recording of a New Years Eve rave

in 1997, this process was actually explained by a live DJ as it was happening (from an

"underground/independent" recording called "E!Nuf: The final event"). Several ravers outlined how the

drugs are intricately and purposefully related to the mood of the rave. For example:

> People will sell pills that are combinations [explained below] to set a mood for a party. Promoters will actually make deals with the drug dealer where they will ask the drug dealer to make a certain type of pill that they can sell and name for the party [aside: This sort of arrangement appeared to be more common in the earlier years of the rave scene, when parties were usually smaller/more intimate, and more secretive compared to the more popular/commercial scene of later on. More "intimate" techno-music focused gatherings that took place in peoples' houses in more recent years still, according to a few interviewees who discussed it, involved people taking the same drugs at the same time for the same experience]. Perhaps they will make a capsule that is half Ecstasy and half heroine. Those used to be called Red Rockets...heroine makes you feel like you're walking through water. It creates a very down atmosphere, very relaxed. Some people like that for intimate occasions...Green Meanies are another one, they have Ecstasy and Crystal Meth, and that's a very "up" drug. That's one of the strongest amphetamines you can get...It's really hard. It kind of takes their awareness away, they can have a good time no matter what is happening. (interview, male raver, university student, 1995)

> Overall, the use of drugs at raves was acknowledged to be and appeared to be widespread, as

studies by the Addiction Research Foundation on the Toronto rave scene have shown (Addiction Research

Foundation, 1998; Dubey, 1996; Weber, 1999). The following fieldnote entries provide some sense of the

drug-related interactions and activities that took place at parties I attended:

> There were two young girls, probably 16 or 17 and one young guy of the same age. They were "authentic" looking ravers [wearing raver clothes and were really into the music and dance]. One of the females took off her pack and came right in front of where I was standing and said to her friend "what now." The friend said "Just some hash." They proceeded to open up the bag and start sorting things out. (fieldnotes, October 14, 1995)

> I was standing behind the railing, mellowing out along with a few others and a young female (who appeared to be about 16 years old) wearing loose pants and a short top walked up to me and said "Do you know anybody here who wants a hit?" (meaning hit of acid/LSD)
> I replied, "No, I'm new here."
> The young female, then said, "You don't know anybody?"
> I replied, "Sorry."
> Then the young female said, "Do you want a hit?"
> I said "No thanks, I'm pretty wired."
> The female replied "OK" and walked away (fieldnotes, September 21, 1995)

Sean said, "I've been approached about 5 times to buy drugs tonight. Ya I bought shrooms. [magic mushrooms]" (informal interview at rave with male raver, college student, fieldnotes, October 14, 1995)

There were mixed views on drug use at raves. Most ravers indicated that the use of Ecstasy and

marijuana are acceptable if you are educated about them. A health counsellor in Toronto (who is well-

known and respected in the Toronto rave scene) who distributes information at raves, emphasized this need

for education. She referred me to an information guide describing the goals and objectives of what is called

the Toronto Raver Information Project (TRIP), a community service programme (that she works in) that

focuses on educating the rave community. The following are passages from the guide that illuminate the

noted educational concerns:

> **Objective** [among others]:  To increase raver's knowledge regarding drug use harm reduction practices.
> **Health Risk Profile**:  Drug use is common among this group of youth, however the drugs commonly used are of the "non-addictive" variety:  LSD, MDMA (ecstasy) and Psilocybin. Crystal Methamphetamine (speed) is also used and is addictive.  Alcohol, opiates, barbituates, and crack cocaine are not currently used within this community.  Opiates, however, are increasingly used within the rave scene in other localities.
> While the drugs of choice for ravers may be currently mostly non-addictive, they do present other risks for harm.  For example, LSD, MDMA and Psilocybin can increase tactile sensitivity and reduce emotional barriers between people.  These effects in themselves may reduce the likelihood of practicing safer sex, especially in combination with the difficulties youth experiences negotiating safer sex when high.

The report went on to stress concerns about the *quality* of the drugs at raves, and the potential dehydration

and overheating that have accounted for drug-related deaths at raves.[143]  Several ravers talked about the

importance of trusting your drug source (I chose not to pursue these types of issues in the study since the

focus of the research was on rave culture, and not specifically about the intricacies of the "drug culture").

A recently created website called "Ravesafe" (based in Capetown, South Africa and publicized in

rave communities around the world) was advertised on the newsgroup I am a part of, and was widely

supported by newsgroup members.  The website, which has the slogan "just say *know* to drugs," includes

information about the latest research on rave-related drugs, and advice about how ravers who choose to do

drugs should do them safely.  The following is an excerpt from their website and a sample of the kinds of

information being disseminated:

*If...*

If you really want to rave safe 100%, you shouldn't take any intoxicants. This includes most drugs, which are toxins (poisons). However, if you are going to take drugs, consider the following:

Know as much as possible about the drugs you are going to take and the risks involved. Speak to people who have experience, search the Internet: **Knowledge is Power**;
Be prepared: take warm and cool clothes, and lots of caring friends;

Eat well long beforehand, and give a bit of time for digestion. Food = Energy + Stomach protection;

Effects of drugs are influenced by your mood, feelings, environment & how much you take;

Remember that there is no quality control with illegal drugs. Drugs could be stronger/ purer or more polluted than expected;

NEVER drive when you're wirEd and don't drive with people who are either. Rather wait in a chill area until chemical levels subside;

Repeated use of some drugs like Cocaine and Heroine WILL lead to addiction. Please see the RaveSafe Dependency Page. You should also be aware of the dangers of drug-induced Psychosis.

Depressed, anxious or having problems ? Taking drugs will probably make you feel worse.

**If you do drugs, don't let drugs do you !** (quoted from
http://www.ravesafe.org.za/home.htm)

This need to be properly educated about (rave-related) drug use, and to be responsible when

using drugs were also emphasized by usually "mature"/experienced ravers who I spoke with. The best

example was the practice of being someone's "E-Mother" (Ecstasy Mother/Guardian) – meaning

staying with someone and watching over them for their first experience with the drug. As one female

explained:

My E-mother, she would sit me down and explain things to me [before a rave], and explained that no matter what happened I could count on her...That's a term, I don't know if she made it up, but I've continued to use it. She was a good mom. (interview, female raver, university student, 1998)

Despite these practices, it was clear from the interviews and from internet newsgroup

discussions that irresponsible drug use in the scene is the major concern:

Around 9am, at *Delirium* [the name of a rave party] in Toronto, one of the girls who was dancing collapsed. She had taken something, possibly E [Ecstasy] and ended up flat on her back. By the time I got there, people were attending to her, but nobody really knew first aid. Not even the security guard that was present. So I stepped in. She was in bad shape - her eyes were rolling

back in her head, she was semi-conscious, her mouth was bleeding, supposedly from biting her tongue. We kept her conscious and warm till the paramedics arrived. She slowly drifted back to coherence, but her vital signs were worrisome. They took her to the hospital. As one of her friends was leaving, I said to her "I hope you'll be a good friend and not allow her to end up like this again." I admit, I am against drug use - I have never touched it, I don't smoke or drink, but I don't condemn others if they do. All I strive for is education. My message to all of you is this - you better believe how much it hurt me to see this seemingly mature individual in such bad shape, all because of a bad trip. I've now seen firsthand what the risks of recreational drug use are, and frankly they scare me. I'm not saying all of you should quit drugs cause I know you won't. But please, please BE CAREFUL. Don't end up like this poor girl did. Thank God she was alright, but she could well have not been. The safest drug is your own pure, internal E . the energy and adrenaline that comes from within you and radiates to all those around you. (newsgroup, anonymous, 1995)

Although this raver's positioning as a non-drug user ("straight edge" raver) was not typical of those who I interviewed, her view on education in the scene *was* indicative of the "mature raver" perspective. With this said, I should also emphasize that not all those interviewed discussed the notion of "safe" drug use in response to questions about the links between drugs and the rave, and it was widely acknowledged by "mature" ravers that unsafe drug use is relatively common. However, most ravers attempted to de-emphasize this aspect of the rave, pointing out that drug use was too often the focus of what were perceived to be unfair media portrayals of the rave scene. Most of the "mature" ravers I spoke with also acknowledged that their current views on drug use were, in large part, gained from their own and others' (positive and negative) experiences with drug use, evident from one raver's description of his "career" as a rave-related drug user:

From my perspective being older and such I can honestly say I have done it all and reached every limit possible and some time to the point of almost checking out. It is sort of a "did that, done that" attitude now. I mean now to me drugs are just not that important to me and I know no matter how much I do, I will always fall short of what it used to be like with me, so I say why bother. Kids that "abuse" drugs are young and I was too, when I was hard-core. Everyone runs around and thinks it is the coolest thing going on to trip your ass off, or tweak or roll but in time even those kids one day wake up and go "is this really worth it." I see people who are letting drugs control them tell me "I'm fine, serious" and I them and I say "Dude your not, trust me." If they could only see themselves through my eyes. In short, drugs should be treated with respect and caution. I mean I have lost friends to drugs and I have almost lost myself to them. Drugs also stagnate your life growth. When you are abusing too much, life just passes you by and at that age you are living the best days of your life, it would be much nicer to live them and enjoy them at least sober most of the time. Some people might be surprised and really enjoy it (male raver/promoter comment in newsgroup discussion, November, 1998).

Similarly, ravers in the study also expressed that it mattered not only how often you used drugs, but also what drugs were used. Concerns about the use of drugs besides Ecstasy (such as GHB, Crystal

Meth, and Ketamine – see "current research on the Canadian rave scene" section in the last chapter for more details on these drugs) were often expressed by "mature" ravers, although it was also clear from both interviews and observations that many ravers focused more on the sensation of these drugs and less on the potential negative consequences of these drugs. Again, while this study does not focus specifically on these issues, this information does provide insight into aspects of the "career of a rave-related drug user," crucial findings for research focused on a rich description of the complexities and dynamics of rave culture (see Chapter 10 for future research recommendations related to "rave and drugs").

Despite these concerns about drug use, most interviewed ravers also commented on the *benefits* of drug use at rave parties, and implicitly or explicitly suggested that drug use should be done safely, but *not* eliminated:

> Besides the ecstatic feeling that you get from it...it breaks down barriers. It breaks down preconceptions, it makes it easier to meet people, it creates an ecstatic feeling more intense that anything most people have ever experienced, and you couldn't experience it without the help of the drug. And if you're experienced with it, rather than just going with it because it is so overwhelming your first couple of times, consciously you think about certain things while you are doing it. You think about how it changes you and how you feel while you're on it as opposed to how you feel when you're not and you try and take the feeling that you get when you're high and relate it to your own life. Do you really need social barriers, do we really need the defenses that we have and would life be better off if we didn't have some of the defenses that we have. Would it be easier to meet people, easier to communicate. It all comes down to communication because there is a lack of communication obviously in our society. (interview, male raver, university student, 1995)

> Sean spoke about how the drugs make him feel with the music. A tune came on that had a really heavy beat. He turned to me and said "I'm really trippin, man." He smiled, "I can feel that beat right through me." While he was saying this he used both hands to motion that he could feel it coming up from his stomach and body toward his head. He then went out and danced by himself for while. (fieldnotes, October 14, 1995)

> Ecstasy is a drug that minimizes your problems because you are in such a happy, lovey state. It keeps you awake and energized. It doesn't make you hallucinate, but it gets you really into sensation. So if you're at a club, with really loud music, house music, the sensation of music is way more intense, the lights are way more intense. (interview, male raver, coffee shop worker, 1998)

In this way, and despite the tensions surrounding drug use, for most of those interviewed Ecstasy was useful for "breaking down (communication) barriers" between people in the rave party, and for enhancing the sensual dancing and music listening experiences. Others discussed and referred me to literature on the ways that Ecstasy was originally used as a therapeutic drug for enhancing communication, and how the

drug has been criminalized because of its association with rave culture (akin to the criminalization of LSD in the 1960s — see Eisner, 1994; Lenson, 1995; Saunders, 1996). Others talked about how Ecstasy use is less destructive than alcohol use:

> Anything in excess can be life threatening, including coffee [we were both drinking coffee at the time]. It depends on how you do it. The bad aspects of the drugs is that people can't control themselves and like the feeling so much they have to do it all the time. That's like anything, alcohol, computer-addiction. My dad needs a drink every night before he goes to bed. My friends get wasted 3 or 4 nights a week at the bars. Once a week I use E and have a really positive time. I go to school and have a good job. Who's the bad guy here?...[Or think about it another way], you can go spend forty dollars on Ecstasy and do it and party the whole night, or you can spend fifty dollars, get loaded [on alcohol] and get violent, act like a retard and get sloppy all night. (interview, male raver, coffee shop worker, January, 1998).

Overall, *arguments supporting drug use in the rave setting were manifested as resistance against the unfair and often uninformed labels put on drug users and drug use, and as rationalizations for behaviors that had potentially negative (but generally unknown) long-term consequences.*

Drug use was viewed in various other ways as well. Some ravers enjoyed the drug-induced feeling and the rave party, but were sensitive to and concerned about the stigma associated with drug use, and did not consider their rave-related activities to be rebellious or subversive. These ravers explained how they "hid" their rave activity from others. For example, a female university varsity athlete who was interviewed was very concerned about her teammates findings out about her raving. Another university student raver indicated that she was becoming more interested in the campus bar scene as she got older — now interpreting drug use as still enjoyable, but anti-social behavior in the context of her university-based peer group.

### 5.2.3 — Dancing

Combined with the music and the drugs, or just with the music, *dancing* is another activity that is believed to help people "expand their minds" and "feel the energy of the music":

> At a rave you can dance in your own little world or you can dance with someone else or you can dance with a group of people. A lot of the people who go to the raves love dancing and that is why they are there. But that is like an offshoot of the music. Because after you listen to the music for a little while, the dance becomes an outward expression of how you interpreted the music. (interview, male raver, university student, 1995)

> There were two things that stood out to me [when I watched the dancing]. Firstly, I noticed that some of the ravers (usually the "authentic" looking ones with "raver clothes" who appeared to be really in tune with the music) were dancing in a way that reminded me of

"break dancing." When I say "break dancing," I am referring to the style of dance made popular by dancers in the inner cities if the USA during the early 80's. Break dancing, while characterized by almost gymnastic moves on the ground (this was NOT happening at the rave), is also characterized by almost "puppet like" movements, where it looks like the feet of the dancer are sort of levitating over the ground when they dance (like the form of dancing called moonwalking, made famous by Michael Jackson). The arms and legs of the dancer move around in a deliberate way so that it looks like they are a "rag doll" who is being moved by someone else. These dancers looked like they were made of rubber. [Aside: In later interviews and at a rave attended with a raver-friend, this "rubber-like" dancing was often related to the simultaneous energy-relax effects of Ecstasy].

The second aspect that I noticed about the dancing at the rave is that dancing is by no means done exclusively on the dance floor. People dance on the side (at times people would be dancing right around where I was standing which was a fair distance from the dance floor at some points). I don't think that actual dance floor is that important. This outside the dance floor dancing also highlights the idea that the dancing is not a show to others so much as it is as it is something personal and individual. (fieldnotes, September 18, 1995)

Each one of us who migrates to the dance floor understands that it is a place without boundaries or barriers. An outer limit to explore our inner souls. Through driving beats...thumpin bass and unchained melodies our minds expand to realize the music in our journey into consciousness. (from a flyer advertising a rave put on by the *Bass Oddessy* promotion company, October 21, 1995)

The data clearly showed that dancing is viewed as a sensual and aesthetically pleasing activity, both for those doing the activity and for those watching the activity. The homologous link between music, dance, and drugs has become clear over the course of this "activities" section. Subtle contradictions did exist in the data on rave dancing however. On one hand, respondents discussed how dance is empowering, liberating, and sensual. On the other hand, it was apparent that dancing was often an activity "on display" (i.e., for good dancers who enjoy being watched, and for novice dancers who are concerned about being watched). Although only one interviewee (a male raver who was a long time member of the scene – and apparently a good dancer) admitted that, on occasion, he likes dancing "for attention," the positioning of some ravers "on stage" (literally and metaphorically) at more recent rave parties, particularly at "club raves" like *Industry* (less so at the early raves I attended) begged attention from others. This seemed to be inconsistent with the "purist view" of dancing as an activity used to "explore one's inner soul," and suggested that rave dancing is more complex and contradictory than some have indicated. These dancing displays are linked with tensions about the popularization of the rave scene (i.e., the movement toward raves that are more like dance clubs that often feature "go go" dancers). The most highly criticized example of mainstream rave-related dancing is the well-known Toronto "dance television" show called

*Electric Circus* (shown on Canada's music station *MuchMusic* and on *CityTV*) which often features

renowned local and international rave DJs who spin music while predominantly "hand-picked" dancers

explicitly "strut their stuff" for the camera. In fact, the camera pans from person to person, with the

spotlighted dancer usually showing their "best moves" (often seemingly choreographed, as opposed to the

more "flowy" raver moves) for the television audience. The show is often referred to jokingly in the rave

community because of its "over-the-top" vanity and its "cheesiness."

### 5.2.4 — From "Trying Hard" to "Feeling It": Levels of Authenticity in Performing Activities

As noted in the above sections, activities performed by members of a subculture may require *some form of*

*deception in their "presentation"* to others.[144] In rave culture, "being yourself," letting go of

preconceptions, and being respectful of others are valued ways of being. Ravers who were not comfortable

with these activities often appeared to "cloak" their insecurities with drug use (see Haas and Shaffir (1991)

and Goffman (1959) for discussions surrounding the "cloak of competence" and "impression management"

concepts). As one raver (who was on Ecstasy) suggested in an informal interview at a rave party:

> My friends don't even recognize the way I am at a rave. Usually I'm pretty shy. When I'm on E I
> can really let go (informal interview with male raver, fieldnotes, October 27, 1995)

Although this raver's comment highlights a common social distinction between "being yourself" (acting the

way you would normally act, drug free) and "being comfortable at a (rave) party" (which, in this case, is

facilitated by drug use), this *reliance* on drugs to break-down-barriers is in contradiction with a central

tenet of the raver philosophy. Experienced, "mature" ravers who I spoke with argued that you become

comfortable over time at a rave, and that this rave-related "state of consciousness" is acquired and real –

and should not be an *exclusively* drug-induced feeling. This desired process of becoming "in tune" with the

rave (i.e., feeling "the vibe") was described by one respondent who outlined how people become more

relaxed with the music and dancing as they go to more rave parties:

> When you go in originally, most people prefer the faster music because its different, and
> they'll stay in that stage for a couple of months, and once they realize what is going on,
> they'll start to groove a little more which is a more relaxed style. After awhile you can really
> tell. And then you start to develop you own style. Alot of the older ravers you can tell
> because instead of being like a club style dance, it's really like a flow. (interview, male
> raver, university student, 1995)

*5.2.5 – Activities In Perspective*

This section demonstrated how the rave subcultures' activities were both *homologously related to the rave doctrine and to the contradictions that underlie the rave doctrine.*[145] The notion of "impression management" was addressed here as it related to the ravers' actual comfort level doing certain activities (i.e., the extent to which ravers were "right into the party/music/dance" compared to the extent to which the participants were "trying too hard"). These complexities of impression management, identity construction/work, and authenticity are examined further in the "identities" section, below.

### 5.3 – Trying to "Feel the Vibe": Identities and Reputations in the Rave

> My advice to you is to relax a bit about the whole clothing thing ...It's not worth your time. Dress the way you want to dress, and don't let anyone or anything tell you otherwise. Everyone has enough shit to deal with in their lives without having to worry about really unimportant [things]. Every 'scene' like ours is bound to be commercialized a bit, but that's the nature of society. As far as I'm concerned, as long as there are...[great] parties things are just fine. I just lose myself in the music, and don't let anything worry me (response to a concern about the expensive clothes that are coming onto the scene – internet discussion group comment, 1995)

Ideally, the rave culture's focus on "losing preconceptions" and "breaking down barriers" would preclude ravers from being bogged down with restrictive impression management issues. However, as the above quotation and the previous sections have indicated, this is not the case for at least some people in the rave scene. This section discusses the variations in and tensions surrounding styles and related identities that ravers have adopted. Particular attention is paid to the ways that definitions of "self" and "other" are played out in the lives of those in the rave community, and how people actively "resist or manage unwanted identity imputations" (Prus, Deitz and Shaffir, 1994, p. 12).

*5.3.1 – Looking the Part: Making Statements and Feeling Comfortable in the Rave*

> Adidas (the athletic apparel company) clothing appeared to be the label of preference. Many people wore *Adidas* shoes, Adidas jackets and *Adidas* pants (*Adidas* apparel is characterized by three stripes, making it very identifiable). Other apparel companies were also evident, usually Converse or Nike. However, the apparel was generally "old style," meaning clothing that is (or appears to be) several years old. For the most part, the clothes worn were very baggy, shirts not tucked in and loose pants. Although many other ravers did not wear "old style" *Adidas* apparel, most still adhered to an "old style" look, with older looking golf shirt style shirts (long and short sleeve), sneakers of any sort (old and new), and baggy pants (jeans or cords). For the most part males and females dressed in a similar ways. (fieldnotes, September 21, 1995)

There are various "styles and looks" adopted by those who attend raves, including the "return to childhood" look, the "sporty" look (above), "outrageous costume look," and the "nothing special" look. Others took on a psychedelic look (wearing tie-die shirts, colourful headbands and small sunglasses). The meanings that ravers gave to these various looks (their own and others) were usually interpreted in ways that were consistent with some aspect of the rave philosophy. There were also tensions surrounding extreme identities/styles in the scene, particularly the "candy raver" identity/style which is an extreme version of the "return to childhood" look. In this section, the return to childhood look and the candy raver look are focused on as case studies of symbolic styles. Rave styles and identities are then examined more generally for their relevance to subculture members over their "raver careers."

Some of those interviewed were emphatic about the symbolic meaning of the clothes they wore. The "childlike" look, symbolized a "temporary return to innocence" for some ravers, a meaning consistent with these ravers' "carefree," escapist interpretations of the rave experience. This "look" for many female ravers included "pig tails," a baby's pacifier, and a "school-girl" skirt. One experienced female raver I spoke with (who works in a tattoo parlour) wears a plaid "catholic school" skirt. There are similar but less spectacular examples for males, who are renowned for wearing "baggy" pants (a.k.a., "phat" pants) and tee-shirts with cartoon pictures or funny/silly phrases or words. I have seen male ravers carrying teddy bears, others have been spotted "blowing bubbles" at a rave with a bubble-blowing kit. One young female, who I saw at two raves (who looked to be around 17 years old) wears a white skirt, a white shirt, and a tin foil "halo" designed so that it sticks up over her head – an obvious attempt to represent the "angel-like" innocence of a child. "Jill" explained her own "return to innocence" look and what it means to her:

> Jill said to me, "When I go to a rave, I have a little kid persona. I take "Jezibel" [the name of her rave persona] out to play. I dress in a school girl outfit." (At this point the female raver began to speak in a "little girl's" voice, saying silly, funny childlike things about raves). Jill went on to say (in her normal voice), "the child is very liberating...there is potential for these liberating acts in the rave scene. You have to exorcise your demons." (informal interview, female raver, tattoo artist, 1995).

### 5.3.2 — Candy Ravers: Tensions surrounding an "ideal type"

The subgroup of ravers that have adopted an extreme form of the "childlike style" and persona are labeled "candy ravers" by the rave community. Although "candy ravers" are only one group in the diverse rave

scene, they are an interesting case study of an "ideal type" of raver who has, for many ravers, become "too

into" their rave role. In general, males and females who are affiliated with this group adopt (extreme)

"childlike" props as part of their costume, including sparkles on the face, plastic toys and plastic bracelets,

glowsticks, and bubble-blowing kits (a store named NUMB on Queen Street in Toronto is a renowned

"candy raver" hang-out where these clothes and props are sold -- NUMB also sets up a booth at some

raves). Interestingly, and while I saw variations of this look and these props at all raves that I attended, it

was only a central part of the culture at certain types of raves where the style of music known as "Happy

Hardcore" (fast-beated, upbeat music, often with a young female voice accompaniment) was played. In

Toronto, this sub-group is most often associated with raves put on by the promotion company *Hullabaloo*,

a company run by, among others, a well-known Happy Hardcore DJ "Anabolic Frolic." The following

excerpt from a flyer for a Hullabaloo rave demonstrates some of the views of this sub-group:

> Dress up and get ready to return to the world famous *Hullabaloo* atmosphere as we present you a
> very special party. Remember, once you grow up, you can never go back!...No drugs, thugs,
> markers, attitude or frowns. If you feel you can't contribute to the crazy *Hullabaloo* spirit, then
> stay away!! Happy ravers only!! (from the flyer for the rave put on by *Hullabaloo* called
> "Foreverland", April 17, 1999)

Many who I interviewed found the candy-raver identity to be "try-hard" and irritatingly childish:

> These kids with their glowsticks and their sparkles. My friends and I look at them being all "so
> into" their glowsticks and their toys and think "ya, right." (interview, female raver, university
> student, 1998).

One raver expressed his mixed feelings about "disliking" candy ravers because of his commitment to the

rave philosophy:

> As a raver am I expected to feel the over riding sense of unity and thus support for portions of our
> "scene" that I personally find repugnant (word for the day). Keep in mind that the way that
> everyone makes fun of Ginos across the board is very very similar to how people make fun of
> Candy Ravers (especially in the Psy Trance department) [Aside: As noted previously, trance is a a
> type of music sometimes associated with the more sophisticated, technology-oriented raver – less
> sophisticated than a minimalist techno fan though]. I personally have yet to decide whether
> Hulla's [Hullas are the candy ravers who attend the "happy hardcore" music raves put on by the
> rave company called Hullabaloo] are my ultimate dream or my ultimate nightmare. Candy ravers
> add colour to what might other wise be a very dark and bleak scene, however at times I can
> understand the beauty of black. Candy Ravers are a riot to watch and a lot of fun at parties but on
> the same token it calls into question the integrity of the whole thing, are they really this happy?
> Are techno snobs really intellectual? Do trancers have any soul? Or the bigger question, does it
> matter?...Is the concept of PLUR just that a concept or is it ultimately expressed by Hullas
> (newsgroup, male raver, January, 1999).

Another raver provided interesting insight into the evolution of rave clothing, and how a distorted

nostalgia for the "original rave scene" (1980s, early 1990s) has been played out in the "candy ravers" style:

> In the progression of "raves" into this whole "candy raver" thing, the definition has changed. When I went to raves [in the early 1990s], there were nice people dressed oddly. Now you have what is termed "candy ravers" because they go out of their way to give you stuff (candy) and dress like kids. They used to wear Dr. Seuss hats and etc. They didn't try to confuse people into thinking they were 3 [years old]. While the PLUR aspects of the rave scene have not been lost, the imagery that surrounds it has. It's mutated into something rather humorous. Even before that, with warehouse parties (and I don't mean a rave thrown in a warehouse - I mean it like it was meant in the 80s), they didn't even dress like those crazy ravers from "back in the day." (newsgroup, male raver, 1998)

### 5.3.3 – Starting to "Feel it": Gaining Comfort in the Rave Scene

Just as the ravers seemed to become more in tune with their *activities* as they gain experience in the scene,

they appeared to become more comfortable with their identities (and appearances) within the subculture

over time (i.e., less concerned about others' perceptions). The "mature" ravers I spoke with suggested that

as they gained more rave-related experience (attended more rave parties), they did not see a need to "show

off" their raver status to others:

> I don't have any special clothes that I wear to raves. I don't go crazy with my hair or do anything wacky. I just go and enjoy myself. There are people who go all out in terms of costumes and that sort of thing are concerned and that's one of the neat things about it, you can't tell how long someone's been raving based on their costume or based on their outward appearance or how much they understand about raving based on their outward appearance. There are some people who dress differently because they think this is part of what they should be doing. (interview, male raver, university student, 1995)

> At my first rave I thought I had to have a costume of some sort and after that I just went and didn't worry about it anymore because I realized you don't have to dress a certain way to be a raver (interview, male raver, university student, 1995)

Again, reflections on "raver career development" are instructive here for understanding how perspectives

and identities change over time.

Others suggested that the rave context is a place where people can "be themselves" (e.g., dress the

way they like to dress) without feeling ostracized:

> Tamara came to the interview wearing sparkles on her face and wearing the a short top that appeared to be made out of a towel. She said "this is what I'll wear when I go to a party...I love that once a week you can just be accepted and dress free." Clearly, Tamara felt free to dress a little outrageous other times, but only at raves would she not get a second look (fieldnotes from interview with female raver and university student, 1998).

Tamara went on to explain how she made her shirt out of "terry towel" because it is comfortable to dance

in ("when you sweat and everything") and it feels "soft and fuzzy" on the skin – especially when you are

on the "sensual" Ecstasy drug (interview, female raver, February, 1998). Others discussed how they would

make unique and fun outfits for parties. Another interviewee (female raver and university student, 1997)

who has (dyed) bright red hair, would often wear clothes that she had made as part of a "fun costume,"

sometimes trying to match her hair with her clothes (this was evident in a follow-up interview where her

hair had been dyed "jet black" and she talked about wearing "more formal" looking black and white

clothes). A male interviewee talked about wearing "cool second hand clothes" like a "bowling shirt with

someone else's name on it" or "old Adidas track jackets" (interview, male raver, former promoter, now

journalist, December, 1997)

While this idea of using clothes to express yourself and to be comfortable (without worrying about

perceptions) were consistently referred to in interviews, there was pride *and "social capital" placed on*

*having the more extreme unique looks*. However, more optimistic ravers I spoke with did not interpret this

as vanity per se because people in the rave are so often complimentary and do not require "nice clothes" to

fit in. Tamara's story about a great outfit she saw at a rave is an example of this:

> Once I saw someone across the dance floor and I had to run over and say, 'That outfit rocks, that's
> the funkiest outfit here, that's so cool'. She had this 'cat in the hat' hat on an these terry cloth bell
> bottoms on that were very fitted around the waist" (interview, female raver, university student,
> 1998).

However, not all those who attend raves are altogether accepting of these unique looks and styles.

Tamara also talked about one time when she went to the washroom at a "club rave" (at *Industry*) and:

> there were two other girls in there who I could see in the mirror were looking at me like "she's so
> weird." It bothered me and it didn't. I go to raves to get away from that, but that doesn't happen
> very often (interview, female raver, university student, 1998).

Overall, these developments and tensions are consistent with the processual view of "identity

work" as reflective of the "ongoing assessments, adjustments, and negotiations as the parties involved

endeavor to work out 'self' and 'other' definitions" (Prus, 1994b, p. 398). While style was not emphasized

as a method for making public statements (like punk rockers, for example), clearly there is a sense where

clothing was both a *homologous expression of rave values* (e.g., be yourself, be comfortable, be free and

innocent for a night), and also as a *display for peers*.

### 5.3.4 — Other Players in the Rave Scene: DJs and Promoters

There are several other players in the scene whose identities and reputations are central to functioning of

the rave community. Although I confine my discussion of these other players because of practical

limitations, their specific positioning should be noted. The *DJs* are considered to be the celebrities in the

rave scene. The DJ controls the music and in turn controls the "mood" of the party (as noted in the

activities section). The DJ must also establish a reputation in order to successfully get hired by promoters

to play at raves.[146]

Similarly, it is important for *promoters* to establish their ability to "throw a good party" (see also

Straw, 1991 for a related discussion of politics, dance music and the DJ in Canada). Suffice to say here that

the identities and reputations of other players in the scene are significant within the rave community, and

although ravers are the driving force behind the culture, the influences and intricacies other roles are also

vital.

### 5.3.5 — Identities in Perspective

For the studied ravers, the primary factors influencing the sense of self and other are *experience* in the

scene, a *sincerity* of rave-related beliefs, and an *understanding* of the rave philosophy. The way people

present themselves (clothing and attitude) and their activities (dancing, use of drugs) are indicative of this

experience and security. The mature ravers appeared to be less concerned with their personal appearance

(and how others perceive them) and had become increasingly secure with their personal beliefs (and,

evident from the "perspective" section, *more comfortable being critical of the rave scene they were part of*

— something that relatively neophyte ravers who I interviewed seldom were). In this way, these ravers

either became more accustomed to or less concerned with impression management as their perspectives

changed. Of course, and as mentioned throughout this chapter, there were also divisions in the rave scene

related to music preference that partially defined the identities of specific style/attitude groups (e.g., the

inextricable link between "happy hardcore" music and candy ravers). However, *this passage from*

*"neophyte" (sometimes "try-hard"), to "authentic" (and more comfortable), to mature/experienced (often*

*cynical) appeared to be a fairly consistent developmental process.*

### 5.4 — Feeling and Sharing Energy: Relationships in the Rave

> The thing that I like most is the vibe that you get from the people. It is an immeasurable feeling that is very difficult to describe. You can feel it if you recognize it just by walking into a room full of people where the feeling exists and it can be described from my point of view as a total release from preconceptions...it's all in your reaction, if someone was to bump into you at a club, they would expect you to turn around and apologize to them and they would threaten you with violence. But if you bumped into someone at a rave where this vibe exists, they might turn around and introduce themselves, apologize to you for being in your way and then smile at you and ask if you are having a good time. (interview, male raver, university student, 1995)

The relationships in and around the rave scene are intricately connected to the underlying "vibe" that is

(ideally) the impetus of the rave party. This section outlines the types of bonds people have with one

another in the scene, the ways people develop these bonds, and the implications of these relationships.

*5.4.1 — "It's a gathering of like-minded people": Developing Bonds in Rave Culture*

Many ravers who I spoke with indicated that they had initiated and solidified friendships through shared

rave experiences. Two ravers/DJs who I knew of (one of which I interviewed) were housemates who had

met through DJing. Another raver indicated that he made his best friend at a rave where they talked

initially about their shared musical interests. A female raver explained how the intimate experiences she

shared with people at the rave will stay with her forever. These relationships were also evident from the

snowball sample that evolved from the interviews (i.e., some interviewees referred me to friends that they

had met at rave parties). As one male raver put it, "It's a gathering of like-minded people" (interview, male

raver/DJ, October, 1995).

This raver/DJ's statement is particularly insightful and useful in this context because it implicitly

acknowledges that friendships in the rave scene emerge and are maintained because of *shared interests* (not

necessarily/exclusively because of a "mystical/religious/spiritual" bond that some pro-rave commentators

have alluded to). Moreover, the extent to which relationships were maintained appeared to be related in

many cases to the longevity of the shared interest/activity. This understanding sheds light on why the

newsgroup friendships that were formed around music and technology appeared to be ongoing and intense.

For example, friendships forged through the "techno.ca" newsgroup included not only ravers who regularly

met to attend raves, but also people who previously "raved" in Toronto but have since moved yet remain part of the group to stay in contact with "techno-friends" from southern Ontario. This also provides some insight into why several interviewees described how their "drug-friendships" were often transitory (as noted in other sections of this chapter).

### 5.4.2 — Interactional Styles in the Rave Party

Within the rave, interactions and bonds are often short-term, fleeting, and context-related. In my own research, for example, it took me two sessions in the field (at the rave) before I started to actively engage people in conversations (and for people to engage me). I was told in subsequent discussions with ravers that it was probably because I was taking the role of somebody who was "mellowing out," and, according to ravers I spoke with about "rave etiquette," people at raves are respectful each others' space. Eventually I focused on "hanging around" the outskirts of dance-floor, usually using conversations about the DJ and the music as departure points. Other times I "trainspotted" with mostly "amateur" DJs. This is an excellent example of how one develops an "interactional style" within a subculture, a fundamental process in "experiencing relationships" (Prus, 1994, p. 409). The following passages demonstrate common styles of interaction within the rave:

> Sometimes when I'm really grooving I will go up and talk to somebody, out of the blue, and it is like we already knew each other before. We almost seem to talk about things that we have in common without even thinking about it. When the energy is really strong this sort of stuff happens all the time. When somebody looks stiff, I will go up and ask them if they want a shoulder massage. So many times people will say to me, 'I was just thinking about that'. (interview, male raver, graphic designer, 1995)

> When you meet someone and you're dancing at the same time it's really interesting and you watch how they dance and if they watch how you dance you'll complement each other. (interview, male raver, university student, 1995)

> I was sitting on the stage in the middle of things, listening to the music. A male raver came and sat down beside me and started to move to the music. I turned to him and said, "hey man, do you know who the DJ is."
> He replied, "No," I don't know the DJs at this party very well." He then asked me if I went to many raves in Toronto and I told him that I was from Vancouver and was new to the scene. He then proceeded to ask about the Vancouver scene, and he proceeded to tell me about raves that he had been to in Europe. We spoke for about half an hour... Eventually the guy I was talking to put out his hand and said, "I'm Mark."
> I said, "I'm Brian" and shook his hand. (fieldnotes, October, 27, 1995)

### 5.4.3 – Race, Gender, Sexuality and Age in the Rave Community

The *bonds people formed* at the raves, *to some extent, appeared to transcend racial barriers*. While the

raves that I went to were populated predominantly by "white" youth, with some minority presence (but not

a noticeably large contingent), there was no apparent animosity or segregation – and certainly no violence

(among any youth at any rave I attended). An experienced raver that I spoke with suggested that there was

a large contingent of minorities at raves that he has been to. He attributed this large cross-section of people

to the "open mind" philosophy of the rave community:

> It's the province of minorities, there are many black people, Filipinos, alot of homosexual
> people, at raves a great many more than you would find in any cross section of people. Going
> along with raving, the lack of prejudgments and the lack of preconceptions makes it easier for
> minorities to be accepted and to find their own place in the rave scene which is good, and it
> makes them feel comfortable. I've got alot of black friends that rave...the combined culture
> makes it so that as long as you like the music and your comfortable with what everybody else
> is doing, you'll be accepted. (interview, male raver, university student, 1995)

> All I can say is I'm surprised that such a person is able to tolerate the cosmopolitan, open nature
> of the bona fide rave scene. (one of many internet newsgroup responses to one person's racist
> comment within a rave newsgroup discussion, November 15, 1995)

The underground rave magazine (that one of the interviewees published and gave to me) provided a

specific statement on this acceptance:

> As a group we are incredibly diverse. We are multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-talented...In
> many respects we are the results of the goals of the 60's. We have learned to interrelate,
> communicate, and party with each other across lines of race, gender, class, and sexual
> preference...We come together for a ritual such as a full moon rave on remote beach. (from
> *Subterrane* underground magazine for ravers)

"Race" was seldom the focus of conversation except in discussions about the unity of the scene (see

above quotations). Although most of the formal interviews were with what I perceived to be "white" youth

(out of 37 formal interviews, 1 black male, 1 Asian female and 1 Asian male were interviewed), those

minorities who were interviewed were equally focused on the rave as a PLUR space, and did not discuss

racial tensions.[147] For example, the interviewee who defined himself as "Black Canadian" responded to an

E-Mail interview question about his parent's socio-economic background in the following way:

> It's not your parents that are important. It's your own status. How you identify with society. That's
> what rave culture is more and more about. The identity of self. Either by hiding in the rave scene
> garb or using it to stand proud and saying you are an individual. Parental education I think is kinda
> moot. What do you think? (interview, male DJ, former university student, 1998)

This kind of response was reflective of most "still optimistic" ravers' perspectives on the rave scene – as a place where there are "no (or no overt) preconceptions." This is not to suggest that these tensions do not exist in the scene, only to indicate that in the observations and interviews conducted in this study, rave culture appeared to be a place of "conditional empowerment" for any marginalized groups (particularly youth who defined themselves as outsiders in high school – this idea is discussed later in the discussion of "gender politics").

Some ravers in more recent discussions suggested that the "jungle" music scene, a scene and musical style that that are more explicit associations with "rap" music culture (a culture generally associated with urban-American Black youth – although in recent years this music has been incorporated into various demographic contexts), was a more racially divided scene. In my earlier research though, before the rampant fragmentation of rave culture into various, somewhat distinct music scenes, this kind of division was not evident. Even my observations of jungle rooms at raves in the latter stages of the research revealed no obvious racial divisions (i.e., there were no obviously segregated race-related "crowds"). However, I did not attend "jungle music only" parties or jungle club nights per se, so I am unable to comment further (in an informed way) about this topic. Suffice to say that issues of race should be considered in future studies that focus more specifically on the fragmented late 1990s rave scene. This is particularly important to consider because, although racism and racial segregation were clearly against the rave doctrine, the overall lack of discussion about these topics might also be interpreted as a relative silence about (ignorance of) potentially hidden issues.

*Sexuality* was often *referred to* in conversations about the "openness" of the rave scene, but was seldom discussed in any depth. From the few newsgroup discussions on the topic and from probing in the interviews, it appeared that *ravers emphasize the importance of accepting people with all backgrounds and orientations (to the rave scene), but acknowledge that the "gay dance club crowd" was seldom integrated with the mainstream rave crowd except when certain DJs draw a more diverse crowd* (apparently the early Toronto dance scene in the 1980s was extremely integrated – see "history of the scene" section). The following newsgroup participant made an interesting perceived (but not empirically confirmed) distinction

between the cultural values of the different scenes – with the gay scene apparently focused more on

fun/hedonism and less on the progression of music:

> I used to love gay House (music). A while back I used to frequent a night called "joy" in Toronto. Then I got really tired of gay house and the gay scene. I got tired of it because gay house isn't about pushing the limits of music, it is more about pushing the limits of hedonism. But if you are really into gay stuff, go to the Church St. gay ghetto in Toronto. On Church between College and Welsley and look for flyers. There are tons of gay parties every weekend that are more or less unknown by the "raving" population and they always get good turnouts and bring in well known international DJs. I never understood why the gay and straight scenes don't mix too much in Toronto. Jr. Vasquez [internationally renowned DJ from the New York house music scene] really brought those two scenes together when he was in Toronto (newsgroup comment, male raver, June, 1999)

Although I do not have any direct empirical data to confirm or contradict this observation, one

interviewee who attends both "gay" and "straight" raves reinforced the position that these are relatively

unintegrated scenes (interview, male raver, coffee shop worker). This trend toward segregated scenes is

consistent with developments in other cities and countries (e.g., see Lewis and Ross' (1996) work in the

Australian context) and would be interesting to study more explicitly in the Toronto rave scene.

Unlike the (limited) research findings about race and sexuality, particular attention was paid to the

way PLUR values, especially "respect," were played out in *male-female interactions*. In all interviews,

*ravers talked about the differences between the "pick-up" culture of bars, and the more friendship-oriented*

*relationships at the rave*. Many ravers described interactions at rave parties as "sensual as opposed to

sexual," since hugging and massaging are central parts of the culture for many ravers.

There were situations where those attending raves were insensitive to the PLUR "respect" norm.

Usually individuals who were disrespectful were assumed to be either: (a) people who had no interest in

being part of the rave culture and were intentionally destructive of the vibe (a.k.a., "toxic ravers" as the

one female suggests below); or (b) uneducated ravers:

> At the community meeting, the young speaker (a female raver, 18 years old) talked about how GHB (the "date rape" drug) was becoming increasingly prevalent at raves. She talked about how some people take it for pleasure at parties, but it also has meant problems for females who go to raves and are put in difficult situations. The speaker went on to explain how she escaped what she believed was a dangerous situation with a male because she recognized the early signs of GHB coming on (which must have been "slipped to her) and got out of there in time (fieldnotes from "community meeting," North York, Toronto, February, 19, 1999).

> There are some guys who go to raves to try and pick up stoned young girls. I call these guys "toxic ravers." (interview, female raver, tattoo artist, 1995)

I danced in this one spot for about a half hour with this guy in front of me who wouldn't leave this one poor chick alone. He kept touching' and grindin her even though she kept on pushing him off. Where the fuck did this ...loser come from. (internet newsgroup, anonymous, November 14, 1995)

Furthermore, most interviewees talked about how the rave was *a welcome place for females and males who did not fit into the conventional (gender) politics of "coolness"* at their high schools. One relative neophyte female raver (who had been raving for about one year – she was a senior university student) talked about how the rave "saved her" from the depression and poor self-image that plagued her through high school and into university:

When I hit university, I had no money but I was drinking and getting fat. My clothes were "out of style" in high school because we didn't have that much money. When I walked into the rave for the first time and saw what everybody was wearing and doing I was like, "Shit, I'm home". I went through high school, through university in residence, I've been searching for funky neat people that I fit in with and it was like, god, there's thousands of them right here. Where have I been hiding? It really changed my life. At the end of first year university I was 170 pounds from drinking, pretty much alcoholic...When I was drunk I felt a bit looser and felt like I could fit in with the other people. It was totally opposite of that. I was all bummed out, I'm like, ah, I'm fat. There's no cool people here, like, I was miserable. That was at the end of first year. I get down sometimes, but since I started raving and all the people I've met through raves, I feel way better. I am healthier, I lost weight (interview female raver, university student, 1998).

Some males I spoke with talked about how they and their friends were marginal to the "cool crowd" in high school because they were "too intellectual" and "geeky" (e.g., "too into" video games, computers, fantasy games) (interview, raver and former promoter, university student). Another raver who described himself as a "hyper-intellectual" spoke about how he has few close friends outside the rave because he is too intense for many people to talk to (raver, graphic designer, 1995). In the rave though (a place he described in spiritual terms – that is, a place where he can connect and share energy with all sorts of different and like-minded people), he felt able to establish relationships with ease (and made a few close friends through the rave experience). However, it is difficult to discern from the research findings whether these friendships were short term (an apparent characteristic of bonds formed exclusively around rave-related drug use) or lasting (e.g., like those formed in the "techno.ca" group). Regardless of the continuity of these relationships, *it would be fair to say that for many ravers, at least temporarily, a sense of community and empowerment was found in the rave scene.*

Having said this, certainly not all of those interviewed indicated that they were seeking community (as noted in the "getting involved" section), and not all "found community" to the same extent. Furthermore, some have argued that as rave has become a "cool" thing to do, it is somewhat less welcoming for the marginal. However, according to this study's findings, this transition (from "welcoming rave community" to "bad attitude dance club") was not nearly as "complete" as some raver veterans suggested. The extent of "perceived community" seemed to be intricately related to career stage (i.e., the meaning that differently located ravers gave to their community-related experience) as well as to changes in the makeup of the scene (i.e., the underground to mainstream transition).

Despite the noted evidence that the rave community is open, accepting and respectful,[148] it would be naïve to suggest that the rave scene is not in some ways *gendered*. Few female DJs or promoters exist in the scene. There was one well-known female Canadian DJ named "Little T" from Vancouver and a lesser known DJ in Toronto named B-DISCO (who was on one of the newsgroups I was a part of). There was also an all-female promotion company named *Transcendence* in Toronto (it has since folded – it was a renowned "pro-rave" promotion company). I interviewed one female promoter who was part of a team of three promoters (the other two were men). Besides these examples, there was very little female involvement that I or other ravers were aware of.[149] The extent to which females were excluded from these roles was seldom an expressed concern in interviews or in (the usually male-dominated) newsgroup discussions. In dialogue that did take place, strategies for achieving equal representation in these occupations was never discussed during my years as a member. On this basis, there was no evidence that the rave community was actively concerned about this issue. One male DJ interviewee who I discussed this with felt that females were often better DJs because they were more "in tune" with the audience and the "mood" of the party (interview, male DJ, record store worker, February, 1998). Another male newsgroup participant suggested that the female DJs who were in the scene should not by revered just because they are female:

> I don't care what sex a DJ is.. that is all! I don't understand why it is hyped up so much whenever a female DJ (or mc) comes to Toronto... With Harris in there's no more affirmative action.. This practice should be finished now. Personally I think that their music (or MCing) should speak for itself. In DJ Rap's [a female DJ] case I think that's true. I loved her set. (newsgroup comment taken from newsgroup archives on home webpage, July, 1995)

Another discussant argued that internationally recognized female DJ Anne Savage is actually not a very good DJ "but her looks make up for it" (newsgroup discussion, male raver, January 6, 1999). Clearly, there were mixed and often masculinist views on the topic. Overall, and although these social-structural issues about female occupational status in the rave business is not the focus of this research, it is important to consider this issue as it relates to the masculinist culture of DJing and promotion and for its hypocrisy in the "open" rave culture.

Implicit in previous discussions were issues surrounding *age-related divisions in the rave scene*. These divisions were embodied in the "club raves vs regular raves" debate (e.g., ravers most often need to be of drinking age to attend club raves), as well as in the "sophisticated versus unrefined" ravers debate (i.e., the belief that younger ravers are "inherently" more interested in the faster, high energy, less subtle and nuanced music). Underlying the latter debate was a belief among *some* ravers that younger ravers are often too young (or simply inexperienced in the scene) to adequately understand the complexities and implications of the culture (e.g., to responsibly handle rave-related drug use). Other ravers pointed disagreed with this argument, suggesting that at the more "vibing" raves, age is not a barrier. Several examples of ravers who became friends despite age differences (ravers in mid-twenties becoming friends with teen ravers) were cited (for example, interview, male raver, graphic designer, 1995). The extent to which these friendships had continuity was unclear, although it would make sense according to the "rave relationships are about shared interests" argument that, if we assume that age and age-related experience are implicitly related to "having something in common," then these relationships might not be as lasting as others. This is purely speculation though, since no data was collected on this topic. Overall, and while age-divisions were not a focus of this study, findings showed that *the rave scene was age-segregated because of an increasing movement toward club-raves which were attracting the "older" rave crowd* (ages 19-25) that might have otherwise attended the "underground" raves (as they did in the early years of the rave scene). The previous description of "a night at *Industry* nightclub and the 'Clockwork' rave party" provides some evidence of these distinctions.

### 5.4.4 – Relationships with "Outsiders"

> It sometimes takes the "outsiders" not understanding and poking fun at our society to make us grow strong. It also shows us that we do have a society, however divided, that hopefully is based around, peace, love, harmony, brotherhood, acceptance, and unity...keep striving towards our Utopian society 'cause I know it's out there, I've seen it. (rave newsgroup discussion, male raver, 1995)

Embodied in earlier comments about "toxic ravers" (and their perceived tendencies toward night-club norms of "bad attitude" and "picking-up") is the dominant perception that "outsiders" in and around the rave scene are problematic. Despite these concerns, the *relationships with those outside the scene* appeared to exist and be maintained. Simply put, *rave subculture members are not isolated from "outside/mainstream" culture* (unlike classic subcultural groups such as punks or skinheads that sometimes live together and "live the subculture"). The ravers that I spoke to had lives and friendships completely separate from the rave scene. For example, DJs and promoters, two groups most closely linked via their occupations to the rave scene, usually worked other jobs as well (although sometimes these jobs were in electronic music shops), or were students. So, while the focus of a raver's social time was often on rave-related activities and relationships (although this was clearly dependent on how committed the raver was to the scene – see next section), [150] many ravers emphasized the importance of "keeping a balance" while remaining true to the rave spirit (see perspectives section on "PLUR"). This argument for keeping rave in perspective is consistent with tenets of the rave doctrine mentioned previously.

### 5.4.5 – Relationships in Perspective

The research showed how the rave values of "being connected," "breaking down (communication) barriers," and anti-violence were played out in and around rave parties. Although it is important to be cautious about attributing the emergence and intensification of relationships exclusively to the "rave philosophy" of openness, it would be fair to say the common interests held by many of those that attend raves (e.g., music, dance, drugs, technology) creates a situation where bonds can be readily formed around activities. Moreover, and while subtle inequalities, segregations, and a gendered power structure do exist in rave culture, the experiences conveyed by those in the scene during interviews *seldom dealt with gender, race, or sexuality problems, focusing almost unconditionally on the hope that the rave scene generates* for a "united culture," where conventional social barriers do not matter (again, see perspectives section).

Acknowledging the need to be attentive to "invisible" inequalities in rave culture in future work, it would be fair to say that the PLUR philosophy was effectively, but tentatively and conditionally, operationalized in rave relationships.[151]

### 5.5 – Giving Back to "the Scene": Commitments to the Rave

> The 50 raver volunteers ...that support the TRIP [the Toronto Raver Information Project – a community outreach group to educate ravers about safe sex and drug use] project illustrate the acceptance of a harm reduction project of this kind. Many of the volunteers have indicated that TRIP offers them a way to give back to the rave community, to try and foster the original ideals of community that the rave scene offered. (from Information Package for the "Toronto Raver Information Project")

As noted previously, ravers I spoke with all had lives "outside the scene" (although some worked in areas related to rave), but, for many, involvement in some activity that supported rave culture was a personal priority.[152] In this section, I assess the intensity of these involvements and examine the ways in which, and the extent to which, some ravers organized their lives around the scene.

Many ravers I spoke with contributed to the rave community (on a volunteer basis) in a variety of ways. One male raver designs stickers and t-shirts with "rave characters" on them and gives them out at raves. This same raver invented a "cooling spray" that he used to spray people at raves who were getting hot and dehydrated from dancing. Another person I spoke with had promoted a non-profit rave (charged only enough to cover the costs) and DJed for free at some raves. Another was working as a health counsellor for ravers (this was a highly committed, but paid position). Some other contributions to and commitments to the community are noted below:

> After a while of doing it (raving)...I decided that I wanted to give something back and I was just playing around with the idea of a magazine and I asked John if he would get involved and he said yes and it got off the ground...we named it first and then we went around and got alot of articles...it turned out to be something really big, we produced 500 issues our first time, and then 700 and then 1000, and the last issue we put out was 2000. (interview, male raver, university student, 1995)

> Someone had put some serious time into decorating this place. The decorations looked like they had been done by hand. The personal effort that must have gone into some of these was incredible (this suggested to me that the people who volunteered or the people who put on the rave were really into making this a good party) [I came to learn that the promotion line for raves often encourages ravers to come out and help – and several often do, with incentives like free admission] (fieldnotes, October 14, 1995)

Although some ravers appeared to constructively employ "raver-values" in their everyday lives

(see "operationalizing perspectives" section), an underlying concern among more experienced ravers was

that some people use the rave scene as an escape from everyday life (i.e., were *overly-committed* to their

raver role):

> Some people use it as a full lifestyle and they try and use it to escape from real life. Which
> you can't do because at some point you have to deal with people, you have to get a job. And
> if you're hair is blue, and you have six earrings in your nose, and you wear clothes that
> people are going to call different, that's going to cause problems for you when try and relate
> to people in real life. You have to have a careful balance between the raving lifestyle and
> your own lifestyle and how you relate that to your own life, and alot of people have
> problems balancing that out. (interview, male raver, university student, 1995)

Reminiscent of the rave doctrine, the point here is that use of raves (and rave-related drugs) as an

escape from reality and real-life problems is criticized. In other words, "giving back" to the scene is

applauded, avoiding life's responsibilities is not. Several interviewees indicated that ravers must

understand why they are raving, just as they must understand why they are using mind-expanding drugs.

Communication and education are emphasized as keys to spreading this word. The following passage from

the Toronto-based "underground" rave magazine referred to throughout this paper (an article written by one

of the interviewees, a male raver, university student) embodies this sentiment:

> Raving has always been a place to escape to for many people. Young and old, Black and
> White, we have managed to disregard our differences, come together...However, I've noticed
> lately that many are trying to escape from something or someone, instead of escaping *to*
> raving. I realized that my problems were still there when I woke up Monday morning and
> that they were beginning to take away my experience on the weekend. So here's some
> advice as publisher and friend: 1. Make raving a reality instead of a fantasy. Get involved
> and spread the values into your everyday world. 2. Reexamine why you rave. If you can't
> have a good time at a rave when you're sober, don't go. Using raving as a tool to
> procrastinate from life responsibilities will dilute the experience and cause more problems
> than it solves. May the force be with you. (from Rave "underground" rave magazine
> *Subterrane*)

### 5.5.1 — Commitments in Perspective

Most "mature" ravers I spoke with were very committed to the rave community, but saw rave as something

that should fit into their outside lives, without taking it over. For example, many of those I spoke with were

students who viewed raves as a weekend escape from their weekly work or school routine (e.g., see "rave

as pleasure" section) – of course, the extent to which their "raving lives" carried over into and impacted

their school life, negatively or positively, likely varied. Processually, these views are particularly relevant

when considering how people organize their routines around particular activities, and the extent to which they neglect previous commitments (Prus, 1994b, p. 408).

### 5.6 — The Life World of the Rave: Conclusion and Departure Points

This analysis showed PLUR (peace, love, unity and respect) to be the dominant group perspective, and the activities of dancing, doing drugs and listening to music to be the embodiments of this perspective. The process of "becoming comfortable" with these activities and perspectives was fundamental to the development of the identities of the ravers, although clearly the "waning of idealism" process was the most prominent underlying theme. Over the course of this study, the rave subculture arguably moved from an underground culture to a "sub-mainstream" culture, something I distinguish from a "full on" mainstream culture because of the successful resistances of some groups to this transition (e.g., there are still more intimate/underground parties that only some "in the loop" ravers know about).[153] Regardless, this movement toward mainstream culture created both tension and excitement in the rave community. The different reactions to this tension within the community illuminate the various perspectives, interactions and commitments of ravers, many of which appear to be predicated on the experience and "maturity" of those in the scene. In the following chapter, these dynamics are considered for their structural significance within contemporary social conditions (i.e., 1990s Canada).

## CHAPTER 6 – EXPLORING THE CONTINUUM OF RESISTANCE IN RAVE CULTURE: DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter considers how the emergent themes and subcultural processes reported in the previous chapter's micro-analysis can be drawn upon to inform, extend, and/or contradict research and theory in the area of youth and rave culture. Particular attention is paid to understanding rave culture from various critical cultural studies and postmodern perspectives. More specifically, this chapter provides empirically-informed examinations of the "resistance," "community," "globalization," and "postmodernism" concepts (although the focus is on resistance). Simply put, the meanings and uses of the rave party and rave culture for youth participants are evaluated for their relevance within larger structural, historical, and geographical contexts.

### 6.1 – Overview of Key Findings and Theoretical Departure Points

The Toronto rave scene/culture was defined by its wide range of forms and characteristics. This range existed simultaneously across the subculture (e.g., the various sub-communities who were affiliated with different genres of rave music), across the careers of individual ravers (e.g., the waning of idealism over time), and across the "life" of the Canadian rave scene (e.g., the scene's evolution from underground to mainstream to fragmented). Retrospectively then, and considering the complex and sometimes contradictory positionings of the rave culture (and sub-groups within the culture), I suggest that the study findings provide provisional and tentative support for optimistic, ambivalent, and pessimistic interpretations of rave culture (see chapter 4).

While offering tentative support for this range of interpretations, study findings also provide grounds for clarifying the "active-passive" model developed in Part 1 of this dissertation. The most pertinent finding in this context was that the rave is a complex scene/culture comprised of various interpretive groups, interpretive contexts, and sub-communities characterized by their variable resistances. In the following discussion, a "continuum of resistance" that embodies a range of "relatively anchored," empirically-derived interpretations of rave-related activity is examined. This continuum includes the following categories (representing a range of active, passive, and reproductive interpretations of rave

165

cultures' relationship to dominant culture): *"purposeful-tactical resistance," "reactive-adaptive resistance," "trivial resistance," "self-aware and oblivious non-resistance," and "reproduction of the dominant culture."* These various conceptions of rave culture reflect not only the diverse sub-communities that exist in the rave scene and the variable meanings that youth give to their activity, but also the variety of possible interpretations of youth behavior that can be made/manufactured by theorists/researchers. The difference between this study and some previous work is that the theoretical assertions made here are relatively anchored by the set of in-depth, ethnographically-grounded findings that informed chapter five's depiction of this complex and contradictory group (in saying this, I acknowledge Giddens (1984) "double hermeneutic" argument as it relates to data interpretation). Simply put, the often empirically-observable features and idiosyncrasies of the Toronto scene provided the basis from which this study's tentative support of (and subtle arguments against) previous approaches to rave can be articulated.

### 6.2 — A Continuum of Resistance: Pockets, Moments and Communities of Resistance

In this section, conceptions of rave resistance are presented as "five theses on rave resistance" (following a format proposed by Donnelly, 1993b). These theses represent a continuum of rave-related resistances ranging from a more purposeful and tactical (although subtle) resistance, to a non-resistant thesis focused on behaviors that reproduce dominant cultural values. These are presented in a summary table (table 2, below), and then described and elaborated on in more depth. Although more assertive, proactive, and overtly oppositional forms of resistance have been theorized for other (often "spectacular") groups, rave culture was, in my view, characterized by its apolitical positioning. For this reason, "proactive" forms of resistance are not included as a separate category, although the theoretical potential for a more antagonistic rave movement is discussed.

Acknowledged in this analysis is that these forms are in many cases "analytically close" (almost indistinct) and open to multiple alternate interpretations. However, the hope is that by making analytic distinctions based on the meanings that youth give to their activities, a more systematic and grounded understanding of rave resistance can be surmised. This approach is an implicit reaction to the highly theoretical assertions about youth resistance proposed by commentators like Hebdige – whose work was largely based on "bird's eye" data drawn from cursory observation and media analysis. Although

Hebdige's "cut'n' mix" methods (akin to Humphries, 1997, 1998 work on punks, ravers and snowboarders) were also adopted in this study as part of creating a "thick description" of the rave group, this study's grounding in Chicago School influenced ethnographic research was crucial for unveiling meanings and interpretations. That is to say, while acknowledging and reporting the various and multifarious "texts" that represent the rave group, this study prioritized interview, internet-discussion, and participant observation.

I realize and emphasize, though, that regardless of empirical foundation, some forms of subtle resistance are analytically indistinct. In other words, when a youth is "tactically" resisting, they might be simultaneously "reproducing" dominant cultural norms. Similarly, when this tactical resistance is seemingly "consented to" by dominant cultural groups, does this then make the youths' resistive behavior "trivial" or "empty?" Put another way, is resistance that "makes no difference", resistance at all? By the same token, when a youth is "coping" with the sometimes oppressive circumstances that define their everyday lives by attending (escaping at) a rave, is this an adaptive form of resistance, or is it a form of non-resistance (i.e., blind consumption)? Is pleasure seeking behavior "reactive and adaptive" resistance, or "self-aware non-resistance," or is it "oblivious non-resistance" (at least the latter two resistances here are somewhat empirically distinguishable). In her ethnographic work on adolescent "production of social space" in the shopping mall, Smith (1997) expressed similar concerns about the resistance problematic:

> The problem of framing an analysis in terms of resistance is that it tends to deteriorate into dichotomies and extremes: resistance vs. resignation, opposition vs. oppression, etc. What goes missing is the continuum along which everyday practices are situated; the resulting community of practices is never wholly resistive, but is a combination of practices which differ in their intensity and interest in the dominant order...We can delineate a number of potential positions from which to use cultural commodities: dominant-hegemonic, negotiated and oppositional. However, all three of the positions still make reference to the dominant order. What, for example, of disinterest? A practice that is obvious – intentionally or not – to the dominant field is not a response to it...Thus we should speak of resistance as a question of relativity, of intensity, of intentionality (Smith, 1997, p. 38).

The following analysis cannot resolve these definitional ambiguities, only make attempts to untangle them. Following this argument, any call to "set the record straight on resistance" (i.e., to immobilize, concretize, stabilize and/or anchor the concept) is a misnomer (and futile). Of course, theorists must at some point (and I am no exception) "anchor" their analysis.

Instead, what I have done is offer a series of empirically and theoretically informed interpretations

of a complex data set, and provide suggestions for "relative anchorage" points (acknowledging that the

notion of a "*point*" betrays this study's commitment to a "continuum of resistance"). These five theses are

intended to act as a source and perhaps guide for further interrogations of complex (sub)cultural groups.

The underlying message of this analysis is that rave is a heterogeneous group that is defined by its

variation, but also (and on a more optimistic note) for the relative anchorage that can be discerned by being

sensitive to patterns of interpretation and meaning-making that emerged in the ethnographic study.

### Table 2:   Five Theses on Rave Resistance

***Thesis #1:   Rave is a form of symbolic 'purposeful-tactical' resistance.***
At certain times in their "careers," many ravers view their own behaviors as symbolically and tactically
resistant to dominant norms/groups. Although these resistant strategies are sometimes spectacular, they are
best viewed as tactical and "quiet" because they are done as part of a private ritual, not a public display.
This ritual of quiet resistance is a concrete form of what de Certeau would view as "tactical resistance."
This finding of a spectacular, quiet resistance provides a basis for alternate interpretations of conventional
"spectacular" (*public* display) versions of the resistance thesis (e.g., Hebdige, 1979) and recent re-
interpretations of the tactical resistance concept that have focused largely on resistance as "unspoken
pleasure"(Malbon, 1998 in his work on club culture) as opposed to 'planned retaliation' (which this study
found, at times). This model is distinguished from thesis two's adaptive-reactive model because this model
is about purposeful subversion, as opposed to incidental deviance.

***Thesis #2:   Rave is a form of 'adaptive-reactive' resistance.***
Rave culture includes communities of "techno-ravers" who embrace technology (and future-oriented
culture) in resistive ways. For example, "techno-ravers" are "resisting through hyper-adaptation" – that is
to say, they are leading a pseudo-mainstream social movement that is, for many commentators on
postmodernism, oppressive/alienating. Although these developments can be theorized in a Baudrillardian
model of resistance that emphasizes 'subversion through over-consumption' and in a de Certeauian model
of 'tactical resistance', I argue that the most adequate model here is a classic subcultural adaptation
perspective. This subcultural adaptation, or "adaptive-reactive" resistance model is a "toned down" version
of the classic CCCS spectacular resistance thesis, that acknowledges the class-based (in this case, middle
class) reaction to postmodern conditions. The proposed model is distinguished from subtle resistance
models that are overly focused on escapism (thesis four) as opposed to this thesis's emphasis on conscious
adaptation.

***Thesis #3:   Rave is a form of 'trivial' or 'hollow' resistance'.***
What is often defined as "resistance" by some members of the rave community (e.g., PLUR) is, for the
most part, superficial, disunited, and unable to alter broader social consciousness (even symbolically). So,
while rave culture in its ideal form would be 'quietly resisting' (supporting McRobbie's "subtle resistance"
thesis), the empirical findings suggest that this conception of rave resistance would be more accurately
defined as "hollow" or "trivial" resistance – that is, a "resistance that makes no difference." With this
background, I argue that an adequate macrological explanation of rave culture can be drawn from an
integration of classic hegemony theory, Hall's articulation concept, and an incorporation model of
subcultural development (positions often ignored in analyses of rave culture, likely because of the rave's
popular positioning as a "postmodern" culture). This view of "trivial resistance" is in many ways akin to
thesis 1, because it is a purposeful resistance. However, the resistance here is considered to be

characterized by the ravers' false and romantic sense of being part of a social movement (whereas the ravers described in thesis 1 understand the modest implications of their actions).

**Thesis #4: Rave is a form of self-aware or oblivious non-resistance'.**
This study showed that some ravers did not give resistive meanings to their activities. These ravers include: pleasure seekers, hedonists, toxic ravers, and "willing dupes." These findings act as a departure point for informing/criticizing models that theorize pleasure as a resistive behavior (Pini, McRobbie, Malbon) and for informing/supporting Reynolds cynical model of rave as an "autistic" culture. Furthermore, the "willing dupes" are examined as a group that is self-reflective and critical of dominant ideological practices, but still "chooses" to, or is positioned to not resist. This apathetic cultural group is examined in relation to two models of non-resistance: an ideological model (Abercrombie et. al.'s "dominant ideology thesis") and a postmodern model (Muggleton's nihilistic view of contemporary youth culture). Although neither position is privileged in this analysis, the discussion attempts to demonstrate the importance of considering these other interpretations of the "escape through pleasure" hypothesis – interpretations that do not require a view of youth as either passive or resistive.

**Thesis #5 – Rave culture supports the reproduction of aspects of the dominant culture.**
Ravers reproduced the dominant culture in two ways. *First*, many ravers still distinguished themselves and their rave-related tastes from mainstream culture, while symbolically detaching themselves from outsiders who "buy into" the commercialized version of rave culture. In this sense, raver culture was in many ways about seeking out and preserving "cultural capital," the same capital that mainstream youth (and adults) seek in other settings – only for ravers, what is termed "subcultural capital" is the most valued symbolic commodity. In the same way, the rave values of "acceptance" and "no preconceptions" were clearly and ironically contradicted through ravers' attempts to protect and attain subcultural capital while excluding the mainstream "other" from the upper rungs of the "hierarchy of cool" (drawing on Thornton, 1995, akin to Becker's (1963) work on levels of "hip"). *Second*, and moreover, the occupational structure of rave culture supports and reflects mainstream, exclusionary, masculinist "gender ordered" norms. Again, and although the rave culture effectively upholds gender-related issues of respect and "breaking down barriers" on one level, the seemingly systemically dominated DJ and promoter cultures reproduce broader hegemonic masculinist societal norms.

**6.2.1 – Thesis #1: Rave is a form of symbolic 'purposeful-tactical' resistance:**

There was some evidence that ravers were *symbolically, but privately and purposefully* resisting oppressive

circumstances, regulations, and perceptions. Rave-related drugs, for example, were often taken privately

and experienced in a space shared with subcultural peers (i.e., as opposed to "public/visible displays" made

by punk rockers who hang out on the street). *Importantly though, these private practices were, for some,*

*purposefully deviant/subversive reactions to dubious mainstream value structures (i.e., dubious according*

*to the subversive ravers).* For example, and as noted in the results section, rave-related drug use was, for

some ravers, a subtle reaction to a hypocritical mainstream critique of drugs and reverence of alcohol.

Others suggested how "respectful" rave partying is a strategically symbolic reaction to the mainstream

norms of night club (bar) culture that is notoriously gendered and racially segregated. *For those ravers that*

*interpreted their activities in this manner*, subtle resistance was an *active* form of resistance – or a concrete

form of "tactical resistance" (de Certeau, 1984) (as opposed to passive forms, such as McRobbie's "escape" resistance).

These findings inform classic CCCS conceptions of resistance (spectacular resistance) and Malbon's more recent reinterpretation of de Certeau's 'tactical resistance' model. On one hand, these findings that a spectacular group can be subtly and privately resistant are evidence that spectacular styles are not *necessarily* meant for public display. That is to say, although sometimes spectacular styles (e.g., the candy raver look) and activities (e.g, rabid, fanatical, often drug-induced dancing) were adopted and practiced, they were not meant to garner attention from those outside the rave scene and certainly not appall or shock (although the styles are carried over into everyday wear that can stand out as peculiar). Furthermore, the finding that youth gave resistive *meanings to their activities* is useful as an empirical confirmation of what are often purely theoretical readings of subcultural groups. This is not to say that resistance must be spoken. However, these findings are not subject to *quite* the same criticisms that semiotic analyses of "cut'n'mixed" data sources are – analyses that are often accused of championing the youth subcultural cause, *regardless of the actual meanings that youth give to their activities* (although certainly ethnographers can interpret data in ways that celebrate youth resistance).

Second, my interpretation of the *meanings* that some ravers gave to their activities as "tactically resistant" contrasts Malbon's version of tactical resistance that was more about an *unspoken resistance* that took the form of rave-related sensual pleasures. As he suggested (the full-length quote appears in chapter 4):

> Resistance is located in the most minute subtleties of clubbing, the ways of clubbing...This is resistance on a micro-level, on the level of everyday life, where the unspoken is that which binds the group together, where the desire to be with others is manifested, and differences are addressed...*This is resistance found through losing yourself, paradoxically, to find yourself* [emphasis added] (Malbon, 1998, p. 281).

The difference here is that my understanding of de Certeau's 'tactical resistance' is one where the marginalized "get back at" the power bloc consciously and symbolically. For Malbon, pleasure itself is a form of de Certeauian micro-resistance. I called this pleasure a form of "trivial resistance," "hollow resistance" or "escape resistance" (i.e., *resistance that makes no difference*). Simply put, I do not view uninhibited, escapist, hedonistic, and pleasure seeking behaviors as conscious forms of adaptation *unless*

*they are viewed this way by participants.* Although I do not want to over-emphasize the difference between unspoken escapism and spoken tactical resistance – my feeling is that this distinction "counts" when trying to make this theoretical separation. On this basis, and although I am generally supportive of Malbon's work because it is ethnographically informed, I take issue with his perhaps overly-romanticized version of pleasure in the club/rave scene. This issue is pursued in the next section.

Of course, my view of tactical resistance is only conditional and tentative. Not all ravers gave subversive meanings to their activities at any given time (i.e., *only a pocket of ravers interviewed actually tactically resisted*). Previous findings related to rave career development and the "waning of idealism" are evidence of this.

### 6.2.2 — Thesis #2: Rave is a form of 'adaptive-reactive' resistance.

The pro-technology stance that largely characterized rave culture in Toronto is likely the most resistive aspect of the group. Consider Dery's (1996) query in his book Escape Velocity (a book about cyberculture at the end of the century): "Will the new technologies liberate us or enslave us in our emerging digital world" (from the book jacket). According to many commentators on postmodernism, the high speed technological-cultural evolutionary process that is associated with the pending "turn of the millenium" is considered threatening and oppressive for many in mainstream society. Common reactions include panic and futile resistance. The influx of popular books about coping with and/or resisting an increasingly digital society are a reaction to this perceived/created panic (e.g., Tapscott's (1997) The Digital Economy and Brook and Boal's (1995) Resisting the Virtual Life).

I argue that rave culture is not only liberated from these constraints, but has embraced technology in profound ways, having integrated technology into leisure consumption so extensively that it could be interpreted as resistive to mainstream skepticism about postmodern technological developments, and even mainstream perspectives on 'how technology should be used'. This resistance is manifested in three ways (although I take issue with the first way). First, ravers are resistive in the Baudrillardian (and Bataille) sense – they are *over*-consuming and *over*-embracing technology in a way that is itself subversive and excessive (i.e, they are *resisting by not resisting*). However, it is worth noting that the ravers I spoke with about this topic did not interpret their behavior this way. Their view of technology was, on one hand, an

extension of the PLUR "breaking down barriers" position, and on the other, was about "progression, experimentation, and pleasure." In this sense, Baudrillard's stance does not cohere with the youths' actual interpretations of their activities (i.e., many of these youth did not view their activities as "oppositional" per se). However, the techno-ravers' excessive consumption of technology clearly falls in the parameters of "deviant" as defined by many mainstream commentators on youth (who, for example, have disapprovingly used the term "screenagers" to describe media/computer/technology savvy youth, as part of the dogma about "today's troubled youth"). Although in my view Baudrillard's argument is overly presumptuous about "resistance," his point is a useful, if unintentional, critique of the ironic and hypocritical labels that are given to "today's youth" (see chapter 1).

Second, "techno-ravers" in particular are 'resisting through hyper-*adaptation* (as opposed to consumption, as Baudrillard would suggest). They are *leading (sub)cultural figures in a pseudo-mainstream social development.* They have, in a small but real way, reversed the ideological power structure of technological usage, flow, and manipulation.[154] Rave culture resists the tendency to be paralyzed by fear and accelerated socio-cultural change (i.e., resistive to a right wing sensibility and backlash against technology).

Third, and similarly, while taking leadership in this movement, ravers are also *using technology in unintended, subversive, and tactical ways* – having virtual parties, spending endless hours downloading, listening to and creating computer-generated music, and developed webpages that feature "best rave experiences."

These latter two arguments about rave cultural resistance are most closely aligned with Stanley's (1997) interpretation of the rave as a "wild zone" – a subversive space existing in a broader context of over-regulation (drawing on Foucault, 1986 and de Certeau, 1984). However, the findings from the current study would, in my opinion, benefit from an analysis that emphasizes the continued importance of the relationship between social class and resistive capacities. Specifically, I suggest that the rave's pro-technology stance is an exceptional, sophisticated, (hyper)adaptation strategy. Simply put, *rave resistance is not entirely different from more conventional, "modern," class-based, subcultural reactions theorized in years past.* A "toned down" version of a classic spectacular resistance model usefully explains the

"techno ravers'" highly adaptive (and less symbolically/politically proactive) behaviours. Put another way,

Hebdige's (1979) and Hall and Jefferson's (1976) spectacular resistance approaches are not entirely useful

for explaining the subtly adaptive function of subcultural membership.

With this background, I suggest that working class youths' propensity/ability to "cope" with

changing social conditions in 1970s Britain using the resources, skills and interests that were available to

them is akin to the "coping" of many ravers in 1990s Canada. Ravers in Toronto are, for the most part, a

middle class group which is (according to the pro-PLUR rationale provided by many ravers) increasingly

alienated by pre-millenium fears such as global warming, AIDS, racial tension, the apocalypse etc.. In this

context, a crucial difference between the punks/skinheads of 1970s Britain and the ravers of the 1990s

Canada is that Canadian middle class youth have different/more "coping resources" than their working-

class counterparts in 1970s Britain who were victims of more clearly class-based oppression. Following

this argument, this study's findings usefully inform Stanley's work (noted above) by refocusing analysis, at

least in part, on the continued importance of the relationship between social class and resistive capacities.

This issue is revisited in a later discussion about the extent to which rave is a postmodern culture.

### 6.2.3 — Thesis #3: Rave is a form of 'trivial' resistance.

In theory, rave culture is about temporarily, but also gradually reversing the perceived societal norms of

oppression, segregation and poor communication. The rave party is intended to act as a micro-society

where these values (e.g., PLUR, openness, acceptance) can be practiced and played out homologously

through, among other things, dance, music and drug use. Ideally, ravers bring these values from the rave to

their interactions with others in their day to day lives. So, in theory, rave culture is about changing society

in non-offensive, subtle, but real ways. It is (supposed to be) about more than "coping" with and escaping

from the multiple pressures of everyday living in the 1990s. In its ideal form, then, rave is a "quiet" social

movement. Following this argument, the "ideal rave culture" embodied in the rave doctrine's PLUR

philosophy is akin to McRobbie's "subtle resistance" thesis, which recognizes how a depoliticized form of

resistance can usefully and progressively alter everyday practices and choices (see also Best, 1997).

However, the findings also showed that the "rave doctrine" is quite abstract and open to multiple

interpretations. In fact, research showed that PLUR, in particular, was interpreted in distinct, and often

non-resistant ways (and at times, it was not interpreted at all). On this basis, it would seem then that the rave movement is ironically, *disunited*. Furthermore, underlying rave-related practices that are supportive of this doctrine are *tensions, contradictions, and complexities that undermine any "real" subtle resistances that might take place beyond those existing in small pockets of the rave scene.*

This study informs previous work that has theorized rave-related behaviour by providing evidence of these multiple interpretations that, in essence, contradict any possibility of a united "rave movement." This is not to discount the importance of considering and highlighting the "pockets" or moments of resistance (as other "theses" presented here have done), or the empowerment that can be gained from rave. It is crucial though, to be sensitive to the complex ways a "movement" is interpreted before labeling group behaviors and overstating the actual resistive potential of the group. Similarly, it is crucial to be sensitive to the numerous ways that resistance can be played out (e.g., as "subversion" or "deviance" as opposed to social opposition).

On this basis, I suggest that, in the context of this study, McRobbie's "subtle resistance" thesis might be usefully reinterpreted in a way that emphasizes how the pleasure that youth gain from the "rave escape" is empowering, but constitutes little more than a "trivial," "hollow," or "empty" form of resistance (i.e., "resistance without substance," or a "resistance without teeth"). Put another way, the study findings showed how the rave's PLUR revolution allowed some youth to "feel (temporary) better" about themselves, but in the end, what was intended to be a meaningful, united, social movement is little more than "false sense of resistance" for many ravers.

It would seem, then, according to classic hegemony theory, that the use of rave culture for coping and symbolic pleasure would be readily "consented to." In fact, those aspects of rave culture considered most threatening to the dominant group (e.g., the unknown locations) have been effectively diluted through "strategies of neutralization" (Baron, 1989a, Hebdige, 1979; Smith, 1995). These strategies included: *incorporation* into mainstream popular culture (e.g., the movement toward club culture), the *trivialization* of the group (e.g., through portrayals of rave culture as a "neo-hippie" group of "fun loving" youth), and *moral panic* (e.g., mass mediated concerns about drug use and drug-related deaths at raves). Of course, moral panic led to the early *censure* of the rave subculture (e.g., raves were being increasingly "closed

down" by police, costing rave promoters money). This led promoters to start using legal venues and increasingly more stable locations. This was the beginning of the movement toward mainstream rave clubs which, in effect, completed the neutralization process (i.e., since the culture was now become effectively incorporated/commercialized, rave resistance was effectively neutralized). *What is left (arguably) is a PLUR-related resistance that makes no difference* (in an oppositional, consciousness raising, social change sense).

In making this argument for understanding rave in a classic model of hegemonic relations, I acknowledge that the underlying power structure assumed in this analysis is not quite so straightforward as the one presupposed by Gramsci. Clearly, social control agents, culture industries, "mainstream" youth, and moral entrepreneurs etc. are the defined 'other' for many raver youth. However, "postmodern" subcultural developments have played into this, particularly as they relate to the disunity and fragmentation of the rave scene, and the increasingly hazy distinction between mainstream culture and underground culture. Consider, for example, the multiple and contradictory identities of rave promoters. These individuals have an ambiguous relationship with mainstream and underground culture. Rave promotion is big business for many (e.g., investing thousands of dollars to fly in DJs from overseas, rent rave venues, advertise events, hire security etc.). For many promoters, though, rave promotion is about giving back to the scene and throwing "vibing" parties (i.e., altruistic rave promotion). In many cases then, the underground and mainstream collide in the form of "pro-money" vs. "pro rave" promoters. Yet even this conflict is not so clearly dichotomous, since many promoters who are part of the rave scene struggle with their alignments – are they "promoter-ravers" (money-oriented but somewhat sensitive to the state of the scene), or "raver-promoters" (non-profit all the way, or any profits go back into the next party)? In this context, the subculture vs dominant (ideological) group model becomes less clear since sometimes the dominant groups are part of the subculture, and vice versa. What is left is a model of "partial incorporation" where a previously obvious "path of resistance" has "collapsed but not disappeared."

In reaction to this, commentators such as Best (1997) have adopted an updated Foucaultian model of power relations as a strategy for understanding rave culture. Consider Foucault's original argument that:

> The notion of ideology appears to me to be difficult to make use of, for three reasons. The first is that…it stands in virtual opposition to something else which is supposed to count as truth. Now I believe that the problem…[is] in seeing historically how effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false. The second drawback is that the concept of ideology refers, I think necessarily, to something of the order of a subject. Thirdly, ideology stands in a secondary position relative to something which functions as its infrastructure, as its material, economic determinant, etc. (Foucault, 1980, p. 118)

For Foucault, who argued that the "universal intellectual" that attempts to unveil the hidden power relations that ideologically support a dominant class is ineffectual because power is everywhere – power is not exerted from above or from below, but is part of all social relations. Foucault suggested that, instead, analysis of local, specific struggles are required to better understand mechanisms of power. Best's updated version (see Part 1 of this dissertation in the overview of the MIPC's work) attempted to show how the "micro-resistances" theorized by Foucault are actually meaningful and progressive, and that the trends toward increasingly diverse and widespread mass media, culture, and technology should be understood for the ways they contribute to the everyday lives of individuals.

I have two problems with these frameworks. First, although Foucault's model might be useful for explaining the "foggy" power relations that exist in less easily explained corners of rave culture, it provides at best a cursory understanding of labelling and incorporation *processes* (and resistances to these processes). Second, I am concerned that Best's update of Foucault appears to be almost indistinguishable from McRobbie's subtle resistance model. Both models optimistically read resistance and progression into complex and contradictory cultural practices that are embedded in classic neutralization processes. Acland's (1995) "youth in crisis," Baron's (1989a) and Hebdige's (1979) strategies of neutralization, and Humphries (1997) work on "commercialized rebellion" (all of which are at least tentatively supported by this study) are but a few examples that contradict such as reading.

On this basis, I argue that a more empirically and theoretically sound update to Gramsci's hegemony model (for understanding rave culture) is Hall's argument *that ideological forces, even if they are in the form of "discursive" practices, are still working with concrete social relations*. In essence, this is a return to Hall's articulation model. Reconsider this model as described by Grossberg (1996) :

> 'Articulation' refers to the complex set of historical practices by which we struggle to produce identity or structural unity out of, on top of, complexity, difference, contradiction. It signals the

absence of guarantees, the inability to know in advance the historical significance of particular practices. It shifts the question of determination from origins (e.g., a practice is defined by its capitalist or working class genesis) to effects (p. 154).

Hall's model usefully explains the decentring of power in rave culture (e.g., the positioning of rave promoters as simultaneous members of mainstream and oppositional cultures), while still accounting for both the concrete social practices that produce and maintain dominant structures, and the relative autonomy of those who resist. That is to say, Hall's model usefully theorizes the commercialization/neutralization processes that characterized rave subcultural development, and the changing identities of various members of the rave scene as they were mediated by social location and interpretive capacity (e.g., experience in the scene). Of course, Hall's work was not intended to explain the specifics of subcultural life, and for this reason, is useful only for explaining the complexities of rave culture in a broad sense.

Overall, suffice to say here that despite the widespread movement toward interpreting rave culture in postmodern frameworks (which is clearly necessary in many instances as I have shown), Gramsci's hegemony perspective "updated" with Hall's articulation concept, and understood along with Hebdige's neutralization model, still provides balanced, comprehensive, and relatively empirically informed macro-explanations of developments in the Toronto rave scene. However, the various interpretations that ravers have of their "incorporated" and still sometimes "underground" experiences, mediate and complicate hegemony, leaving it necessarily incomplete. As the previous section showed, not all social practices are consented to and effectively neutralized.

### 6.2.4 — Thesis #4: Rave is a form of self-aware or oblivious non-resistance.

For many of those interviewed, rave was about seeking pleasurable and sensual experiences. Raves were sometimes attended because they were relative "safe spaces" for drug-use, places where one can dance with reckless abandon, watch and enjoy favourite DJs, meet new people, and spend time with friends. Many ravers did not interpret their behaviors as subtly, symbolically or overtly resistant — instead focusing, quite simply, on how rave is a "good time." This "free and easy" perspective on rave activity does not seem to match "pleasure as resistance" interpretations of rave espoused by some authors. On this basis, I find it difficult to support Malbon's engaging but seemingly unequivocal statement that "resistance (at the rave) is found through losing yourself, paradoxically, to find yourself." Consider also the trend among experienced

ravers to retrospectively suggest that in their early days of raving, "when they lost themselves, *they were actually lost.*" These kinds of arguments problematize the idyllic "pleasure as resistance" thesis.

This critique is based on the assumption that resistance relates somehow *to an interpreted* opposition or subversion. While I am not attempting to undermine the points made by Malbon, Pini, or McRobbie about the potential for pleasure to empower marginalized youth, what I am suggesting is that "empowerment," coping, and pleasure (among other benefits that are sometimes read from rave culture) can be analytically distinct from resistance. That is to say, pleasure, the focus of this discussion, can be understood and interpreted in various ways, some of which have little to do with subverting and transgressing the oppressive boundaries (or lack of boundaries) as they exist in a chaotic, postmodern, patriarchal society. As many of the more actively "pro-PLUR" ravers noted, too much pleasure is empirically akin to "too much escape" and often, "too many drugs," and "too much commitment" to rave culture. For these ravers, (excessive) pleasure in this context, interpreted this way, actually reverses the rave value system and undermines the rave doctrine.

In this sense, the current study provides conditional support for Reynolds' (1997) more balanced interpretation of the rave. Reynolds acknowledged the potential for rave to be a pleasurable space for experiencing "sensation without pretext or context" *in ideal circumstances* (i.e., when the "desiring machine is running smoothly"), but argued that the inevitable tensions and mainstream developments in the scene have led rave from "a way of life" to a situation where ravers should "get a life."

However, Reynolds also goes too far. Although I agree that rave has lost revolutionary potential (if it ever had any), it was clear from the current findings that the rave is also *empowering* for many youth (as Pini, Malbon and McRobbie correctly pointed out), and not an exclusively escapist, hedonistic, and pathetic space. Empirical findings from this study of rave culture in Canada support this more balanced position. Furthermore, and while some ravers were hedonistic, excessive and self/scene-destructive in Reynolds' sense (what I call unconscious non-resistance – or passivity in the conventional "social dupe" Frankfurt School sense), others were seemingly aware of the destructive potential of rave's "desiring machine turned fascist," but participated in and embraced the pleasures that rave had to offer anyway. This self-conscious participation seems inconsistent with the single-minded, tunnel vision, *passive* consumption

as Reynolds would have it. In fact, for some of those interviewed who were interested in a "release and escape" at the rave, there appeared to be neither a view towards conscious resistance, or blind passivity. It would seem presumptuous then to assume that attendance at raves and participation in the excesses of rave signal either "resistance" or "gullible adherence."

With this background, I offer two "middle ground" approaches that do not require a "social dupe passivity" or resistance from the raver subject. The first is an "updated" version of Abercrombie et, al's (1980) dominant ideology thesis; the second is a similarly "balanced" position offered within the postmodern context by Muggleton (1997). On one hand then (and drawing on Abercrombie et. al.), self-conscious, non-resistant (excessive) rave participation could be theorized in a model developed around the idea that consent to the dominant order is less ideological and more about a "dull compulsion" toward passivity.[155] This argument is akin to Abercrombie et. al.'s contention that working classes are critical of and question the credibility of the dominant group, but because of the "iron cage" created by the bureaucracies of modern society, and the "dull compulsion of the economic" which requires compliance in the workplace, there is little energy or motivation for resistance. For raver youth, who arguably exist in the postmodern "iron cage" of mass media images, education, work, suburban life etc. (Foucault's view of the many levels of power relations might be more applicable here), it could be argued that the complications and efforts required to resist are not "worth it." So, some ravers purposefully, consciously, and non-resistantly temporarily escape through excessive pleasures.

Returning to the initial argument (that focused on overly dichotomous understandings of resistance), I suggest here that just because youth "know what they are doing" does not make raving resistant. By the same token, it does not make them duped or unaware either. It only makes them tired, apathetic, complacent, and perhaps pragmatic. In fact, Muggleton's (1997) position (outlined in Part 1) that challenges scholars to consider how a postmodern consumer (in a nihilistic, anarchistic subculture) "beholds the world with a knowingness that dissolves feelings and commitment into irony," is the postmodern/non-ideological equivalent of Abercrombie et. al..

Although the above positions in no way explain rave culture in a comprehensive manner (nor were they intended to in this discussion), they usefully provide a response to both the overly pessimistic and the

overly optimistic interpretations of rave culture. In essence, what I have attempted to show is that

interpretations of rave do not *require* a view of youth behavior as an either/or dichotomy related to

resistance and passivity.

### 6.2.5 — Thesis #5 — Rave culture actively supports reproduction of the dominant culture.

In the process of becoming mainstream and commercialized, rave also came to reproduce many of the

inequalities and attitudes that, in theory, it opposed. The "unity" of the rave scene was disintegrating as

different music scenes emerged and divided rave culture by musical preference. Unity in the rave party

was also disintegrating as more "outsiders" continued to come to parties. Even the resistance to hypocrisy

was disabled and undermined by rave culture's dubious relationship with the enticing aspects of

mainstream electronic music culture. Regardless, this clear movement to "club raves" from 1995-1999 and

the types of "subcultural distinctions" that accompanied that movement (e.g., as described in the research

setting comparisons between "rave culture" and "night club culture") clearly supported Thornton's (1995)

adaptation of Bourdieu's (1984) "distinction" model. Thornton explained how in British "club culture"

youth seek to attain "subcultural capital" in the form of cool clothes, white label (underground) records and

so forth (see Part 1 of this dissertation). Thornton's work also insightfully outlined the labeling process

that operates within the subculture, where "authentic ravers" distinguish themselves from mainstream,

commercial, "pop" oriented values and cultures that were believed to be polluting the scene. Thornton's

theorizations were almost mirrored in the distinctions by youth (in the current study) who were critical of

the movement toward rave clubs (e.g., referring bitterly to "ginos" who were destroying the rave vibe), of

the "Electric Circus" (*MuchMusic/CityTV*) dance show, and of most other "cheesy" rave spin-off industries.

The current study also extends and informs Thornton's work by *providing insight into how ravers'*

*interpretations of what is "cool" or "hip" changed over time* (i.e., as it was related to the waning of

idealism, as well as to an increased comfort level in the scene).

     The current study also showed that, despite postmodern tendencies in rave culture, rave is usefully

and necessarily theorized in a structure-agency framework that presupposes classic conceptions of

"ideology" and "resistance" and hegemony (and hegemonic masculinity). Consider, for example, the way

ideological relations are played out in rave promotion (e.g., target marketing, the rave flyer, the move

toward commercialized raves), the ways that gender inequalities are systemically embedded in the rave

DJ/promoter occupational structure, and, more broadly, the "strategies of neutralization" imposed by

various dominant groups. These findings inform and subtly contradict Muggleton, Redhead and others

who have argued that rave culture can no longer be understood in a "depth model" (i.e., in a theory of

ideology) of subcultures. For example, Redhead's (see Part 1) argument that there is no hidden agenda

behind the shimmering mediascape, and that the depth model is no longer appropriate for a culture (i.e.,

rave) characterized by shallowness, flatness and 'hyperreality' *does not account for the clear examples of*

*ideological relations noted previous* (of course, Redhead's work was in the British context), although his

view that there is a decreased possibility for resistance in the classic CCCS sense is largely supported by

these findings. In other words, while I am not suggesting that classic subcultural models entirely cohere

with the findings of this case study, these theoretical positions certainly should not be dismissed

unconditionally on the basis of sweeping observations of a hyperreal cultural group and movement. In

other words, there is a need to be cautious about proclaiming the "end of youth culture" considering the

structures at work in the Toronto rave scene.

### 6.3 – Considering the Rave Community as a (World Level) Social Organization

In addition to the community perspectives addressed above in the context of discussions about rave-related

unity, empowerment, and subcultural fragmentation, I provide the following examination of "rave

community" as it relates to the *social organization of rave culture*.

Over the course of the research it became clear that this was not a study about a subcultural group

per se, but a study about both social space(s) and social organization(s). Ravers "dropped in" and "dropped

out" of the rave scene (*in terms of attending rave parties* – see below) over the course of their rave career.

This finding provides some support for Malbon's (1998) view of the rave as a "tribal formation"

characterized by a somewhat *stable space but unstable membership* (i.e., "unicity" as opposed to "unity").

Of course, and although rave spaces/locations change each week, "rave clubs" have lent some spatial

stability to the rave scene. However, the current study informs/contradicts Malbon's conception by

showing how raver involvements, if understood in terms of *"career*

*processes/contingencies/memberships,"* are relatively stable (e.g., the "waning of idealism" process).

However, this stability is defined less by attendance at rave parties, and more by involvement in rave-related activities (i.e., ravers might attend fewer parties, but be more involved in music-making, or participating in rave-related technology newsgroups). Overall then, by considering this (symbolic interactionist) "career model" perspective on rave involvement, along with Malbon's (see also Straw's, 1991, 1997 view of scenes) postmodern understanding of movement and social space, a more comprehensive understanding of *spatial/social movement and spatial/social experience* can be articulated.

Throughout the study, I used numerous terms to describe various group formations, such as culture, subculture, group, sub-group, community, scene, and world. Although some have argued that the seemingly interchangeable usages of these terms damages the explanatory power/potential of these concepts (Crosset and Beal, 1997), this research provides evidence that rave is defined by its multiple levels of organizational complexity, and requires multiple and flexible usages. Overly restrictive usage of terms would clearly have inhibited my ability to discuss a group defined by it hazy organizational distinctions.

However, given the complexities of rave culture as a social organization, the finding demanded an approach to understanding the various levels of rave, particularly at the more loosely defined global levels. I suggest that Best and Luckenbill's (1994) flexible model of organization sophistication/complexity provides a superior practical reference point for multi-leveled and loosely defined groups such as rave culture. Consider their following discussion of the world concept in their work on deviant behavior, and how this view might be usefully adapted to understanding rave culture:

> [We have] described a continuum of organizational sophistication for deviants, ranging from loners, through colleagues, peers, and teams, to deviant formal organizations...[It is also important to consider] two additional organizational forms – worlds and communities. A deviant world has a large but imprecisely defined membership. Its members share a sense of their common deviant status and an argot composed of words common to different deviant groups, but they do not share a code of conduct or a sense of responsibility [this might require updating if adopted for rave cultural studies]...Deviant worlds exist, but they are not a highly sophisticated form...(Best and Luckenbill, 1994, p. 67)

Rave culture understood in its broadest form is akin to Straw's version of scene, Malbon's tribal formation, and Best and Luckenbill's world level organization (described above). However, Best and Luckenbill's model emerges as the preferred framework because it accounts for the other organizational forms that exist

simultaneously within the rave world level of sophistication. For example, peer groups exist in the form of

newsgroups such as "techno.ca," formal organizations and teams exist in the form of promotion companies

(and peers and colleagues), collegial groups such as DJs are part of the Toronto rave community, and, of

course, the Toronto rave community is part of the less easily defined, but clearly influential and ever-

present rave world (defined largely by internet relationships, but also through music influences, the history

of the scene). This organization sophistication model is also a *continuum*, which is a crucial for

understanding a multi-leveled and dynamic group like rave culture.

This model also provides a somewhat grounded response to commentators (such as Reynolds, who

described the highly fragmented rave/club scene) that *over-theorize* rave as a postmodern culture, and in

doing so, ironically *under-theorize* the often recognizable complexities of the group. Moreover, and

although this study provides some support for Reynolds (1997) historically-based argument that the

evolution of diverse music scenes led to the disparagement of the rave philosophy (i.e., PLUR), Reynolds

argument is understandably overly-structuralist since his work did not account for the *meanings* that ravers

gave to their involvements in these various scenes, at any given time, and over time.

### 6.4 — Rave Culture, Globalization, and the Politics of Nostalgia

The extent to which Toronto's rave culture is and was influenced by developments in Britain and/or New

York is a contentious issue. There were interesting parallels between the evolution of the rave scene

abroad and in Canada (i.e., Toronto). For example, both scenes originated in the gay community and were

subsequently incorporated into an underground but less marginalized culture. Both scenes also evolved

into various sub-scenes or sub-communities that were defined largely by music genre, but also by age and

drug use (e.g., the two Chicago house music scenes are akin to the sophisticated "techno" scene and the less

refined "happy hardcore" scene in Toronto). Furthermore, there were undeniable influences on the origins

of the Toronto rave scene by early promoters who attempted to simulate the British rave in the Toronto

context. In fact, the authenticity of the original parties were judged by their perceived similarities to the

British raves in the same way that current Canadian raves are judged against nostalagized versions of early

Toronto raves.

However, if we consider Reynolds and Redhead's historical treatment of the rave scene, and their

insights into the problems with the scene even in its "purest form," then it makes sense to be at least

somewhat critical of these idealized memories of early raves. Consider Smith's (1979; see also Nauright

and White, 1996) general argument about the relationship a mythic past and community solidarity:

> [nostalgic/mythic reconstructions of the past offer] the illusory hope of escape from social conflict
> into an idyllic past that never was, and can never be (p. 202).

Consider also the political economy position adopted by Ingham, Howell and Shilperoort (1987):

> The past is captured under new conjunctural circumstances – a past that, perhaps, never really
> existed but that is used not only to promote a sense of 'we' that does not structurally exist, but also
> to promote a mythical consensus that blurs the distinctions between private profit and public good
> (p. 453).

These arguments have particular relevance to the 1990s Toronto rave scene in the sense that

constructions of the "ideal rave" culture represented by the past (e.g., as described in several retrospective

testimonials provided by veteran ravers) are used by: (a) promoters (e.g., the rave company named *Better*

*Days* can be interpreted either a reference to the future or the past – the company threw a party in London,

Ontario on March 15, 1997 called "Back to my Roots" which was advertised as a "blast from the past," a

revisiting of the roots of the scene in London, England, and as an "evening of nostalgia"); and (b) more

commercial/big business entities who benefit from the belief in a rave community with a rich history of

PLUR and excess (see Humphries, 1998 for an extended discussion of "commercialized rebellion" in rave,

snowboard and punk cultures). The irony of nostalgic constructions of rave in Toronto is that rave parties

might be, on some levels 'more British and more aligned with the revered summer of 88 than the British

raves ever were'. This is an arguable contention, but worth considering given the various and sometimes

contradictory histories of the scene that are told. This is also a notable, alternate way to consider the

development of subcultures that goes a step beyond the conventional "underground to mainstream" model

that often seems to overlook the processes of nostalgia mentioned here.

Consider also how this reading of rave is an implicit critique of classic subcultural "evolution"

theories that view the youth subcultural project as a linear development. If the above argument that rave is

characterized by distorted, decontextualized "memories" of "better (more authentic) days past" is

understood along with the finding that individual ravers (regardless of when they entered the rave scene)

experience a rave career characterized by a "waning of idealism," then the idea that subcultures progress

over time and that experiences within subcultures vary according to the "state of authenticity" (i.e.,

closeness to the point of origin) is brought into question - particularly since studies of "inauthentic"

cultures presume that there was an authentic (untainted?) starting point. On this basis, these findings

provide conditional support for Redhead's (1990) criticism of the tendency for academics and journalists to

inaccurately view subcultural development (from 1945 on) to be both progressive and continually

authentic. Instead, Redhead (1990) argued that .

> pop [culture] time has, in many ways, been circular rather than linear: the speed of what comes
> around again may change but the cyclical motion is embedded in pop's genealogy (pp. 24-25)

Redhead (1990) went on to explain:

> Beginning, initially, with the teddy boy style in the mid-1950s, working class subcultures are
> retrospectively mapped back on to British cultural history every few years. The mods, seen to
> spring from a more semi-skilled and white collar social base than the teds, explode on to the youth
> cultural landscape to clash, metaphorically and literally, with unskilled rockers. Greasers, bikers
> and other variants emerge, though with nothing like the legendary menace of American Hell's
> Angels. Skinheads, metamorphosed 'hard' mods, are spotted 'taking ends' at football grounds in
> the season after England's World Cup victory in 1966, before they splintered, eventually, into
> crombies, suedeheads and other groupings by the early 1970s...These youth subcultural fashions
> were read as white styles; some urban black styles, rudies, rastas, B-boys did however receive a
> similar kind of treatment in youth cultural histories on a parallel time scale...Subsequent revivals,
> for instance, of teds, mods, skins, hippies, and greasers, failed to disrupt the impression that what
> stood out in this evolution of post-war youth styles was continuity rather than circularity (pp. 23-
> 24).

This "end of (or lack of) youth culture" thesis is akin to Baudrillard's (1987) view of the end of history –

"where history has stopped meaning, referring to anything...[where] we have passed into a kind of hyper-

real where things are played out ad infinitum" (p. 21, see also Redhead, 1990, p. 23). While, the current

study informs Redhead's work by providing data related to the processes of involvement and interpretation

that guided youths' involvement in subcultures (and how there appeared to consistency and circularity as

opposed to progression per se), in the broader context of youth cultural evolution, I suggest that Redhead's

argument for the "end of youth culture" is too extreme. Although aspects of raver involvements (i.e.,

involvement processes) were characterized by circularity (although this micro-circularity is "uneven" since

rave culture has changed over time and the positioning of rave as a "culture for the marginalized" has come

into question with the acquired "cool" status of rave – a findings that would itself impact the "waning of

idealism" process), understood in terms of the broader development of youth subcultures, rave culture is still historically important, *and is characterized only by a pseudo-(macro)circularity*. That is to say, while some ravers are reacting to current social conditions through subcultural participation, *they are doing it in ways that are distinctly relevant to 1990s postmodernizing culture* (e.g. embracing technology). So, while traditional understanding of youth culture as a linear project were shown from this research to be flawed in some respects (this point in revisited in this chapter's conclusion), history is a crucial consideration when interpreting the strategies youth use for subcultural reaction, subversion, and resistance. Also, it is important to consider how Hebdige's (1979) and others' arguably linear portrayals of youth culture *did acknowledge the micro-circularity of subcultural development* (e.g., the strategies of neutralization are a social process of struggle).

Consider also how the British scene and the Canadian scene's subsequent evolution can be understood in the context of the global-local theoretical nexus, as explained by Maguire (1994):

> In the global flow of goods, services, and culture, indigenous groups are active in interpreting in interpreting what they receive. People – whatever the unequal power relations – are not blank sheets on which transnational corporations imprint their commodified tastes. In the multiple identities that compose a person's biography, involving class, gender, and ethnic dimensions, a dynamic interweaving occurs between the local, national, and transnational. A sense of place...coexists with visions of "other" places...There is no *single* global flow; in the interweaving of global scapes, disjunctures develop and cause a series of diverse, fluid and unpredictable global conditions and flows. (p. 402).

Maguire's argument can be extended to include cultural impacts *situations where local audiences embrace cultural colonization* (as with rave), while being inevitably bound by local socio-cultural conditions that on some level modify the ways that culture is interpreted and adapted (see also Appadurai, 1990; Lull, 1995; Wilson and Sparks, 1996).

Following these arguments, the problem with lending credence to an understanding of the Toronto rave scene that is overly focused on "British influences" is that the rave movements in each country took place in at least somewhat distinct social contexts. The movement from "raves to clubs" in Britain was largely because of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994 that essentially outlawed and criminalized raves in Britain (the bill was considered to be, in large part, a reaction to the mass mediated "moral panics" surrounding raves and drug use) (Brown, 1997, Redhead, 1997b). Although the law has

been a factor in the movement of raves from illegal to legal venues in Toronto, this process was much more

discreet and has arguably been initiated by promoters who were tired of taking financial losses from rave

parties that were periodically closed down by police (even so, the police are considered to be remarkably

tolerant in Toronto compared to other cities and countries — see Stebbins, 1988 for an elaborate discussion

of general issues related to tolerated deviance).

Consider also how the New York club scene in the 1970s was originally a gay and ethnic

movement, and how the Detroit techno scene was a supposed reaction to the decay of an urban centre.

While the rave in Toronto has been shown to be a gathering place for marginalized youth, and the pro-

technology aspect of Toronto rave culture to be a hyper-adaptation to increasingly postmodern conditions,

these are not parallels so much as cultural messages that have been locally altered. Critics have argued

about the ways that the globalization and subsequent appropriation of music that was/is symbolic of a

cultural movement can be disempowering for the groups whose messages have been

incorporated/appropriated. As Lipsitz (1997) explained in his work on "popular music, postmodernism and

the poetics of place":

> Like other forms of contemporary mass communication, popular music simultaneously
> undermines and reinforces our sense of place. Music that originally emerged from concrete
> historical experiences in places with clearly identifiable geographic boundaries now circulates as
> an interchangeable commodity marketed to consumers all over the globe. Recording by
> indigenous Australians entertain audiences in North America. Jamaican music secures spectacular
> sales in Germany and Japan. Rap music from inner city ghettos in the U.S.A. attracts allegiances
> of teenagers from Amsterdam to Auckland...*These transactions transform — but so not erase —
> attachments to place* [emphasis added]...[For example] electric-techno-art music made in
> Germany serves as a staple for sampling within African-American hip hop; Spanish flamenco abd
> paso doble music provide crucial subtexts for Algerian rai artists; and pedal steel guitars first by
> country and western musicians in the U.S.A. play a prominent role in Nigerian juju...*This
> dynamic dialogue, however, does not necessarily reflect relations of reciprocity and mutuality*
> [emphasis added]. Inter-cultural communication does not automatically lead to intercultural
> cooperation, especially when participants in the dialogue speak from positions of highly unequal
> access to power, opportunity, and life chances (p. 4).

While the adaptation of rave from Britain and Ibiza into the Canadian rave scene does not necessarily

reflect unequal cultural positionings, the adaptation of 1970s club cultures into Disco (i.e, the adaptation of

a gay, Black movement into mainstream) does. Furthermore, and if this argument is taken a step further

(i.e., examining the ways that the resistive potential for marginalized groups is lost through dominant

cultural incorporation — see Wilson, 1999), Toronto's incorporation of "house" dance music into raves and

rave-clubs in particular might be interpreted as a mainstreaming and threatening of the gay club scene

(which is largely separate from the Toronto rave scene). Of course, this suggestion is purely speculative

since the research was not focused on the relationship between these scenes.

## 6.5 – Conclusions and Recommendations

> From the post-war days of the jitterbug, demob suits, big bands and ballrooms...through the
> Teddy boys bopping to Bill Haley, amphetamine-fuelled Mods out on the dance floor every
> weekend dancing to early Motown and R&B; through the Northern Soul and Southern Funk
> scenes of the 1970s and to the warehouse parties of the 80s and raves of this decade, dance music
> has been a focal point of working class youth culture...Yet, somehow, this has escaped the
> attention of all those involved in today's rave scene. Or these individuals, nothing seems to have
> existed before 1989 and their belated discovery of dance music and Ecstasy...And what better way
> of claiming importance for a music scene than claiming that it is subversive? Thousands of kids
> united under the "dance" banner, threatening the status quo, dancing to the "underground" music –
> you know it's underground and "dangerous" because of the slick marketing of the CDs, raves and
> the slew of promotional items tells you so again and again (Strongman, 1999, quoted from the
> webzine "Discord", "Rave: The culture that isn't", issue 10, www.discord.co.uk/rave.html)

Debates persist about the extent to which rave is a "postmodern" subculture. On one hand, I am concerned

that critics who do not acknowledge rave's positioning as a postmodern subculture are also not

acknowledging the definition of "postmodernism" on its most basic level – meaning "after modernism," or,

"maintaining aspects of modernism while having integrated aspects of culture that characterize social life

after modern times' (substituting "late capitalism" for postmodernism if Jameson's (1984) position is more

palatable), which in this case means rapidly evolving mass media and technologies. As Chen (1991)

argued:

> Postmodernity denotes a 'rearrangement' and a 'new configuration' which have exceeded the
> boundaries of modernity. Although it is not an absolute rupture, on has to realize, with Gramsci
> (as Hall himself does), that no historical era is ever absolute; that 'Stone Age' elements remain,
> albeit entering new relations with other internal elements (pp. 36-37).

Surely the rave subculture is a postmodern subculture by this definition (if Chen's position is extended

from historical period to cultural practice) and requires (and has received) research attention on this basis.

On the other hand though, I also suggest that overstating the positioning of rave as a postmodern

subculture is equally problematic. Work that describes the evolution of rave culture toward a fragmented,

and culturally chaotic group often fails to consider the patterns of meanings that ravers give to their

activities. Moreover, models of postmodern culture that emphasize the "global-virtual" characteristics of

the group fail to acknowledge how "world level" cultures are still part of social organizations, even if they

have become less easily defined (consider Best and Luckenbill's (1994) "world level" of organizational complexity). Other work that emphasizes how rave represents a sensual, emotional, ritualistic, techno-community (i.e., the "affective" level of subcultural life) fails in many cases to consider the generic social processes that continue to define all subcultural groups (and that no subcultures are entirely defined by "emotional connection").

Overall, suggestions made here are consistent with arguments presented throughout this dissertation for examining and being sensitive to a range of resistances, attentive to complexity within subcultural groups, and for adopting a methodologically balanced approach that account for both socio-historical conditions and the meanings that subcultural participants give to their involvements. In the context of rave culture, a group labeled in both academia and popular journalism as "the first postmodern subculture," this balanced approach has meant avoiding the tendency to either overstate or understate the positioning of rave as postmodern.

## CHAPTER 7 – YOUTH CULTURE IN AN "INNER CITY" RECREATION/DROP-IN CENTRE: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

The Young Street Riots of 1992, and more recently, the school shootings in Taber, Alberta and in

Columbine, Colorado (both in 1999) fueled existing concerns about youth crime in Canada, and more

generally, with issues surrounding "today's troubled and troubling" youth. These concerns have been both

reflected by and amplified by media accounts (Acland, 1995). As is often the case, post hoc interpretations

of these tumultuous incidents vary, ranging from moral panics about collapsing social values, to

implications about media impacts, to suggestions that such events might be connected with social trends

such as long-term high rates of unemployment. The latter type of argument was typified by Mathews

(1993) who suggested following the Young Street Riots that:

> This disturbing public spectacle by youth of all backgrounds should serve as a "red flag" and
> focus our attention on what young people are trying to say to the adult world they so often feel
> alienated and excluded from (p. 9).

Heightened awareness of youth delinquency has prompted various suggestions for interventions.

On one end of the spectrum are proposals for the reintroduction of quasi-military boot camps. Others

recommend programs focusing on restitution and/or rehabilitation (see Tanner, 1996 for an overview of

these approaches and about the problems with "get tough" and "scared straight" strategies).

Implicit in the more progressive approaches is a recognition that contemporary "at risk" youth

differ from less vulnerable youth because of their deeply inscribed senses of powerlessness and dislocation

from stable social support networks. Rather than attribute delinquency to pathologies within individuals,

these perspectives identify contributing factors in their social environments. Emerging from these

perspectives is a range of interventions aimed at providing more supportive environments for these youth.

One such approach, youth recreation/drop-in programmes, will be the focus of this case study.

While the idea of establishing youth recreation/drop-in programs to provide alternative leisure

pursuits for youth "at risk" for violence and delinquency is not generally new, scrutiny of their efficacy has

attracted research attention because of heightened concerns about youth violence, and perceived needs for

meaningful interventions (see Carrigan, 1998 and Tanner, 1996 for social histories of the treatment of

190

juvenile delinquents in Canada, an overview with some contextual relevance to this discussion). Findings of positive impacts of such programmes have indicated that they provide youth with positive role models, give youth "something constructive to do," offer a sense of community, promote self-confidence and self-esteem, and enhance cultural awareness (Reid and Tremblay, 1994; see also Martinek, 1997; Offord and Knox, 1994). These applied studies have provided convincing evidence that youth "preventative" programs can be effective in some areas for youth "at risk" for violent or other deviant behaviors. In this context, a number of factors "predispose" youth "at-risk" to deviant behavior (according to Collingwood (1997), McKay (1994), Laub and Sampson (1988), Cernkovich and Giordano (1987), Agnew (1991), Dishion et. al. (1984) and others). These include: low socio-economic status, lack of family support, group or "gang" peer interactions, poor academic performance and living in high crime areas. Although the definition of "youth" in these studies is inconsistent, Reid and Tremblay (1994, p. 11) suggest that the "majority of empirical research has concentrated on youth attending high school, ages 14-18 years."

These efficacy studies have, though, *focused more on outcome measures and determinants than on the subjective experiences of youth who attend recreational drop-in centres*. The process of involvement and the creative ways that youth negotiate these surroundings and construct meaning within them has not been explicitly examined. Little is known, for example, about why youth typically construct non-violent subcultures in drop-in centres, while it is also clear that their angry voices to the adult world have not been otherwise silenced. Although "common sense" would hold that alienated youth in the 1990s would be better served by attending a recreation/drop-in centre than engaging in gang violence, it is also evident that the social dynamic of an "at risk" youth group in a relatively structured youth centre environment is still potentially "highly charged." The root economic and social impediments in their backgrounds are still present. It is with this background that the culture of youth in a recreation/drop in centre are examined

The structure of this case study presentation is as follows. First, previous theoretical and substantive work is reviewed and interrogated as a way of beginning to understand the social positioning of youth recreational drop-in programs, the ways that youth construct identity in these contexts, and the ways that gender, class and race underscore these experiences. Second (chapter 8), findings from an ethnographic study of youth are reported and examined, with particular attention given to the ways that knowledge,

beliefs, behaviors, and customs are created, maintained, and referred to as the basis for interaction. This

section examines both the dominant (masculine) culture of the centre and the ways that marginalized

females react to and negotiate their status in this context. Finally (in chapter 9), the findings are discussed

for their relevance to existing substantive and theoretical work on youth centres, youth cultural resistance

and gender.

### 7.1 – Youth, Female Identities, and Theories of Gender, Sport and Physical Activity

As noted in Part 1 of this dissertation, a central problem with the (sub)cultural studies of youth that were

conducted in the 1970s at the CCCS in Britain was that the experiences of young females and the

intricacies of female cultures were essentially absent from research and theory. Moreover, gender

inequalities and gender relations were ironically overlooked in the CCCS's emphasis on the ways that

(male) youths' behaviors were resistant to dominant social relations as they pertained to *class* (Griffith,

1985; McRobbie and Garber, 1976). In response, feminist research in the early 1980s focused

(ethnographic) studies on the types of and meanings of female leisure activities (e.g., Ang, 1985; Griffith,

1985; McRobbie, 1982; McRobbie and Nava, 1984). Valentine et. al (1998) summarized these 1980s

studies of young female subcultures as follows:

> What this [body of]...research concluded was that, at that time and in those case studies: girls'
> leisure was more restricted than that of boys; they were often unable to engage in spectacular
> leisure activities which were dirty, dangerous or hedonistic, such as motorcycle riding or hanging
> around the urban streets; girls spent more time in the home, supervised by parents; unlike boys,
> girls' leisure was not structured first by the move from school to work but by their relationship to
> men (p. 17).

More recent work has been critical of this feminist post-CCCS work, arguing that "there was little

space in such studies" for females who did not participate in what were perceived to be "traditional" young

female activities such as reading teen magazines, dancing, watching soap operas, or listening to music

(Valentine et. al., 1998, p. 17; see also Tanner (1996) for a comprehensive overview of current work on

female deviance). So, and although aspects of the post-CCCS approach to female youth culture remain in

contemporary work (evident, for example, in Pini's (1997) work on rave culture outlined in the previous

case study) there is continued debate about how to properly theorize young female activity. Dorothy

Smith's (1988) work has been influential in recent research on young female identity construction (e.g.,

Proweller, 1998) for her attempts to explain how females identities are negotiated through a 'textually mediated discourse' (drawing on Foucault). What Smith meant was that females not only consumed mass media messages about "what it means to be female," but engage, reinterpret, and creatively use these contents – that is to say, they construct their identities through a complex, two-way interaction (c.f., Roman & Christian-Smith, 1988). In essence, and as Alcoff (1989; see also Haraway, 1988; Proweller, 1998) points out, "the identity of a woman is the product of her own interpretation and reconstruction of her history as mediated through a cultural discursive context to which she has access" (p. 324).

In leisure and sport sociology, studies of (young) females' experiences in and participation in sport have been theorized within updated models that articulate existing masculinist hegemonic relations. Cole (1993), for example, has argued for the integration of socialist feminist theory, Althusserian cultural studies, and Foucaultian post-structuralism in an attempt to more adequately understand the relationship between traditional female oppression in sport, ideology, and the politics of the body. Although Cole has been criticized for not adequately explaining how these broad fields can be integrated, and, similarly, for overlooking important contradictions and shortcoming in the theoretical areas she works within (see A. Hall, 1993 for a critical response to Cole), her attempt to theorize gender in a more sophisticated framework that is adequately sensitive and attentive to various issues of gender, ideology and postmodern/poststructuralist thought is a worthwhile aspiration and important departure point (see also McRobbie, 1994 for similar updates in mainstream youth cultural studies).

With this in mind, I suggest that the "gender order" and "hegemonic masculinity" are concepts which responsibly theorize the relations *between and within* marginalized groups and are consistent with the post-CCCS approaches privileged in this dissertation (but are not open to the previously noted critiques that were lodged at early feminist work on youth). The term "gender order" refers to "a historically constructed pattern of power relations between men and women and definitions of femininity and masculinity" (Connell, 1987, pp. 98-99), while "hegemonic masculinity" can be defined as:

> ...the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women...Hegemonic masculinity embodies a 'currently accepted' strategy. When conditions for the defence of patriarchy change, the bases for the dominance of a particular masculinity are eroded. New groups may challenge old solutions and

construct a new hegemony. The dominance of any group of men may be challenged by women. Hegemony then is a historically mobile relation (Connell, 1995, p. 77).

Connell's work (see also Messner and Sabo, 1990; White and Young, 1999) provides an instructive depiction of the theoretical configuration of the complex and dynamic processes of gender-related oppression. In leisure and sport, these hegemonic masculinist relations have been played out historically in debates about control of women's sport, in the acceptability of women's participation in sport, and the ways women played sport. A classic hegemonic masculinist compromise outlined by Hall (1999) was that women were granted concessions in sport "provided traditional gender roles went undisturbed" (p. 18). These tensions between formal and informal cultures within and outside the spectrum of leisure are examined further in the following case study about gender and leisure in a youth recreation/drop-in centre.

Finally, the importance of understanding the relationship between gender and other determinants of oppression is crucial for the current research on working class, male and female youth, for which class and gender (in the broader context of age/youth) are central components. This dynamic and the challenge for future research is captured by Donnelly and Harvey (1999) in their work on class, gender, sport and physical activity:

> Both class and gender influence the form (types of sport and physical activity) and frequency of sport and physical activity participation. These differences, at least for social class, are usually interpreted in a simplistic way as being related to economic capital...However, in order to understand how class and gender intersect to influence sport and physical activity involvement, it is necessary to understand the different meanings that sport may have in the lives of men and women, and the ways that sport may have in the lives of men and women, and the way in which those meanings are influenced by their respective class locations (pp. 46-47).

The current research builds on previous studies that have used in-depth, integrated approaches to the study of social practices in social settings. Ethnographic methods were used to provide a dense description of life at a recreation drop-in centre located in an inner-city environment in southern Ontario, Canada. Questions surrounding the cultural and symbolic meaning of interactions within and between individuals and sub-groups within the centre (e.g., the ways that youth are "self-policing"), between individual youth members and the centre's "authority" figures (where supervision is typically low key and informal), and distinctions between group life inside and outside the centre are explored.

**7.2 – The Social Organization of the Youth Centre: Interactionist Approaches**

This study also draws on the interactionist-based conceptual framework used in Fine and Mechling's (1993,

p. 135) organizational analyses of youth-serving programmes while maintaining sensitivity to more

structuralist concerns (in the discussion section). Fine and Mechling's (1993) approach emphasized the

distinct sets of rules, traditions and understandings that must, to some extent, exist for any youth

"organization," such as a youth recreation/drop-in centre, to cohere:

> it is not enough that adults create an organization and program that provide strong identity structures
> for the young participant. Within a successful organization there grows an independent, robust peer
> culture [original emphasis]. One of the paradoxes of organizational cultures is that the health of the
> organization depends equally on its official culture and its unofficial culture, which at times may be
> antagonistic to its official culture. The best laid plans of adults go awry if the group never coalesces
> to create and sustain a small group culture...(p. 135).

Moreover, the interactionist perspective, as noted in part 1 of this dissertation, is useful because it

focuses on how small group cultures are created and sustained. Using the concept "idioculture" to theorize

the ways that youth develop a "community" within youth programs created by adults and "controlled" by

adult leaders, Fine (1987) suggested that (see also interactionist discussion in Part 1):

> Every group has its own lore or culture, which I term idioculture [original emphasis]. Idioculture
> consists of a system of knowledge, beliefs, behaviors, and customs shared by members of an
> interacting group to which members can refer and that serve as the basis for further interaction.
> Members recognize that they share experiences, and these experiences can be referred to with the
> expectation that they will be understood by other members, thus being used to construct a social
> reality for its participants. This approach stresses the localized nature of culture, implying that it
> need not be part of a demographically distinct subgroup, but rather be a particularistic
> development of any group (p. 125)

In this way, Fine explained how issues surrounding friendships, play, and resistance (to adults) are all sites

of expression and negotiation for adolescent peer cultures. The idioculture that is established within the

youth group "is a necessary and sufficient condition for distinguishing members of a group from non-

members" (Fine, 1987, p. 128).

This study builds specifically on Fine and Mechlin's (1993) work that examined the (practical)

existence of a youth idioculture within organizations that are developed by and operated by adults:

> whereas adult leaders have a great deal of control over the design and operation of the identity
> structures of a successful youth organization, adults will find that they have less control over the
> creation and sustenance of the idioculture of the group...Idiocultures provide young people
> (especially adolescents) with important, symbolic means of resistance against the dominance of
> the adult leaders' definitions of the organization; along with a supportive culture...Young people

invent and share some elements of the idioculture as ways of taking power in an organization...these symbolic traditions of resistance may strengthen the organization, giving the young people the sense that they are equal participants in and, accordingly, have an equal stake in the culture of the group. No doubt, the adult leaders will be uncomfortable with elements of the idioculture invented or appropriated by young clients...adults should tolerate these expressions of idioculture as much as possible, recalling that youth groups are competing against deviant gangs with their rich lore and tradition (p. 137).

Overall then, along with Fine's interactionist approach to youth organizations, this study adopts

Willis' critical ethnographic method (outlined in Part of this dissertation) along with Connell's conceptions

of "variable masculinities," "gender order," and "hegemonic masculinity," as points of departure from

which to theorize and empirically study male and female youth culture in an urban recreation/drop-in

centre. In particular, questions about how class and gender (and to a certain extent race) intersect within a

relatively unstructured social environment are addressed. The focus will be on how identities and

meanings are negotiated in the centre and the ways authority figures (traditionally considered the focus of

anger and frustration for working class youth and men) are understood and related to.

### 7.3 – Methodology

Participant observation, observation, and interviews were used to gain insight into the culture of youth in a

low income, recreation/drop-in centre. These methods follow a tradition of ethnographic research geared

toward gaining in-depth understandings of cultural groups (see introduction to Part 2). This study of the

"social setting" and "organization" of a drop-in centre also draws on Lofland and Lofland's (1984) methods

of studying group meanings (rules, typifications), relationships (hierarchies, cliques), and roles

(organizational, social, formal).

My positioning as 27 year old adult white male (I turned 28 during the latter stages of the

research) is required context when considering "how I was perceived" in the research setting. Dr. Phil

White, Professor of Sport Sociology, a white male who was 44 years old at the time of the research,

collaborated on parts of the project by acting as a second coder of data and working along with myself as a

research supervisor for one of the female researchers that was recruited for the project (see below). We

discussed research findings and interpretations of data after several of the fieldwork sessions. This process

of conferring in the analytic process helped clarify and expose some of the subjectivities and fieldnote

report/quotation bias in this report.[156] For the research focused on the female youth culture, two female

researchers were recruited. Both researchers were white, with one being 26 years old and the other 21 years old (the distinct characteristics of their research are described later).

The research setting of an inner city recreation/drop-in centre in southern Ontario was selected during a related study of youth "prevention" programs which was part of a broader investigation of youth violence (Wilson, 1996). The centre's history as a well-attended, non-violent facility located in an "at risk," low income urban area made it an optimal location to study a successful youth idioculture. Permission to spend time in the centre to observe and interview participants was obtained from the supervisor of the facility, who subsequently informed other staff members about the project.

The drop-in centre is adjacent to a major shopping mall located in a low income, urban area. At the time of the study there were approximately 3000 youth members aged from 4 to 24 years. The centre's annual membership fee is maintained at a low level in order to cater to low income youth. The fee ranges from $3 per year for youth under 12, to $6 per year for youth under 17, to $35 per year for older age groups(in 1996 and 1997). According to the centre's staff, if a potential member cannot afford a membership, a "payment plan" is set up that allows them to pay when they are able. The large membership from this low income area is evidence of the centre's success in breaking down access barriers.

The centre is equipped with a gymnasium approximately the size of a regulation basketball court (with some space along one side for other activities, for bleachers, and for "hanging out"), a swimming pool, a weight room, a games room (with video games, pool table, and ping pong table), a meeting room with VCRs, a crafts room, and a computer room. The centre employs five full-time staff members, five part-time staff members, and several secondary school and college student volunteers. In addition to supervising the facilities, staff members organize programs and trips.

Although these facilities are open to all members most of the day (including adults and seniors), time slots in the evening — a "high traffic" time, particularly during school months — were assigned by age group. Only youth aged 13 years and under were allowed to use the gym from 6pm to 8pm. The 8pm to 10pm slot was reserved for youth 13 and over.[157] These age divisions lead to quite distinct groups of youth attending the centre at different times in the evening, although the number of youth present at any given time varied considerably depending on the time of year (variability was evident over the five months of

observation late summer to mid-winter). The number of participants in the gymnasium at any given time ranged from eight to fifty. There were, on average, six youth playing in the games room and five youths in the weight room (the time restrictions for age groups did not apply to the weight room) at any particular time. Although there was a group of youths who were "regulars," who come to the centre three or more times per week, there were also a larger number who are considered "semi-regulars," who came to the centre approximately one to two times each week.

*Participant observation* and *observation* usually took place in and around the gymnasium area, the centre of activity during the 8pm-10pm time slot. This allowed for a better focus on the "teen" group. Over the course of data collection, observations were usually made from the bleachers in the gymnasium, where basketball and ball hockey, played predominantly by males, were the most common activities. Often females in attendance would either sit in the bleachers or hit a volleyball back and forth on the side of the gymnasium. Although the females were involved in the centre's activities in a general sense, they appeared marginal to the gymnasium idioculture during the 13 and older time slot.[158] This positioning of the female youth was examined specifically by the two female researchers.

During data collection a good rapport was developed between myself and some of the more outgoing youth. I spent time "hanging around," the youth seemed increasingly disinhibited about being observed. In most cases, it seemed that the youth were also unconcerned if a staff member was present – the staff members presence did not appear to influence their behavior. Seldom was a youth seen looking around before doing something "mildly" deviant, like swear at or challenge another youth.

One youth in particular, who is well-known and well-liked in the centre, took the time to "show off" the centre to me. He conducted a "guided tour" of the facility during which he pointed out the trophies won by the teams representing the centre.[159] He also led me through a Haunted House that was made by members at the centre for the community to enjoy on Halloween. This youth, a 13 year old white male, was a primary informant who provided key insights into the culture of the centre.

I used numerous observational techniques/strategies because of the diversity of the clientele and the variability of the social scenario at the centre. Sometimes I was a participant-observer when invited to join teams short of basketball players. I also became involved in shooting games at other times when there

were not enough players to make a basketball game. Participation in the Halloween Haunted House also

allowed me to observe and experience an event that required youth sub-groups to actively contribute to the

centre and work together beyond their day-to-day activities. Generally, observation sessions lasted one to

two hours and were followed by the writing of fieldnotes. Over the course of data collection, observations

were made of approximately 80 members with various informal discussions occurring with ten of them. In

total, I visited the centre 18 times over the first four months of study (September to December, 1996) and

"dropped in" on occasion over the following four months. In addition to the less formal interviews that

were conducted with youth during the participant observation research (in February and March of 1997) I

conducted three focus groups (n=13, two groups with five youth and one group with three youth). See

Appendices H and I for lists of the interview questions guides the focus groups with male and female

youth.[160]

Following the "formal interview" component of the focus group, the youth were asked to fill out a

biographical questionnaire (see Appendix G) that was referred to in order to confirm some aspects of the

youths background (in particular, it showed that most of their parents had little or no post-secondary

education). Although the biographical questionnaires were not a central component of the study (the study

was concerned with the social processes that characterized the culture), they were a reference point to

confirm "at risk" status (acknowledging the problems with this label) as defined by parent's education. This

biographical information was contextualized using Census Canada data on income for the area in which the

centre was located, which included income distributions for males, females, and families for the area

surrounding the drop-in centre, approximately 1 square mile (reported below). An examination of other

adjacent areas showed similar statistics.

Table 3 – Income Profile of Area: Males and Females 15 and over *with an income*:

| | Males | Females | Family |
|---|---|---|---|
| Income less than $9,999: | 15.3 % | 35.1% | 8.9% |
| Income between $10,000 and 19,999: | 33.3% | 46.9% | 13.0% |
| Income between $20,000 and $29,999: | 16.3 % | 10.1% | 24.6% |
| Income between $30,000 and $39,999: | 18.6% | 6.0% | 12.3% |
| Income between $40,000 and $49,999: | 13.1% | 0.0% | 18.8% |
| Income $50,000 and over: | 1.6% | 0.0% | 22.4% |
| Median Income | $21,356 | $11,940 | $31,926 |

(Taken from Statistics Canada (1991), Profile of Census Tracts, Ottawa, ON: Industry of Science and Technology, Canada)

Interviews were also conducted formally or informally with 10 staff members, with a focus on two staff member informants who worked most closely with the youth groups. These staff were particularly helpful in providing background information about the centre, the youth, and their own experiences with the youth.

When the purpose of the research was explained to the youth (who sometimes asked), some offered insights into why they liked the centre, while others were indifferent. These conversations usually took place when the researcher sat in the bleachers during 1-3 hour long periods of observation. Members asked fewer questions when the gym was busy which was fortunate because these times usually provided the richest observational data. Conversely, conversations with the youth were more frequent during "dead" times (most common in the late summer/early fall). While observations were made throughout the centre, most of the richest material was obtained in the gym, watching and listening to the subgroups interact. During busier times in the gym, observations were made when the bleacher area was also occupied by members who were watching the games or resting in between games, in addition to a small group of females who watched the males play. There was also an older group of youth (17 and older for the most part) who worked out in the weight room and who sometimes joined in the games after their workout or sat in the bleachers to spectate.

During this first phase of the research, it became clear that the female culture of the centre, a culture that appeared to be, for the most part, marginal to the focal activities of the centre, was receiving inadequate research attention. This was due, at least in part, to my postioning as an "older" male who had aligned himself with the predominantly male basketball culture and spent much time as an observer and some as a player. Simply put, the dynamics of the female peer groups was not something I could not reasonably have access to, and to expect any kind of fair interview results given my limited rapport would be senseless. In response to this shortcoming and in an attempt to build on my own findings, two female researchers were recruited. One of the researchers, a 26 years old, white, kinesiology graduate, did participant observation/observation and conducted interviews that in many ways paralleled the research that I had done – with the participant observation taking place during similar times of the night and in similar

parts of the centre (although the focus was on the female spaces within these broader areas). For this researcher, each participant observation session was followed by a recorded discussion with the primary researcher (myself). In total, this researcher attended the 8-10pm session (for teens) 8 times over a 3 month period (January-March 1998). Four focus group interviews were also conducted over the same period of time (n=13, groups sizes of four, four, three and two – ages ranging from 13-16). Two of these groups were relatively formal (I set them up through the gym supervisor) and two others took place spontaneously during fieldwork sessions. The other researcher, a 21 year old, white, sociology university student, focused specifically on the female basketball team at the youth centre, which she was coaching. The team practiced once a week, usually in the late afternoon (after school for the youth). She conducted informal interviews with the youth and observed interactions during and surrounding practices and games.

**CHAPTER 8 — THE LIFE WORLD OF THE DROP-IN RECREATION CENTRE: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

The following chapter examines youth culture as it existed in the recreation/drop-in centre. Particular

attention is paid to the many subgroups that coexisted in the centre and how, for the most part, the groups

appeared to share a distinct and effective idioculture despite obvious inter-group differences. Because the

most striking variation was between the male and female groups, the centre's dominant "masculine" culture

and the somewhat marginalized "culture of young females" are examined in separate sections as well as

being discussed in terms of their interrelationships.

### 8.1 – Drop-in/Recreation Centre Youth Culture: Tolerance, Resistance and Complexity

*8.1.1 – A Culture of Subcultures: Cliques, Hierarchies, and Conflict*

An identifiable idioculture of youth existed in the centre despite extraordinary diversities. Several different

groups with unique "styles," interests, ages, races, and sexes were integrated in varying degrees in the

overall culture. The gymnasium was the centre of the action for these groups:

> The gym today was full, with many different groups of youth in different parts of the gym. There
> were about 30 youth in total. At one end of the basketball court there was the "cool" crowd of
> basketball players (8 players-all male), the older (aged 13-16) and better players playing on one
> hoop. At the other end was the younger group of basketball players playing on the other hoop (6
> players-all male). Across the middle of the court, the hockey players were shooting at a net at the
> side of the gym. There were 5 males playing hockey. They were playing rougher and "horsing
> around" as they usually did. This did not affect the other games being played except in a couple of
> instances. No conflict resulted. There were also youth shooting on the side baskets. One of the
> centre's staff was shooting baskets on a side rim with a couple of younger kids. On another hoop,
> there were some of the older youth (they were approximately 20 years old-again all male) who had
> been lifting weights and were shooting baskets. On the bleachers there were some male basketball
> players resting and watching. There were 5 females (about 12-13 years old) talking and
> sometimes stepping out to the side of the court to hit a volleyball around. (Fieldnotes, Dec. 16,
> 1996)

The norms and codes of behavior *within* each group differed significantly. Despite these

differences, some "rules" were generally shared by all (of these predominantly male) groups, allowing

members to avoid or deal with conflict. These rules were usually respected by all groups, even those

groups that were explicitly aggressive in their particular play patterns:

> The hockey players often were rougher and more aggressive in their play and interactions than any
> of the other sub-groups...[For example], the hockey players like shooting the ball at each other.

Sometimes they do this when the other player isn't looking so it will "sting" the player when it hits them unexpectedly. They do this in a joking way, usually laughing about it. One incident happened today where the hockey player who was hit, picked up the ball, (the player seemed sort of "pissed off" and embarrassed that his friends had "got him"), and from about 20 feet away threw the ball as hard as he could at the head of the player who shot it at him (he did not hit him). This kind of behavior just doesn't happen in the basketball group. The hockey players seem pretty careful not to "hit" anybody other their those in their own group, especially the other "major" group, the basketball players. Although some of the subgroups seem to get along well, the hockey players and some of the basketball players seem more like they just tolerate each other, never talking to each other despite constant "contact." Usually they make special efforts to make sure the ball doesn't hit somebody, apologies are not usually offered when the ball does get away... there was one instance where the hockey ball went into the basketball game, the hockey player stepped in trying to avoid any contact with the basketball players. He didn't apologize for having the ball go into the game. It was almost expected that ball is going to go into their game every now and again. However, nobody became angry. Everybody seemed tolerant, and more than anything, more concerned with playing ball than arguing with each other or fighting. (Fieldnotes, Dec. 16, 1996)

Occasionally, the groups were less successful in sharing this social space, prompting individuals and groups involved to diffuse tension:

The one area of anticipated potential conflict was between the hockey players and the basketball players. Except for that they played in the same gym, there did not seem to have much in common. The hockey players seemed quite a bit older, most had longer hair and visible tattoos, and were all white. The basketball players had short hair or shaved heads, were a little bit younger, between 13-16, and were Black and White playing together [older basketball players started coming in more often during the winter months]. When one of the basketball kids was coming across the hockey side, the ball went near him and almost hit him in the leg (this was a youth who the staff at the centre said had a history of problems, although he was "pretty good" now). He turned toward the guy who he thought shot the ball and said, "fuck off." The youth stood and waited for a reaction from the other youth. The other youth gave him a look like "come on" or "get real." The youth who shot the ball then lifted up his hand and pointed his thumb to the other side of the gym. The other youth walked away, back to his friends on the other side of the gym. Nobody said anything, although the it seemed like the guy who walked away looked kind of foolish. None of his friends gave him any positive feedback, or any feedback at all for that matter. (Fieldnotes, Oct. 17, 1996)

In contrast to the macho norms of some masculinist groups, in the cultural context of the centre, the need to "save face" was rarely resolved through physically violent confrontation (the staff referred to a few instances that had occurred in the past, although no physical violence occurred during research sessions). If a problem did arise, it was usually not allowed to escalate to violence, at least partially because most members largely policed themselves, although the ameliorating influence of the adult leaders cannot be discounted.[161] In one of the group interviews with the basketball players, it was explained this way (although the potential need to come across as someone "who doesn't take any crap" in other settings is acknowledged in this discussion):

*Moderator:* If you had been hit with the hockey ball at school, how would you have reacted there?

*"Rick":* Personally me, I would have scrapped them for sure. [But not here] because I respect [the centre]. I can't make a bad name for myself here. [pretends he's somebody watching him fight at the centre and says] 'Oh look at that guy, he starts fights in here. He's supposed to be a member. He's supposed to be a role model for these little guys'.

*"Jim":* Like if this was school, I'd be scrapping right out in the middle of the gym, but this place is different.

*"Ross":* What else is good is that most of us are lucky because we have a recreation centre right around us and we can come to it every day, and most people don't have that kind of thing, and if they do, it's like $200 for a pass. It's only $6 for us.

*"Jim":* That's why they respect it, because it's cheap to come here and there's a lot to do.

*"Ross":* We are getting so much stuff out of the Club.

*"Rick":* When I come in these doors, I come right down. You're totally enclosed from the outside world, you can be a totally different person. So when I step in these doors...

When conflicts did arise, it was usually precipitated by one group deviating from the norms of the idioculture. For example, in one instance, one group allowed their activity to interfere with the action of another group. A group of younger youth (around age 11 to 12 — this observation was during an open gym time during Christmas holidays when no age restrictions were in place) were throwing a soccer ball at each other, just laughing and being silly. Their ball kept going onto the basketball court where an older group was playing their own game. In this case, a verbal "keep the fuckin' ball down in your end, you moron" from one of the older and more outspoken basketball players was sufficient to prevent the problem from reoccurring that day (Fieldnotes, Dec. 30, 1996).

Generally, the gym remained relatively free of conflict as long as each group did not allow their activity to "spill over" because they were "being stupid." Members, in general, appeared to respect the rights of other members who were "doing something" in the centre. They, pointedly, did not give positive feedback to anyone who was "fooling around" or looking for conflict. One of the staff members interpreted this behavior as follows:

There is a difference as soon as the kids get into high school. "Johnny Smith" will no longer sneak into the seniors room and pull out the wheelchairs and zip around the gym. It's as much these guys as it is our pressure. For these kids, if you're going to do something, don't wheel around in wheelchairs. It's a waste of everybody's time. (Interview, "John" the gym supervisor, Sept. 24, 1996).

The youth explained in other ways why there is not much "trouble" in the centre:

> Kids who come in here, even if they do bad stuff other places, won't do it here. Here, everybody's doing something. Playing ball, swimming, lifting weights, whatever. They might smoke out front, but they won't break windows or anything. (Interview, male youth "Rob," 13 year old, Thursday, Sept. 26, 1996).

> Everybody comes here for a reason. We all come here to entertain, to let time fly, to just have some fun. We're not here to bust people's balls and shit (from group interview, 1997)

For the most part, incidents I saw in the gym where an individual was "acting up" and causing

problems (which in all cases were youth who were "regulars" at the centre), were mediated by the

individual's friends according to their own subcultural rules.

> During a shoot-around session, one of the youth shot the hockey ball at the goalie when the goalie was turned around looking behind the net. The ball (a hard, orange hockey ball) hit the goalie in the back, where there was no padding. The youth who was goalie became very angry at this, took off his goalie mask and threw it at the youth that shot the ball. The goalie went over to the bench and nobody said anything. The youth that shot the ball didn't apologize, but he did go over to the goalie and said "put your mask back on, let's play." By talking to him first and by "asking" to play again, the goalie appeared to cool off (and was ready to play again). This was a great example of an intra-group incident that was kept under control only because nobody made "too big a deal" out of the initial confrontation or allow it to elevate. There was no pressure put on the goalie to "save face" because of the "cheap shot" or for the other player to retaliate for the mask throwing. (Fieldnotes, Oct. 17, 1996).

Underlying these informal procedures for conflict prevention and resolution was the functional

need to be "tolerant" and "respectful," although interactions between groups appeared to require more

"tact" than interactions within groups. According to the informal rules, it was unacceptable for members

to: (a) "fool around" if it would affect those who are "doing something," (b) allow their own activity to

impose spatially on other groups – there was a need to accommodate to the fact that the there is limited

space in which to play, and (c) be confrontational (in a way that would require a physical altercation to

"save face").

These processes were congruent with Fine's (1987, p. 133) notion of *functional culture* which

draws on interactionist claims that "group culture is functional and much culture production is directly

related to group problem-solving" (see also Becker and Geer, 1960; Spector, 1973). This conception

embodies the cultural rules (e.g., the "conflict rules" or "tolerance code" mentioned above) that are

incorporated into a groups' idioculture, and the successful integration of these rules to facilitate the

"survival and successful operation of the group."

Because of a hierarchy within the idioculture, certain groups had a greater license to "do what they want" within the gym. The factors determining this hierarchy appeared to be age, athletic ability, charisma, perceived "toughness," and "activity group" membership. Basketball players and hockey players were numerically dominant "activity groups," although the weightlifters also comprised a smaller but recognized and "respected" group that did not get "pushed around:"

> A "pecking order" in the gym was evident in who played in the big games and who was left to shoot on the side baskets (usually the older kids, the better players and the odd charismatic younger kid were part of the "in" games). Weightlifters also seemed to feel comfortable walking into the gym and participating in any activity without worrying about the whole social hierarchy that exists in the gym. This in large part could be attributed to their age, since most of them are 18 years old and older. Although the weightlifters rarely "interfere" with the games, usually playing non-competitive games on the side baskets, they make their presence known at other times. One weightlifter, a white male who appeared to be about 22 years old would sometimes walk out of the weight room to the gym, pick up a hockey stick and take a slap shot at the ball, although there was obviously a group of youth that were playing amongst themselves. Nobody seemed to mind, but part of that seemed to be because of his physicality. He wasn't part of the hockey culture and when he would join in their subcultural "rules" did not seem to apply to him (meaning , for example, that they would not shoot the ball at him as a joke, which they often do to each other). (Fieldnotes, Oct. 7, 1996)

> There's definitely a pecking order here. If you look over at the side over there [referring to a side basketball hoop that several youth were playing at], those are kids who were at the top of the ladder when they were in the younger age bracket [last year these kids would have played in the gym time that was designated for ages 13 and under]. You'll notice them trying to get into the games and doing things to try and impress the older kids. Some kids, like "Robbie", even though they are small and young, everybody likes and he'll play with the older kids right away. (Interview, "Ted", a staff member, Oct. 7, 1996)

Interestingly, the hierarchies and the subgroups that characterized this idioculture did not appear to have any distinct racial divisions. The youth in the centre were from various racial backgrounds, and although all of the Black youths who played in the centre were basketball players (none of the Black youth were part of the hockey games during my visits to the centre), there was no racial division or tension within the racially mixed "basketball crowd." The group played together harmoniously and appeared to be friends. One staff member expressed his take on the situation:

> Ya, these kids play together all the time. Actually it's really interesting, something we've talked about before because these kids have problems with race violence and stuff at their schools. It's really bad for some of these kids and they have talked a little bit about it when they come here, but it's pretty touchy. I think they would have to get to know you really well before they would say anything about that (Interview, Ted, Oct. 7, 1996)

An interaction with a Black youth and White youth during an interview also provided some insight:

[In response to the question "How long have you guys been going to the centre?" The question was posed to two male youth – both are regulars at the centre – a black youth and a white youth, who were sitting with me on the bleachers. Both youth are 13 years old]:
Rick, the black youth said "About 8 years."
Rob, the white youth said, "Ya, I've been here for about 8 years too."
These questions led the youths to talk about how long they had known each other. Although they couldn't remember exactly, they thought that is must be at least 5 years. (Fieldnotes, Oct. 1, 1996)

Many of the members had known each other for much of their young lives. At the centre, an

environment existed that allowed them to get to know each other without race being a "sticking point."

The older youths who had been going to the centre and playing basketball together for several years

appeared to have long-standing friendships that transcend race because of their familiarity with and

understanding of one another. The development of this "code of tolerance" (inter-group and racial

tolerance) was likely created by an interaction between the agency of the members and the ability of the

staff to "keep youth coming" from a very young age, thus allowing youth from different backgrounds to get

to know each other in preadolescence.

In this sense, their perspectives on their culture were acquired through both immediate feedback

("keep that fuckin' ball down at that end") and through a "growing up" process that involved feedback

from the apparently inseparable combination of "role model" staff and "high status" peers – both important

groups in the centre's hierarchy. "John," the gym supervisor (Interview, Tues. Sept. 24, 1996) described a

few members who used to be problem kids but had become potential staff members.

Once they've learned to be patient and rid themselves of their own family influence...which we try to do because we see them so often. We teach them the more patient, gentle approach to discipline. [These youth] are good to have around because they know what can be done, and what kids will do, what they could do, what they can get away with, and they still don't do it. Rickey knows he could walk out the back door with a basketball, but he's not going to do it, but 2 or 3 years ago he did. He knows that it can be done, with a pool cue or whatever it is...And now when he acts up, his friends who are 15-16 are reacting negatively.

An observation made of a high status youth on a night's events demonstrates this idea:

An older looking male black basketball player (looked about 20-22) showed up to the centre today. All of the regulars seemed to know him. He seemed very friendly, well liked. He was also an exciting basketball player, one of the few players who could dunk the ball. People gave him space on one of the glass backboards to shoot around. He shot around and joked around with "Rob," a main informant. The new player eventually took charge of organizing the game. Nobody "acted up" in the game – it seemed as though nobody wanted to look bad in front of him. Ted, one of the staff members, told me about the player later in the night, "He's a regular, but he hasn't been able to come as much now because he works full time at Wendy's now, and has to take the bus to get to the centre." Ted went on to say that "Chad" was an excellent basketball player, he

was 22 years old and was really well liked by others in the centre. Apparently "Chad" was a long time member of the centre and nobody wanted to look bad in front of him. Also, he just seemed more adept at organizing a good game (Fieldnotes, Oct. 14, 1996).

Construction of "dominant" cultural attitudes toward inter-group cohesion is consistent with Prus' (1994b, p. 397) processual understanding of *acquiring groups perspectives*, where definitions of reality are encountered and defined by others (the older "high status" youth and the "in" staff), who promote and defend group perspectives. Similarly, Fine (1987, p. 135) suggests that potential cultural items, rules, and behaviors "are more likely to be accepted into a group's idioculture when proposed by a high-status member." This was evident when Chad, the older, charismatic, skilled basketball player "introduced" a more organized, competitive style of basketball play.

Connell's notion of "variable masculinities" is also evident within this hierarchy. For example, the "hockey players" male subculture's intra-group rivalries and physical jokes were "offset" by a general respect for the centre, authority and other groups. In this sense, this potential culture of "violence" is tempered by the centre's "tolerance code," so that appears to be more a culture of "toughness." For the staff, the provision of a "relative freedom" for these youth to play/operate within the centre's social spaces, and the use of (generally) non-confrontational discipline strategies to deal with problem situations/youth were coherent with (and contributed to) the youth idioculture. For example, the staff usually attempted to deal with "problem youth" in a space separate from their friends or other youth (e.g., an office), so that "they don't have to save face in front of their friends" (interview, Tom, Sept. 12, 1996, and from ongoing observations). The staff who were most understanding and respectful of the intricacies and sensitivities of this masculinist culture were most "well liked" and effective as leaders (and appeared to have the least discipline problems). This is not to say that staff were never forced to deal with problem situations in more overt, aggressive ways (e.g., breaking up fights), but these situations were rare because of the staff's and the youth's joint creation of a (relatively) tolerant environment. Similarly, the staff's attempts to involve the youth in the centre's activities, as volunteers for the centre's day-to-day activities (such as older youth assisting staff with children's programmes), as participants in the centre's youth council, or as fundraisers for trips and special activities – gave many youth a stake/sense of ownership in the centre.

*8.1.2 — Protecting the Centre: Attitudes Towards "New Members" and "Outsiders"*

While some members were more committed to the centre than others, the "regulars" appeared in certain circumstances to assume a sense of "ownership" of the centre, indicating a willingness to protect and be empowered by their "second home." Older regulars were the most invested in the centre because they: a) were most influential in the centre's social hierarchies; and b) appeared to have the most well-developed sense of what the centre's role has been in their lives. Having said this, the staff recognized that there are many older youth, former members, who are doing "other things" now — whether this be work, school activities, or deviant activities. They also noted that the younger youth, who are less reflective about the place of the centre in their lives, have the most benefit from the centre environment.

The assumption of ownership was evident during a special event in which many of the youth were involved — the Haunted House that was put on by the centre for the community. Most of the regulars from all of the different groups volunteered for involvement in the Haunted House, helping set up the displays, dressing up as monsters, and being tour guides for the children and parents. A few incidents during the Halloween night demonstrated the importance this event had for "the centre" and for many of these youth:

> At the back of the centre there were a couple of doors that had been open. A few kids who weren't from the centre "snuck in" without paying. The youth volunteers, much more than the staff, were livid. Different youth, on their own initiative, would go out and do a patrol. This was very important to them, and obviously they didn't want anybody ripping off the centre, or wrecking what they had created. "Tim," one of the volunteer youth said, "Don't let those kids in, they haven't paid. We have to make sure they don't get in". Another volunteer staff member chased a couple of the kids out back and yelled "If you sneak in, you will be banned from here for life, that's it." (Fieldnotes, Oct. 30, 1996)

When asked about this kind of self-policing, a staff member indicated that "some of the good kids, especially the older kids, will stop things before they happen," although it was apparent that this was not an unconditional situation (this depended on the "status" of the youth saying something, and the "status" of the youth causing the problem). Any incidents observed where "outsiders" caused problems (such as youth hanging on the basketball rims, or youth sneaking into the centre) were usually handled by the staff who were particularly cognizant of who "belongs" in the centre, who the potential trouble-makers are, and what "tricks" youth will play:

> Two males had come in the gym. "John," the gym supervisor, went right over to them and told them to leave. When asked about the incident, John said, "These kids try and sneak in all the time,

and pretend they 'didn't know' that they were supposed to get a membership or come in the front door"... Although the youth playing in the gym at the time were aware of what was going on, they didn't seem too concerned. The youth seem to have considerable faith in the staff to take care of these situations. For example, the youth (male and female) often wanted to hang around the staff, talking to them about anything from what happened at school that day to what happened when they were in the mall when it was closing. One youth said that he thought "the staff were great...role models." These feeling toward staff might account, in part, for the security these youth feel when they are at the centre and likely explains why they don't want to do anything to cause problems themselves. Of course, not every youth (especially those that don't come that often and have less "stake" in the centre) is this "into it." (Fieldnotes, Sept. 26, 1996)

The staff member in charge of the gym also indicated that sometimes when youth "who are not members" come into the centre, he will let them stay as long as they say who they are and they give the staff member their parents telephone number. In this sense, the youth trust and rely on the staff to be "gatekeepers" to the centre.

The general attitude toward new members and outsiders appeared mixed. On one hand, when new youth came to the centre, especially groups from other areas who have come to play basketball, there were initial tensions. However, these appeared to have more to do with the "playing basketball against new competition" and taking up valuable gym space than it did with other youth threatening their "stake" in centre. An incident where three males who were new to the centre came in and started playing on one basketball hoop demonstrates this idea:

> "Jim" watched the new group of basketball players when they came into the gym. He watched a couple of their shots until one of the players, who did not appear to be a very skilled, took a bad shot and "Jim" laughed, saying "no game" [meaning the player is not a good basketball player]..."Jim" went out and joined in a game with these youth, where he dominated. He was pretty cocky about it (really making one player look bad by scoring on him consistently). Everybody seemed to be enjoying the game and there were no confrontational moments. "Jim" seemed to enjoy having new people, to "show off" to, although it didn't appear that he was not trying to make these guys specifically feel unwelcome. (Fieldnotes, Sept. 26, 1996).

In one of the group interviews, the youth discussed how the "attitude" of the new member is crucial to their acceptance

> *Moderator:* What happens if someone comes [to the centre] who's not into that [the respectful philosophy of the centre], who isn't into the atmosphere?
> *R2:* It depends on how they act.
> *R4:* If they act like assholes, tough shit
> *R1:* If they're acting all hardcore, then of course [there will be a problem]
> *R2:* People don't like that and then they isolate them and it's like "I don't want to deal with this, so you go here or you go there..."
> *R1:* It's not like we're all one giant big happy family, you know, there's still crowds and there's still you know

*R4:* [continuing last respondents idea] people who bug other people

*R1:* It's not like every single person's [makes an expression to suggest "into it"], you know. It's like that though, like for me, personally, that's how I am, I'm all over the place, though.

"New members" seemed to be both a source of tension and a welcome "change in scenery" for the regulars.

Two statements made by different staff members ("John" and "Ted") and comments made by "regular"

youth during a busy night in the gym demonstrated these points:

> When you get other groups of kids coming down from the mountain or from other areas, then things will be less relaxed around here. The games are a lot more competitive. (Interview, Ted Oct. 7, 1996).

> the difference between them (the new kids members and the "regulars") is that they (the new kids) don't have the same sense of ownership...BUT, they are here for a specific activity, they generally will put the ball back where they are supposed to, will not argue with you. They don't think most of the rules can be bent as far as they actually can, that we are a little different than so many other places...If it's just regulars in there for too long a period of time, that's when we have trouble. They're bored of playing with their own group because they hang out together everywhere, or they're the same group that always come to [the club]... If it's the same group, they're sick of the small numbers, they're sick of each other, they're sick of just coming and shooting around, they need to have organized games (Interview, John, Sept. 24, 1996)

> The gym was packed tonight. In one end of the gym, there was a basketball practice for the older youth. In the other end, there were about 15 males of all ages who were rotating in and out of a basketball game. It was very crowded. "Rob" walked back to the bleachers after a game had ended and said "Who *are* all those guys. I hate it when this happens. I don't even want to play when it's like this". I asked Rob why he hates it, and he said that he doesn't like the style of play [the games were "crowded" and rougher because they were playing 5 on 5 in a half court area]. Rob's friend "Tom" came over and sat down and they proceeded to talk about why it "sucked" playing tonight. There seemed to be some resentment toward "those guys" (the new members or occasionals) taking up valuable court space and changing the relaxed pace of many half-court games (usually it was the full-court games that were the roughest and most competitive among the regulars – half-court games were usually more relaxed) (Fieldnotes, Feb. 11, 1996).

*Gaining acceptance* into the centre on a superficial level (e.g., playing in games and using the

facilities without feeling threatened or uncomfortable) did not appear to be a problem for most youth. New

members were welcomed as a way to add "new life" to the centre, although the "regulars" took pride in and

were empowered by their longer-standing status within the centre (e.g., they know where everything is,

they know all the leaders by first name). Certain regulars at the top of the informal hierarchy "take

possession" of the centre to the extent that even new staff were initially considered outsiders.

In this way, the "new members" (and staff) were used by the "regulars" to help alleviate boredom

as well as to reinforce their identity as a regulars by "showing off" in their "home" environment. As

interlopers, new members formed a subgroup in the centre's overall community. They were temporarily

excluded from what Fine (1987, p. 131) has referred to as *known culture*, "the pool of background information" shared by members of the group. New members knew in a superficial way who the staff were, but did not know who the "influential" groups or individuals were, and may not have been aware of the "code of tolerance." In most cases, however, neophytes successfully negotiated their probationary status by remaining "low key." Before acceptance, they were also excluded from what Fine (1987, p. 132) calls *usable culture*, meaning the cultural elements (such as language) that "are common to all members of a group, but may not be publicly shared because of sacred or taboo implications." These youth did not know, as the staff members suggested, "how far they can bend the rules," or "what they can get away with" – essentially the differences between the official and unofficial culture. Their uncertainties about the appropriateness of "goofing off" or "swearing" (a part of gym culture not rigorously discouraged by staff[162]) were manifested in hesitancy in their behaviors.

Evidently then, there were many levels of "knowledge, beliefs, behaviors and customs" (Fine, 1987) making up the idioculture of the centre. The nature of the *relationships* within the centre, between regulars and outsiders, the youth and the leaders, and between regulars of high and low status were central to the functioning and maintenance of the group. Similarly, the *identities* created within the centre (e.g., the extent to which youth are empowered by and/or assume some ownership of the centre) and the *commitments* to the centre (e.g., the extent to which youth "protect" the centre, put faith in the leaders, and subscribe to the centre's official and unofficial rules) were central to this culture of youth.

*8.1.3 — Escape, Resistance, and "Making Do:" The creative "use" of the centre by youth*

In addition to these idiocultural and processual aspects of the youth centre, there was also evidence that the youth "used" the centre and as a means of escaping, resisting, and "making do" in the face of pervasively oppressive conditions. Considering the creative but anti-social ways of resisting the dominant culture identified in much of the youth research, where rituals of behavior and elements of "style" have been appropriated and given new defiant meanings, the "non-threatening" nature of personal and group behaviors noted in the centre would not seem to indicate resistant creation or colonization of culture (Hall and Jefferson, 1976; Hebdige, 1979). However, when the dominant culture in a low-income, "at-risk" area is itself somewhat deviant, and where behaviors of "at-risk" youth in institutional settings is, for many,

destructive and problematic, then the "productive" behaviors characteristic of those in the youth centre

would appear to be resistive of the *dominant culture of a marginalized area*.[163] At the very least, the centre

could be considered a way to (temporarily) escape otherwise oppressive conditions.

The low income, sometimes abusive backgrounds of members situate them, by definition, in the

"at risk" youth category (see Reid and Tremblay, 1994). The expectations (and self-fulfilling prophesies)

for these youth to "fail" in institutional settings, particularly schools, and to experience difficulties with the

law are well-documented (Reid and Tremblay, 1994; Henry, 1994). "John" discussed the backgrounds of

some of the centre's youth:

> I'll give you what we've got into with the families. [If a youth got into trouble at the centre] we
> would explain the situation [to the family]. However, we were getting no response from the home.
> We would inform them of things that happen. You get a stern "I'll have a talk with him when he
> gets home" and half an hour later they are back up [on the roof of the centre] pelting neighbours
> with rocks. There was absolutely no guidance, no discipline, no support really, no understanding
> of rules coming straight from the family…We know in some cases if there's forms of abuse,
> neglect, abuse of their own bodies, drugs or alcohol.. There are certain families where we won't
> call their house because we know. We basically handle all discipline internally [in these cases]
> because by contacting the parents it would only be worst in the short term and the kid's not going
> to learn anything…. They've grown up without a lot of rules, curfews.
> …[for some of these kids] it's basically a survival thing. Rather than just reading in the papers
> about why kids are carrying weapons, think about it. They think they are going to get into a fight
> tonight and they need a knife, because the other kid's going to have a knife or a crowbar. They are
> going to have them. There are good kids carrying knives, guns. They do it for prestige in some
> cases. [But in other cases] they've seen their friends get beat up or they've been beat up, and
> they're not going to let it happen to them. (Interview, "John", Sept. 24, 1996)

For some youth, the centre appeared to be a place where they could escape these conditions.

> One youth ("Bill") was wearing jeans and t-shirt and old shoes, looking much less "stylish" than
> some of the other basketball players who were wearing expensive shoes and jerseys (although this
> does not mean that they were well off). He looked to be about 13 or 14. When asked if he had
> been coming to the centre for long he replied he replied proudly (with a smile and a loud voice),
> "Of course I have. Can't you tell, everybody knows my name." He was obviously referring to the
> fact that the staff and other youth knew who he was. I asked "Why do you like it here." He
> replied, "Stuff to do, but I'm going next week to New Brunswick and I'm happy about
> that…cause I won't have to listen to my crying sister anymore." (Fieldnotes, Sept. 26, 1996)

It was evident that Bill felt empowered by his status in the "community" of the centre, which, at least in

part, compensated for problems at home.

Paradoxically, other youth appeared to be actively defying norms of deviance and macho street

life by opting instead to spend time at the centre:

"John" referred to one white youth who was on the court playing basketball. He said, "'Ron' there in the black shorts [he pointed to a youth on the basketball court], most of the kids he used to hang out with are in trouble or in jail of some sort. They call him a wimp for coming here, but he is at school and he is playing ball, now that he is older, ("John" laughed at himself, for thinking that the youth was in fact "older," even though the youth is now only 14 years old). (Fieldnotes, Sept. 26, 1996)

More generally, this was a place for youth who were interested in sports whose "outside" friends have other interests:

> R1: When I come in these doors, I come right down. You're totally enclosed from the outside world, you can be a totally different person. So when I step in these doors...You come here for different reasons, you want to party, you're gonna go party with your party friends. You want to have a good time, you're gonna come here and be with the guys that you like
> R4: Usually your party friends aren't gonna be the one's here playing 2 hours worth of ball cause they're gonna be too winded to do anything.

These multiple positionings underscore the complex relationship between these youths' lives outside the centre and their participation in centre life. Just as Willis (1990) emphasizes the creative ways youth "make do" using everyday items, members of the centre who lack resources, role models, and a safe community (at home or school), creatively and assertively use the centre's resources. For some members this means raising money for the centre's special outings (e.g., ski trips, laser tag tournaments),[164] attending youth basketball tournaments, becoming volunteer leaders, using the centre's scholarship fund for club members going on the post-secondary education, or for getting "counselling" when there are problems at home.

### 8.2 – "Girls on the Side": Multiple Identities in a Marginalized Culture

Female culture in the youth centre, while marginal to the dominant male group(s), was characterized by complex inter and intra group relations, and distinct uses of social space. This section examines the female youths' distinct positioning(s) in the broader culture of the centre with particular attention to the 'perspectives, activities, identities, relationships and commitments' of the group, and to females' (often marginalized) positioning in the gender order of the activity culture in the centre.

*8.2.1 – "Urban Sanctuary" or "Delinquent Hangout": Contradictory Perspectives on the Youth Centre*

The females expressed two contradictory perspectives that framed all activities, identities and relations.[165]

*On one hand, female youth described how the centre was a place where females can be empowered by*

*various opportunities for leisure involvement, and by their interactions with a supportive community of*

*friends and leaders.* For some of these youth, these opportunities were particularly significant because

access to "leisure and supportive community" were not always available in other social settings where these

females spend time (e.g., at school or at home).[166] This point of view (reminiscent of and consistent with

the views espoused by the basketball-playing males) was evident in the following focus group discussions:

> *Respondent 1:* I prefer fundraising for [the centre] because I'm here most of the time, like after school, and it's more fun...because at school a sport like basketball only goes for a certain time and here you can play it whenever you want. The only place you can play sports is in gym [class] when you are at school.

> *Respondent 2:* [Compared to school] it's way bigger [here], way more stuff to do, not crowded. Everybody's nice here. Nobody fights here, just the little kids fight.

> *Respondent 1:* Everybody's so friendly here...

> *Respondent 3* (continues R1's idea] like all the staff, they don't act like "adults," when they hang out with a little kid, they act like a little kid, when they hang out with a teen, they'll act like a teen.

> *Respondent 1:* [It's] not hard to fit in. Everybody knows everybody.

(group interview, February 1998)

Other groups made similar assertions:

> *Moderator:* Is there a difference between here and other places [you hang out]

> *Respondent 1:* They [the staff] treat you fair.

> *Respondent 2:* They get you involved.

> *Respondent 3:* Even if you're not that good at a sport they'll still put you on a team.

> *Respondent 1:* They better your skills too, they'll help you better yourself

> (this conversation was revisited later in the same interview)

> *Respondent 1:* It gives you a place to go instead of hanging out on the street or whatever.

> *Respondent 2:* ...and the staff here really does care.

> *Respondent 1:* They go deeper than just caring about ball [basketball].

(from group interview, April 9, 1998)

Both the staff members and the male youth were considered helpful in creating this positive

environment, although the females had mixed opinions about just how helpful/inclusive the male youth

were (male-female relationships are examined in more depth in the following "identities section"). The

"centre as empowering" point of view was most often supported by the sub-group of young females ("the

jocks" – discussed in next section) who were highly involved in the centre's structured and unstructured

activities (and often played on the girl's basketball team). In several interviews, individual females who

admitted to having "been in trouble" in the past, talked about how the centre was a place where it was

unlikely they would be part of a deviant activity. In some cases these same females discussed the "positive

influence" of the centre, although it was unclear the extent to which the centre (i.e., supportive leaders,

leisure activities, community) were able to rehabilitate youth with a "troubled" past (there was one female

doing court-ordered community service at the centre who claimed that the centre helped her stay out of

trouble). The data from this study did not shed light on this issue beyond cursory observations.

At the very least it appeared that this was a place where "respect" and tolerance were widely

practiced (and to some extent learned) as part of idiocultural norms. Although this study was not about

measuring the impacts of the centre on young female attitudes per se, there was evidence of a positive

cultural learning, as explained in the interviews:

*Moderator*: Is there a difference between here and other places [where you spend time]?

*Respondent 1*: We don't get into trouble here

*Respondent 2*: Ya

*Respondent 3*: We stay out of trouble

*Moderator*: Why?

*Respondent 1*: Like everyone who comes here all know each other

*Respondent 2*: It's always the same people

*Respondent 1* [point continued in a later part of the interview]: It's a second home here...we feel more comfortable playing [sports] here because everybody plays.

*Respondent 2*: [despite the good things] A couple of years ago I really cheated it [the centre] bad. I would write on the walls and stuff

*Respondent 3*: Ya, she would write on the walls.

*Moderator*: Why?

*Respondent 2*: Cause I was dumb.

*Moderator*: Why don't you do it anymore?

> *Respondent 2*: Cause I matured, got older and realized [what the centre was all about]
>
> (from group interview, April 2, 1998)

Another respondent acknowledged her appreciation of the centre as a place where there's always something for her to do:

> It's not boring here, like some nights it's dry here but I can always turn to basketball (from group interview, April 9, 1998).

*On the other hand, the female groups acknowledged and sometimes emphasized that there is a common perception (among some "outsiders" and insiders") that the centre is a place where "bad kids" hang out.* Some youth endorsed this view, while others indicated that this view is unfair and that the "bad element" which people refer to is represented only by a few individuals who occasionally attend the centre. According to these youth, many of their non-centre peer friends and some parents hold this negative view of the centre – although this belief is certainly not held by everybody. Some details of and reasons for these views were outlined in the focus group interviews and in informal interviews with youth:

> *Moderator*: How do you like hanging out here?
>
> *Respondent 1*: It's OK here.
>
> *Respondent 2*: It doesn't have a great reputation
>
> *Respondent 3*: It has a reputation for having bad kids here
>
> *Respondent 1*: A lot of people think that sluts come here
>
> *Respondent 2*: When I tell some of my friends that I'm going to the centre they laugh and make fun of me because it has a bad reputation.

The topic of conversation was revisited later in the group interview. In this discussion, the mixed feelings these females have about the centre - simultaneously criticizing it and protecting – are clear :

> *R1*: Some people don't come here because it has a bad rap.
>
> *R2*: It's for geeks
>
> *R1*: It's not for geeks, it's just that a lot of bad things go on around here
>
> *R3*: Like my Mom, she worries, she thinks that I can get drugs here, and I suppose I can.
>
> *R1*: The centre is a good place and they're trying to make it better but the area

[around here] is really bad.

*R3*: There are always cops patrolling the area, in these streets

*R2*: Cause of the centre

*R1*: It's not because of the centre, it's because of the area.

*R3*: I don't think it gets the credit it deserves. I think my Mom should accept it because it's a good place.

(from group interview, April 9, 1998)

### 8.2.2 – 'Jocks', 'Tight Jeans' and 'Spectators': Young Female Identities

Underlying these dual perspectives was an acknowledgement that there are diverse groups who attend/use

the centre for various, sometimes contradictory, reasons. Inseparable from discussions about these

*identities* and affiliations were comments about the *relationships* between these groups. This section

examines these topics with particular attention paid to the characteristics of distinct female subgroups, and

to the females positioning within the broader (male-dominated) culture of the centre.

The females' group affiliation was often discussed with reference to levels of sport (usually

basketball) involvement. Implicitly and explicitly this appeared to mean that only some females

participated in structured and unstructured sport/leisure activities at the centre. Similarly, the findings

showed clearly that diverse groups used the centre in different ways, and these differences were sometimes,

but not necessarily, at the root of inter-group tensions. Having said this, and while noting the importance of

group related identities (e.g., as "jocks") in the centre (discussed throughout this section), group affiliation

was complex and often overlapping, as the following focus group discussion reveals:

*R1*: There's different groups...like if I see "Sleezy Susan" walking by I'll be like "I'm not interested in that."

*R2*: People have their own preference as to who they're going to hang out with, and it's different groups...there might be a group here and a group there and a group there.

*R1*: [for the guys at the centre] it's like people who like basketball don't hang out with the people who like hockey cause it's like "there should be more basketball, there should be more hockey."

R2: like 'Sara' and I, we are like basketball friends, but that doesn't stop 'Carrie' and I [from being friends] because she doesn't like basketball and she's not obsessed with it. It's just our preference.

Identified in this description, in other interviews, and in fieldnote data were three somewhat distinct sub-groups of females in the centre: the "jocks," the "spectators," and the "tight-jeans."

The *"jocks"* group were the females whose primary activity at the centre was playing basketball (usually playing on the centre's female basketball team). This group was usually supportive of the centre, often espousing the benefits of the centre as a place to be active and stay out of the trouble that their "outsider" friends might be getting into at the mall (see "perspectives" section). This group made up the largest portion of the "regulars" females who attended the centre, often coming to the centre to "shoot around" in the gym. "Jocks" that were members of the centre's female basketball team (everybody who is interested can belong to the team) also benefited from the "female only" practice time that was allotted for the team. According to the interviewees, this was essentially the only time that the females were able to play "on their own terms," without having to fit into male-dominated games. Following this theme, females often spoke about how their relationships with the male basketball players were positive, but acknowledged that they still held a marginalized status in the centre's social structure.

> *R1*: There's a lot of guys that are really good at basketball and they teach us things that we don't know when we play with them
>
> *R2*: It's fun to play with people that are better than you because you get to learn.
>
> (from interview, April 29)
>
> We play [basketball] whenever the boys let us...they're macho...they taught me how [to play] but now that I know how to play they go and play by themselves.
>
> (from interview, April 2, 1998)

This marginalized status noted in the above comment was also reflected in the fieldnote observations made in the first part of this chapter, where females often would step onto the floor (from the bleachers, where they often sat to spectate male-only games) and throw the ball around, while the boys were playing basketball at one end of the court, and then step off when the boys came back down to play on the other basket. The females suggested that this problem might be alleviated if there was more "female only" and "structured activity" time. In this context, the young females were very aware of the differences between playing semi-competitive sport in "female-only" situations compared to "when guys play":

*R1*: The girls give a lot of moral support for each other, the guys just like shoot together [on the team], they're there for competition or whatever, they don't talk about it, the guys, they look out for one another and all that, but the team's not as it should be, they don't give a whole lot of support to one another, they more criticize than anything.

*R2*: Like after the games they'll go "Oh, you missed that alley oop" [a basketball play] or whatever.

*R1*: But for the girls it's more than that.

*R3*: Girls would be like "oh that's a good shot."

*R2*: On the basketball team there's lots of moral support, we're always helping the younger ones on the team.

*R1*: Like when we're too old and not here anymore they're going to be the team.

The interviewed leaders expressed an *awareness* of the females' relatively marginalized status (to myself and one of the female researchers) and the need to cater to females more explicitly in programming. One new leader showed some interest (to the interviewer) in arranging more female-only programmes but at the conclusion of the study no apparent steps had been taken in this direction (beyond maintaining the female-only basketball team). It is important to note, though, that non-sport activities such as the centre's fundraising efforts and the centre's newspaper were predominantly female activities.

Moreover and without question, there were no obvious efforts to change the male-dominated *informal culture* of the centre (i.e., there were no indications in observations or in interviews with leaders). In fact, the relatively small number of teen females who were an active part of the centre made the challenge of creating unstructured and structured programmes that catered equally to males and females little more than a theoretical idea for the centre's staff. For females who were at the centre, the male-dominated informal culture of the centre appeared to be a natural and normal situation (i.e., the 'way it's always been'). Although some females indicated that they would "like it if the guys let them play more often" and "didn't hog the court as much," they seldom challenged the informal male-dominated status of the centre. For example, in response to questions about "how they would change the centre to make it better" (which was asked in every interview), the topic was never raised (although more "female-only activity" was raised).

The female group considered to be predominantly *"spectators"* (the second female subgroup) of the primary activities at the centre usually hung out on the bleachers in the gymnasium, watching the males play sport, often socializing with other female and male spectators, or with friends from other female groups. In the interviews, these females usually indicated that they came to the centre "if there was nothing else to do," suggesting that activities such as going to the mall or hanging out in other locales were as, or more desirable than hanging out at the centre (e.g., in one situation, a young female who was approximately 14 years old indicated to a leader I was sitting with on the bleachers that she came to the centre that day only after her and her friends were "kicked out of" the mall for loitering). Members of this group were involved in unstructured activities occasionally -- activities that usually entailed tossing a ball around on the sidelines of a male-dominated basketball game, or shooting baskets/hitting a volleyball around during less organized gym times.

Overall, by virtue of their marginalized status in the centre (the gym culture in particular), virtually all the females were sometimes spectators for the male-dominated basketball and hockey games (although, on occasion, a female or two would participate in the basketball games, I did not see any female participation in the hockey games). Every group that was interviewed talked about how one of their favourite activities was "watching the guys," although the emphasis on this activity certainly varied – with the jocks talking about it the least and the spectators talking about it the most ("guy-watching" was perceived to be the primary activity for the "tight-jeans" group).

Although both researchers gained little direct access to the third group, a relatively small group (of about 10) was labelled the *"tight jeans"* by the female researcher (although usually called "the sluts" by the other females in the centre). This group was a clear and constant presence in the centre. These young females were characterized stylistically by their tight-jeans, prominent facial make-up, and short shirts. From the interviews with the jocks and spectators, and from fieldnote observations, it appeared that the "tight jeans" group was perceived to attend the centre primarily to watch and hang-out with the males. They also appeared to have no intention of participating in the sport related activities (i.e., less than the spectators). These females were often observed going in and out of the weight room where they would watch and talk to the males who were working out:

> A group came out of weightlifting room, about 7 guys and 2 girls. The girls were wearing make-up and clothes that were done right up. The guys looked like "tough jocks." The girls obviously weren't working out, they were talking and hanging out (fieldnotes, January 21).

Overall, all three groups were in large part defined by their varying levels of *commitment* to the centre. While the "jocks" and some "spectators" were part of various fundraising campaigns and often volunteered at the centre in various capacities (e.g., helping out with children's programmes, were scorekeepers for basketball games, participated in the haunted house), others simply complied with the centre's idiocultural rules of tolerance and respect (most of the time), but made no other contributions to the centre (and, by the same token, rarely used the centre for anything besides a hangout and a place to keep warm in the winter).

### 8.2.3 – Tolerable Differences?: Inter and Intra Group Relationships in Young Female Culture

For the "jocks," in particular, the "tight-jeans" group were largely responsible for the bad reputation that the centre had as a place where "slutty girls hang out" (group interview, April 9, 1998). Although (unfortunately) only limited data was attained in this research about the actual activities, perceptions and realities of the "tight-jeans" group, what is important is the extent to which the perceptions of a conspicuous sub-group within the female youth centre culture impacted broader perceptions of the youth centre, and the feelings of the other subgroups had about other female members of the youth centre about being affiliated with this "slutty/dangerous" label.

Despite these underlying tensions between these groups, there was little overt conflict. Similar to the male groups, the interviewed females attributed this lack of violent, confrontational situations to the centre's informal culture of respect and, moreover, to the long-standing relationships that implicitly develop in community-based programmes that encourage and cater to young members (who often remain members for several years).

> The one girl said, "There's not very many fights because people having been coming here for a long time," I wouldn't want to fight in here, I'd fight somewhere else, usually it's the younger kids that will fight, not the older kids. The other girl agreed, "the older kids have been coming here for so long, why would we start fighting now? (informal interview, fieldnotes, February 6, 1998).

The relationships between the females and the males, while complex and diverse depending on which identity group the females were affiliated with, in all cases were consistent with the centre's well-

established "gender order" (that favoured male activity over female activity). Although the females who

embraced opportunities to participate in and be empowered by leisure activities and the centre's generally

supportive community were able to "win space" in a broader sense (i.e., despite restrictions placed on them

in other settings, they found a place to participate), they were largely compliant with the male-dominated

informal culture of the centre.

## 8.3 – Girls on the Side: Overview

Overall then, the various female sub-groups gave complex, diverse and sometimes overlapping meanings to

their activities and demonstrated various levels of respect for and level of commitment the centre, both over

their time as members at the centre and between the different subgroups. However, in all cases females

conformed to the dominant culture of the group by: (a) respecting on at least a base level the "tolerance

rules" that were central to the idioculture of youth at the centre, and (b) existing relatively passively on the

margins of the dominant male culture.

## 8.4 – Summary and Conclusions

In summary, two key findings emerged from this research: (a) that despite a broader context of "risk"

outside the youth centre, a peer driven "culture of tolerance" exists; and: (b) that experiences within the

youth centre community, while often positive, were varied and extremely gendered, with female youth

being marginalized in the broader, informal, male dominated culture. This interactionist driven

understanding of the "life world" of the recreation/drop-in centre is contextualized in a conceptual

discussion related to broader notions of resistance, and to theories of gender relations in the next chapter.

s

# CHAPTER 9 –(GENDERED) RESISTANCE IN A MARGINALIZED COMMUNITY: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the study findings are interrogated for their relevance to substantive literature and their location within broader theoretical models. Specifically, this discussion is organized around the conceptual areas of resistance and gender.

## 9.1 – Resistance

In general, there is an engaging interaction between, on the one hand, the youths' resistance to oppressive conditions existing outside the centre, and, on the other hand, the youths' resistance to neophyte members and staff.[167] The first type of "resistance," McRobbie (1994, p. 162) would argue, is an example of youth "using" everyday, "mundane" cultural venues to make statements and to empower themselves on a micrological level. The second type of "resistance," Fine and Mechling (1993, p. 137) would suggest, is a symbolic means of inventing and sharing (resistant) elements of an idioculture "as ways of taking power in an organization clearly dominated by adults" and creating a sense for these youth "that they are equal participants in and have an equal stake in the culture of the group." Although resistance theories such as these are sometimes criticized for overemphasizing the connections between youth activity and cultural resistance (e.g., Frith, 1985, 1978), I suggest that McRobbie's and Fine and Mechlings's formulations, because of their emphasis on the multiple strategies and spaces where youth can "make a difference" *within everpresent structural constraints*, are useful, productive, and sensible. Given the often negative influences of and/or low expectations in the family, peer group, school and "street" in marginalized communities (Reid and Trembley, 1994 and others), the youths' choice to become part of a positive environment such as a recreational/drop-in centre could be considered "subtle" resistance against these sometimes dominant negative influences, and against a broader culture of low expectations. Although, as noted in chapter 6, these might be overstatements of what is resistance, and could perhaps be better understood as "conditional and tentative empowerment", or according to the "five theses of resistance" noted previously, an adaptive-reactive form (i.e., effective coping). These debates and distinctions are not pursued further in this chapter, deferring instead to the more rigorous theoretical discussion presented in chapter 6.

For many of these youth, membership at the centre gives them a stake and identity in this inner city context. Participation in the centre's culture allows them to gain skills relevant outside the centre. For example, they learn to "negotiate different roles in different places," including home, school, the street and possibly a workplace (McLaughlin, 1993, p. 38). In essence, an environment is created where these youth can develop a secure sense of self and effectively develop several identities. Similarly, youth seeking (satisfactory) employment-related experiences, experiences denied to many inner city youth, are well-served by the centre which provides valuable volunteer opportunities and educational incentives. The valued act of "giving back" to the centre (e.g., volunteering at the Haunted House) works subtly to advance these youths' skill sets. These cultural elements operate along with more conventional strategies employed by staff to break down barriers that prevent many youth from participating in recreation programmes – barriers such as high costs for membership, poor facility location or lack of transportation to facility, lack of programme awareness, and lack of adequate leadership. The benefits for these youth augment those outlined by Reid and Tremblay (1994) in their examination of recreation initiatives for "at risk" youth in Canada, such as increased cultural awareness, and enhanced self-esteem and self-confidence.

Overall, these findings highlight the connection between this neighborhood-based organization, the local inner city setting, and the larger context of urban Southern Ontario. McLaughlin (1993) explains the intricate relationship between the structures that influence urban youth socialization in these various settings:

> The civic, community, and neighborhood settings in which urban youth grow up furnish different signals and supports for their social identity, worth, and possible futures. Young people construct their identities within these embedded, diverse, and complex environments, a reflection of such elements as local political economy, peer relations, family circumstances, civic supports, churches, schools, and neighborhood based organizations...The institutions from which inner-city youth derive support and hope are institutions that are enmeshed in the lived realities – not imagined conditions or construed circumstances – of urban youth. Neighborhood-based organizations that enable youth to construct a positive sense of self and to envisage a hopeful future have roots deep in the local setting and have caring adults who provide bridges to mainstream society (p. 36).

Providing this bridge is key to the lasting positive impacts of these "sanctuaries."

Similarly, these findings highlight the practical relationship between the identity structures, leadership models, and this peer culture.[168] Clearly, the leaders at the centre have made successful efforts to empower these youth by "giving" them the freedom and responsibility to play in a relatively

unstructured environment. In turn, the youth have taken possession of this social space and established an "unofficial" peer culture that maintains order and relative "peace" among this mosaic of sub-groups. The conflicts that often occur between different ages, different style/interest groups, and different races in other settings are less evident here because of the intimacy/integration of the cultures in this small space. The tradition of friendships and acquired understanding amongst the different youth members who have known each other through the centre from a very young age is also an integral feature of this community.

## 9.2 — Gender

However, these benefits must be understood in relation to the (informal) masculinist hegemonic power structure that framed all activity in the centre. Within this structure, females often gave different meanings to their own experiences, and moreover, were marginal to the dominant male culture of the centre. It is important to note that there was overlap between male and female experiences in terms of the empowerment that was gained by belonging to a youth centre community, and in their resistance to/escape from the oppressive circumstances that exist outside the centre. In some ways, females "resisted" in more concrete ways, having actively gained access to leisure activities at the centre that were denied to them in other contexts, as well as finding spaces to participate in volunteer jobs as scorekeepers and running the centre's newspaper. Despite these (arguably) progressive struggles, young females were unquestionably at the bottom of the "gender order" as it existed in the youth centre's sport/physical activity culture. The traditional exclusionary tactics employed in other sport-related contexts were present here (e.g., *participation rights when "it is convenient" and non-threatening*) (see Hall, 1999). Furthermore, and while these females were from working class backgrounds and lived in a low income area (all factors that cited in economically-based arguments focused on the exclusion of females from physical activity*), it was the gendering of physical activity at the centre as opposed to class factors that most directly contributed to exclusion* (although, undoubtedly, the females expressed lack of opportunity in other contexts would be inseparably class and gender related). These findings provide meaning/experience-based (ethnographically informed) insights into the class-gender-physical activity dynamics described by Donnelly and Harvey (1999).

While leaders acknowledged the marginalization of females in the existing system and implemented some effective "female-only" programmes as a response, any informal "integrated" programmes usually left the girls "on the side." Indications by the "jocks" and many "spectators" that more "female-only" programmes need to be implemented (because in integrated settings they do not get adequate participation time) suggests that, on some level, these females have come to accept (as "natural) the existing male-dominated informal culture of the centre and are looking for other participation possibilities. Moreover, though, the relative absence of teen females attending the centre and the maintenance of a culture that is, at least systemically, catered toward "the boys," is further evidence of this.

Overall then, it is clear how the female's positioning in the centre is complex and contradictory. While being conditionally empowered within some programmes and spaces, the integrated, informal sport culture of the centre reinforces/maintains traditional gendered power relations that these females have come to accept. So, while this research provides support for Connell's and Messner and Sabo's conception of the gender order, this study also provides specific substantive insights into how gender relations are played out in what are usually considered supportive, preventative, integrated social settings for "at risk" youth.

### 9.3 -- Conclusion and Recommendations

The youth centre is a medium through which youth gain support from peers and leaders, allowing them to resist the negative (dominant) expectations and the often destructive culture existing within their marginalized surrounding. These findings bear positively on the benefits of recreation/drop-in centres as places to escape and deal with some of the problems faced by youth living in an "at risk" area. In saying this, I acknowledge the dynamic relationship between leadership, environment, and youth culture, and also the limitations of centres that serve youth for a comparatively small part of the day (e.g., compared to school). Moreover, the different ways that males and females experience these environments and they ways that the informal culture of drop-in/recreation centres might marginalize females require serious consideration in this context. Taking this issue into account, further research is required in Canada that examines the idioculture of youth in successful recreation/drop-in centres -- research that explores the full interaction between peer cultures and other organizational factors in these centres, and considers relevant external influences for these youth. More in-depth understandings of the positionings of and negotiations

made by young females in these settings is also required, above and beyond the preliminary findings presented here. A more integrated understanding of different preventative environments will inform theoretical perspectives on the intricacies of (youth-serving) organizational cultures while extending our awareness of the benefits of and problems with these programmes.

## CHAPTER 10 – CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND "MAKING A DIFFERENCE"

> Most academics just ramble. Far too few raise a fist or a voice. Communications professors tell their students everything that's wrong with the global media monopoly, but never a word about how to fix it. Economics professors drone on endlessly about their macroeconomic models while in the real world we live off the planet's natural capital and the backs of future generations...Nonexperts – regular reasonable people – are disgusted by all this dithering. They already have a good idea what's going on. They can tell by the issues their politicians choose *not* to address...[by] the way their kids' expressions go vacant by the third hour of television viewing. Abbie Hoffman nailed it when, after being told that academics and experts were busy analyzing the subject of 'subversive activity' he said: 'What the fuck are you analyzin' for man? Get in and do it!' And Edward Abbey nailed it when he said: 'Sentiment without action is the ruin of the soul' (Lasn, 1999, p. 37 – quoted from the social activist magazine *Adbusters – Journal of the Mental Environment*).

This critique of the utility of academic research (and academic researchers for that matter) is both compelling and problematic. On one hand, Lasn's anti-academic, "common sense," "cut the crap and do something" position fails to recognize that the research process, done responsibly and ambitiously, and followed through to its logical conclusion, can be effective and progressive. His point is also dubious because he makes a harsh generalization about a diverse, complex group, while assuming that "making a difference" is what all academics should be concerned with. On the other hand though, it seems inherent that critical work is *about* "making a difference" (particularly neo-Marxist work, such as this dissertation), and yet much critical research seems, at best, to be moderately successful in linking theory with practice.

With this background, I conclude this dissertation with a brief overview of some theoretical and methodological implications of the research findings, and a discussion of how these findings might practically inform "real world" issues and actions. More specifically, the following chapter repositions the arguments made in each substantive case study into the broader theoretical and methodological approaches developed in Part 1 one this dissertation, explains how these studies inform, and might expand these initial frameworks, outlines practical implications, and provides an integrated assessment of and commentary on the two case studies. In this framework, the following questions raised (in various ways) throughout this dissertation are addressed: what do these case studies contribute to the structure-agency debates in youth cultural theory (particularly surrounding conceptions of resistance); can the studied youth groups be

understood for both their positioning as distinct subcultures and for their internal complexities (i.e., how "anchored" are the underlying themes that have been used to discuss and describe each group); how do these case studies inform existing understanding of youth culture in Canada; and how do these findings inform and extend the literature pertaining to the positioning of "youth culture at the end of the century" (or "youth culture in postmodern times").

### 10.1 – Theoretical Implications

#### *10.1.1 – The Conceptual Continuum and Theories of Resistance*

This dissertation developed a conceptual continuum model intended to act as a framework for understanding how youth are creative and constrained in their everyday lives. Findings from two case studies of Canadian youth were drawn upon in order to discuss, refine, and assess the credibility of this model for understanding the relative theoretical positionings of social groups. The hope in devising such a framework was that it might provide a useful reference point for understanding various youth cultures in relation to one another, and in relation to existing theories of youth.

On this basis, and while concentrating on youth resistance as a theoretical concept, this dissertation showed how different communities of ravers (defined by age, leisure preference, cultural experience), and "drop-in," youth (defined by gender), could be positioned on this continuum. For example, "techno ravers" have effectively *reactively resisted* to the (oppressive) trend towards a highly technologized postmodern society by hyper-adaptation – that is, embracing and in effect, leading this movement. An alternate view of rave unveils the ways that youth use the culture as a pleasurable escape, but do not actively or intentionally resist broader social circumstances (i.e., they are non-resisters). Moreover though, for these ravers who participate in this increasingly mainstream, incorporated culture, that is largely defined by a masculinist power structure of DJs and promoters, they are in many ways reproducing dominant cultural values.

In the same way, the youths' attendance at the drop-in/recreation centre was interpreted as subtle, "reactive" resistance to the broader, often negative influences of the marginalized culture of a low income, "risky" area. Likewise, some female youths' uses of the centre were considered to be "reactive" to a broader culture that limits physical activity opportunities for young females. However, when the gendered

realities of the youth centre were considered, it was clear that this youth (idio)culture also played a part in "reproducing" a dominant masculinist gender order.

In this sense, the case studies showed how these youth groups were simultaneously reactive and proactive resisters, passive non-resisters, and reproducers of dominant cultural values. These distinctions were empirically discernable, although clearly my own interpretations of these youths actions/comments and my own understanding of various conceptions of resistance cannot be separated from this analytic point. That is to say, in arguing that these youths positionings were "relatively anchored," I acknowledge that, at some point I (the analyst), am providing explicit anchorage. The goal though, in presenting an abundance of data in the micro-analysis of the youth groups in chapters 5 and 8, was to allow for alternative interpretations of the same data from other readers/analysts.

Overall, this dissertation's argument for adopting a theoretical/conceptual continuum that is sensitive to the relative anchorage of the resistance concept is a response to oversimplified, undertheorized, and seemingly discrete (i.e., theoretically "anchored") approaches to youth culture. The research also acts as an implicit critique of and reaction to work that naïvely assumes that "the data speaks for itself," not acknowledging that the interpretive process and the research process are inseparable from the reported and discussed findings (as Willis, 1978 as well as many postmodern and feminist researchers have emphasized).

### 10.1.2 — Postmodernized Critical Interactionism

Underlying both case studies was an explicit argument for the continued use of critical interactionist principles. Without the ethnographically driven, process-oriented analysis that made it possible to detect intra-group distinctions and similarities, subsequent structural, critical comments would have been uninformed and irresponsible. However, in making this argument for the merits of critical interactionism (as a theory and method), it is also crucial to acknowledge the importance of being sensitive to the increasingly postmodern context within which social relations take place (i.e., an increasingly complex, contradictory, mass mediated, highly technologized society) – the necessity of which was obvious in the rave study, where the sometimes "virtual cultures" of techno ravers begged examination. Both case studies were also attentive to (and unveiled) intra-group complexities and contradictions that were embedded in

this increasingly diverse social context (although this context was relatively distinct for each group).

Overall, then, these case studies were intended to illustrate the utility of using the integrated theoretical-methodological approach outlined in part 1 – where critical interactionism was informed by postmodernism.

### 10.1.3 – Theorizing Canadian Youth Culture

As noted in the introduction to this dissertation, qualitative studies of Canadian youth culture are scarce. While many of the existing studies are well-theorized within American and British models of youth (e.g., Brake, 1985; Young and Craig, 1997), and at times are developed into insightful critiques of these classic models (e.g., Tanner, 1996; Davies, 1994a, 1994b), existing discussions seldom take into account "updated" perspectives on youth (e.g., McRobbie's "subtle resistance" thesis) and fail to acknowledge postmodern perspectives on youth culture at the "end of century" (for example, Redhead's (1990) classic work where he proclaimed the "end of youth culture"). While this is problematic on a fundamental level (i.e., literature reviews are not up-to-date), more importantly, this might be a signal that the *global cultural developments of the 1990s are not being adequately considered* for their influences on Canadian youth culture (e.g., the emergence of media cultures, virtual cultures, and "high-tech" cultures). Moreover, and as noted in chapter 1, complexity within and around youth cultures seldom receive a balance of theoretical and empirical (i.e., ethnographic) attention. Put another way, the qualitatively diverse meanings that youth give to their subcultural activities are only sometimes considered in theoretical work focused on the resistance concept.

This dissertation developed a rationale for and ultimately created a bridge between postmodern approaches to youth culture (and related approaches to complexity in the interpretive process) and existing perspectives on Canadian youth in hopes of providing a departure point for studying and theorizing "youth culture at the millenium." While rave culture was the clearest example of a group requiring specifically "postmodern" theoretical consideration (because of its relationship to the internet and technology), both groups required sensitivity to theories that adequately account for both intra-group complexity and for a range of resistance strategies. Equally important, though, was the recognition from these case studies that

not all youth live equally in a postmodern world. This findings reinforces the need to be sensitive to social context, and open to using diverse and adaptable analytic strategies when studying youth groups.

Furthermore, in both studies it became clear that these "updated" approaches to studying Canadian youth culture must remain attentive to the ways that classic demographic variables such as gender, class (and of course, age) underlie participation patterns in, and interpretations of cultural activity. In essence, these studies confirm that critical research on power relations needs to take into account social, geographic, and historical context. Informing this general theoretical point, the two case studies in this dissertation showed that the meanings that youth give to their experiences are only relatively anchored by their memberships in the social category of youth. That is to say, identities are transitional, complex and sometimes contradictory within subcultures and over the career of subculture member.

## 10.2 — Methodological Implications

Building on the rationale for using critical ethnographic methods, I address four additional areas that were informed by my experiences studying these two cultures. These are: studying an evolving subculture; studying gender issues; studying the internet and internet cultures; and writing ethnographies about somewhat diverse groups.

### 10.2.1 — Subcultural Evolution and Method

Brymer (1991), working in the field of anthropology, argued that while theorists have developed sophisticated models to explain the evolution of subcultures, *they generally fail to provide adequate data over time* to stand behind these arguments except on a broad level (e.g., the commercialization of culture has been examined, but not the intra-group dynamics of subcultural groups during the commercialization process). The rave study's examination of a loosely defined community over a 3 and half year period provided useful insights into the impacts of the commercialization process on the subcultural lives of youth. Moreover, this study of an evolving culture provided some insight into the ways that the "politics of nostalgia" were integral to perceptions of rave culture by ravers. For example, although the study showed clearly that rave was "more mainstream" in 1999 compared to 1995, the *tensions (as expressed by ravers) about commercialization and rave politics existed similarly in the earlier and the latter stages of the research.* Over the course of the study, discussions about the "good old days" of rave were commonplace.

However, in my view, the differences between 1995 and 1999 were not as dramatic as cynical ravers seemed to think. That is to say, it appeared that ravers views were influenced both by career stage and selective memory. Although the study did not begin until 1995, I suspect that tensions existed in the scene previously that were "forgotten," in part of because of rave promoters who used the past as a reference point for parties with nostalgia themes.

### 10.2.2 – Gender and Method

The study of male and female cultures in the drop-in/recreation centre builds on existing work by Gurney (1991) and others who discuss the ways that methodological issues such as "access" and "trust" are sometimes inseparable from the profile of the researcher. That I was able to tap into some of the male youths' interpretations of their experiences at the drop-in centre, but unable beyond observation to get anything more than a general sense of the marginalization of the female culture seems notable in this context . While these insights are not generally new, there still appears, particularly in youth cultural studies, a suspicious lack of collaborative studies that include research teams with somewhat diverse profiles (Willis, 1990 study appears to be one of the few exceptions). Such collaborations allow for more effective work that deals with the often diverse and contradictory experiences of differently located youth in similar social settings.

### 10.2.3 – Internet and Method

Although internet analysis is becoming an increasingly and necessarily popular method for studying cultural groups, there are justifiable reservations about the utility of data gathered from this resource (particularly from newsgroups, where the identities of discussants are often unknown; also the profile of the "readership"/audience of webpages that are analyzed is also generally unknown). Acknowledging these difficulties, I suggest that embedded in the rave study were some notable suggestions that might contribute to this methodological area. For example, the research demonstrated not only the utility of the newsgroups as a place to recruit respondents for in-person interviews, but it also showed how meeting and getting to know people who regularly participate in the studied newsgroups might act to legitimize data drawn from *virtual discussions* among *known discussants*. Also, the study offered a suggested method (the "two-letter" approach) for "tactfully" recruiting from newsgroups where respondents might be threatened by outsiders

(for ravers, who sometimes discuss topics such as drug use, this was a concern) and, more generally, for generating interest among participants while providing some evidence of the researcher's legitimacy (see also Phillips, 1999). Future work that discusses strategies and experiences using this method is needed (for the most elaborate statement to date, see Markham, 1998).

### 10.2.4 – Writing Ethnographies About Somewhat Diverse Groups

It is important to comment on the relatively diverse strategies that guided the writing of (and the length of) the two case studies. The rave subculture, as a complex, technologized, "world level" culture required extremely diverse methodological strategies, and background sources to properly portray the group. On the other hand, the youth drop-in/recreation centre, a more localized (at least as it was envisioned for this study) did not require the same broad-based rigor, although the research certainly presented its own methodological challenges (e.g., gender issues in a relatively closed environment).

It is also important to note how the drop-in/recreation centre study was guided by and organized around both the processes of involvement *and* gender themes, while the rave study was organized (at least in the results and analysis section) around the social processes, but did not address gender with the same rigor (and, in fact, the ongoing gender theme in the drop-in centre study required an increased "sprinkling" of theory and data in the results and analysis section). Put simply, gender, while important, *did not define the culture* in the same way as it did in the drop-in/recreation centre research. This is not to say that issues of gender were not central to rave culture – clearly they are, as noted in other research on the topic (e.g., Pini, 1993, 1997, McRobbie, 1993, 1994). However, these themes did not stand out in my research, and moreover, my "research agenda" and theoretical approach was focused more on broader issues of subcultural resistance in the context of the structure-agency debates. With this background then, the gender issue was dealt with only marginally in the rave study, while the emergent data made this a compulsory area for discussion in the youth centre study.

Moreover, and underlying these relatively diverse presentation strategies, there was an implicit argument for a flexible approach to research that is both data driven (embodied in the micro-analysis chapters) and concerned with theoretical advancement (embodied in the conceptual implications and

discussions chapters). In essence, this is support for Willis' classic combination of symbolic interactionism and critical theory.

### 10.3 — Practical Implications

Ideas and insights derived from this dissertation could be considered for their practical importance in the following five areas: (1) for informing social programmes that target youth; (2) for remaining cautious about and critical of "action-plans" that are overly focused on creating "high moral standards" for youth; (3) for teaching about youth; (4) as a framework for future research on youth culture; and (5); as a foundation for critiques of mass media portrayals of youth. These areas are described below.

### 10.3.1 — Informing Social Programmes That Target Youth

The two case studies have potential implications for social programming. For example, the rave study's findings about the meanings that youth give to their activities might be useful for youth workers in the area of drug abuse, a problem linked with raver activity (Drake, 1995). The hope is that this work will complement existing knowledge about the behavioral determinants of drug abuse, providing insight into the social context of leisure-related drug use (since this study was focused on the ways that drug use was part of the broader rave culture) — showing how drugs were used in different ways for different reasons.

The study of youth centre culture also complements existing behavioral work focused on the "effects" of drop-in/recreation centre programmes (or "preventative programmes) on "at risk" youth (Offord and Knox, 1994; Reid and Tremblay, 1994). By providing practical information not only about the ways that youth contribute to (and detract from) youth centre organizational culture, but also how these experiences are distinct for males and females (something which the leaders at the centre seemed aware of, but not focused on), these environments might be altered and constructed in more (idio)culturally-sensitive and gender-sensitive ways.

Overall though, the importance of creating an open dialogue between researchers and practitioners seems to be the most appropriate to way to establish how research findings can be most effectively utilized. These kinds of connections have been effectively made by researchers in sport studies (see, for example, Martinek's edited journal entitled Serving Underserved Youth), in Addiction Foundations (see various articles in Toronto's Addiction Research Foundation's journal which can be viewed at http://arf.org), and in

youth research centres (e.g., Brock University in Ontario, Canada has developed a programme for the study

of youth and children).

### 10.3.2 – Remaining Cautious About and Critical of "Action-Research" Plans

I also argue that it is important to remain critical of politically and academically derived "action-plans" that

are focused on creating "high moral standards" for our youth (under the vision that today's youth are "in

trouble"). For example, William Damon's (1997) book The Youth Charter: How communities can work

together to raise the standards of our children is predicated on the idea that, in recent years, standards for

youth have fallen, and that people who work with youth need to be better equipped to deal with and reverse

this trend. Consider the following statement in the preface to Damon's (1997) book:

> Everywhere I go, parents and teachers complain that the forces influencing children have spun
> wildly out of control. How can a parent pass on good values when children are exposed to every
> imaginable form of sordidness through the mass media? How can a teacher pass on skills and
> knowledge when the popular and peer cultures discourage serious academic motivation? Other
> citizens, too, express concerns. How can a pediatrician, seeing her caseload bursting with
> unnecessary teenage health disorders – suicide attempts, alcoholism and drug abuse, eating
> disorders, assaults, injuries from driving accidents – do anything effective about preventing the
> damage when her young patients refuse to take her warnings seriously? How can a citizen, seeing
> his home town wracked by youth vandalism, theft, and other petty crime, stop young people from
> destroying his town – and their futures – when neither the police nor the youngsters families seem
> able to control the youngster's behavior...The youth charter is an approach that brings together all
> adults who are in positions to influence young people...in the quest to define high community
> standards for youth development...Many of the necessary conditions for youth development –
> solid community, guiding relationships, clear standards – have been eroded. Young people today
> encounter a fractionated society broadcasting messages of low expectations, disbelief, cynicism,
> relative or nonexistent standards, isolation, and moral detachment. The guidance many young
> people need is missing from the usual places. Their families' lives, their schools, their
> neighborhoods, and religious or other community organizations have been degraded by conflict or
> lack of support. The increasingly powerful mass media impart messages that are mixed at best
> and corrupting at worst, further confounding the youngster's developmental quest (pp. ix, x, 55-
> 56).

My concerns about Damon's position are in no way intended to belittle or trivialize his proactive

stance on youth issues. His intent to "make a difference" is admirable. However, Damon's message is

strikingly and terribly similar to journalistic calls for something to be done about "today's youth." Where

is the evidence that things are worst now than they were in the "good old days?" Where is the evidence

that things have spun out of control, and moreover, that things were "in control" 40 years ago? As a

response to Damon's "practical" arguments, I revisit Tanner's (1996) suggestion that youth behavior in the

"good old days" might not be notably different than youth behavior today:

One of the consequences of imbuing the behavior of the young with important symbolic meaning is that it leads to images of adolescent deviance that do not always correspond with reality...Simply being young and hanging out with friends on the street or in a shopping mall is often enough to generate negative stereotyping or a deviant label. But appearances are sometimes deceiving, and the fact of the matter is that most young people are not in serious conflict with society, do not hold values that clash with those of the parental generation, and do not engage in the types of deviance that adults find most troubling (p. 19)

Moreover, the continued use of the "mass media" as a scapegoat for the "problems with today's youth" is ignorant to research on actual media impacts (Wilson and Sparks, 1996, 1999 – in press). For example, ongoing blanket critiques of the media implicitly preclude the possibility that *it is adults that are being duped by the mass media* into thinking that youth are "troubled and troubling," and that society and its values are spinning wildly out of control (see Thornton's (1994) discussion of moral panics and the media, drawing on Cohen (1972)).[169] Of course, and returning to the arguments made in the first chapter, underlying many of these no-nonsense action plans is the assumption that "today's youth" are in crisis. However, as demonstrated in this dissertation, the notion of "today's youth" (or to use Damon's terminology, "young people today"), is an irresponsible and extremely oversimplified portrayal of this social group.

So, while being sensitive to the problems youth do face in 1990s culture and the ways that this dissertation might act as a basis for informing, working with, and remaining constructively critical of practitioners who are concerned with youth-related social problems, I also suggest that there is also a need to consider the *contributions* youth can make "to today's society." For example, the "net generation" (Tapscott, 1998) of youth, the most technologically advanced generation, should be recognized for their ability to adapt to the changing cultural landscape and for their potential to instruct other generations about the benefits and pleasures of technology. As Rushkoff (1996) suggests in his book Playing the Future: How Kids Can Teach Us to Thrive in the Age of Chaos:

> The evolutionary experience of culture, as practiced by kids today, directly contradicts much of the traditional New Testament interpretation. It accepts that things keep changing, without a satisfying, determinist ending. It dispenses with storytelling and parable in favour of experiential...methods of understanding abstraction or divinity. It refuses to treat the discontinuous as anything but natural: the increasing nonlinearity of our media and popular culture is not a heathen retreat from the dualistic morality of God, but the process by which we learn to accept the very natural, organic and complex property of life called *chaos* [original emphasis]...What I'll attempt to show...is that the more frightening aspects of a non-apocalyptic future are being addressed today, and quite directly, by the most pop-cultural experiences of

children and young adults. Whether it's the Power Rangers showing us how to accept co-evolution with technology, or a vampire role playing game calling for us to accept the satanic beast in each of us, these new forms have the ability to assuage our worst fears, confirm our most optimistic scientific theories, and obliterate the religious and cultural absolutism so detrimental to our adaptation to the uncertainty of our times. Within the form and content of kids' favourite shows, games and social interactions lie the prescriptions for us to cope with cultural change...So please let us suspend, for the time being, our grown-up function as role models and educators of our nation's youth. Rather than focusing on how we, as adults, should inform our children's activities with educational tidbits for their better development, let's appreciate the natural adaptive skills demonstrated by our kids and look to them for answers to some of our own problems adapting to postmodernity (pp. 12-13).

While I admit that Rushkoff (1996; see also Tapscott, 1998 for a similar, although less socially responsible, argument) is also oversimplifying the capabilities of youth, his innovative "pro-youth" position usefully counter-balances so much of the problematic writing focused on the "youth problem." My intention in highlighting Rushkoff's position is not to dismiss the real social constraints and barriers that youth do face (and in saying this, I acknowledge that there are structural factors that limit some youth more than others), but to show, once again, that youth should be understood for what they are — complex and contradictory.

### 10.3.3 — Teaching and Researching About Youth

One of the goals in devising the "conceptual continuum" and explaining how key approaches included in the continuum can be integrated with postmodern theory, was to create a helpful tool for explaining how "youth are constrained" and "youth are creative" and for discussing the complexities/dynamics of youth culture at the end of the millenium. Acknowledging that embedded in this theoretical model are my own interpretations of these theories and theorists, and my own privileged perspectives, I suggest that such a model represents at least a point of departure for debate about (Canadian) youth cultural theory in a contemporary context.

In the same way, my intention in proposing an updated, integrated model was to provide a departure point for future research on Canadian youth culture. Through the use of two cases studies, I attempted to show how a theoretical approach that is flexible and integrates postmodern approaches is a progressive way to frame research. Similarly, if the "conceptual continuum" (or the "five theses on resistance proposed in chapter 6) was deemed to be a useful framework by researchers who study youth culture, it could serve the same purpose as Prus' "generic social process" model. That is to say, work on

Canadian youth culture could be theoretically and empirically organized within and located along an active-passive continuum.

*10.3.4 — Critiquing the Mass Media*

By providing detailed information about the contexts for and meaning given to the cultural activities of youth – activities that the mass media sometimes sensationalize, oversimplify, and present in unbalanced ways – the hope is that *critics of the media* can make even more informed statements about the ways that the complexities of youth culture are inadequately depicted. Moreover, for journalists interested in writing about youth culture, accessible and hopefully reasonably publicized publications resulting from this dissertation might provide points of departure for more balanced articles.

## 10.4 — Ravers and Drop in Youth – An Integrated Assessment and Commentary

I return now to the questions that underscored the research on ravers and drop-in/recreation centre youth: What do these case studies reveal about youth culture, and how can the defining characteristics of these cases be explained? To address these questions, a comparative examination of the two cultures is used as a departure point for extracting insights about the diverse and dynamic ways that youth are constrained and enabled in various cultural contexts.

There were notable *differences* between the two studied groups. The ravers' activity spaces were often transitional and sometimes virtual, while the "drop-in" youth met in a stable location. The ravers' styles of expression were often spectacular, outlandish and unconventional (e.g., uninhibited all-night dancing, designer drug use), while drop-in youth used more conventional, sport-related expression techniques. The social context in which the groups' lives were embedded was distinct, with many ravers existing in a highly technologized, multileveled, loosely defined "postmodern" context (e.g., in the subculture and in their high-tech leisure activities) while the drop-in youth inhabited conventional, traditional, "modern" settings (e.g., the youth centre, the playground). Perhaps the most striking difference (besides social class differences — discussed below) emerged in findings about the distinct structurings of and attitudes towards gender relations (e.g., a central tenet of rave culture is to be respectful of all social groups while the youth centre culture subtly and overtly marginalized young females).

The distinct social positioning of the ravers as a middle class culture and the drop-in youth as a working class culture underlay the studies' findings about youth leisure preferences and cultural activities, and provide a basis for explaining these distinct consumption patterns. Many ravers are university students (or come from "educated backgrounds") and are exposed to rave-related concepts (e.g., proactive stances on social inequality) and resources (e.g., high technologies) outside of the rave context. In other words, raver youth have (class-related) "coping resources" that define their leisure involvement and resistive capacities. Drop-in centre youth, who deal with and subtly resist some of the negative/oppressive conditions that partially define their lives through attendance at the youth centre and participation in the centre's culture, are also using the "coping resources" (i.e., those offered at and through the centre) that are available to them. In this way, differential coping-strategies appeared to be defined by class-based access to resources.

The groups' distinct attitudes toward gender require a more complex interpretation/explanation than the class-based one offered above. Although it makes sense that ravers, by virtue of their middle class status and (for some) their educational attainment, might be more attuned to gender-sensitive stances than the drop-in centre youth (who often come from backgrounds that would traditionally have less exposure to more progressive views on gender equality), in my view this is an incomplete and potentially deceiving depiction of the situation. I suggest that these differences can be more fully explained if the history of gender politics in both the dance music scene and in sport/recreation are taken into account. Remember that the founders and early supporters of "house" dance music were not only working class, but gay, black and/or Puerto-Rican – all marginalized groups. The dance music scene was structured around openness and acceptance, and although gender inequalities clearly exist in cultures for the marginalized, considering the desexualized, gender ambiguous character/history of this cultural group, it would make sense that a gender-respect norm would be at least somewhat retained in the post-underground dance music scene (i.e., the rave subculture), even if it derives from a nostalogized understanding of what an authentic underground dance culture is supposed to be. In the same way, the sport-related culture in the youth centre, which is inseparable from the broader sport culture because the activities and relationships are still built on understandings of sport brought from elsewhere (e.g., school sports experiences for youth and leaders), is

embedded in a history of distributive and relational inequalities in sport and leisure that favour male participants. This still existing prioritization of male sport (e.g., in school where male sports receive preferential activity times and spaces, and where females historically and contemporarily are excluded from certain sports events on the basis of biologically-based false stereotypes), is reflected in the taken-for-granted ways that the gym space in the youth centre is still "for the boys," and where the periodic inclusion of females seems to be viewed as a female privilege, as opposed to a right.

Despite these disparities, these subcultural distinctions were undercut by various *commonalties* that linked ravers and drop-in youth in important ways. Both groups simultaneously resisted and reproduced dominant value systems (e.g., the ravers subverted conventional views toward females but still reproduced gender inequalities in the rave occupational structure; the youth centre offered valuable female-only sport programmes but was characterized by an informal culture that discouraged/prevented female sport involvement). Both groups are, in their own ways, marginal to and oppressed within an over-regulated mainstream world that is generally hostile to "youth." Both groups sought and used (sub)cultural contexts/spaces in ways that allowed them to be expressive, creative, and relatively "undisciplined" (compared to the regimentation associated with being, for example, a student). Put another way, the youth centre and the rave were relative "free" spaces for unproductive, excessive, empowering, energizing/energy-expending activities – activities defined by mobile/motile body articulations.

Of course, the rave and youth centre were still bound by adult and youth-created rules and regulations. Sometimes obscure but ever-present discipline mechanisms (implemented and sometimes coercively enforced by adult groups) existed in the form of leaders in the youth centre, and police who periodically seek out and check-in on rave parties. However, and despite this constant presence (a presence that reveals these youths' positionings within a restrictive, somewhat efficient hegemonic relationship where dominant ideological figures begrudgingly allow for mini-digressions) these youth still effectively negotiated their own social orders, and created their own methods for dealing with intra-group conflicts. For example, the tensions between various groups in the youth centre were minimized by the youths' adherence to "tolerance rules," while the potential tensions in the rave were addressed proactively through an ongoing campaign to promote the PLUR philosophy on websites, in raver literature, and through word

of mouth. So, within the broader, undifferentiating, and imprecise adult-guided surveillance system, the youth were in control of their social space. In essence then, and contrary to popular beliefs that chaos, turmoil, and upheaval are inevitable unless youth are properly/constantly disciplined/controlled, findings showed how youth themselves are crucial in the process of self-discipline and organization. Even the tendency toward social differentiation within subcultural groups (e.g., different activity groups in the youth centre, different music genre affiliations in rave culture) functioned not only as an opportunity structure that offered some latitude for personal taste/preference, but it also provided youth sub-groups with a visible and present "other," to be tolerated but also collectively disparaged.

Overall then, and although these case studies revealed much about resistance and creativity in hegemonic relations (and built on largely neo-Marxist theoretical work), the data also showed how there were *functionalist* tendencies toward social order even in subcultural groups. In the same way, findings were consistent with classic *interpretivist* positions that theorize how generic social forms and processes emerge in the study of all social groups/contexts. Clearly then, diverse social theories tell us similar things about different youth groups, just as findings about these youth groups inform diverse social theories. In other words, social order and social resistance are manifested in various, often similar *theoretical and empirical* ways. In this sense, study findings confirmed the view that youth can be simultaneously understood as, on one hand, determined, duped, positioned, and subject to ideological and hegemonic forces, and on the other hand, interpretive communities, negotiators of the social order, and active resistors.

I re-arrive at this now mundane conclusion burdened with empirical and theoretical tensions. While the study findings reaffirmed classic sociological positions about the relationship between structure and agency, the tension between simplicity and complexity in interpreting subcultural activity remains ambiguous. After developing an argument for and providing empirical evidence for understanding the complexity of the youth subcultural project, I have (seemingly unavoidably) returned to making general statements about youth culture. *This is not discouraging, however, if this circular development is considered for the insight it provides into the ways that straightforward, recurring, and powerful explanatory concepts can be played out in (empirically) complex ways.* While it might be "easy" to recognize that (ideological) struggles are, in fact, taking place between dominant and marginal groups and

within marginal groups (and to provide speculative commentary about these struggles), the challenge is to

responsibly examine and articulate the ways that struggles transpire and are worked out in specific

substantive contexts (and to "return to the general" with these understandings). In the end, this is a

theoretical-empirical statement about the need for in-depth qualitative research as a method for

understanding youth cultures as generically-oriented social groups, and as unique, dynamic negotiators of

their social world.

### 10.5 – Concluding Thoughts: Knowing Your Audience and Knowing Yourself

Although the underlying questions addressed in this dissertation have dealt with the complex ways that

youth are "constrained and creative," it became increasingly clear that without in-depth qualitative research

as a foundation, this theoretical work would not be very useful or progressive. Without an understanding of

the rich, *various*, and sometimes complex ways that youth use and give meaning to music, or dancing, or

recreation centre basketball – meanings that researchers who simply "drop-in" (on a one-time basis) to

conduct interviews or distribute a survey would have been unable to tap into. For example, several of the

misunderstandings that I had of the youth cultures were only cleared up after spending time at raves and the

youth centre, or reading their discussions on the newsgroups, or reading the literature they read, or listening

to the music they listen to, or hanging out in gym they play in. While the argument which was developed

in the introduction chapters for utilizing ethnographic research was made on "theoretical-methodological"

grounds (i.e., drawing on the prevailing literature in the area of qualitative research methodology), it was

these ongoing experiences as an "outsider," an "insider," and both, that were the most compelling evidence.

Moreover, and for the same reasons, I emphasize the need to be sensitive (theoretically) to the

ways that complexity and contradiction are played out within and surrounding youth cultural groups.

Building on the argument developed in chapter 1 on this issue, I follow Cohen's (1999) insightful critique

of socialist thinkers who make attempts to do more progressive sociology:

> It is often said that socialists have a bad habit of advancing towards the future looking back over
> their shoulders at the past. This is not perhaps the best of positions from which to engage with a
> present in which so many of our traditional assumptions have been upset by deep and subtle shifts
> in social structure...The fact is that the youth question has to be continually rethought in the light
> of the changing social circumstances of the times. Yet if we look at the political and theoretical
> assumptions which continue to govern policy-making we find that all too often it is a case of old
> wine in new bottles (P. Cohen, 1999, pp. 180-181).

This critique of "old wine in new bottles" supports the need to acknowledge the postmodern circumstances in which many youth live (or are beginning to live in). This sort of context-sensitive perspective, which has implicit relevance to both theoretical and methodological debates, might also inspire mainstream analysts to focus less on the youth "problem" and more on the ways that many youth have resourcefully and successfully adapted to the challenges of postmodern times.

# ENDNOTES

[1] The terms "complexity" and "contradiction" are considered separately from issues of "difference" that have been well developed in feminist literature (e.g., Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1987; Messner and Sabo, 1990).

[2] Chambers (1986), for example, argues that "we can no longer overlook the (reality of) heterogeneous surface activities of everyday life" and that a world of "mobile meanings", "shifting connections" and "intertextual richness" needs to be inserted into the critical model" (p. 212-213).

[3] See Hall (1980a, 1983) for an elaboration on the theoretical intricacies of these positions, and for a proposed middle ground embodied by in the concept "articulation" and in "conjunctural theory." These are also discussed in chapter 2.

[4] Akin to Norris' (1990) postmodern continuum and A. Hall's (1996) gender continuum.

[5] A term drawn from both the structuralist sociology of Marx, Durkeim and Merton, in the social psychological context it refers to *individual* attitudes and beliefs and personal (as opposed to collective) alienation.

[6] Although not pursued here, other researchers approaching youth from social-psychological perspectives have focused on adolescence as a stage when a natural, but anxious, and rebellious disengagement from parents takes place. Others focus on adolescence as a starting point for instincts related to the onset of puberty, such as fluctuations in mood related to non-conformity and rebellion (see Coleman, 1992; Baittle and Offer, 1971).

[7] *The Teens* was produced in 1957 by Crawley films for the National Film Board. Other films included *The Meaning of Adolescence* (1953) produced by McGraw Hill Books and *Who is Sylvia* (1957) produced by the National Film Board (these films were identified in Adams, 1997).

[8] These definitional difficulties have been examined by Crosset and Beal (1997), who suggested in the context of sport ethnography that "subculture" "has been employed so broadly that [it] has lost much of its explanatory power " (p. 73). McCarthy-Smith (1991) argued similarly in her research on organizational complexity and gay culture that "countless articles...cloak references to communities, worlds and subcultures in ambiguity...[while others] simply employ the term deviant 'worlds' or communities at random, perhaps assuming that the meanings are explicit" (p. 2, see also Best and Luckenbill, 1994 and Fine and Kleinman, 1979). Following Crosset and Beal's (1997) suggestions for clarifying the usage of subculture and subworld, subculture will be used in this dissertation to mean "resistant sub-group" (in Hall and Jefferson's (1976) terms).

[9] These terms are located historically in the Chicago School symbolic interactionist approach to social inquiry. The integration of terminology from interactionist and critical cultural studies positions is consistent with this dissertation's "multiperspectival" (Kellner, 1995; Neitzsche, 1986, 1968) approach and builds on other more general proposals for integrating these approaches (Cagle, 1989; Denzin, 1992; Kortarba, 1991).

[10] On Wednesday April 29, 1992, four white Los Angeles police officers were found "not guilty" of beating motorist Rodney King – a savage beating that was caught on videotape and was later broadcasted to America. The verdict led to the "Los Angeles riots," an outbreak of race-related violence and destruction in South Central Los Angeles.

[11] Statistics about youth crime are inconsistent. More recently, some statistics have shown decreases in youth crime.

[12] See Onstad (1997) for an insightful overview of this issue in the Canadian context.

[13] However, in making this argument, I acknowledge and support the use of quantitative studies as *context for* studies about culture and the construction of meaning. As Lewis (1997; see also Davies, 1994a, 1994b, White & Wilson, 1999) suggested, in his argument for a revival of quantitative studies in cultural studies:

> If we are to understand ideological agencies and practices it is helpful to understand their salience...And while there are many ways to measure ideological resonance, it seems churlish to persistently ignore those research models that might be well equipped to do so (p. 87).

[14] Similarly, Blumer's (1969) classic arguments against the use of quantitative methods are of direct relevance here. As he outlined in his book Symbolic Interactionism:

> the current designs of `proper' research procedure [quantitative, statistical] do not encourage or provide for the development of firsthand acquaintance with the sphere of life under study. Moreover, the scholar who lacks the firsthand familiarity is highly unlikely to recognize that he is missing anything...no observation of scientific protocol, however meticulous, are substitutes for developing a familiarity with what is actually going on in the sphere of life under study (pp. 37-38, 39).

[15] See also Mofina (1996) and Tanner (1996) for more research in the Canadian context. Refer to Acland, (1995), Fowler (1991), S. Cohen (1972), and S. Cohen and Young (1973) for more specific discussions of "moral panics" and the media.

[16] In 1994, Canada's justice minister Allan Rock tabled Bill C-37 to amend the Young Offenders Act to lower the age limit for those who face adult punishment for committing "serious criminal acts" (first degree murder, manslaughter, kidnapping, armed robbery, rape and aggravated assault) from 18 to 16 years old. This change would mean, among other things, that 16 and 17 year olds charged with murder would now be tried in adult court rather than youth court, where the penalty is life imprisonment instead of ten years (Visano, 1996, p. 77, see also Schissel, 1993).

[17] The connection between an economic decline and an increase in youth deviant activity was predicted by in Brake's (1985) seminal work on Canadian youth culture.

[18] Although the characteristics of postmodernism will be discussed later, suffice to say here that "blurring," "excess" and "technology" are classic elements (Hebdige, 1988; McRobbie, 1994e).

[19] This debate has also been called the agency-structure debate, social action-social structure debate and the culture-structure debate.

[20] *Structuration theory* is akin in many respects to Garfinkal's "ethnomethodology" and Goffman's (1974) "frame analysis" -- both approaches emphasize the taken-for-granted rule systems that frame everyday interactions. Giddens (1984) claims in his description of structuration theory that while "structural properties do not act, or act on, anyone like forces of nature to compel him or her to act in a particular way" (p. 181), structural constraints and dominant ideologies are still reproduced and reinforced in everyday behavior. The *negotiated order perspective* attempts to conceptualize the relative freedom (agency) that individuals have within the constraints, ideologies, and hierarchies of social structures. The "negotiated order" was clearly demonstrated in Strauss et. al.'s (1963) seminal research on the organizational features of psychiatric hospitals. Similarly, Maines (1982, see also Hall, 1987) theorized the concept *"mesostructure"* within this tradition, meaning the merger of social process and social structure -- or the middle ground of micro and macro perspectives. In keeping with the negotiated order perspective, mesostructure is intended to show, (a) how structures are constraining for individuals, and (b) how individuals actively alter structures through/during interaction (see, for example, Pestello and Voydanoff's (1991) study of gender relations in the family). Another approach growing out of the negotiated order perspective is *social network analysis*. In this framework, "network is conceived as a set of relationships that people imbue with meaning and use for collective and personal uses" (Fine and Kleinman, 1983, p. 197). For Fine and Kleinman (1983), social relationships and networks are unstable because "when members have discrepant conceptions of the structure of networks" social breakdown and radically altered relationships can result (p. 102). However, despite the recognition that even small decisions can ripple through networks of groups and relations, social structure is still "telescoped" down to micro-relations in network analysis -- and thus "structure" remains an undeveloped, untheorized concept.

[21] Giddens, in particular, has been criticized for not accounting for the place of culture (see Lull, 1995, p. 173).

[22] Of course, most perspectives do not treat youth exclusively as active or passive, but fall somewhere in between. Furthermore, it is crucial to note that the "active-passive" dichotomy is not necessarily aligned with the culturalist-structuralist dichotomy. As will be demonstrated in this critical overview, work that has been labeled "structuralist" because of its focus on analyzing youth cultures as "texts" that are interpreted by the researcher (instead of analyzing the meanings that youth give to their activity), can still focus on the creativity, empowerment and resistance of marginalized groups. The best example of this is Dick Hebdige's work in the British subcultural tradition. Similarly, work that might be considered culturalist because of its ethnographic focus on the collective actions of youth, at times treats youth as reactive or passive (not creative or proactive) individuals who partake in collective behavior because they cannot

successfully meet the middle class expectations in terms of education and employment. The best example of this is the early American (functionalist) deviance/delinquency theory. It is because of this ambiguous crossover between structuralist and culturalist theories and methods that I have chosen to organize these theories along a continuum from passive (constrained/submissive) to active (creative/resistant), while clarifying these issues along the way.

[23] In this dissertation, the concept of (post)structuralism (as opposed to the more unitary notion of structuralism – although even this difference has been disputed) will be used in a manner consistent with Hall and Grossberg (1986), who have argued that in (post)structuralism, "structural unity and identity are always deconstructed, leaving in their place the complexity, contradictions and fragmentation implied in difference...[while] social totality is dissolved into a pluralism of powers, practices, [and] subject-positions" (p. 64).

[24] Hall avoided the ambivalent positioning that is associated with many theories of complexity -- what has been termed "lucid postmodernism" (scholars such as Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) characterized the work of Lyotard, Derrida and Baudrillard in this way).

[25] Hall likely did not intend this complex theoretical formulation to used in focused research, but to act as a theoretical point of departure, as I am doing in this dissertation.

[26] Constructivist/phenomenological approaches (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Schutz, 1967) that are linked to the symbolic interactionist perspective also have much to offer here, as does labeling theory (Becker, 1963; Lemert, 1967).

[27] In describing the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies as a unified group, I acknowledge that even this relatively detailed discussion does not do justice to the theoretical and methodological diversity of the School's work from the 1960s to the 1980s.

[28] Although these ideas are generally associated with the CCCS's classic compilation of theory and research, Resistance Though Rituals (Hall and Jefferson, 1976) that was published in the mid 1970s, it was in Phil Cohen's (1972) seminal work on skinhead culture and mod subculture that these themes first emerged. Crucial background to the CCCS's formulations was outlined by Cohen, who explained how the socio-economic transitions in East London in the 1950s and 1960s, including re-housing and the economic movement from a skilled labour work force to an unskilled industry-based one, lead to a dissatisfied and disenfranchised working class culture. For youth, this meant there was little satisfaction to be gained from either school or work since both of these were constructed for the empowerment of the middle-class. As a result, youth used style and leisure to gain esteem and express dissatisfaction, and "magically" resolve the ideological contradiction between "working class puritanism and the new ideology of consumption" (Cohen, 1972, p. 23). It was Cohen's argument that youth were, in fact, proactive as opposed to reactive that separated his position and other work at the CCCS from the more functionalist American sociology that is discussed later in this section.

[29] Gray (1989, drawing on Gramsci, 1971 and Hall, 1982), for example, used the "ideological hegemony" concept to theorize the material and symbolic processes by which deceiving, stereotypical and degrading racial representations are produced and naturalized.

[30] The notion of hegemony has been adopted in numerous studies of subcultures (e.g., for example, see Donnelly, 1993 in the sport context) and social practices (e.g., Gruneau 1988) since the CCCS's seminal work.

[31] With this background, it is important to note that up the late 1960s, the British lacked a serious subcultural tradition. For this reason, the neo-Marxist CCCS (Hebdige and Willis included) built on the more traditional functionalist (American) approaches that see subcultural membership as a way for youth to address problems experienced in, for example, the family or at school (these are outlined later in this review -- see Cloward and Ohlin, 1960; A. Cohen, 1955; Merton, 1957). Furthermore, and as Baron (1989, p. 291, drawing on Mungham and Pearson, 1976) points out, the American tradition was valuable for the British because "it demonstrated the need to study the effects of working-class culture...and class inequalities in structuring the social situation of youth and their response to it" (concerns initially pursued in Britain by Downes, 1966 and P. Cohen, 1972). However, in making this link, the British were critical of American subcultural theory because it was "culturally specific" (Brake, 1985; Downes, 1966; Downes and Rock, 1982).

[32] McRobbie (1977) provided a similar study and analysis of working class females.

[33] "Ethnographic research" is often used synonymously with qualitative methods – referring usually to participant observation, observation and interviews (see, for example, Shaffir and Stebbins, 1991; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983 – see also "Introduction" to Part Two of this dissertation)

[34] Of course, signs can have different meanings for different people depending on one's acquired knowledge and cultural experiences and intended meanings do not always match interpreted meanings, although there is believed to be a "preferred" or dominant interpretation that most people will have (Hall, 1980).

[35] Other postmodern difficulties were noted and anticipated by Taylor and Wall (1976) in their analysis of the "glamrock culture" of the early seventies, where the commercialization of youth style "from above" appeared to reduce or eliminate the creative agency of youth (see also McGuigan,1992).

[36] These were also attempts to overcome the difficulties associated with narrower, ahistorical, processual understandings central to interactionist approaches by maintaining an acute sensitivity to the relationship between broader social circumstances and these everyday practices.

[37] According to Willis, this symbolic work and creativity can differ in form, style, and content according to age and "lifestyle."

[38] Similarly, Fraser (1989), drawing on Foucault's (1980) notion of the "politics of everyday life," argues that (mundane) social practices and relations in private and domestic spheres must be considered for their potential to "widen the arena" whereby people can change the character of their lives (see Best, 1997 for an insightful discussion of ways that "resistance" has been "retheorized").

[39] Other authors to draw on de Certeau's work on consumption and everyday life include Silverstone (1989), Frow (1991) and H. Jenkins (1992).

[40] I am oversimplifying the range of theoretical perspectives that are associated with both approaches. In this case, Merton and A. Cohen's American work is being contrasted with Hall et. al.'s (1976) work at the CCCS.

[41] Thrasher's (1927) classic work on youth gangs was grounded in and a basis for these conceptions (the "subculture" formulation also developed from Thrasher's work, although he did not use the term) (Fine and Kleinman, 1979). Thrasher argued that delinquency was a result of growing up in a city characterized by social change, disorganization, and a lack of adult control over adolescent behavior. As Tanner (1996, drawing on Bordua, 1969) explains, the result was a delinquent street culture "motivated not by frustration and deprivation as later theorists would have it, but by a desire for fun and excitement" (p. 61).

[42] Although not described here, Clifford Shaw's classic books The Jack Roller (1930), The Natural History of a Delinquent Career (Shaw & Moore, 1931) and Brothers in Crime (Shaw, McKay & McDonald, 1938) were also vital contributions to these early Chicago school positions on youth, crime and ethnography. His work examined the experiences, dilemmas, practices, and affiliations of youth offenders by gathering case histories and accounts of the ongoing practices of juveniles (Prus, 1996b, see Denzin, 1992, p. 35-44 for a scathing critique of the life history method used in The Jack Roller).

[43] These classic American formulations grew out of the work conducted in the 1920s at the University of Chicago, where researchers focused on areas in Chicago where crime and deviant behavior were concentrated (see Park et. al.'s (1925) publication, The City). Findings that juvenile delinquency (and crime in general) were generally found in the city's core (what Burgess (1925) referred to as "zones in transition") were the basis for the early formulations of the related "social disorganization," "cultural transmission," and "differential association" theories – the three theories that formed the basis of this section's work on subcultures and deviance. "Social disorganization theory" explains inner city delinquency by the lack of social control that exists in these settings – a lack of control that is attributable to the high number of transients (particularly immigrants) that inhabit these areas who are unfamiliar with "conventional" American behaviors and values (Burgess, 1925; Shaw and McKay, 1942). "Cultural transmission" theory is an attempt to explain youth delinquency by the decreased parental control that is evident in socially disorganized areas – a situation that apparently increases the propensity for youth to engage in deviant/criminal activity (Shaw and McKay, 1942, see also Liska, 1987, p. 64). "Differential association" theory accounts for deviant/criminal behavior by one's exposure to other deviants/criminals (Sutherland, 1937). Although these early formulations of social disorganization were, in part, contradicted by research that showed an organized character to even the most unsophisticated criminal/deviant activities

(see, for example, Whyte, 1943 and more recently Best and Luckenbill, 1994), the basic concepts were integral to later frameworks.

[44] Middle class youth were not attended to in this early work on inner city, delinquent criminal behavior.

[45] Although I do not pursue this here, it is noteworthy that Matza also made the critical link between visible youth culture and the mass media's reactions to these adolescents, and adolescents reactions to media labels (these were the basis for related conceptions of the "moral panic" (S. Cohen, 1972), labeling theory and Becker's (1963) notion "deviancy amplification").

[46] First, "taste" is manifested by economic capital – which determines the financial wherewithal to consume. Second, "taste" reflects and reproduces relations of dominance/subordination because of the cultural, social, or symbolic wealth required for an individual to move in various social circles of consumption (see also Gans, 1974). These types of wealth, for Bourdieu, have to do with the "social value" of tastes and consumption patterns, with some tastes considered "cultivated" and others "vulgar." In general, access to the accumulation of social profits derived from distinctive practices depends on factors such as family background, opportunities for educational achievement, and occupational connections.

[47] Hereafter I only use the term club culture. The distinction between these, something Thornton does not pursue at length, are not fundamental to this discussion.

[48] For Thornton, micromedia flyers and listings used by club organizers to bring crowds together, niche media are the music press that document the "scene," and mass media are mainstream media that develop and distort youth movements (see Thornton, 1994).

[49] I use the term clubbers to describe both those who attend clubs (after hours dance clubs) and those who attend raves (usually illegal warehouse parties and field parties). Although there are distinctions between clubbers and ravers, as mentioned above, Thornton does not clearly delineate these and since these are not crucial to my discussion, I will not pursue this idea.

[50] Thornton's understanding of the hierarchy of "hipness" draws on Becker's (1963) study of jazz musicians and Polsky's (1967) research on the Beatnicks.

[51] The Frankfurt School for Social Research was a school of German critical theorists who fled the Nazi regime to other parts of Europe and to North America in the 1930s. As noted with the CCCS and with American delinquency theory, there were a range of perspectives that emerged from the Frankfurt School, a range that is often unfairly summarized and oversimplified (McLaughlin, 1998; Modeski, 1986). Besides Horkheimer and Adorno, whose work is described here, other Frankfurt School theorists include Marcuse, Pollach, Benjamin, and Fromm.

[52] Although Marxist in this sense, Adorno and Horkheimer are critical of Marx's grand narrative in other areas. For example, these theorists explain why revolution has not occurred (and likely will not occur).

[53] Angus also refers to Walter Benjamin (1969, originally published in 1936), a contemporary of Horkheimer and Adorno who focused on mechanical reproduction and art. While similar in their mass culture thesis, Benjamin was criticized by Horkheimer and Adorno for describing the cultural shift exclusively through the mechanical apparatus.

[54] Angus acknowledges in his analysis that his conception of simulation differs from Baudrillard's. Angus, unlike Baudrillard (1983a, 1983b), does not consider the "authenticating originals" to be exploded or eliminated. Angus (1989, p. 102) sees the ideology of the media as "merely reflecting reality" and to be embedded in the concrete practices of the media system.

[55] Jameson suggested that while Horkheimer and Adorno's view of ideology is "profoundly true today", it for this very reason, with "its very universalization and interiorization," that ideology has become less visible as it has become "a veritable second nature"(1984, p. 351). Jameson's analysis of "historical allusions" and nostagia in film and architecture lead him to conclude that culture has become a "glossy mirage" (1984, p. 21) lacking any temporal structure or chain of signification – a breakdown that " suddenly releases this present of time from all the activities and the intentionalities that might focus it" (1984, p. 73). In this sense, Jameson's work supports the argument that culture is "too ideological" to be intelligible (even for the intellectual). However, Jameson (1984, p. 88-89) argues that a "moment of truth" will occur in postmodern culture when the subject will gain "a new heightened sense of its place in the global system". This could be interpreted as a time when these "hyper-ideologies" will become accessible and apparent.

[56] Since the cultural studies approaches adopted here are essentially an integration of neo-Marxism and

symbolic interactionism, it should also be noted that embedded in the "postmodernism-cultural studies" debates are also "postmodernism-symbolic interactionism" debates and "cultural studies-symbolic interactionism" debates. Although these are alluded to here, the basic assumption here (building on the argument for Willis' critical interactionist approach in the previous chapter) is that cultural studies and - symbolic interactionist approaches are compatible and useful.

[57] Hebdige (1988) felt it was ironic that postmodernists are identified here with an "anti-generalist" position, yet thinkers like Baudrillard and Lyotard often write at an extremely high level of abstraction and generality of a 'post-modern condition', or 'predicament', a 'dominant cultural norm'.

[58] The order of the simulacra for Baudrillard is the process of the inversion of the base-superstructure model -- that is, where the use value is completely absorbed into the exchange value (see Baudrillard, 1983a).

[59] This is still a broad and oversimplified characterization of postmodern theory that reflects the ways that "postmodernism" has been "stretched in all directions, across different debates, different disciplinary and discursive boundaries, as different factions seek to make their own, using it to designate a plethora of incommensurable objects, tendencies and emergences" (Hebdige, 1988, p. 182).

[60] Despite these critiques of "Baudrillard the postmodernist," Baudrillard himself denies any connection with or association to postmodernism (e.g., in Gane's (1993) *Baudrillard Live: Selected Interviews*). In fact, Baudrillard considered himself to be a "metaphysician", as he explained in a statement about his disassociation from sociology:

> Let's be frank here. If I ever dabbled in anything in my theoretical infancy it was philosophy more than sociology. I don't think at all in these terms. My point of view is completely metaphysical. If anything, I'm a metaphysician, perhaps a moralist, but certainly not a sociologist (Baudrillard, 1987, p. 84).

[61] The differences between post-structuralism and post-modernism are not clearly defined. Grossberg (1996, p. 171) suggested that poststructuralism "represents the last stages of the modernist epistemological problem...the relationship between the subject and the forms of mediation, in which the problem of reality is displaced" – a definition that is clearly akin to many definitions of postmodernism. Hebdige (1988, p. 186) indicated that "the links between post-structuralism and post-modernism are in places so tight that absolute distinctions become difficult if not impossible." This is evident from the diverse classifications of theorists such as Baudrillard, Lyotard, Lacon, Barthes and Derrida as both poststructuralist and postmodern thinkers. Suffice to say here that there is considerable overlap in theoretical approaches (see Jameson, 1984).

[62] This integrated approach is akin to Kellner's (1995) "multiperspectival perspective," although Denzin engaged the cultural studies-postmodernism debates more specifically in the development of his approach and also worked from a symbolic interactionist position that is grounded in the study of human lived experience -- something Kellner did not do.

[63] For Grossberg (1996, p. 171), theorizing the concept "affect" involves "deconstructing the opposition between the rational and the irrational in order to undercut, not only the assumed irrationality of desire but also, the assumed rationality of signification and ideology." On this basis, Grossberg has critiqued structuralist theories of ideology for abandonment of "the insights embodied in notions of 'structure of feeling' (Williams) and 'the texture of lived experience' (Hoggart)" (1996, p. 171).

[64] Many of these concerns are also addressed within other integrated frameworks, particularly postmodern feminism.

[65] Although Denzin work in the late 1980s and early 1990s (particularly Denzin, 1989a, 1989b, 1992) inspired more general debates about the possibility of broadening the symbolic interactionist research project, it was the release of Denzin and Lincoln 's (1994) Handbook of Qualitative Research that inspired the most debate and negative reaction in the journals Symbolic Interaction and the Journal of Contemporary Ethnography.

[66] See Clifford and Marcus (1986, p. 173-186) for a useful and balanced outline of these methodological movements.

[67] McRobbie draws on data from Mary McLoughlin's unpublished study of thirty girls who were readers of the magazine Jackie. McLoughlin's methodological protocol included interviewing the girls and asking them to keep diaries.

[68] Redhead (1990) has gone so far as to suggest that youth culture/style has always been cyclical rather than

linear, thus challenging the CCCS's claim that there ever was a "pure," authentic subculture.

[69] Drawing on Bataille's work in Visions of Excess (1985).

[70] McRobbie has responded to criticisms about being overly-optimistic in her work, particularly to Frith and Savage's (1993, see also 1997) suggestions that cultural studies in the 1980s was an uncritical celebration of popular culture. McRobbie argued that Frith and Savage oversimplified and distorted the cultural studies project, conflating "cultural studies into an undifferentiated and uncritical monolith so as to be able to blame it for an equally conflated version of cultural journalism" (McRobbie, 1996a, p. 335; see also McRobbie 1996b).

[71] The structure of Redhead's edited book purposefully mirrored the classic Hall and Jefferson book Resistance Through Rituals which it attempted to update. A "theory-case study-theory" format was followed.

[72] These researchers still maintained a loose tie with post-CCCS positions by *acknowledging* the relevance of race, class, gender and other structural factors in determining meanings and understandings of youth social practice.

[73] Redhead has also used the term "post-subculture" to describe this postmodern youth group.

[74] This argument is supportive of McRobbie's position, although her recent postmodern writings lacks the emphasis on methodological rigor that her earlier feminist/critical interactionist work possessed.

[75] Although not pursued here, it is important to acknowledge the directly relevant and ongoing debates surrounding audience research methodology and theory (see, for example, Allor, 1988; Cobley, 1994; Grossberg, 1988; Lewis, 1991; Lull, 1988; McGuigan, 1992; Radway, 1986; Seaman, 1992; Seiter et al., 1989; Silverstone, 1990) and the "interpretive community" framework (see, for example, Ang, 1991; Machin and Carrithers, 1996; Radway, 1988; Schoder, 1994).

[76] Although definitions of ethnography and participant observation vary (Hammersley, 1992), one view is that participant observation is a primary methodology used by ethnographers, a method of research "that involves social interaction between researcher and the informants in the milieu of the latter, during which data are systematically and unobtrusively collected" (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984, p. 15).

[77] Although it has been argued that analyzing the interpretations of audiences/subjects allows for more useful insights into the impacts of media texts (Lewis, 1991; Jhally and Lewis, 1992; Wilson and Sparks, 1996).

[78] Again, these ideas are reminiscent of suggestions made by some postmodern ethnographers (see Clifford, 1988; Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Geertz, 1988; and Marcus and Fischer, 1986 for more developed arguments related to the "crisis of representation" in ethnography).

[79] Atkinson (1990) and Foley (1992) have argued that very few ethnographers have adequately addressed this problem of infusing "literary devices into conventional theory-driven ethnographies" (Foley, 1992, p. 45).

[80] In addition to the conventional and substantive contributions that this project can make, the hope is that the often sensationalized and speculate media accounts of the rave can be amended.

[81] Acknowledged here is that this outline is not entirely representative of all existing versions of the "history of house" in New York City and beyond – a fact attributed to the extensive mythology surrounding this sometimes underground scene (Kempster, 1996). The sources drawn from here are considered (by those in the scene who I spoke with) to be among the most reliable sources.

[82] According to Collin (1997), who drew on Albert Goldman's examination of the scene in his 1978 book *Disco*, the club was called Salvation. Garratt, describing what appears to be the same club (both described the club's location in the Hell's kitchen district of Manhattan, it's links with the church – the location was previously a church, and its opening in 1970 and closing in April, 1972), indicated that the club was named Sanctuary.

[83] Salvation opened in 1970, the "clash" took place in June of 1969 – "the end of the civil rights era, the last days of the hippies" (Collin, 1997, p. 10).

[84] Garratt (1998) explained the scene of the Stonewall Riots as follows:

> The customers were allowed out [of the Stonewall Inn, after the raid] one by one and gathered outside on the pavement waiting for friends, but when the police van arrived to take away the staff [of the Inn, who had been arrested during the raid for serving after-hours], including three struggling drag queens, their anger exploded. In the ensuing riot, the police ran back and locked

themselves inside the club while the crowd outside tried to set the place alight. The battle continued on the following nights, with shouts of 'Gay power!' heard on the streets for the first time. Police attempting to chase down the rioters were shocked when, realizing their strength in numbers, the gays turned and forced the officers to flee instead (p. 8).

[85] Sometimes this means devising "coping solutions" to problems (reactive), other times it means "fighting back" in hopes of changing oppressive conditions (proactive). This is akin to Cohen's and Merton's conceptions of social "strain" and "status frustration."

[86] These developments were not the only underground happenings in the New York dance scene, although for the purposes of this discussion, they are the most significant. One other location requires mention here. "The Loft," an after-hours club opened in 1970, was an old factory loft owned and lived in by David Mancuso. The club was known for its alcohol free policy and state of the art studio effects and sound system. Mancuso's "invite only" Saturday night parties were a bridge between the psychedelic 1960s and the upcoming disco era of the 1970s. The Loft was a place where Mancuso and others would experiment with different combinations of music, drugs of and sex as part of developing what would eventually become part of the disco popular cultural scene (Collin, 1997; Goldman, 1978).

[87] According to many of those interviewed in the current study of rave in Toronto, this type of integration between cultural activities was existed "good days" of rave, before the eventual bastardization of the scene.

[88] The influence of European electronic music was also beginning to take hold in this context, particularly the German band *Kraftwerk* (see aside at the end of the "Detroit Techno" section) (Kempster, 1996).

[89] Levan was born Lawrence Philpot (Collin, 1997).

[90] Levan and Knuckles worked together at a New York club called *The Gallery* where their job was to hand out and spike the punch with hits of acid (LSD). Levan and Knuckles later worked together as DJs at a renowned gay bath-house in New York called the Continental Baths (Collin, 1997, Garratt, 1998; Reynolds, 1998).

[91] Knuckles' innovative musical tracks were developed from original experimentation with drum machines and reel to reel tape players, at times mixing in hard to find European synthesizer tracks by bands like Wire, Depeche Mode and DAF (Collin, 1997; Garratt, 1998; Reynolds, 1998).

[92] Knuckles was hired away from New York after Levan turned down the same job to stay at *Paradise Garage* (Collin, 1997; Garratt, 1998; Reynolds, 1998).

[93] It is Levan's work at *Paradise Garage* is most closely affiliated with deep house as a genre, however (Collin, 1997; Garratt, 1998; Reynolds, 1998).

[94] May was also widely recognized for the following quote:

> [techno music is] a complete mistake. It's like George Clinton [musical innovator renowned for being combining Rhythm and Blues with hard rock to create 'funk' music] and Kraftwerk [computer-music innovators from Germany] stuck in an elevator with only a sequencer to keep them company...(quoted in Kempster, 1996, p. 19).

[95] Although these three DJs were the innovators of the Detroit techno music scene as it is remembered now, the earliest influence was DJ Charles Johnson who played eclectic mixes of various music genres on his revolutionary radio show "Midnight Funk Association" under the name "Electrifying Mojo." As Garratt (1998) explained:

> Mojo played the Clash, Marvin Gaye, he B52s, Peter Frampton, Madonna and Devo. He played the hard-edged, futuristic P-funk failed Motown songwriter George Clinton was creating for his bands Parliament and Funkadelic in United Sound studios, disguising his sharp political comments behind humour and a mock-futuristic language involving Afronauts and Motherships from space. Mojo played James Brown and Jimi Hendrix, the Yellow Magic Orchestra and Tangerine Dream, European synth-pop, strange sound effects and the music to *Star Wars*. He played Prince, who liked the DJ so much that he once called up for a chat on air. He chose and album a week and played it all, even doing remixes and new edits on the tracks so that listeners got into it more deeply...Like George Clinton, Mojo transcended restrictions of race and genre by claiming he didn't come from this planet at all (p. 55).

[96] In making these claims about the "origins of electronic and technological music, I acknowledge that the history of "non-dance" forms of technological music can be traced back to "musical futurists" at the beginning of the century. See archives for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporations Ideas programme

called "TICK TOCK BANG: NOISE IN MODERN ART" that was broadcasted on January 27, 1999 on CBC Radio One, 9:05 pm (written by Russell Smith with Soundscape production in Toronto by Max Allen, with Dave Field).

[97] Oakenfield opened this original club with his friend Trevor Fung (Collin, 1997).

[98] It is that this point that the 1990s British rave culture theorized in chapter 3 emerged.

[99] Shepperd uses the DJ name "Dogwhistle" at raves performances for contractual reasons (Shepperd's name is a commodity on radio and with record companies).

[100] Since the original's club's opening and closing, a new club, also named "23 Hop" opened in the same location with different owners. Shepperd's trademark DJ line that he is "often imitated, never duplicated" has also been said of the original club as well (Klublife, Issue 6).

[101] The early parties have taken a place in history, and are remembered fondly by some of those I interviewed from the early days of the Toronto rave scene, as I discuss later.

[102] It is worth noting that Toronto police are notoriously tolerant of the rave scene, according to interviewed promoters who have worked in the U.S.A. (Buffalo) and in Canada.

[103] To distinguish between these terms, Malbon (1998, p. 284) used the following quotation from Maffesoli: "As examples of the differences between unity and unicity, one might compare the following, identify-identification; individual-person; nation-state-poly-culturalization" (Maffesoli, 1991, p. 19)

[104] Reynolds also makes clear links between the changing music scenes and the changing drug preferences. For example, the ominous jungle scene he described is no longer dominated by the "love drug" Ecstasy, having been replaced by cocaine – which contains increasingly high levels of THC, thus creating "a sensory intensification without euphoria," a drug state that fits perfectly with "jungle's ultra-vivid synaesthetic textures, hyperspatialized mix-scapes and tension but no release rhythms" (Reynolds, 1997, p. 103).

[105] With the exception of Best's (1997) optimistic discussion of rave in the context of Foucaultian theory.

[106] Since Weber's study, the ARF has been renamed the "Centre for Addiction and Mental Health."

[107] Other documentaries have also highlighted various aspects of the rave scene, such as the life of the rave DJ (the acclaimed documentary "Hang the DJ" by two former Concordia University film students) and the history of rave music culture (e.g., the history of house music and techno music in the documentary "Modulations"; the history of techno music on CBC's "Ideas" radio programme).

[108] The magazine is no longer being published.

[109] There were also key changes in the rave scene from 1995-1998 that created sometimes unique research situations and challenges related to "getting into" the research scene and the situations for observation and discussion once I was inside. These subtle and not so subtle changes are referred to throughout the report of findings.

[110] I was very aware during times when I was alone how it would have been easier to be relaxed in my observer role if I were a smoker.

[111] The "club-based" raves I went to were generally an older crowd (ages 19-25) and much larger. Although I was more comfortable doing the research, because I fit in more, the culture of people who attended these parties was less open and outwardly friendly than the more intimate events. This could be attributed to several things, including: more "non-ravers" who were not interested in or aware of the rave philosophy attended; the "half-club – half-rave" mix also meant that alcohol was a part of the scene (and arguably less Ecstasy and more "unfriendly" drugs); and when the crowd was so big, it was easier to become anonymous and stay with your own friends (the strategies I used during phase one of hang out by the dance floor or sit on the stage did not work at these rave clubs).

[112] These statistics taken from the newsgroup's homepage and from an information E-Mail from the group's "list administrator.

[113] There also several "chatrooms" that I would periodically visit on websites where raves are promoted. More often than not, these discussions were anonymous. This was not a primary source of data, but often served as a reliability check for the kinds of information that I was attaining from other sources.

[114] It is recognized here that in the process of acquiring and developing perspectives, "orientational frames may change over time as people attend to various features of their life-worlds" (Prus, 1994b, p. 397).

[115] My interviews showed that at least in some cases, though, these information sources were a from of education for the ravers and, in fact, I was often referred to existing writing by ravers who felt that certain

flyers or articles reflected their own feelings. Although analytically it is debatable whether these flyers reflect or reinforce the state of the rave movement at any given time, it was clear from the research that the flyers are an indication of telling of what sorts of "content themes" underlie each party and, when understood together, the Toronto rave scene.

[116] This use of language holds with the processual notion of language as a shared set of symbols that are essential for a sense of "other within oneself" for these ravers, that will be shown to reinforce group interaction over the individual (Prus, 1994b, p. 397).

[117] Since ravers were often the promoters of these events, or were consulted in the organization process, these titles can be considered reflective of raver ideals.

[118] This magazine has no identified dates, issue or authors, likely in an attempt to make it truly "underground". I do not include this in my reference section for this reason.

[119] The place of drug use as an activity that enhances the rave experience, and helps break down barriers and open the mind is addressed more comprehensively in my discussion of "activities "

[120] I explain the aspects of the rave that are not consistent with the ideal rave philosophy in my discussion of the tensions and resistance to this philosophy. This will shed further light on the view that the "vibe" was not present at some raves.

[121] "Progress Forward" was put on by the rave company *PHRYL* on April 18 and May 30 1998 (a unique two-event party). "Knowledge in a New Dimension" was promoted by the company *KIND*, taking place on July 26, 1997.

[122] According to the "stats" section of the webpage, there were 180 subscribers to the list, most of which are Canadian and most of the active participants at least are from Southern Ontario.

[123] The works in this book are reminiscent of classic "cyberpunk" novels, such as William Gibson's (1986) *Neuromancer*.

[124] I came to find out, though, that there is a European based hyperreal site as well as a North American one.

[125] This belief in "education" supports processual views of acquiring perspectives, where definitions of reality are encountered and defined from "others." Similarly, the "mature ravers" attempts to promote (and defend) perspectives to others is consistent with this notion (Prus, 1994, p. 397).

[126] All of those interviewed associated this notion of energy with "the vibes" and "the feelings" associated with raves. This was not exclusive to those people associated with witchcraft.

[127] For ravers, "gino" refers to the stereotypical male who attends nightclubs, wearing popular stylish clothing and who adhere to many of the macho norms of intimidation and use conventional macho "pick-up" strategies (meaning aggressive interactions with females in hopes of taking them home for the night) frowned upon by the rave community.

[128] This magazine and column have since been discontinued.

[129] The drugs in the scene are considered by mature/authentic ravers to be secondary to the rave experience. They are supposed to be used as a conduit for losing preconceptions. The ravers suggest that drugs are not to be ends in themselves. This is discussed further in the "Activities" section.

[130] I distinguish authentic ravers from mature ravers – authentic ravers are ravers who understand the rave philosophy and are "into" the scene while mature ravers are experienced ravers, who may or may not still subscribe to these views.

[131] The sub-groups of ravers that I refer to here, and the noted interactions are discussed further in the "Identities and Reputations" and the "Relationships" sections.

[132] New years Eve is the height of rave politics because almost all promotion companies are throwing a rave In any cases, "teams" of promotion companies (e.g., 3 or 4 companies) will collaborate, pooling their resources to throw one rave party.

[133] For discussions surrounding the incorporation of subcultural style by popular culture industries and focused on other means of censure for youth subcultures, see Brake (1985, 1980), Hall and Jefferson (1976), P. Cohen (1972), Muncie (1981), Mungham and Pearson (1981) and Baron (1989a, 1989b).

[134] This section's examination of the processual aspects of raver perspectives provided evidence of perspectival development, implementation, and change (Prus, 1994a, 1994b).

[135] This is by no means an exhaustive list of the many activities that take place at raves, but these were the activities that the ravers themselves considered most important and the activities that "stood out" during my

participant observation sessions. Although I do not include "hanging out" on this list, it is embedded in my analysis of these other activities, and is shown to be important in its own right.

[136] This formula was more pronounced in 1995 than in 1998. In 1998 and later, there was usually a main room with headlining DJ acts, and sometimes multiple "other" rooms where DJs playing a variety of rave music styles would be performing (e.g., jungle and/or happy hardcore, as well as ambient – depending on the theme of the party).

[137] Although I do not focus on the "smart bar" in this paper, it is important to note that the smart bar serves high energy drinks and water, both of which are considered essential to keep energy levels high for dancing and also to prevent dehyration that results from dancing and also from drug use. No alcoholic beverages are served at the smart bar. On the hypperal website (www.hyppereal.com), smart drinks are described as:

> drinks made with nutrients that supply needed precursors and cofactors that your body uses to manufacture neurotransmitters, the chemical messengers that carry impulses in the brain. These neurotransmitters can frequently be depleted by heavy exercise, stress, stimulant drugs, or lack of sleep, and many people report that amino acid/vitamin combo "smart drinks" seem to help.

[138] In the sleevenotes of his 1978 album *Music for Airports*, Brian Eno (best know for his production work with the band U2) wrote about ambience and ambient music, "ambient music is intended to induce calm and a space to think...[it] must be able to accommodate many levels of listening attention without enforcing one in particular" it must be as ignorable as it is interesting" (quoted in Toop, 1996, p. 9 – see David Toop's (1996) book <u>Ocean of Sound: Aether Talk, Ambient Sound and Imaginary Worlds</u> for a wonderfully detailed description and overview of ambient music and its history).

[139] Jungle is generic term used to describe a various combinations of reggae and house music – before 1994 it was known as drum n' bass music. Some of these other variations are hardstep, jazzy jungle, jump up, regga jungle and techstep (see James, 1997 for a detailed history of jungle music).

[140] I will not present the data on the activity of mixing records from the perspective of the DJ here. The whole DJ philosophy and the ideas surrounding the activity of DJing are so rich and intricate, that they require far more attention than I can reasonably provide here. The book Music, the Brain, and Ecstasy (Jourdain, 1997) has been referred to as a guide for understanding some of the intricacies of music and mood.

[141] Although this development is not examined specifically in this study, the ways that the fragmentation of the music scene has impacted (perceptions of and feelings of) "unity" in rave culture are noteworthy and referred to throughout this research report.

[142] Although most of those I interviewed were critical of this lower quality amphetamine, there was a known contingent of (often younger) ravers that were regular users..

[143] The TRIP group presented at a "community meeting" in North York (an area of Toronto) on drug awareness where their mandate was discussed. This was one of the only times where an open dialogue between police, parents, healthcare workers, and educators took place. One of the ravers who I knew of who attended the meeting talked in a follow-up newsgroup post about how "the public" is not at ease about drug use, and that openness and honestly is not necessarily the best route for maintaining a thriving rave scene, suggesting the people will never understand the rave scene unless they go to a rave. This point was hotly debated on the newsgroup.

[144] This discussion about perceptions of self and other is directly linked to the *Idenitities and Reputations* addressed in the next section.

[145] Although there were numerous other activities that the ravers mentioned, including the use of props such as light sticks and whistles (which, according to the ravers, are fun to use when hanging out or dancing, and are exciting for the senses when on Ecstasy) are, the activity of "staying out all night," and the activity of hanging out, it was the dancing, the listening to music and the doing drugs and being high) that were central to all discussions and to my observations.

[146] The DJs positioning and influence was described in the following way on the "hyperreal" website (www.hyperreal.com):

> The art of DJing has come full swing in the world of the rave, where the DJ has replaced the live musician as the focal point for an event. The DJ is now regarded at the "conductor" of their "orchestra" of two turntables and a mixer (and maybe a sampler, but that's not necessary). The orchestra's "instruments" are the slabs of vinyl (or aluminum & plastic, in Pete Ashdown's case)

that carry the basic grooves and melodies, and it's up to the DJ to ensure that the orchestra plays all their instruments in perfect sync and with a measure of continuity. The DJ must *know* their music, know where the breaks are, know the keys, know the BPM's, [beats per minute] to make his/her set come out as perfect as possible. Anyone who says DJ'ing is just spinning records has never tried to do so. DJs often develop a following, and the level of devotion among some is something unseen since the Beatles. (Basically, if you have Garth [well known and popular DJ] playing at your event in San Francisco, you can ensure 2000 people will be there, even with VERY minimal flyering - the same holds for Barry Weaver or Doc Martin in LA, or Adam X on the East Coast).

[147] I acknowledge in this discussion and elsewhere (see Wilson, 1997, 1999; Wilson and Sparks, 1996, 1999 – in press) that race is a social constructed category (see Anthias, 1990; Fleras & Elliot, 1996; Francis et. al., 1995; Henry, 1994).

[148] This non-violence theme has been confirmed in several public interviews with police and with those who work security at raves (Drake, 1995). This was also noted at a community meeting about raves in North York, Toronto.

[149] There are a few, particularly a well-known and revered former promotion company called *Transcendence* which is renowned for throwing the rave with "vibe."

[150] Relationships with parents and police were also pursued in the interviews, but are not discussed here.

[151] Overall, and according to Prus (1994a, p. 20), relationships "are best understood in processual terms....with respect to their emergence, intensification, dissipation and possible reconstitution," a view that was partially adopted as a guide for this analysis. Although this section addressed only the emergence of relationships, intensification of relationships, and types of relationships (there was little data dealing with dissipation and disinvolvements), processual insights were gained about the extent to which the PLUR philosophy manifested it subcultural relationships.

[152] In this discussion of commitments, I only refer to the authentic ravers in the scene. Although I acknowledge that "outsiders" attend rave parties and are a component of the scene, these people are not an accepted part of the subculture. For this reason and because of space/scope limitations, I do not attend to these groups here.

[153] A 1997 New Years Eve Party called "E-Nuff" was only advertised by word of mouth and was a smaller, intimate party compared to the massive commercial raves that also took place that night.

[154] It is worth noting that many of the older ravers were also working in information technology business for a living as well – at times newsgroups would receive work-related technology queries from a raver member.

[155] Adapted from Marx.

[156] For a discussion of "coding" procedures in data qualitative data analysis, see Krippendorf (1980).

[157] 13 year olds are given the option of playing with the older group or the younger group.

[158] Although one female staff volunteer usually participated with the males in basketball games, few other females ventured onto the main court for the youth organized games. The male-female imbalance was acknowledged, although not "endorsed" by the staff. All programs in the centre are advertised for males and females. Females were involved in most other areas of the centre, particularly around the swimming pool.

[159] The centre would often sponsor members to attend youth basketball tournaments or other open youth competitions. These events were usually subsidized through fundraising efforts by the youth or through external support.

[160] These focus groups were also used as a pilot project for an audience research study focused on youth interpretations of cause-related marketing messages (e.g., Stay in School, Say No to Drugs) that feature professional athlete spokespersons.

[161] The youth were generally compliant to the direct requests of staff ands some staff were more likely to elicit "good behavior" than others (the gym supervisor said of the centre's basketball coach, "the kids will do anything for Jim, anything he says"). However, the less overt conflict between youth was necessarily handled within the peer group.

[162] Staff members would tell youth to "watch your language" if they heard a loud "curse" during a game, but were less apt to say anything in less overt circumstances. John explained, "we want to set a good

example and not tolerate most swearing, but we can't worry about every little thing here" (Fieldnotes, January 17, 1997).

[163] This argument builds on work by Mathews (1993) and Solomon (1992) in Canada, and Martinek and Hellison (1997) and Bing (1991), in the United States. These authors show how many "underserved" youth adhere to peer pressure and the dominant "gang values" in the school setting by "skipping classes, being disruptive, ignoring homework, and not paying attention" (Martinek and Hellison, 1997, p. 38) and in other settings by supporting violence-related behaviors.

[164] The youth centre has a staff member responsible for a youth empowerment program that includes special outings, events and educational workshops (e.g., leadership skills, violence reduction). The coordinator had recently organized a "youth council" which is responsible for helping with fund-raising initiatives and other events.

[165] While some groups aligned themselves with one point of view over another, usually both points of view were raised and acknowledged over the course of most interviews.

[166] This information derived largely from responses to questions about how the youth centre is similar to and/or different from other places where these youth spend time.

[167] One staff member was "mooned" by one youth on his first day. Although new staff also must earn a position in the centre's pecking order, as this incident demonstrates, they have more potential to be "gatekeepers" for the youth if they can gain their trust and respect.

[168] These finding and recommendations build on American work that has examined interactions between formal adult groups and informal adolescent cultures in the organizational settings of youth recreation/drop-in centres (Fine and Mechling, 1993; see also Fine, 1987; Mechling, 1981). According to this research, the features of an effective organization include "the maintenance of strong *identity structures* which tie the individual to the organization in the face of multiple centrifugal forces," a basis of charismatic leadership, and "the existence of a *robust peer culture*" (Fine and Mechling, 1993, p. 127).

[169] Having said this, there are some excellent mass media articles focused on this issue (e.g., Onstad, 1997).

**REFERENCES**

Abercrombie, N., Hill, S., Turner, & Bryan, S. (1980). *The Dominant Ideology Thesis.* London: George Allen and Unwin.

Abrams, M. (1959). *The teenage consumer.* London: London Press Exchange Ltd.

Acland, C. (1995). *Youth, murder, spectacle: The cultural politics of 'youth in crisis.'* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Adams, M. (1997). *The trouble with normal: Postwar youth and the making of heterosexuality.* Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Adelson, J. (1979). Adolescence and the generation gap. *Psychology Today,* 12(9), 33-37.

Addiction Research Foundation. (1998, June 10). *Snap-shot of raving in Toronto.* Press release from the Addiction and mental Health Services Corporation. Available at http://arf.org/rave.htm.

Adorno, T. (1991). *The culture industry.* London: Routledge.

Agnew, R. (1991). The interactive effects of peer variables on delinquency. *Criminology,* 29(1), 47-72.

Albert, E (1991). Riding the line: Competition and cooperation in the sport of bicycle racing. *Sociology of Sport Journal,* 8(4), 341-360.

Alcoff, L. (1989). Cultural feminism vs post-structuralism: The identity crisis in feminist theory. In M. Malson, J. O'Barr, S. Westphal-Wihl, & M. Wyer (Eds.), *Feminist theory in practice and process.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Alexander, J. (1987). The centrality of the classics. In A. Giddens & J. Turner (Eds.), *Social Theory Today* (pp. 11-57). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Allor, M. (1988) 'Relocating the site of the audience: Reconstructive theory and the social subject', *Critical Studies in Mass Communication,* 5(3): 217-233

Althusser, L. (1971). *Lenin and Philosophy.* New York: Monthly Review Press.

Andrews, D. (1996) The fact(s) of Michael Jordan's blackness: Excavating a floating racial signifier. *Sociology of Sport Journal,* 13(2), 125-158.

Andrews, D. (1998a). Excavating Michael Jordan: Notes on the critical pedagogy of sporting representation. In G. Rail (Ed.), *Sport and postmodern times* (pp. 185-219). Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Andrews, D. (1998b). Feminizing Olympic reality: Preliminary dispatches from Baudrillard's Atlanta. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport,* 33(1), 5-18.

Ang, I. (1985). *Watching Dallas – Soap opera and melodramatic imagination.* London: Methuen.

Angus, I. (1989). Circumscribing Postmodern Culture. In I. Angus & S. Jhally (Eds.), *Cultural Politics in Contemporary America* (pp. 96-107). New York: Routledge.

Anthias, F. (1990) Race and Class Revisited – Conceptualizing Race and Racisms. *The Sociological Review,* 38(1): 19-42.

Appadurai, A. (1990). Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy. In M. Featherstone (Ed.), *Global culture: Nationalism, globalization and modernity* (pp. 295-310). London: Sage.

Aries, P. (1962). *Centuries of childhood.* New York, NY: Random House.

Atkinson, M. (1997). *Rounders or robin hoods?: Questioning the role of the ticket scalper in urban marketplace activity.* Unpublished masters thesis, McMaster University, Hamilton.

Atkinson, P. (1990). *The ethnographic imagination.* London: Routledge.

Baittle, B. & Offer, D. (1971). On the nature of adolescent rebellion. In F. Feinstein, P. Giovacchini & A. Miller (Eds.), *Annals of Adolescent Psychiatry.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Baron, S. (1989a). Resistance and its consequences: The street culture of punks. *Youth and Society,* 21(2), 207-237.

Baron, S. (1989b). The Canadian west coast punk subculture: A field study. *Canadian Journal of Sociology,* 14(3), 289-316.

Baron, S. (1994). *Street youth and crime: The role of labour market experiences.* Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. University of Alberta.

Baron, S. (1997). Canadian male street skinheads: Street gang or street terrorists? *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology,* 34(2), 125-154.

Barthes, R. (1973). *Mythologies*. London: Paladin.

Bataille, G. (1985). *Visions of excess: Selected writings, 1927-1939*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press

Baudrillard, J. (1975). *The mirror of production*. St. Louis: Telos.

Baudrillard, J. (1983a). *Simulations*. New York, NY: Semiotext(e).

Baudrillard, J. (1983b) *In the shadow of silent majorities*. New York, NY: Semiotext(e).

Baudrillard, J. (1987). *Forget Foucault*. New York: Semiotext(e).

Baudrillard, J. (1988a). *Selected writings* (M. Poster Editor). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Baudrillard, J. (1988b). *The ecstasy of ommunication*. New York, NY: Semiotext(e).

Baudrillard, J. (1988c). *America*. London: Verso.

Bauman, Z. (1992). *Intimations of postmodernity*. London: Routledge.

Becker, H. (1963). *Outsiders*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Becker, H. & Geer, B. (1957). Participant observation and interviewing: A comparison. *Human Organization*, 28-32.

Becker, H., & Geer, B. (1960). Latent culture: A note on the theory of latent social roles. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 5, 304-313.

Bee, J. (1989). First Citizen of the Semiotic Democracy? *Cultural Studies*, 3(3), 353-359.

Bellett, G. (1998, September 17). Richmond turns down the volume on raves: Complaints from Vancouver residents led councillors to draft tough new regulations. *Vancouver Sun*, p. B4.

Benjamin, W. (1969, originally published 1936). The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction. In Hannah Arendt (Ed.), *Illuminations*, (pp. 222, 239-241).

Berger, B. (1995). *An essay on culture: Symbolic structure and social structure*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Berger, P. & Luckmann, T. (1971). *The social construction of reality*. New York, NY: Doubleday.

Bernard, T. (1992). *The cycle of juvenile justice*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Best, B. (1997). Retheorizing resistance. In S. Redhead (Ed.), *The clubcultures reader* (pp. 18-35). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Best, J. (1989). *Images of issues: Typifying contemporary social problems*. New York, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.

Best, J. (1995). Lost in the ozone again. *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, 17, 125-130.

Best, J. & Luckenbill, D. (1994). *Organizing deviance*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Best, S. & Kellner, D. (1997). *The postmodern turn*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Bey, H. (1991). T.A.Z. *The temporary autonomous zone, ontological anarchy, poetic terrorism*. Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia.

Bibby, R. & Posterski, D. (1985). *The emerging generation: An inside look at Canadian teenagers*. Toronto, ON: Irwin.

Bibby, R. & Posterski, D. (1992). *Teen trends: A nation in motion*. Toronto, ON: Stoddard

Bing, L. (1991). *Do or die*. New York, NY. Harper Collins.

Blanchfield, M. (1996, September 28). Police seize potentially fatal drug - versions of Ecstasy found in Ottawa. *Ottawa Citizen*, p. C1.

Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Blumer, H. (1971). Social Problems as Collective Behavior. *Social Problems*, 18, 298-306.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Bradley, B. (1994, July 18). Raves all the rage. *Winnipeg Free Press*, p. 5.

Brake, M. (1980). *The sociology of youth culture and youth subcultures*. Boston, MA: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Brake, M. (1985). *Comparative youth cultures*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Brook, J. & Boal, I. (Eds.) (1995). *Resisting the virtual life: The culture and politics of information*. San Francisco, CA: City Lights.

Brown, A. (1997). Let's all have a disco: Football, popular music and democratization. In S. Redhead (Ed.), *The clubcultures reader: Readings in popular cultural studies* (pp. 79-101). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Brymer, R. (1991). The emergence and maintenance of a deviant subculture: The case of hunting/poaching subculture. *Anthropologica*, XXXIII, 177-194.

Burgess, E. (1925). The growth of the city: An introduction to a research project. In R. Park, E. Burgess and R. McKenzie (Eds.), *The City*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Busch, L. (1982). History, negotiation, and structure in agricultural sciences. Urban Life, 11, 368-384.

Cagle, V. (1989). The language of cultural studies: An analysis of British subculture theory. *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, 10, 301-313.

Callinicos, A. (1990). *Against postmodernism: A marxist critique*. London: St. Martin's Press.

Carrigan, D. (1998). *Juvenile delinquency in Canada: A history*. Concord, ON: Irwin Publishing.

Carrigan, T., Connell, R., & Lee, J. (1987). Toward a new sociology of masculinity. In H. Brod (Ed.), *The making of masculinities: The new men's studies* (pp. 63-100). Boston, MA: Allen and Unwin.

Cerncovich, S. & Giordano, P. (1987). Family relationships and delinquency. *Criminology*, 25(2), 295-321.

Chambers, I. (1986). *Popular culture: The metropolitan experience*. London: Methuen.

Chambers, I. (1994). *Migrancy, culture, identity*. London: Routledge.

Champion, S. (Ed.) (1998) *Disco 2000: Nineteen new stories from the last hours of 1999*. London: Sceptre.

Chen, J. Monkman, D. & Dubey, A. (1996). Ketamine on rise at raves. *The Journal* (for the Addiction Research Foundation). http://www.arf.org/researchup.html.

Chen, K. (1991). Post-Marxism: Between/beyond critical postmodernism and cultural studies. *Media, Culture and Society*, 13, 35-51.

Chen, K. (1996). Post-Marxism: Between/beyond critical postmodernism and cultural studies. In D. Morley & K. Chen (Eds.), *Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies* (pp. 309-325). New York, NY: Routledge.

Clarke, J. (1976). Style. In S. Hall and T. Jefferson (Eds.), *Resistance through rituals: Youth sub-cultures in post-war Britain* (pp. 175-191). London: Hutchison.

Clarke, J. (1991). *New times and old enemies: Essays on cultural studies and America*. London: Harper Collins.

Clifford, J. (1988). *The predicament of culture: Twentieth century ethnography, literature, and art*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Clifford, J. & Marcus, E. (Eds). (1986). *Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Clough, P. (1988). The movies and social observation: Reading Blumer's 'movies and conduct'. *Symbolic Interaction*, 11(1), 85-97.

Clough, P. (1992a). A response to Faberman's distinguished lecture: A closer encounter with postmodernism. *Symbolic Interaction*, 15(3), 359-366.

Clough, P. (1992b). *The end(s) of ethnography*. Newbury Park:, CA: Sage.

Cloward, R. & Ohlin, L. (1960). *Delinquency and opportunity: A theory of delinquent gangs*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Cobley, P. (1994) Throwing out the baby: Populism and active audience theory. *Media, Culture and Society*, 16: 677-687.

Cohen, J. & Krugman, M. (1994). *Generation ecch!* New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Cohen, A. (1955). *Delinquent boys*. Glencoe IL: The Free Press of Glencoe.

Cohen, A. (1997). General theories of subculltures. In K. Gelder & S. Thornton (Eds.), *The subcultures reader* (pp. 44-54). New York, NY: Routledge.

Cohen, P. (1972). Subcultural conflict and working-class community. *Working papers in cultural studies*, 2 (Spring), 5-52.

Cohen, P. (1999). *Rethinking the youth question: Education, labour and cultural studies*. Durham, NC:

Duke University Press.

Cohen, S. (1972). *Folk devils and moral panics: The creation of mods and rockers*. London: Macgibbon and Kee.

Cohen, S. & Young, J. (1973). *The manufacture of news: Social problems, deviance and the mass media*. London: Constable.

Cole, C. (1993). Resisting the canon: Feminist cultural studies, sport, and technologies of the body. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 17(2), 77-97.

Coleman, J. (1992). The nature of adolescence. In J. Coleman and C. Warren-Adamson (Eds.), *Youth policy in the 1990s: The way forward* (pp. 8-27). New York, NY: Routledge.

Collin, M. (1997). *Altered state: The story of ecstasy culture and acid house*. London: Serpents' Tail.

Collingwood, T. (1997). Providing physical fitness programs to at-risk youth. *Quest*, 49(1), 67-84.

Connell, R. (1987). *Gender and power: Society, the person and sexual politics*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Connell, R. (1995). *Masculinities*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Corbin, J. & Strauss, A. (1990). Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria. *Qualitative Sociology*, 13, 1.

Corringan, P.(1979). *Schooling the smash street kids*. London : Macmillan.

Cowie, E. (1977). Women, representation and the image. *Screen Education*, 2-3, 15-23.

Crosset, T. & Beal, B. The use of "subculture" and "subworld" in ethnographic works on sport: A discussion of definitional distinctions. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 14(1), 73-85.

Cudmore, J. (1999, March 9). Rave Drug GHB doesn't mix well: T.O. club goers increasingly end up in hospital. *National Post*, p. B4.

Culbert, L. (1998, June 2). UBC calls and end to all-night rave parties: A party on the weekend ended with four overdoses and a home invasion. *Vancouver Sun*, p. B3.

Damon, W. (1997). *The youth charter: How communities can work together to raise standards for all our children*. Toronto, ON: The Free Press.

Davies, S. (1994a). In search of resistance and rebellion among high school drop-outs. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 19(3), 331-350.

Davies, S. (1994b). Class dismissed? Student opposition in Ontario high schools. *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 31(4), 422-445.

Davies, S. (1995). Leaps of faith: Shifting currents in critical sociology of education. *American Journal of Sociology*, 6, 1448-1478.

Dawson, L. & Prus, R. (1993). Interactionist ethnography and postmodern discourse. *Studies in Symbolic Interactionism*, 15, 147-177.

Dawson, L. & Prus, R. (1995). Postmodernism and linguistic reality vs symbolic interactionism and obdurate reality. *Studies in Symbolic Interactionism*, 17, 105-124.

De Certeau, M. (1984). *The practice of everyday life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

De Saussure, F. (1966). *Course in general linguistics*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1977). *Anti-Oedipus: Captialism and schizophrenia*. New York, NY: Viking.

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Denzin, N. (1988). Blue Velvet: Postmodern contradictions. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 5, 461-473.

Denzin, N. (1989a). *Interpretive interactionism*. Newbury Park, CA. Sage.

Denzin, N. (1989b). *Interpretive biography*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Denzin, N. (1990). The spaces of postmodernism: Reading Plummer on Blumer. *Symbolic Interaction*, 13(2), 145-154.

Denzin, N. (1992). *Symbolic interactionism and cultural studies: The politics of interpretation*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Denzin, N. (1993). The postmodern sensibility. *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, 15, 179-188.

Denzin, N. (1996). Prophetic pragmatism and the postmodern: A comment on Maines. *Symbolic Interaction*, 19(4), 341-355.

Denzin, N. & Lincoln, T. (Eds). (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications.

Dery, M. (1996). *Escape velocity: Cyberculture at the end of the century*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Dickens, D. & Fontana, A. (1994). *Postmodernism and social inquiry*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Dickens, D. & Fontana, A. (1996). On nostalgic reconstruction in interactionist thought – or, realism as the last refuge of a scoundrel. *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, 20, 181-192.

Ditchburn, J. (1996). Drug called ecstasy remains pillar of 'rave' dance scene. *The Record* (Kitchener, ON), p. D4.

Dishion, T., Loeber, R., Stouthamer-Loeber, M. & Patterson, G. (1984). Skill deficits and male adolescent delinquency. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 12(1), 37-54.

Donnelly, P. (1985). Sport subcultures. In R. Terjung (Ed.), *Exercise and sport sciences review*, vol. 13 (pp. 539-578). New York, NY: MacMillan.

Donnelly, P. (1993a). Subcultures in sport: Resilience and transformation. In A. Ingham & J. Loy (Eds.), *Sport in Social Development* (pp. 119-145). Windsor, ON: Human Kinetics Publishers.

Donnelly, P. (1993b) Democratization Revisited: Seven Theses on the Democratization of Sport and Active Leisure. *Loisir and Société / Society and Leisure* 16, 413-434.

Donnelly, P. (forthcoming). Interpretive approaches to the sociology of sport. In J. Coakley,& E. Dunning, (Eds.), *Handbook of Sport and Society*. London, UK: Sage.

Donnelly, P. & Harvey, J. (1999). Class and gender: Intersections in sport and physical activity. In P. White & K. Young (Eds.), *Sport and gender in Canada* (pp. 40-64). Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.

Donnelly, P., & Young, K. (1988). The construction and confirmation of identity in sport subcultures. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 5, 223-240.

Downes, D. (1966). *The delinquent solution*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Downes, D. & Rock, P. (1982). *Understanding deviance*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Drake, J. (1995, March/ April). Drug-taking a powerful undertow to rave wave. *The Journal* (of the Addiction Research Foundation), 24(2), 9.

Dubey, A. (1996, March/April). Tainted Ecstasy surfaces at raves. *The Journal* (of the Addiction Research Foundation), 25(2).

Duffy, A., Hall, J, & DeMara, B. (May 5, 1992). Metro police, mob clash on Yonge St. *The Toronto Star*, p. A1.

Duncan, M. (1990). Sports photographs and sexual difference: Images of women and men in the 1984 and 1988 Olympic games. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 7(1), 22-43.

Eagleton, T. (1991). *Ideology: An introduction*. London: Verso.

Eagleton, T. (1996). *The illusions of postmodernism*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Eco, U. (1972). Towards a semiotic enquiry into the television message. *Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, 3, University of Birmingham.

Edwards, S. (1998, Nov. 2). Study says ravers risk memory loss and other brain damage if they take Ecstasy. *National Post*, p. D3.

Eisner, B. (1994). *Ecstasy: The MDMA story*. Berkeley, CA: Ronin Publishing.

Elkin, F. & Westley, W. (1955). The myth of adolescent culture. *American Sociological Review*, 20, 680-684.

Empey, L. (1982). *American delinquency: Its meaning and construction*. Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press.

Epstein, J. (1998). *Youth culture: Identity in a postmodern world*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Erlandson, D., Harris, E., Skipper, B., Allen, S. (1993). *Doing naturalistic inquiry: A guide to methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Farberman, H. (1991). Symbolic interaction and postmodernism: Close encounters of the dubious kind. *Symbolic Interaction*, 14, 471-488.

Featherstone, M. (1987). Lifestyle and Consumer Culture. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 4, 55-70.

Featherstone, M. (1991). *Consumer culture and postmodernism*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Fee, D. (1992). Symbolic interaction and postmodern possibilities: A comment on Harvey Farberman's distinguished lecture, *Symbolic Interaction*, 15, 367-373.

Fine, G. (1987). *With the boys: Little league baseball and preadolescent culture*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Fine, G. & Kleinman, S. (1979). Rethinking subculture: An interactionist analysis. *American Journal of Sociology*, 85(1), 1-20.

Fine, G. & Kleinman, S. (1983). Network and meaning: An interactionist approach to structure. *Symbolic Interaction*, 6, 97-110.

Fine, G. & Mechling, J. (1993). Child saving and children's cultures at century's end. In S. Heath & M. McLaughlin (Eds.), *Identity and inner-city youth* (pp. 120-146). New York, NY: Teacher's College Press.

Fish, S. (1979) *Is there a text in this class? The authority of interpretive communities*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Fiske, J. (1987). *Television culture*. London: Methuen.

Fiske, J. (1989a). *Reading the popular*. Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman.

Fiske, J. (1989b). *Understanding popular culture*. Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman

Foley, D. (1990). The great American football ritual: Reproducing race, class, and gender inequality. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 7, 111-135.

Foley, D. (1992). Making the strange familiar: Writing critical sports narratives. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 9, 36-47.

Fontana, A. (1993). Interactionist ethnography and postmodern discourse revisited. *Studies in Symbolic Interactionism*, 15, 189-192.

Fontana, A. (1994). Ethnographic trends in the postmodern era. In D. Dickens & A. Fontana (Eds.), *Postmodernism and social Inquiry* (pp. 203-223). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/Knowledge*. Toronto: Random House.

Foucault, M. (1986). Of other space. *Diacritics*, 16.

Fowler, R. (1991). *Language in the news: Discourse and ideology in the press*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Fraser, N. (1989). *Unruly practices: Power, discourse and gender in contemporary social theory*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Frieson, B. (1990). Powerlessness in adolescence: Exploiting heavy metal listeners. In C. Sanders (Ed.), *Marginal convention: Popular culture, mass media and social deviance* (65-77). Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press.

Frith, S. (1978). *The sociology of rock*. London: Constable.

Frith, S. (1985). The sociology of youth. In Michael Haralabos (Ed.), *Sociology: New directions*. Ormskirk: Causeway Press.

Frith, S. (1987). Toward an aesthetic of popular music. In R. Leppert & S. McClary (Eds.), *Music and society: The politics of composition, performance and reception* (pp. 133-149). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Frith, S. & Savage, J. (1993). Pearls and swine: Intellectuals and the mass media. *New Left Review*, 198, 107-116.

Frith, S. & Savage, J. (1997). Pearls and swine: Intellectuals and the mass media. In S. Redhead (Ed.), *The clubcultures reader* (pp. 7-17). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Frow, J. (1991). Michel de Certeau and the practice of representation. *Cultural Studies*, 5(1), pp. 52-60.

Fuller, L. (1992) *The Cosby show: Audiences, impact and implications*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Gane, Mike. (1993). *Baudrillard live*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Gans, H. (1974). *Popular culture and high culture*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Garfinkal, H. (1967). *Studies in ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Garratt, S. (1998). *Adventures in wonderland: A decade of club culture*. London: Headline Book Publishers.

Geertz, C. (1973). *Interpretations of culture*. New York, NY: Basic books.

Geertz, C. (1988). *Works and lives: The anthropologist as author*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Gibson, W. (1984). *Neuromancer*. New York: Dell Books.

Giddens, A. (1984). *The constitution of society: Outline of the theory of structuration*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Gillis, J. (1974). *Youth and history*. New York, NY: Academic Press.

Gitlin, T. (1989). Postmodernism defined, at last. *Utne Reader*, July/August.

Glaser, B. & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.

Glenday, D. (1996). Mean streets and hard times: Youth unemployment and crime in Canada. In O'Bireck (Ed.), *Not a kid anymore: Canadian youth, crime, and subcultures* (pp. 147-174). Toronto, ON: Nelson Canada.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York, NY: Anchor.

Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis*. New York, NY: Harper Colophon.

Goldman, A. (1978). *Disco*. New York, NY: Hawthorne Books.

Gordon, R. (1995). Street gangs in Vancouver. In R. Silverman & J. Creechan (Eds.) *Canadian Delinquency* (pp. 311-321). Scarborough, ON: Prentice Hall.

Gore, G. (1997). The beat goes on: Trance, dance and tribalism in rave culture. In H. Thomas (Ed.), *Dance in the city* (pp. 50-67). New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks*. New York, NY: International publishers

Gray, H. (1989). Television, Black Americans, and the American Dream. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 6: 376-386.

Griffin, C. (1985). *Typical girls? Young women from school to job market*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Grossberg, L. (1984). "I'd rather feel bad than not feel anything at all": Rock and roll, pleasure and power. *Eclectic*, 8(1-2), 94-110.

Grossberg, L. (1986). History, politics and postmodernism: Stuart Hall and cultural studies. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 10(2), 61-77.

Grossberg, L. (1988) Wandering audiences, nomadic critics. *Cultural Studies*, 2(3), 377-391.

Grossberg, L. (1989). The formations of cultural studies: An American in Birmingham, *Strategies*, 2, 114-149.

Grossberg, L. (1996). History, politics and postmodernism: Stuart Hall and cultural studies. In D. Morley & K. Chen (Eds.), *Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies* (pp. 151-173). New York, NY: Routledge.

Grossberg, L. (1997). Re-placing popular culture. In S. Redhead (Ed.), *The clubcultures reader: Readings in popular cultural studies* (pp. 217-237). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Grossberg, L. & Hall, S. (1986). On postmodernism and articulation – An interview with Stuart Hall. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 10(2).

Gruneau, R. (1981). Review of Surfing subcultures of Australia and New Zealand. ICSS *Bulletin*, 21, 8-10.

Gruneau, R. (1988). Introduction: Notes on popular culture and political practice. In R. Gruneau (Ed.), *Popular cultures and political practices* (pp. 11-32). Toronto, ON: Garamound Press.

Guattari, F. (1996). *Soft subversions*. New York, NY: Semiotext(e).

Gurney, J. (1991). Female researchers in male-dominated settings: Implications for short-term versus long-term research. In W. Shaffir & R. Stebbins (Eds.), *Experiencing fieldwork: An inside view of qualitative research* (pp. 53-61). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Haas, J. & Shaffir, W. (1991). *Becoming doctors: The adoption of a cloak of competence*. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press Inc.

Haden-Guest, A. (1997). *The last party: Studio 54, disco, and the culture of the night*. New York, NY: William Morrow and Company.

Hagan, J. & McCarthy. (1992). Street life and delinquency. *British Journal of Sociology*, 43(4), 533-561.

Hall, A. (1993). Feminism, theory and the body: A response to Cole. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*,

17(2), 98-105.

Hall, A. (1996). *Feminism and sporting bodies: Essays on theory and practice*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Hall, A. (1999). Creators of the lost and perfect game? Gender, history and Canadian Sport. In P. White & K. Young (Eds.), *Sport and gender in Canada* (pp. 5-23). Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.

Hall, P. (1987). Presidential Address: Interactionism and the study of social organization. *Sociological Quarterly*, 28, 1-22.

Hall, S. (1960). Editorial. *New Left Review*, 1, 1.

Hall, S. (1980a). Cultural studies: Two paradigms. *Media, Culture and Society*, 2, 57-72.

Hall, S. (1980b) 'Encoding/decoding' pp. 128-138 in S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe and P. Willis (eds) *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, 1972-79. London: Hutchison.

Hall, S. (1982). The rediscovery of ideology: Return of the repressed in media studies. In M. Gurevitch, T. Bennett, J. Curran, & J. Woollcott (Eds.), *Culture, society and the media* (pp. 56-91). London: Methuen.

Hall, S. (1983). "The problem of ideology – Marxism without guarantees. In B. Matthews (Ed.) *Marx 100 years* on (pp. 57-86). London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Hall, S. (1985). Signification, representation, ideology: Althusser and post-structuralist debates. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 2(2), 91-114.

Hall, S. (1986). On postmodernism and articulation: An interview with Stuart Hall. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 10(2), 78-98.

Hall, S., Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clarke, J., & Roberts, B. (1978). *Policing the crisis*. London: MacMillan.

Hall, S. & Jefferson, T. (Eds.). (1976). *Resistance through rituals: Youth sub-cultures in post-war Britain*. London: Hutchison.

Hammersley, M. (1992). *What's wrong with ethnography?* New York, NY: Routledge.

Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. (1983). *Ethnography: Principles in practice*. London: Tavistock.

Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledge: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575-599.

Harrison, M. (Ed.) (1998). *High society: The real voices of club cultures*. London: Piatkus.

Harvey, D. (1989). *The condition of postmodernity: An inquiry into the origin of culture and change*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Hebdige, D. (1979). *Subculture: The meaning of style*. London: Methuen.

Hebdige, D. (1987). *Cut 'n' mix*. London: Comedia.

Hebdige, D. (1988). *Hiding in the light*. London: Routledge.

Henry, F. (1994). *The Caribbean diaspora in Toronto: Learning to live with racism*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Horkheimer, M. & Adorno, T. (1972). *Dialectic of enlightenment*. Trans. John Cummings. New York: Herder and Herder.

Humphries, D. (1997). 'Shredheads go mainstream'?: Snowboarding and alternative youth. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 32(2), 147-160.

Humphries, D. (1998). *Boarders, punks and ravers: An introduction to the history of commercialized rebellion*. Unpublished masters thesis. University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.

Ingham, A., Howell, J., & Shilperoot, T. (1987). Professional sports and community: A review and exegesis. *Exercise and Sport Sciences Review*, 15, 427-465.

Irwin, J. (1977). *Scenes*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

James, M. (1997). *State of bass – Jungle: The story so far*. Chatham, Kent: Boxtree.

Jameson, F. (1979). Reification and utopia in mass culture. *Social Text*, 1, 130-148.

Jameson, F. (1984). *Post-Modernism or, the cultural logic of late capitalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Jenkins, R. (1992). *Pierre Bourdieu*. London: Routledge.

Jhally, S. & J. Lewis (1992) *Enlightened racism: The Cosby show, audiences, and the myth of the*

*American dream*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Joll, J. (1977). *Gramsci*. London: Fontana.

Jourdain, R. (1997). *Music, the brain, and ecstasy: How music captures our imaginations*. New York, NY: Avon Books.

Kellner, D. (1995a). *Media culture: Cultural studies, identity and politics between the modern and the postmodern*. New York: Routledge.

Kellner, D. (1995b). Mapping the present from the future: From Baudrillard to cyberpunk. In D. Kellner (Author) *Media Culture: Cultural studies, identity and politics between the modern and the postmodern* (pp. 297-330). New York: Routledge.

Kempster, C. (Ed.) (1996). *History of house*. Kent: Staples of Rochester.

Kincheloe, J., & McLaren, P. (1994). Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research. In N. Denzin & T. Lincoln (Eds), *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications.

Kinga, M. (1995 – no date recorded on copy). Rave scene. *Club Scene Magazine*, p. 14.

Knapp, L. (1999, April 30). Two Pentiums and a microphone. *Wired Magazine*. www.wired.com/news/news/email/member/culture/story/19415. .

Kortarba, J. (1991). Postmodernism, ethnography, and culture. *Studies in Symbolic interaction*, 12, 42-52.

Krippendorf, K. (1980). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Laclau, E. & Mouffe, C. (1985). *Hegemony and socialist strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics*. London: Verso.

Laing, D. (1985). *One chord wonders – Power and meaning in punk rock*. Milton Keyes: Open University Press.

Landale, E. (1998, July 14). Raves all the rage to connect. *The Toronto Star*, pp. F1-F2.

Lasn, K. (1999, July/August). The new activism 03: We're not academic. *Adbusters, Journal of the Mental Environment*, 26, 36-37.

Laub, J. & Sampson, R. (1988). Unravelling families and delinquency: A reanalysis of the Gluecks' data. *Criminology*, 26(3), 355-380.

Lehmann-Haupt, R. (1995 May/ June). Sacred raves. *Yoga Journal*, pp. 77-81.

Lemert, E. (1967) *Human deviance, social problems and social control*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Lenson, D. (1995). *On drugs*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Lewis, J. (1991) *The ideological octopus*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Lewis, J. (1997). What counts in cultural studies. *Media, Culture & Society*, 19, 83-97.

Lewis, L. & Ross, M. (1996). *A select body: The gay dance party subculture and the Hiv-AIDS pandemic*. Cassell Academic.

Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Lipsitz, G. (1997). *Dangerous crossroads: Popular music, postmodernism and the poetics of place*. New York, NY: Verso.

Liska, A. (1987). *Perspectives on deviance*. Englewood Cliffs, NY: Prentice Hall.

Lofland, J. (1976). *Doing social life: The qualitative study of human interaction in natural settings*. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons.

Lofland, J. & Lofland, L. (1984). *Analyzing social settings*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Lull, J. (1985). The naturalistic study of media and youth culture. In K. Rosengren, L. Wenner, & P. Palmgreen (Eds.), *Media gratifications research: Current perspectives* (pp.209-224). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Lull, J. (1988). Critical Response: The audience as nuisance. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 5: 239-242.

Lull, J. (1995) *Media, communication, culture: A global approach*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Lyotard, J. (1984). *The postmodern condition*. Manchestor: Manchestor University Press.

Machin, D. & Carrithers, M. (1996). From "interpretive communities" to "communities of improvisation." *Media, Culture and Society*, 18, 343-352.

Maffesoli, M. (1991). The ethics of aesthetics. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 8, 7-21.

Maffesoli, M. (1995). *The time of the tribes: The decline of individualism in mass society*. London: sage.

Maguire, J. (1994). Sport, identity politics, and globalization: Diminishing contrasts and increasing varieties. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 11, 398-427.

Maines, D. (1982). In search of mesostructure. Studies in the negotiated order. *Urban Life*, 11, 267-279.

Maines, D. (1988). Myth, text, and interactionist complicity in the neglect of Blumer's macrosociology. *Symbolic Interaction*, 11, 43-57.

Maines, D. (1989). Repackaging Blumer: The myth of Herbert Blumer's astructural bias. *Studies in Symbolic Interactionism*, 10, 383-413.

Maines, D. (1996). On postmodernism, pragmatism, and plasterers: Some interactionist thoughts and queries. *Symbolic Interaction*, 19, 325-342.

Malbon, B. (1998). Clubbing: Consumption, identity and the spatial practices of every-night life. In T. Skelton & G. Valentine (Eds.), *Cool places: Geographies of youth cultures* (pp. 266-286) New York, NY: Routledge.

Marcus, G. & Fisher, M. (1986). *Anthropology as cultural critique: An experimental moment in human sciences*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Marcuse, H. (1964). *One-dimensional man*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Markham, A. (1998). *Life online: Researching real experience in virtual space*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.

Marquand, D. & Seldon, A. (1996). *The ideas that shaped post-war Britain*. London: Fontana.

Martinek, T. (Ed.). (1997). Serving underserved youth through physical activity. Special issue of *Quest*, 49(1).

Martinek, T. & Hellison, D. (1997). Fostering resiliency in underserved youth through physical activity. *Quest*, 49(1), 34-49.

Marx, K. (1963). *The eighteenth brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. New York, NY: International Publishers.

Mathews, F. (1993). *Youth gangs on youth gangs*. Ottawa, ON: Solicitor General Canada.

Matza, D. (1964). *Delinquency and drift*. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons.

Matza, D. & Sykes, G. (1961). Juvenile delinquency and subterranean values. *American Sociological Review*, 26, 326-543.

McCall, G. & Simmons, J. (1969). *Issues in participant observation*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

McCarthy-Smith, M. (1991). The history of subculture theory: An overview. Unpublished paper taken from McCarthy-Smith, M. (1990). *Gay communities, gay world: The evolution of institutional completeness and organizational sophistication*. Unpublished M.A. thesis, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

McGuigan, J. (1992). *Cultural populism*. New York, NY: Routledge.

McKay, J. (1995) "Just do it": Corporate sports slogans and the political economy of enlightened racism. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 16(2): 191-201.

McKay, S. (1994). *A review of the effectiveness of recreation prevention and intervention efforts with at-risk and juvenile delinquent populations*. Unpublished Masters Thesis: Texas A&M University.

McLaren, L. (1998, June 6). Rave culture: And the beat goes on, and on, and on. *The Globe and Mail*, pp. D1, D2.

McLaughlin, M. (1993). Embedded identities: Enabling balance in urban contexts. In S. Heath & M. McLaughlin (Eds.), *Identity and inner-city youth* (pp. 36-68). New York, NY: Teacher's College Press.

McLaughlin, N. (1998). How to become a forgotten intellectual: Intellectual movements and the rise and fall of Erich Fromm. *Sociological Forum*, 13(2), 215-246.

McRobbie, A. (1977). *Working-class girls and the culture of femininity*. Unpublished MA thesis, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, UK.

McRobbie, A. (1982). Jackie: An ideology of adolescent femininity. In B. Waites, T. Bennett, & G. Martin (Eds.), *Popular culture: Past and present*. London: Open University Press.

McRobbie, A. (1986). Postmodernism and popular culture. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 10(2), 108-116.

McRobbie, A. (1987). Settling accounts with subcultures: A feminist critique. In Bennett, T., Martin, G., Mercer, C., & Woollacott, J. (Eds.), Culture, Ideology and Social Process (pp. 111-123). London: B.T. Batsford Ltd.

McRobbie, A. (1991a). Feminism and Youth Culture. Boston: Unwin Hyman.

McRobbie, A. (1991b). Jackie and Just Seventeen in the 1980s. In A. McRobbie (Author), Feminism and Youth Culture (pp. 135-188). Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman.

McRobbie, A. (1991c). Dance Narratives and Fantasies of Achievement. In Angela McRobbie (Author), Feminism and Youth Culture (pp. 189-219). Boston: Unwin Hyman.

McRobbie, A. (1991d). The culture of working class girls. In A. McRobbie (Author), Feminism and youth culture (pp. 35-60). Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman.

McRobbie, A. (1993). Shut up and dance: Youth culture and changing modes of femininity. Cultural Studies, 7(3), 406-426.

McRobbie, A. (1994a). Youth culture and femininity. In A. McRobbie (Author), Postmodernism and popular culture (pp. 155-176). New York, NY: Routledge.

McRobbie, A. (1994b). The moral panic in the age of the postmodern mass media. In A. McRobbie (Author), Postmodernism and Popular Culture (pp. 198-219) London: Routledge.

McRobbie, A. (1994c). Second-hand Dresses and the Role of the Rag Market. In A. McRobbie (Author), Postmodernism and Popular Culture (pp. 135-154). London: Routledge.

McRobbie, A. (1994d). A Cultural Sociology of Youth. In A. McRobbie (Author), Postmodernism and Popular Culture (pp. 177-197). London: Routledge.

McRobbie, A. (1994e). Postmodernism and popular culture. London: Routledge.

McRobbie, A. (1996a). All the world's a stage, screen or magazine: When culture is the logic of late capitalism. Media, Culture & Society, 18, 335-342.

McRobbie, A. (1996b). Looking back at new times and its enemies. In D. Morley & K. Chen (Eds.), Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies (pp. 238-261). New York, NY: Routledge.

McRobbie, A. & Garber, J. (1976). Girls and subcultures: An exploration. In S Hall & T. Jefferson (Eds.), Resistance through rituals: Youth subcultures in post-war Britain (pp. 209-222). London: Hutchison.

McRobbie, A. & Nava, M. (1984). Gender and generation. London: Methuen.

McRobbie, A & Thornton, S. (1995). Rethinking 'moral panic' for multi-mediated social worlds. British Journal of Sociology, 46(4), 559-574.

Mechling, J. (1981). Male gender display at a Boy Scout camp. In R. Sieber & J. Gordon (Eds.), Children and their organizations: Investigations in American culture (pp. 138-160). Boston, MA: G.K. Hall.

Merton, R. (1938). Social structure and anomie. American Sociological Review, 3, 672-682.

Merton, R. (1957). Social theory and social structure. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press of Glencoe.

Messner, M. & Sabo, D. (1990). Sport, men and the gender order: Critical feminist perspectives. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Books.

Miles, C. (1997). Spatial politics: A gendered sense of place. In S. Redhead (Ed.), The clubcultures reader (pp. 66-78). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Miller, W. (1958). Lower class culture as a generating milieu of gang delinquency. Journal of Social Issues, 14(3), 5-14.

Mills, C.W. (1959). The sociological imagination. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Mitrano, J. (1999). The "sudden death" of hockey in Hartford: Sports fans and franchise relocation. Sociology of Sport Journal, 16(2), 134-154.

Modleski, T. (1986). Introduction. In T. Modleski (Ed.), Studies in entertainment: Critical approaches to mass culture. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Mofina, R. (1996). Young Offenders and the Press. In J. Winterdyk (Ed.), Issues and Perspectives on Young Offenders in Canada (pp. 101-117). Toronto: Harcourt Brace and Company, Canada.

Moores, S. (1993). Interpreting audiences: The ethnography of media consumption. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Morgan, D. (1988) Focus groups as qualitative research. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Morley, D. & Chen, K. (Eds.) (1996). *Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Morris, M. (1988). The pirate's financee: feminists and philosophers, or maybe tonight it'll happen. In I. Diamond and I. Quinby (Eds.) *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Muggleton, D. (1997). The post-subculturalist. In S. Redhead (Ed.), *The clubcultures reader* (pp. 186-203). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Mungham, G. & Pearson, G. (1976). *Working class youth cultures*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Nauright, J., & White, P. (1996). Nostalgia, community and nation: Professional hockey and football in Canada. *Avante*, 2(3), 24-41.

Neitzche, F. (1968). *The will to power*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Neitzche, F. (1986). *Human, all too human*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Norris, C. (1990). Lost in the funhouse: Baudrillard and the politics of postmodernism. In R. Boyne & A. Rattansi (Eds.), *Postmodernism and society* (pp. 119-34). London: Macmillan

O'Bireck, G. (Ed.) (1996a). *Not a kid anymore: Canadian youth, crime, and subcultures*. Toronto, ON: Nelson Canada.

O'Bireck, G. (1996b). Preppies and heavies in bigtown: Secondary school experiences. In G. O'Bireck (Ed.), *Not a kid anymore: Canadian youth, crime, and subcultures* (pp. 247-281). Toronto, ON: Nelson Canada.

Offord, D. & Knox, M. (1994). *Yours, mine and ours. Ontario's children and youth*. Phase 1: Premiere's Council on Health and Well-Being and Social Justice. Queen's Printer For Ontario.

Onstad, K. (1997, March). What are we afraid of?: The myth of youth crime. *Saturday Night*, 46-58.

Park, E. Burgess & R. McKenzie (Eds.) (1925). *The City*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Pesch, M., & Weisberg, M. (1998). *Techno style: The album cover art*. Zurich: EDITION OLMS AG.

Pestello, F. & Voydanoff, P. (1991). In search of mesostructure in the family: An interactionist approach to the division of labor. *Symbolic Interaction*, 14(2), 105-128.

Phillips, M. (1999). *Saving the club: The South Sydney list serve and resistance*. Paper presented at the Third Conference of the Australian Football Studies Group called "Teams and Fans" at Twin Waters, Sunshine Coast, Queensland, Australia, July 15-18.

Pierson, R. (1986). *"They're still women after all": The second world war and Canadian womanhood*. Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart.

Pini, M. (1993). *Rave, dance and women*. Unpublished MA Dissertation. Thames Valley

Pini, M. (1997). Women and the early British rave scene. In A. McRobbie (Ed.), *Back to reality: Social experience and cultural studies*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Plummer, K. (1990). Staying in the empirical world: Symbolic interactionism and postmodernism, A response to Denzin. *Symbolic Interaction*, 13(2), 155-160.

Polsky, N. (1969). *Hustlers, beats, and others*. New York, NY: Anchor.

Porter, D. (Ed.) (1997). *Internet culture*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Poster, M. (1989). *Critical theory and poststructuralism: In search of context*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Prendergast, C. & Knotternus, J. (1990). The astructural bias and presuppositional reform in symbolic interactionism: A noninteractionist evaluation of the new studies in social organization. In L Reynolds (Ed.), *Interactionism: Exposition and critique* (pp. 158-180). Dix Hills, NY: General Hall Inc.

Proweller, A. (1998). *Constructing female identities: Meaning making in an upper middle class youth culture*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Prus, R. (1987). Generic social processes: Maximizing conceptual development in ethnographic research. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 16, 250-293.

Prus, R. (1994a). Approaching the study of human group life: symbolic interaction and ethnographic inquiry. In M. Dietz, R. Prus & W. Shaffir (Eds.), *Doing everyday life*. (pp. 10-29). Mississauga, ON.: Copp Clark Longman Ltd.

Prus, R. (1994b). Generic social processes: Intersubjectivity and transcontextuality in social science. In M.

Dietz, R. Prus & W. Shaffir (Eds.), *Doing everyday life*. (pp. 393-412). Mississauga, ON.: Copp Clark Longman Ltd.

Prus, R. (1995). *Envisioning power as intersubjective accomplishment: Acknowledging the human enterprise entailed in tactician-target interchanges*. Paper presented at Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction, Washington, DC, August 20-21.

Prus, R. (1996a). *Symbolic interaction and ethnographic research: Intersubjectivity and the study of human lived experience*. Albany, NY: State University of New York.

Prus, R. (1996b). Adolescent life-worlds and deviant involvement. In G. O'Bireck (Ed.), *Not a kid anymore: Canadian youth, crime, and subcultures* (pp. 7-70). Toronto, ON: Nelson Canada.

Prus, R. (1997). *Subcultural mosaics and intersubjective realities: An ethnographic agenda for pragmatizing the social sciences*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Prus, R. (1999). *Beyond the power mystique: Power as intersubjective accomplishment*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Prus, R., Dietz, M.L. & Shaffir, W. (1994). Writing Ethnographic Texts: Some Practical Considerations. Paper presented at *Studying Human Lived Experience Conference*, May 18-21. University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.

Radway, J. (1986) Identifying ideological seams: Mass culture, analytic method, and political practice. *Communication*, 9(1), 93-124.

Radway, J. (1988) Reception study: Ethnography and the problem of dispersed and nomadic subjects. *Cultural Studies*, 2(4), 359-376.

Radway, J. (1991, originally published 1984). *Reading the romance: Women, patriarchy, and popular literature*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Rail, G. (1998). *Sport and postmodern times*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Raphael, M. (1998, December, 29). Drug chic hits the mall: The buzz at Eatons – Ravers and marijuana aficionados are reading a lot of nudge, nudge, wink, wink into the latest advertising campaigns such as Eaton's, Roots, and the Body Shop. The companies say it's a non-issue. Whatever. *National Post*, pp. B5-B6.

Redhead, S. (1990). *End of the century party: Youth and pop towards 2000*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

Redhead, S. (1991). Rave off: Youth, subculture and the law. *Social Studies Review*, 6(3).

Redhead, S. (1997a). *Subcultures to clubcultures: An introduction to popular cultural studies*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Redhead, S. (Ed.), (1997b). *The clubcultures reader: Readings in popular cultural studies*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Redhead, S. (1997c). Pop time, acid house. In S. Redhead (Author), *Subcultures to clubcultures: An introduction to popular cultural studies* (pp. 56-60). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Reid, I. & Tremblay, M. (1994). *Canadian youth: Does activity reduce risk?* Ottawa, ON: The Fitness Directorate of Health Canada and the Canadian Parks/Recreation Association.

Reynolds, S. (1994, February). Generation E. *Artforum*, 54-57.

Reynolds, S. (1997). Rave culture: Living dream or living death. In S. Redhead (Ed.), *The clubcultures reader: Readings in popular cultural studies* (pp. 102-111). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Reynolds, S. (1998). *Generation ecstasy: Into the world of techno and rave culture*. Toronto, ON: Little, Brown and Company.

Rheingold, H. (1993). *The virtual community: Homesteading on the electronic frontier*. New York, NY: HarperPerennial.

Roberts, A. (1992, August 14). Ecstasy Deaths Rising. *The Times*.

Roman, L. & Christian-Smith, L. (Eds.) (1988). *Becoming feminine: The politics of popular culture*. London: Falmer Press.

Rose, D. (1990). *Living the ethnographic life*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Rosengren, K., L. Wenner and P. Palmgreen (Eds.). (1985). *Media gratifications research*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Rushkoff, D. (1994). *Cyberia: Life in the trenches of hyperspace*. San Francisco, CA: HarperEdge.

Rushkoff, D. (1996). *Playing the future: How kids' culture can teach us to thrive in an age of chaos.* New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Rushkoff, D. (1997). *Ecstasy club.* San Franciso, CA: HarperEdge,

Saunders, C. (1995). Stranger than fiction. *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, 17, 89-104.

Saunders, N. (1996). *Ecstasy: Dance, trance and transformation.* Oakland, CA: Quick American Archives.

Schissel, B. (1993). *Social dimensions of Canadian youth justice.* Toronto, ON: Oxford University Press.

Schoder, K. (1994) Audience semiotics, interpretive communities, and the "ethnographic turn" in media research. *Media, Culture and Society*, 16(2), 337-348.

Schutz, A. (1967). *The phenomenology of the social world.* Trans. G. Walsh and F. Lehnert. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University.

Seaman, W. (1992) Active audiences theory: Pointless populism. *Media, Culture and Society*, 14, 301-311.

Seiter, E., Borchers, H., Kreutzner, G. & Warth, E. (1989) *Remote Control: Television, Audiences, and Cultural Power.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Shaffir, W., & Stebbins, R. (1991). *Experiencing fieldwork: An inside view of qualitative research.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Shaw, C. (1930). *The jack roller: A delinquent boy's own story.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Shaw, C., & Moore, M. (1931). *The natural history of a delinquent career.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Shaw, C., McKay, H., and McDonald, J. (1938). *Brothers in crime.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Shaw, C., & McKay, H. (1942). *Juvenile delinquency and urban areas.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Silverstone, R. (1990). Television and Everyday Life: Towards an Anthropology of the Television Audience. In Marjorie Ferguson (Ed.), *Public Communication: The New Imperatives* (pp. 173-189). London: Sage.

Skelton, T., & Valentine, G. (1998). *Cool places: Geographies of youth cultures.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Slater, H. (1996, March 6). Neutral and Commercial...Just Like Everybody Else, Review of Sarah Thornton's "Club Cultures". *CTHEORY*, 42.

Smart, B. (1992). *Modern conditions, postmodern controversies.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Smith, D. (1988). *Femininity as discourse.* In. L. Roman & L. Christian-Smith (Eds.), *Becoming feminine: The politics of popular culture.* London: Falmer Press.

Smith, J. (1995). *The rave community: Youth subculture as a positive phenomenon.* Unpublished undergraduate thesis, McMaster University, Hamilton.

Smith, J. (1997). *Hanging out and the mall: The production of an adolescent social space.* Unpublished masters thesis, McMaster University, Hamilton.

Smith, M. (1979). *The city and social theory.* New York, NY: St. Martins Press.

Solomon, P. (1992). *Black resistance in high school: Forging a separatist culture.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Spector, M. (1973). Secrecy in job seeking among government attorneys: Two contingencies in the theory of subcultures. *Urban Life and Culture*, 2, 211-229.

Stanley, C. (1997). Not drowning but waving: Urban narratives of dissent in the wild zone. In S. Redhead, D. Wynne, & J. O'Connor (Eds.), *The clubcultures reader* (pp. 36-54). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Stebbins, R. (1988). *Deviance: Tolerable differences.* Toronto, ON: McGraw-Hill Ryerson.

Stewart, D. & P. Shamdasani (1990) *Focus groups: Theory and practice.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Strauss, A. et. al. (1963). The hospital and its negotiated order. In E. Freidson (Ed.), *The hospital in modern society* (pp. 147-169). New York, NY: Free press.

Straw, W. (1991). Systems of articulation, logics of change: Scenes and communities in popular music.

*Cultural Studies*, 5(3), 361-375.

Straw, W. (1997a). Organized disorder: The changing space of the record shop. In S. Redhead (Ed.), *The clubcultures reader* (pp. 66-78). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Straw, W. (1997b). Scenes and communities in popular music. In K. Gelder & S. Thornton (Eds.), *The Subcultures Reader* (pp. 494-505) London: Routledge.

Strongman, J. (1999). Rave: the culture that isn't. *Discord*, 10.

Sutherland, E. (1937). *The professional thief.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Tagg, P. (1994) From refrain to rave: The decline of figure and the rise of ground. *Popular Music*, 13(2), 209-222.

Tankel, J. (1990). The practice of recording music: Remixing as recoding. *Journal of Communication*, 40(3), 34-46.

Tanner, J. (1978). Youth culture in a Canadian high school: An empirical analysis. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 3, 89-102.

Tanner, J. (1990). Reluctant rebels: A case study of Edmonton high-school drop-outs. *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 21(1), 79-94.

Tanner, J. (1992). Youthful deviance. In V. Sacco (Ed.), *Deviance: Conformity and control in Canada* (pp. 203-235). Scarborough, ON: Prentice-Hall.

Tanner, J. (1996). *Teenage troubles: Youth and deviance in Canada.* Toronto, ON: Nelson Canada.

Tapscott, D. (1997). *The digital economy: Promise and peril in the age of networked intelligence.* Toronto, ON: McGraw-Hill.

Tapscott, D. (1998). *Growing up digital: The rise of the net generation.* Toronto, ON: McGraw-Hill.

Taylor, I. & Wall, D. (1976). Beyond the skinheads -- comments on the emergence and significance of the glamrock cult. In G. Mungham & G. Pearson (Eds.), *Working Class Youth Culture*. London: Routledge.

Taylor, S. & Bogdan, R. (1984). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: The search for meaning.* New York, NY: John Wiley.

Teshler, E. (1998, June 17). Teen's actions prove power of young people. *The Toronto Star*, A2.

Thomas, W. (1923). *The unadjusted girl.* Boston, MA: Little, Brown.

Thompson, E.P. (1968). *The making of the English working class.* London: Penguin.

Thornton, S. (1993). *From record hops to raves. Cultural studies of youth, music & media.* Doctoral thesis, John Logie Baird Centre, University of Strathclyde.

Thornton, S. (1994). Moral panic, the media and British rave culture. In A. Ross and T. Rose (Eds.) *Microphone fiends: Youth music, youth culture* (pp. 176-192). New York, NY: Routledge.

Thornton, S. (1995). *Club cultures: Music, media and subcultural capital.* Hanover: Wesleyan University Press.

Thrasher, F. (1927). *The gang.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Tomlinson, A. (1998). Domination, negotiation, and resistance in sport cultures. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 22(3), 235-240.

Tomlinson, L. (1998). 'This ain't no disco?'...or is it: Youth culture and the rave phenomenon. In. J. Epstein (Ed.), *Youth culture: Identity in a postmodern world* (pp. 195-211). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Toop, D. (1995). *Ocean of sound: Aether talk, ambient sound and imaginary worlds.* New York, NY: Serpent's Tail.

Trask, S. (1996). Future shock. In C. Kempster (Ed.), *History of house* (pp. 41-48). London: Sanctuary Publishing.

Tyler, S. (1986). Post-modern ethnography: From document of the occult to occult document. In J. Clifford & G. Marcus (Eds.), *Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography* (pp. 122-140). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Unruh, D. (1983). *Invisible lives: Social worlds of the aged.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Valentine, G., Skelton, T., & Chambers, D. (1998). Cool places: An introduction to youth and youth cultures. In T. Skelton & G. Valentine (Eds.), *Cool places: Geographies of youth cultures* (pp. 1-32). New York, NY: Routledge.

274

Vaughan, C. (1992, June 8) Everything old seems new again, to teens. *Globe and Mail.*

Visano, L. (1996). What do 'they' know? Delinquency as mediated texts. In G. O'Bireck (Ed.), *Not a kid anymore: Canadian youth, crime, and subcultures* (pp. 71-106). Toronto, ON: Nelson Canada.

Vobejda, B., & Perstain, L. (1998, June 18). Girls will be...boys – and it's not a pretty sight. *The Toronto Star*, pp. A1, A36.

Wagner, H. (1964). Displacement of scope: A problem of relations between small-scale and large-scale sociological theories. *American Journal of Sociology, 69*, 571-84.

Walker, W. (1992, May 5). Ottawa plans to tighten law on police use of deadly force. *The Toronto Star*, A2.

Webb, E., Campbell, D., Schwartz, R., Richard, S., Sechrest, L., & Grove, J. (1981). *Nonreactive measures in the social science.* Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin.

Weber, T. (1999, February 18). *A snapshot of raving in Toronto.* Presentation given at forum called "raving in Toronto" put on by the Toronto Drug Awareness Coalition, North York (Toronto), Ontario, Canada.

Welsh, I. (1997a). *Ecstasy: Three tales of chemical romance.* London: Vintage.

Welsh, I. (1997b). *The Irvine Welsh omnibus: Trainspotting, The acid house, Marabou stork nightmares.* London: Jonathon Cape/Secker and Warburg.

West, G. (1984). *Young offenders and the state.* Toronto, ON: Butterworths.

West, R., & Hager, S. (1992). Rave new world. *High Times*, 8-11.

Wheaton, B. & Tomlinson, A. (1998). The changing gender order in sport?: The case of windsurfing subcultures. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 22*(3), 252-274.

White, P. & Wilson, B. (1999). Distinctions in the stands: An investigation of Bourdieu's 'habitus', socio-economic status and sport spectatorship in Canada. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 34*(3), 245-264.

White, P. & Young, K. (1999). *Sport and gender in Canada.* Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.

Whyte, W. (1943). *Street corner society.* Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Williams, R. (1965). *The long revolution.* London, Penguin.

Williams, R. (1977). *Marxism and literature.* London: Oxford University Press.

Willis, P. (1977). *Learning to labour: How working class kids get working class jobs.* New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Willis, P. (1978). *Profane culture.* London: Routledge.

Willis, P. (1990). *Common culture.* San Francisco, CA: Westview.

Willis, P. (1997, originally published 1980). Theoretical confessions and reflexive method. In K. Gelder & S. Thornton (Eds.), *The subcultures reader* (pp. 246-253). New York, NY: Routledge.

Wilson, B. (1996). *Violence and sport in Hamilton: Issues, actions and recommendations.* Unpublished paper written as a working paper for the "Violence Prevention in Hamilton-Wentworth" Working Conference, Oct. 31-Nov. 1.

Wilson, B. (1997) "Good blacks" and "bad blacks": Media constructions of African-American athletes in Canadian basketball', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 32*(2), 177-189.

Wilson, B. (1998). *Theorizing Youth Leisure Cultures, Locating Canadian Youth: The Cases of Inner City Recreation Centre Culture and "Rave" Culture.* Presented at the International Sociology Association's "World Congress of Sociology" in Montreal, Quebec, July 26-August 1.

Wilson, B. (1999a) "Cool pose" incorporated: The marketing of black masculinity in Canadian basketball coverage. In P. White & K. Young (Eds.), *Sport and gender in Canada* (pp. 232-253) Toronto, ON: Oxford University Press.

Wilson, B. (1999b). *Cultural Studies, Postmodernism, and Symbolic Interactionist Ethnography: Some Comments About Integration and Compatibility.* Presented at the "Colloquium on Qualitative Research" at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, March 19.

Wilson, B. (forthcoming). Cultural Studies, Postmodernism, and Symbolic Interactionist Ethnography: Some Comments About Integration and Compatibility. In W. Shaffir & D. Pawluch (Eds.), *Conference Proceedings for the First Annual Colloquium on Qualitative Research.*

Wilson, B. & Sparks, R. (1996). "It's gotta be the shoes": Youth, race and sneaker commercials. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 13(4), 398-427.

Wilson, B. & Sparks, R. (1999-in press). Impacts of Black Athlete Media Portrayals on Canadian Youth. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 24(4).

Wilson, B. & Sparks, R. (forthcoming). The Complexities of "Nike Youth." In D. Andrews (Ed.), *The Michael Jordan Reader*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Witheford, N., & Gruneau, R. (1993). Between the politics of production and the politics of the sign: Post-marxism, postmodernism and "new times." *Current Perspectives in Social Theory*, 13, 69-91.

Wright, L. (1993 March 27). Rave. *The Toronto Star*, K1, K10.

Young, I. (1995). *The Stonewall experiment*. London: Cassell.

Young, K. & Craig, L. (1997). Beyond white pride: Contradiction in the Canadian skinhead subculture. *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 34(2), 175-206.

## APPENDIX A: SHORT VERSION OF LETTER TO RAVERS

Hello "Newgroup ravers",

This is the short version of a letter written to ask you about being involved in my thesis research on rave culture in Toronto. If you have a little more than a moment, please consider looking at the more in-depth version of this request for your participation. If you don't have time, don't feel like wading though a long letter, and/or want a "to the point" version of my request for your participation, read below.

My name is Brian Wilson, and I'm doing my Ph.D. at McMaster University in sociology, specializing in the study of popular culture. My thesis research is on rave culture in Toronto. I am very interested in talking to members of the WNYSOR community who are involved in all areas of the Toronto rave scene. So far, I have attended raves, talked to some people in the scene, and been a silent member of WNYSOR for a couple of months, but still need to talk to more people and have more pointed and in-depth discussions if I am to give a responsible and accurate depiction of the scene. Some of the topics I am interested in include: the evolution of the rave scene; rave politics; DJ culture; promoter culture; meanings of and changing meanings of the dance, music, drugs and the rave itself; the commercialization of the scene; and the history of the rave scene in Toronto and Canada. This is not research about drugs in the rave, except about the cultural significance of drugs in the rave — in fact, it is a reaction to the incessant media depictions of the rave as a drug culture. Please contact me (privately) if you are in participating in the research. I am interested in both in-person interviews with people living in the Toronto area, and E-Mail discussions with others (in-person interviews are preferable, but E-Mail is still very useful and encouraged). All information is confidential (unless you don't want it to be), and the interview usually takes around 1 hour, although sometimes they go on for much longer when the conversation really gets going. To date, most interviews have been conducted in coffee shops or similarly quiet places and have been very enjoyable (for me and the interviewee). I am very flexible about interview times. To everybody reading this message, thanks very much for considering this request, and please read the long version of this letter (to follow) for more information. I look forward to meeting those of you who are interested in participating in the research.

Take care and thanks again,

Brian Wilson
Department of Sociology
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario
L8S 4M4

**APPENDIX B: LONG VERSION OF RECRUITMENT LETTER FOR NEWSGROUP**

Hello "Newsgroup Ravers" (name of newsgroup has been withheld because of confidentiality issues),

This is the long version of a letter written to ask you about being involved in my thesis research on rave culture in Toronto. If you have only a moment, please read the "to the point" version of this letter (just sent), that summarizes what I'm doing and how you can participate/help. If you have a little time, though, please read this longer version through. I've tried to be as concise, honest and interesting as possible. Since this letter is a couple of pages long, I've put in subject headings in case you want to skim it. Thanks and look forward to hearing from those of you who are interested in participating.

My name is Brian Wilson and I am Ph.D. sociology student at McMaster University specializing in the study of popular culture. My thesis research is on rave culture in Canada, with a focus on the rave scene in Toronto. I have been a silent member of this newsgroup for a couple of months now and have learned much about the rave scene and some of the major debates in the scene. I have also enjoyed the fun/funny discussions and the obviously great sense of community – thanks. Anyway, later in this letter I will be asking about anybody who might be interested in talking to me about their involvement in, opinions about, and knowledge of rave culture (e.g., the evolution of the scene, politics of the scene, meanings attached to activities, DJ culture...). But first, I'll tell you a little about myself and my research in hopes of making you more comfortable with me and what I'm doing.

### WHO I AM, AND THE PROBLEM I WANT TO ADDRESS

I first gained an interest in doing research on rave culture when I was a "casual raver" in Vancouver in 94-95 (I went to a rave about once every couple of months), and when a good friend of mine became seriously involved in the Toronto scene. At the time, I was also studying about youth culture and popular culture for my Masters thesis at the University of British Columbia, and was bothered because everything I read about the rave scene (in popular media) was either related to "drug panics" or was some shallow description of ravers as "neo-hippies." Furthermore, and as you no doubt already know, I found that while people have been trying for years to better understand the rave (and club) scene in Britain and some of the other European scenes, there is relatively little research that has been done specifically on the Canadian rave scene (except by people in the scene who have done work on web sites and magazines, and a couple of other researchers like myself). It would be safe to say that this lack of local information and research has, at least in part, contributed to the persistent panics and general misunderstandings about the scene. For example, the most popular and recent book that has discussed significant "youth movements" in Canada from an academic perspective had only 3 short paragraphs about the rave scene that were based exclusively, it appears, on a 1993 article in the Globe and Mail newspaper.

### HOW I PLANNED TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM

What the problem inspired me to do when I came to Hamilton for my Ph.D. (in 1995-96) was convince my research committee at McMaster that it would be a good idea to study rave culture for my thesis (fortunately they agreed that it was a good idea). Specifically, I proposed that I:

(a) critically analyze media coverage of the rave scene (with a focus on coverage of the Canadian scene)

(b) talk to people who attend raves, talk to people who DJ at raves, talk to people who promote raves and talk to people surrounding the scene (e.g. healthcare workers, police) – to explore all aspects of rave culture (including DJ culture and promoter culture)

(c) attend raves myself to get a better understanding of what happens, the meaning of certain activities, and to give me some important context for the interviews

(d) and, more generally, to find out everything I can about rave culture with a focus on the Toronto rave scene (the study also includes research on rave record stores, rave fiction, rave radio, rave and the internet and so on – many of the things that have been talked about on the WNYSOR newsgroup). The experiences of the many subgroups of people within the scene (e.g., people who have been in the scene for a long time

**APPENDIX B continued**

and a short time, male and female perspectives...) are all of interest here. An ambitious project, but given my passion for the topic, I know it is manageable.

## WHAT I HAVE DONE SO FAR

So far, I have talked to SOME people in all areas of the scene (in-depth interviews with several ravers, a few DJs and promoters, and a few others – about 25 people in total, possibly people in this newsgroup who I didn't know were part of it) and attended about 14 rave-related events over the past couple of years (early in the research I was going to the 1995 wave of Destiny Fridays as well as raves such as SIN Network, Good Vibes, and Eden; more recently I've been to the Clockwork and MDMA parties as well as Industry's Slam Saturdays – sad I missed H4). The changes in the scene over time, and the popularity of clubs like Industry (and the resistance against these clubs) are things I am very interested in. For example, I found the discussions about Industry and EC and other related topics in this newsgroup to be very informative. I've also listened to lots of "rave radio" and surfed the internet for rave-related information (and found tons here). If you live in the Hamilton area, you might have read a newspaper article written about my research when it was in its early stages (I presented preliminary findings at a conference and the Hamilton Spectator picked up on it). The article wasn't too bad, focusing on my discussion of rave culture as a unique part of a long history of youth cultures (I made no bold or controversial statements), and not on "rave and drugs" like I feared they might try and do. Anyway, if you're interested in checking it out, it was in the Hamilton Spectator on May 30, 1996 on p. C3 (they have a picture of a person who is supposed to be Brian Wilson (me) with it, but they put in somebody else's picture).

## WHERE YOUR VOICES AND OPINIONS WOULD BE INVALUABLE

With this background, I admit that I feel as though I am just scratching the surface in some areas related to rave culture. Having read WNYSOR for a few months now and
looked through the archives, I have gained a better understanding about certain parts of the scene through your discussions and debates. Even with this information, more in-depth and pointed discussions about some topics would help me do justice to the rave scene. IT IS HERE WHERE YOUR PERCEPTIONS AND KNOWLEDGE WOULD BE INVALUABLE. My goal is to give a Canadian voice (your voices) to research on and depictions of the global rave scene and, more locally, to describe and discuss the scene as it exists in Toronto in a grounded, honest fashion. I certainly welcome input from those south of the border who are also part of the Canadian rave scene. With these goals in mind, I am writing to ask if some of you, as members of the WNYSOR community, if you would consider lending your voices to this project. Specifically, I am writing to see:

(a) if those of you who live in the Toronto area would be open to an in-person interview to talk about your experiences in the rave scene and to talk anonymously (unless you don't want to be) about the details of your own involvements in the culture (e.g., the details, politics and intricacies of DJ culture, promoter culture, novice raver culture, experienced raver culture, and so on...). I EMPHASIZE, ALL DISCUSSIONS (E-MAIL OR IN PERSON) WILL BE ANONYMOUS. NO NAMES WILL BE ATTACHED TO THE RESEARCH WHEN I PUT IT TOGETHER (UNLESS YOU WANT THEM TO BE, and in some cases you might, especially when talking about the history of the scene).

(b) if those of you who are outside the Toronto area would be willing to and interested in answering some questions by E-Mail. I definitely encourage this type of involvement as well.

## GENERAL TOPICS I'M INTERESTED IN

Some of the general topics I'm interested are listed below. The direction of your conversations will obviously depend on your involvement in the scene (whether you are a raver, a DJ, a promoter or combination) and will be more specific than the areas I outline below. Here they are:
(1) the meaning of, the changing meanings of, the connections between, and your opinions about: rave-related music, dance, drugs, drugs and rave locations. Within the WNYSOR group there appears to be

**APPENDIX B continued**

many similar perspectives, but also some distinct views on these areas – all of which I would like to follow up on. I'm also interested in what makes a great party and what makes a bad party FOR YOU as a raver and/or promoter and/or DJ (e.g., I'm interested how some people have a great time at a party that others were critical of).

(2) how you got involved in the scene, the EXTENT of your involvement in the scene (rave once a month, DJ twice a week...), the WAYS you are involved in the scene (e.g., raver, work for rave magazine, DJ; promoter; work in rave-related record store; involved in technology side of raves); your CHANGING involvements, and the MEANINGS of those involvements to you.

(3) the politics of promoting and DJing (in addition to the great discussions that have already taken place about DJs "making a name", promoters giving DJs a chance...)

(4) DJ culture – the unwritten rules of DJing, ideal DJing experiences, bad DJing experiences, relationships between DJs and other DJs, DJs and promoters...

(5) Promoter culture – the unwritten rules of promoting, the relationship between the business of promoting and the spirit of raving (for example, the way the different New Years Eve events were promoted)...

(6) relationships in the scene (for example, the formation of and importance of the WNYSOR group and other sub-groups within the scene that you might be involved with)

(7) the commercialization of the rave scene and your perceptions about what it means to "sell out", and the importance of maintaining authenticity in the scene (would also like to follow-up discussions about places like Industry and the Electric Circus, bands like the Chemical Brothers and Prodigy)

(8) the history of Toronto (and Canada's) rave scene, including the history of DJing and promoting

**WHAT I WANT TO DO WITH THE RESEARCH AND HOW I WANT TO KEEP YOU INFORMED ABOUT THE RESEARCH**

With this information, I plan to document the history (histories) of the rave scene in Toronto and Canada, place it in historical context (of 1990s Canada and the world) and discuss, with insight and detail, the intricacies of rave culture in Toronto area. Moreover, I want to give a Canadian voice to the global rave scene, something which hasn't been done to the extent that it should (at least in research/writing on popular culture and youth movements). This is where I ask for your perceptions, experiences, opinions, ideas – many of which I will quote directly in the manuscript. I will send drafts of the research results to all those who are interested in the development of the project in hopes of getting valuable feedback and constructive criticism (particularly about the areas you participated in). I will keep WNYSOR updated on the work, since the ideas of the group will hopefully be central to much of the research findings. Although this research will appear first in my Ph.D. thesis, I will also put this together in book manuscript form (I'm aiming for the summer of 1999 to reach this second goal).

**WHAT THE INTERVIEWS ARE LIKE...**

The interviews I've conducted so far have all been very enjoyable for myself and the interviewee – usually in a coffee shop environment (wherever my tape recorder can pick up what you say). I plan for 1 hour, but often they take much longer when we get talking (but the length of time is entirely up to you). The interviews are very informal, following a loosely structured interview guide (basically, a list of general topics to talk about, similar to the list shown above), intended to spark conversation about your perceptions of and opinions about various issues related to your involvement in the scene.

*JUSTIFYING THE RESEARCH, CONTACTING ME, AND THANKING YOU*

I know academic research is not always the most respected work, but I think that the potential contributions of this research, when done rigorously and insightfully, are immense. I hope to benefit both those outside the rave community who misunderstand the scene, and those within the rave community who are interested in a historical and contemporary depiction of their scene - as told by members of the scene. While the critique of media coverage of the rave

**APPENDIX B continued**

should be useful and telling, I consider the interview findings to be the most important, informative and intense part of the research.

With this said, please contact me by E-Mail (privately) if you are interested in participating in the research and also feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. Talking in person is preferable (I find in-person conversation to be more in-depth and rigorous than E-Mail), but E-Mail is certainly encouraged if an interview isn't convenient. Further, if you can think of ideas and information that I haven't mentioned that you think would be important, I would appreciate any suggestions. I will do everything I can to fit in with your schedules. Thanks in advance for any help and thank you so much for considering this request. I'm really looking forward to speaking with those of you who are interested.

Take care everybody and I hope H4 was fantastic,

Brian Wilson – Ph.D. candidate
Department of Sociology
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario
L8S 4M4

## APPENDIX C: INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

### McMaster University
### Rave Culture Study

### Consent Form

| | |
|---|---|
| **Researcher:** | Brian Wilson, Department of Sociology |

**Statement of Purpose:** This study is about the culture of youth who attend, promote and DJ at rave parties. My intention is gain a better understanding of rave culture by investigating the meanings of and perceptions of the group's activities.

**Your involvement:** The study involves interviewing you for approximately 1 hour. My questions will be fairly general. There are no right or wrong answers. You are free not to answer questions if you wish and may withdraw from the interview at any time. The interview will be recorded on a cassette recorder. If there are parts of the interview that you do not want recorded, please say so and I will turn off the tape.

**Confidentiality:** What you say in the interview will be kept strictly confidential. Any publication arising form this project will not use names of interviewees. Such publications will be made available to you at the completion of the project.

Signature of Researcher

_____

Brian Wilson
Department of Sociology
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario
L8S 4M4

**APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PREPARATION MATERIALS AND TENTATIVE INTERVIEW GUIDES FOR RAVE STUDY**

Note: 3 interview guides are included below: one for ravers, one for DJ/ravers, and one for promoter/ravers

## GUIDE 1: GENERAL INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR RAVER

Intro., 1) what I've done so far, interested in talking about 2) how you got involved, 3) what raving means to you (dancing, music, drugs), 4) what changes have taken place and what you think of them, 5) female experience

*1) how did you get involved in raving*
-how old were you, how long have you been raving
-how did you hear about raves

*2) tell me all the ways that you are/were involved*

*3) how big a part of your life is/was it (was it just a weekend thing or something else)*
-did you just go on weekends, did you buy magazines...
-friends who rave/raved?
-how did others at your school react to "ravers"
-was it the cool thing to do, or how was it viewed-a status thing

*4) were you a raver outside of going to raves* – if I saw you on a Wednesday at school, would I know you were a raver (way you looked, anything about the way you acted?)

*5) what do/did your parents think of you going to raves (and your friends' parents...)*

*6) The culture (your involvement, the meanings, how you think these things have changed)*

1) describe to me what a good party is/was for you (what are/were your favourite parts of the rave – dancing...)
2) describe what a bad party is
3) describe a typical night going to a rave, from start to finish
3) talk about clothes at the rave (how did you dress, what did it mean to you)
4) talk about the dance
5) the DJ
6) drugs...(extent of use, culture of drug use, ...)
7) -talk about the music, what did it mean, why was it special, or was it (did your tastes change over time)
8) what do the props mean/what are they used for (glow sticks, whistles etc.)
9) -did the physical set-up mean much to you (what aspects were most important to you)
10) -male and female culture in the rave scene ...

*-what changes have you seen over the time you have been in the scene*
1) how do you feel about the commercialization of the scene
2) do you like Industry
3) what do you think of Chris Shepperd, Electric Circus etc.

**Perspective**
1) Do you go as much as you used to (if go less, why?)
2) will you continue to go to raves in the future, will you stop...
3) what concerns you most about the rave scene

**APPENDIX D continued**

4) what it the future of the rave scene in your opinion

-anything else I should know, want to clarify
contacts...

## GUIDE 2:  GENERAL INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR DJ/RAVER

**General (your involvement)**

1) how did you get involved in the rave scene (why...)
2) tell me all the ways you have been involved in the rave scene
3) how did you get introduced to djing (and promoting etc.)
4) how did you learn how to dj (who were/are your major influences)
5) how did you get your first job
        talk about the politics of djing(politics of getting jobs) – how do you get into the loop
        politics of getting shows in other cities
6) problems as a dj dealing with promoters (which promoters are good and which aren't)
7) is there anything typical about djs that you know, or are they all kinds
8) has djing changed over time
9) how about djing at clubs vs raves (how about industry...)
10) do you have certain standards about where you play, what you play
11) changes in your attitudes towards djing since you began

**History of the scene (djing and rave)**
11) history of djing in Toronto/Canada
12) history of promoting in Toronto/Canada
13) for you, how has the rave scene changed over time, as a dj and raver
14) do you know very much about other scenes in Canada

**DJ culture**
1) what aspects of being a dj (styles, skills) are most respected by the dj community
2) what behaviors or actions are frowned upon by the dj community
3) in layperson language, describe the music the style of music that you play and what it means to you to play this music
3) describe to me a what a good set is for you as a dj
4) describe to me what a bad set is for you
5) what will you look for when watching/listening to another dj
6) are there important details that djs attend to when doing their work (how about you)—symbols (gestures...)-any subtle things that happen that someone might not know who is watching
7) how do you dress—meaning of clothes for you
8) what do you do when something goes wrong (robert de la gauthier)
9) (talk about the difference in crowds who attend raves for these styles) -- are different genres of music more or less difficult to dj for
10) at a rave, the dj is a celebrity, how does that affect people, what does that mean
11) drugs huge part of "rave" culture -- are *drugs* part of dj culture
12) what are dj competitions
13) do you believe that a dj can sell out-talk about Chris Shepperd
14) do many of the djs get radio work
15) compare clubs like industry to raves as a dj
16) what do you like about djing -what do you not like about djing
17) do djs work in competition, or together, does dj culture reflect rave culture

**APPENDIX D continued**

18) female djs, different races, make a difference, any trends...
19) how long do you see yourself involved in the business, what is the next step from here

**Changes in the scene – what are the most significant changes**

**Micro level**
-perceptions of changes in rave scene since you began
-the philosophy (what it was and what it became)
-the music
-view on how drug scene was and is
-view on dancing
-the clothes
-parties in general
**Macro level**
-commercialization of the scene, describe (and your opinion)
-what are your thoughts on Chris Shepperd and what he has done
-do you believe in "selling out"
-perceptions of places like Industry (vs "raves")
-what is the future of the rave scene (djing, promoting...)

**Relationship With "Outsiders"**
1) police
2) media – what do you think

**Problems in the scene-what problems exist in the scene presently that most concern you**
-Talk about the drug issue in raves (is this relevant to dj culture)
-media panic bother you

**Conclusion**
-do you or did you consider yourself a "raver" were you a raver
-are you involved in the internet rave stuff
-rave books
-female djs?
-parents think of you djing as an occupation, going to raves (any other jobs)
-background
-anything else you think I should know-
-any questions for me

## GUIDE 3: GENERAL INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PROMOTER/RAVER

**General (your involvement)**
1) how did you get involved in the rave scene (why...)
2) tell me all the ways you have been involved in the rave scene
3) how did you get introduced to promoting etc.)
5) how did you learn how to promote (who were/are your major influences)
6) how did you get your first job
        talk about the politics of (politics of getting jobs) – how do you get into the loop
        politics of getting shows in other cities
7) problems as a dj dealing with promoters (which promoters are good and which aren't)
8) who are promoters
9) how has promoting changed over time

**APPENDIX D continued**

10) clubs vs raves (how about industry...) – describe differences and your attitude toward them
11) do you have certain standards about where you will have raves etc.
12) changes in your attitudes towards promoting since you began
4) why did you leave

**Promoter Culture**
-what happened last year, promoters, changes
-talk about involvement of business in the rave scene now
1) describe the thought behind getting certain venues
2) describe the strategies related to setting up certain parties, (would a jungle party be different than a more housy party, or a trance party)
3) are there different types of promoters – tell me more about it
4) promoter politics (big companies vs small), what happened recently
-how have promoters reacted to drug situation
-relationship among promoters (how do you feel about outsiders)
-did you have a problem letting other companies advertise at your raves
-age situation
-what is a sell-out
-tell me the etiquette of promoting-is there a "code" for promoters
-describe a good party and a bad party
-after parties, how are they different

**History of the scene (promoting)**
11) history of promoting in Toronto/Canada (tell me about Michael Stein)
12) history of promoting in Toronto/Canada
13) do you know very much about other scenes in Canada

**Changes in the scene – what are the most significant changes**

**Micro level**
-perceptions of changes in rave scene since you began
-the philosophy (what it was and what it became)
-the music
-view on how drug scene was and is
-view on dancing
-the clothes
-parties in general (who attends)
**Macro level**
-commercialization of the scene, describe (and your opinion)
-what are your thoughts on Chris Shepperd and what he has done
-do you believe in "selling out"
-perceptions of places like Industry (vs "raves")
-what is the future of the rave scene (djing, promoting...)

**Relationship With "Outsiders"**
1) police
2) media – what do you think

**Problems in the scene-what problems exist in the scene presently that most concern you**
-Talk about the drug issue in raves (is this relevant to dj culture)
-media panic bother you

**APPENDIX D continued**

**Conclusion**
-are you involved in the internet rave stuff
-rave books
-the gay scene
-female promoters, djs?
-parents think of you promoting as an occupation, going to raves
-background
-anything else you think I should know

-address-send you stuff
-contacts

# APPENDIX E: ON-LINE INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE FOR RAVERS

Here are the questions. As you will see, they are very general. The questions were asked in this way to give you the freedom to talk about the things that are most important to you (and so you aren't forced to "fill in the blanks" in narrow categories that can't do justice to sometimes complex ideas). With this in mind, write about the things that are most relevant to you, important to you, and interesting to you. Use stories about things that have happened to you, or any other kinds of examples to demonstrate your ideas (however you express yourself and your ideas is entirely up to you). Write as much as you want, and in any style or format you are comfortable with. All questions are optional, so if you are uncomfortable answering any of the following questions, just leave them blank (and follow-up questions will not be asked on these areas). If you think a question doesn't really apply to you, express this briefly and then move on. If your involvement in the rave scene is less as a "raver" and more in some other area, answer the more general questions here and I will ask questions relevant to your unique position in the scene in the follow-up questionnaire.

Just a reminder that all information that you provide is treated as CONFIDENTIAL (unless you want your name attached to your quotations). No names will be attached to any of the information when I write up the research findings. Also, there are no time restrictions on getting your answers back to me. Obviously, the sooner the better, but there is no urgency and whenever it is convenient for you to send the answers back to me is fine with me. No pressure, no worries.

As I mention above, the "follow-up questionnaire" (which I will send to you after I receive the answers to these questions) will focus on your specific involvements in the scene, and ask you to elaborate on some of the ideas that came out of your responses to this first set of questions (perhaps to talk more about DJ culture, about the preferences you have for certain raves or music, or about your philosophy on drug use at raves).

Once again, thank you very much. Your help and time are much appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns, please send me an E-Mail and I'll clear things up. I hope you enjoy the questions and if you have any feedback about the questions (problems or comments), please let me know. I'll also be sure send you a copy of the overall findings when they are done so you can see how your answers were implemented. I will also invite your feedback at that time. Take care.

HERE ARE THE QUESTIONS:

(1) How did you get involved in the rave scene (please include how old you were and how you heard about your first rave)?

(2) Describe the ways you are involved in the rave scene (e.g., raver; work for rave magazine; DJ; promoter) and the EXTENT of your involvement in the scene (rave once a month, DJ twice a week...).

(3) Describe, from your own perspective, the characteristics of: (a) a good rave and, (b) a bad rave. (feel free to tell a story if this helps you explain)

(4) Describe a "typical night" where you go to a rave, describing events and feelings from start to finish (include pre-rave and post-rave happenings).

(5) Talk about the meaning of the following parts of a rave party TO YOU:
(a) music, (b) dance (c) drugs (d) setting of the rave (e) any other parts of a rave party that are important to you that I haven't mentioned.

**APPENDIX E continued**

(6) What does "raving" mean to you NOW compared to what it meant when you FIRST STARTED raving (refer specifically to the meanings of the music, drugs, and dance if they help you explain)? Or has it changed?

(7) In your opinion, has the rave scene changed since you first began raving? If yes, what are these changes and what is your opinion about these changes (might overlap with next question).

(8) What is your opinion about the increasing popularity and commercialization of the rave scene (good, bad, both or neither, explain)? (if it's helpful, refer to rave "clubs", music like the Chemical brothers, and/or perhaps shows like the Electric Circus)

(9) Is there anything that concerns you about the rave scene? (if yes, explain)

(10) What it the future of the rave scene in your opinion? (and why do you say this)

11) Is there anything else that you think is important that I haven't asked and you would like to talk about?

Now a few questions about you and your background (optional, if there's anything you don't want to reveal, please don't feel any pressure to do so)
(12) Age:____
(13) Sex: ____
(14) Race _____
(15) Size and location of the city you grew up in_____
(16) Size and location of the city you presently live in_____
(17) What is your parents' education level?
Mother: _____
Father: _____
(18). Please identify your parents' occupation:
Mother: _____
Father: _____

That's it! Thanks so much again for you time and insights. I'll be back in touch soon with a few follow up questions once I receive your answers. Much appreciated and take care for now.

## APPENDIX F: A SHORT ESSAY ON RAVE FLYERS, PROMOTER STRATEGY, AND RAVER PERSPECTIVES

The handbill known as the flyer is the most important means of information on the techno scene, announcing new records, the opening of scene record shops and, most important of all, parties [raves]. It can be rapidly produced and easily distributed, making it the ideal way to give the motto of the planned event and the DJ lineup at short notice as required. It is available where the scene meets which makes it highly effective in terms of promotion. It also helps keep the scene exclusive, as the information it spreads is restricted to special circles of followers....In addition to its utilitarian nature—its original function being merely to pass on news which will soon be out of date – the flyer has turned into a specific feature of the scene. It is a collector's item serving in part to document the techno movement. Of course, the increasing importance of graphics has a part to play here. The effort involved -- whether it be the time-consuming creation of 3D graphics or printing on special material – demonstrates the self-confidence with which the scene assures itself of its own livelihood and creativity.

Quoted from photo-essay-book *Techno-Style: The Album Cover Book* (Pesch and Weisbeck, 1998).

In the Toronto rave scene, flyers were important for the dissemination of information about upcoming parties as well as for expressing the themes of these parties and the philosophies of specific promotion companies (or at least this would be their claim on the flyer). In my own research, I collected hundreds of rave flyers either from record shops or rave parties where there is usually a table displaying these advertisement for upcoming parties, from people would come around and hand-out flyers, and, on the sidewalk (looking like litter) downtown Toronto (it was on the sidewalk where I found several key flyers early in the research). One raver who had been collecting rave flyers since the early 1990s allowed me to photocopy her collection, a collection that included rave notices from the early "Chemistry" parties that were taking place in 1992 and 1993 – classic flyers by Toronto raver standards. Now there are websites where ravers display their flyers from many of the parties past.

In conducting the research and conducting the interviews, ravers often discussed their collections of rave flyers, referring to how many flyers they had, where they got them, and which were their favourites. There was clearly more 'capital' associated with having flyers from the 'legendary' parties of years past, particularly flyers from the early 1990s when fewer raves were taking place, and flyers were less common than today where every rave has an elaborate flyer. My encounter with "Janice" when she lent me her collection of rave flyers provides more general insight:

**APPENDIX F continued**

I met Janice [a McMaster University student who I'd met through a personal of mine] at the house she was living in with some other students...She pulled out a bunch of magazines, got a shoe box of flyers and went to the stereo and got a stack of CDs. She was really proud of her flyer collection. She talked about how in her residence room the year before she had the flyers plastered all over her walls, indicating that so many ravers she knows love to make big flyer collages. She opened the shoe box and proceeded to go through the flyers and tell the "stories" behind some of them. Sometimes the flyer wasn't all that spectacular, but it reminded her of a great party she'd had. For example, she came across a rave she'd been to in Ohio the previous year saying, "here's the flyer for the Ohio party [a summer festival that is often attended by Toronto ravers who will drive down], I even kept the wristband they gave me. I think you can still smell the pot on the wristband from when I sweated on it." She also showed me some pictures that had been taken at the party. Janice pointed out the DJs on the flyers that she was personal friends with. Throughout all of this though, she was looking for the "classic" flyers, particularly the one from a Chemistry party (one of the original rave promotion companies in Toronto) she had the flyer for (she did find it). She also talked about how you can tell the more "underground" parties that have more personalized and often less glossy flyer compared to what she called the "gino rave flyers" that represent that more commercialized, widely attended raves (as a point of information, the "ginos" that were referred to here have been referred to in other contexts to refer to people that would normally go to popular clubs and get dressed up in expensive cloths, etc. – complying with bar traditions instead of rave traditions). In efforts to help with the study, she pointed out differences between the early flyers from raves she had attended (in 1992 and 1993) and the more recent ones (from 1996-1997). In essence, the early rave party flyers paralleled what Janice considered to be the "underground" parties, while the more recent flyers were similar to the popular rave flyers (fieldnotes, December 2, 1997).

In a few cases, ravers that I spoke with were influenced by the contents of the flyer, using the philosophical rave writings that sometimes appear inside on the flyer (usually representing either a statement about the underlying theme of the party, the perspective of the rave company, or simply a statement about rave culture) as a guide for understanding the rave movement.

Promoters, on the other hand, also discussed the importance of their design of the flyers for both expressing the "mood" of the party they were planning, and also for getting people to come to the event:

Rod met me at the coffee shop...for our first interview...He pulled out some flyers for the next party he was holding and a few flyers from parties he already had. Holding out one of the flyers, he said, "what does this mean to you" (meaning how did I interpret the flyer)...We talked about what it meant for a little while, referring to the simultaneously "futuristic-nostalgic" theme. He also emphasized the unity and technology part of the message. However, Rod was also clearly concerned about people liking the flyer and moreover, people coming to the rave. As I had heard in other interviews, raves are often a big financial risk for many promoters [and later in newsgroup discussions] so making money is clearly a consideration. Rod actually admitted to me that the reason he had contacted me after reading the story about my research in the newspaper was because he wanted to "pick my brain" to see what sorts of things he should be doing at parties to get ravers to come. While clearly this motive had a sincere "good service" function to it, the "make money" part of this should not be lost (fieldnotes, June, 1996).

**APPENDIX F continued**

Other promoters talked about how over the years flyers had become "more commercial and less personal" (i.e., the large glossy flyers versus the paper, hand-made flyers) and how the negative commercialization of the rave can be traced through the development of the flyer.

Either way, this mixture of philosophy and business was crucial to the ways that several promoters understand the art of flyer creation. Clearly, the multiple and blurred meanings associated with flyers by the producers and consumers in the scene (e.g., a raver's nostalgic association between the flyer and an experience at a party versus a promoter's positive feeling about the flyer's ability to attract high numbers of ravers to the party) are reflected in and complicated by the hazy distinction between the dual raver-promoter role that many in the scene held.

A similar rave-related artistic tradition is evident on techno music album covers, although because many ravers will never buy an album, this medium is not as widely disseminated or celebrated as the rave flyer. These sorts of artistic products have been displayed at the "Chromopark" exhibition in Berlin since 1994 (Pesch and Weisbeck, 1998, p. 7).

**APPENDIX G: BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DROP-IN/RECREATION CENTRE YOUTH**

**Instructions:** The following questions are intended to provide some background information about you. If it is unclear what is being asked, please ask for help.

1. **Age:**____ (years)

2. **Sex:** Male/Female (circle)

3. How long have you lived in the Hamilton area?____(years)

4. If you have ever lived outside of the Hamilton area, where did you live? **area**_____

5. What is your **race**? _____

6. How many **hours** of television did you watch **last week?** ____ hours

7. What are your **3 favourite television shows?**

i)_____

ii)_____

iii)_____

8. How many Toronto Raptors games (or parts of games) did you watch on television this basketball season?

☐ 0   ☐ around 1-2 games   ☐ 3+ games

9. How many basketball games total (NBA or college) did you watch last year?

☐ 0   ☐ about 1-2 games   ☐ 3+ games

10. What is your parents' education level? **(Check in each column as appropriate)**

|  | Mother | Father |
|---|---|---|
| Some high school | ☐ | ☐ |
| Finished high school | ☐ | ☐ |
| Some college | ☐ | ☐ |
| College diploma | ☐ | ☐ |
| Some university | ☐ | ☐ |
| University degree | ☐ | ☐ |
| other (please specify)_____ |  |  |

**You have finished the questionnaire. Thank you very much for your help.**

**APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP WITH MALE YOUTH FROM DROP-IN/RECREATION CENTRE**

1) Is the Boys and Girls Club different from other places you spend time, like at school or other places in the neigbourhood. (if yes, How?)

2) If you weren't spending time at the boys and girls club, what would you be doing
-Are many of your friends from school members of the Boys and Girls Club

3) Does everybody get along at the centre? (Explain)
   What do you do if you become irritated by somebody from a different group, how do you react

4)  You know how new kids at school sometimes get a hard time, what is it like for new kids who join the centre? How long does it take for them to "fit in", what do they need to learn if they want to "fit in".

5) Keep these ideas in mind for probes
   -what happens to new kids, how do they learn how they are supposed to act-what sorts of things do they need to learn in order to fit in
   -what do you do if you see somebody wrecking the Club
   -how do you guys make sure that people are wrecking the place, or doing things to make less a place that you don't want to hang out at

6) If I was starting a new Boys and Girls Club and wanted people like yourself to come and hang out, what programmes should I have, what should I do...
   -what would I do so that people would respect it

# APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW GUIDE-YOUTH CENTRE FEMALES

1) What things or activities do you like doing the most at the Boys and Girls Club? Tell me what you like about each.
-focus on each activity and find out what they like about it
-are there any activities that you would like to do more (e.g.would you like more gym time)

2) How does the Boys and Girls Club compare to from other places that you hang out (like the mall or at school)? How?

3) Do you play sports at school?
-IF NO, why do you play sports at the Club, but not at school
-is there a difference between playing sports at school and here at the Club
-do you get a chance to play sports at school
-are the leaders different here than at school

4) Is there very much "girls only" time in the gym
How is the gym different when it's just the girls playing basketball, than when its open gym.
-do you play with the guys in the gym
-trying to a get a sense of whether they care that they don't have much gym time

5) Is there anything you would change about the Club if you could?
-e.g. more gym time, , more parties, more video games, more friends from school

6) What would you be doing if you weren't at the Boys and Girls Club?
-Boys and Girls Club vs other places they might hang out
-is it a cool thing to do, hang out here, if so, what is it about this place that make it cool, people, activities, leaders

7) How did you find out about the Boys and Girls Club programmes
-are many of your friends from school also members at the Club, or do you have different groups of friends-why aren't they involved

8) Have you been members long, do people usually stay members here for along time or do they start to do other things-what other things do people do

9) When someone comes to a new school it is sometimes hard to fit in, How easy is it for new girls to fit in and make friends here?
-if someone doesn't fit in that well here, what are they doing wrong?-how should they act different or do things differently
-what sort of things do you need to know if you want to fit in here-unwritten rules, what things are cool and uncool to do

10) How often do you spend time at the Boys and Girls Club. What do you do during these times?
Do you spend much time here at night in the 8:00-10:00 time slot, what will you do then, do you play in the gym then, or what will you do?
-will you hang around when the guys are playing basketball, what will you do—will you relax on the bleachers or play, what is the cool thing to do

11) There are lots of different people at the boys and girls club. People who like to play basketball, people who like hockey, older youth, younger youth, different ages, different races and cultures, males and females. Does everybody get along.
Why here and not other places? Do you treat people differently here.

**APPENDIX I continued**

12) Do any of you volunteer at the centre. Are you involved in special events here. Why do you like being involved?
Do you get involved in any special events here. Why? Is it fun, do they like to give back to the centre

13) If I was setting up another place like the Boys and Girls Club and wanted girls like yourselves to come and hang out, what sorts of activities should I have, should I have more gym time, or a bigger games room, or more parties-what should the leaders know, should there be more programmes, or more hang out time (which do they like and why)
Thanks and fill out biographical before you go